The third and last group of panels and papers presented here offered space for the debate about textual criticism and practice in different contexts. This last in particular served to investigate the specific differences between the European and Oriental approaches in the formation of a textual theory.

The organization of the conference that formed the basis of this volume would not have been possible without the much appreciated support of a variety of individuals and institutions. The editors wish to thank the organizers from Istanbul University, Tuba Çavdar and Meral Alpay, for their excellent cooperation, and for turning the lecture halls of the Faculty of Philosophy of Istanbul University into a congenial environment for the symposium during which these papers were presented. We also wish to thank the then-Director of the French Institute of Anatolian Studies in Istanbul (Institut Français d’Études Anatoliennes, IFEA), Paul Dumont, for his willingness to host several of the conference participants. Our special gratitude goes to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate and the Suleymaniye Library in Istanbul for welcoming the conference participants to tours of their respective premises, permitting them to inspect some of their choicest manuscripts and incunabula at close sight. Special thanks we owe to Nevzat Kaya, Director of the Suleymaniye Library, for his hospitality and guidance throughout the conference, which extended far beyond the pre-arranged visit of the manuscript collections with accompanying tea break in the Library’s lovely gardens.

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How ‘Sacred’ is the Text of an Arabic Medieval Manuscript?

The Complex Choices of the Editor-Scholar

Wadād al-Qādī

If we were, hypothetically, to ask scholarly editors all over the world about the theoretical approaches that govern their critical editorial work, many of them would be quite detailed in talking about the procedures they follow, but only very few would be able to talk about principles that guide them in their work. Although the accuracy of such a hypothetical situation varies from place to place and time to time, it is probably safe to say that scholars involved in editing surpass by far those involved with the theory of editing both in number and in volume of production. Some editors would have read, and even appreciated, something about the theoretical aspect of editing; but when the time comes for sitting at the table to edit, much of what had been learned seems somehow to evaporate, leaving few traces in the editor’s mind as he concentrates on the text in front of his eyes. And yet, is it really possible that a scholar-editor should function without any guiding principles whatsoever, that his editorial work proceeds in a theoretical vacuum? Probably not; for, even if the editor is not aware of it, “every statement about editing,” as G. Thomas Tanselle puts it, “reflects, directly or indirectly, an attitude towards certain fundamental questions, and various families of editorial approaches have grown up over the centuries because these questions have been answered in different ways.”

Indeed, after centuries of editing activity, D. C. Greetham found it still appropriate, and relevant, to ask, as late as 1995, “and what is scholarly editing, anyway?” with the question prompting him to assemble in a book a sizable number of articles on the subject from various perspectives and in different cultures. Having done at least some of my editorial work without giving much conscious thought to the role of principles in determining the editorial process, I would like here to try my hand — and, actually, explore my spirit — at clarifying how I see the dynamic of principle-procedure at work in the particular field of editing medieval Arabic manuscripts. More specifically, I would like to examine

1 Throughout this paper, I shall be using the masculine singular when referring to the editor in order to make the text read smoothly.
how this dynamic works in the question of how much a scholarly editor should interfere in his text, or, conversely, how 'sacred' the text of a manuscript is. This question is important for all scholars who adopt the historical approach to editing, and the way they answer it depends on one or more principles they adopt, implicitly or explicitly, in their editing. Thus, in the first section of what follows, I would like to discuss a principle which helps explain the variation in the editors' answers to the question posed above, presenting at the same time my own guiding principle to this question. In the second section, I discuss the approaches advocated by Arab and Orientalist scholars regarding the editing of Arabic medieval manuscripts, particularly the issue of the editor's interference in his text; thereafter I present my own alternative approach which is based on taking into consideration aspects of Islamic civilization. In the last section, I examine how my proposed approach affects the procedures of editing medieval Arabic manuscripts and how it limits, or opens up, the editor's role in the final production of his edited work.

One of the main principles that the editor has to take into consideration is that editing is an activity in which the interests of more than one party are at stake, and these stakes are sufficiently important to raise the editor's choices to the level of the ethical and the moral, and are sufficiently conflicting to make those choices not only difficult but crucial, too. All that puts on the shoulders of the editor several weighty responsibilities.

The first thing that the editor realizes is that the work he intends to edit is not his own, but the work of another person, the author. As such, the editor's work is, in principle, secondary to the author's. This means that the editor has a moral responsibility to the author, and, to do his work properly, he must accord the author's wish primacy over his own, restricting, necessarily, his role in 'shaping' the final form of the book. But the second thing which the editor realizes is that, by editing a book, he has another responsibility, not towards the author but towards the text he is editing, especially in specific cases, like when the text's author is unknown. Here his role could be either less or more restricted, depending on many factors, not the least of which is the state of preservation and accuracy of the original text. Again, the editor also realizes that he has another party to whom he bears responsibility: the audience, for neither the author nor the editor work in a vacuum, and their corresponding versions of the text are necessarily meant to be read by some audience; in other words, they must have accessibility. In this area, the editor might very well find himself less restricted than in other situations, since he cannot but keep the audience in mind when weighing the choices he makes in his editing.

6 See the table in Tanselle 1995: 10.

But the matter can become more complicated when the editor looks at editing as a professional activity, which it certainly is; if it were not, anyone who can read and write in a certain language can be an editor, which is not the case. Here, more parties come into play, and the editor finds himself faced with new parties and additional responsibilities, all of which are weighty, crucial, and also ethically and morally demanding. As a professional, the editor, for one thing, bears a responsibility towards the scholarly field his editorial work serves, for his editions become the starting points for future research in this field, and, as such, are at the basis of the advancements that the field can make, at least in part. The editor, too, has to contend with another party towards whom he bears responsibility, namely the students in the field and affiliated fields — his immediate professional audience. Since this group is the one upon whose shoulders the future of the field depends, the editor owes it to them to give his editorial work his best, to inspire them to carry the torch forward, and, optimally, to pose as a role model for what scholarly editing can and should do. These two parties, thus, make of the editor a pivotal player in the editorial process, and, actually, a towering third party to whom he bears an enormous responsibility. Furthermore, this editor is a specialized scholar with broad knowledge of the field, a trained professional in the art of deciphering texts, and a person with critical judgment. As such, he is a discerning reader of the texts he edits. But reading texts means necessarily interpreting them, and the editor, by the nature of his profession is, thus, an interpreter of texts. This is a duty he cannot, ethically, escape from, and a responsibility he bears not only to his field and its students but above all towards himself; forfeiting that responsibility means nothing less than betraying the moral precepts of his profession.

What does the editor do in the face of multiplicity and conflict in the parties towards whom he bears an ethical and professional responsibility? According to Western scholarship on the theory of editing, and within the historical approach with which we are concerned here, the editor defines his perception of the relation between author and text, and, based on that perception, he defines what his goal from editing a certain work is. If he decides that that the ideal text is the one produced by the author, and that the author's intentions are knowable from his final text, then his goal would be to establish the text as finally intended by his author. As such, his editorial work would be author-centered, and, regardless of whether he perceives of his role as passive or active in the editorial process, his eye is constantly on the author's intention, and his intervention in his text is confined by self-inscribed limitations. In so doing, he would join the majority of scholarly editors from ancient times until the twentieth century, especially in the English-speaking world. If he, on the other hand, decides that authorial
intention is unknown or unknowable and unstable,⁷ and that works are collaborative, social products,⁸ then his goal would be to present the text in the most accurate, historically illuminating form. As such, his editorial procedures would be text-based, the author is relegated to the background, and the editor assumes a wide range of freedom. In so doing, he would join one or another theorist of the modern German Post-Gregian school of editing, which was influenced by such movements as structuralism, post-structuralism, literary sociology and new historicism, and where even eclecticism is contemplated or even condoned.⁹

Such are the theoretical options that editors have, as discussed in the West, albeit with many rich variations, from the nineteenth century until today. But several things seem to be missing there. For one thing, the audience seems to play a rather marginal role in many of these theories. But the audience is most certainly an extremely important party to which the editor is ethically and morally responsible, as I have noted above, and indeed professionally, too, since what I had identified as the field and the students in the field can also be considered two forms of audience. For another thing, the staunch theoreticians, be they advocates of particular theories or historians of theories, tend mostly to see different theoretical approaches as starkly separate and differentiated, so that if one editor subscribes to one approach, he, in their view, does not belong to the believers in the other approach. But is this necessarily true? Could not an editor who subscribes to the authorial-intention theory be faced at some point in his editorial career with a situation in which an author is impossible to identify, even more, that a work he intends to edit is indeed a "communal product," as some advocates of the German school would say? Such inherent assumptions of an almost clear cut break between the pre-Gregians and the post-Gregians, thus, does not necessarily always hold. In fact, I think, diminishes the pivotal role of the editor as I have tried to describe it above. The third and last matter that needs caution with regard to the Western theories of editing is that they have been derived mainly from the editorial experiences of Western cultures from Alexandria times until today. It would, therefore, be profitable to see how they fare when their applicability is tested in non-Western editorial experiences.

On the basis of these remarks, let me state here the principle that I think could be an effective guide in editing medieval Arabic manuscripts, and specifically with reference to the question of how 'sacred' the text of a manuscript is. Approaching the texts in those manuscripts historically, the primary goal of editing is, as

Tanselle has said, "to receive a communication from the past."¹⁰ This communication should be as accurate and illuminating as possible, and can be author-based or text-based; depending on the individual manuscripts at hand; what it should never do is to censor the parts of the manuscript, i.e., to willfully omit sections of it for extratextual, personal reasons.¹¹ Since, also, these manuscripts were written centuries ago for particular audiences, and since the editor's audiences are different from the earlier audiences, those "communications from the past" should also aim at being as accessible as possible. The party which decides what procedures are to be followed for reaching this goal is the scholar-editor, the carrier of the heavy responsibilities of the editorial enterprise, and the one whose critical judgement is constantly called upon to balance the accuracy of an author's text with its accessibility to a different audience in a different time and place.

II

Editing manuscripts, in the modern sense, is a rather young area in the field of Arabic and Islamic studies; the first two books that stated on their covers that they were "edited" (tabqīṭ) date to 1914.¹² This has to do with several factors, not the least of which is the relative delay in the importation of the printing press until after the Napoleonic campaign against Egypt in 1799, so that the main presses, like Bulaq, did not start publishing Arabic books, copied from manuscripts but unedited, until the latter decades of the nineteenth century, i.e., after some European publishing houses had begun to publish edited Arabic manuscripts.¹³ After the middle of the twentieth century, editing Arabic

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¹¹ See Shafiq Dajani's edition of Ibn Sa'īd al-Maghribi's (d. 683/1286) historical-literary work on Andalusia, al-Maghrib fi bila l-maghrib (2 vols., Cairo 1953-55) which lacks two sections that the author believed to be too indecent to be published. The same reason explains the falling out of one maqāmā of Ibn al-Zamān al-Hamadhānī's Maqāmat ("al-maqāmā l-shāmīyya") in addition to a few sentences from two other maqāmās ("al-Raṣālīyya" and another unidentified one), as was stated by Muhammad Abdu, the editor of the most popular of Hamadhānī's Maqāmat (Beirut, 8th edition, 1975), p. 2. In Ibrahim al-Kilani's edition of Abu Ḥayyān al-Tawḥidi's, al-ʿAṣr wa l-labūṭā (4 vols., Damascus 1965-[67]), we find many paragraphs dropped out presumably because the author could not read them, as the new edition of this book by Wadad al-Qādī has shown (10 vols., Beirut 1988). This phenomenon is found in several cultures and has been so for many centuries. Tanselle 1995: 9 retold the story of Alexander Pope's deletions from his edition of Shakespeare by quoting the great bibliographer A. W. Polland's sharp statement that Pope "might be ranked high among Shakespeare's editors had he not relegated passages he disliked to the margin, and even omitted some offending lines altogether."
¹² These are Ibn al-Kalbi's (d. 204/819) Kitāb al-aṣyāmān and al-Aṣyān (d. ca. 216/831) Kitāb al-khayl, both of which were edited by Ahmad Zaki Pasha and published by Dar al-Kutub al-Misriyya in Cairo.
¹³ On the foundation of presses in Egypt, see al-Tanāḥ, Muḥammad Muḥammād 1984: Madhhabā ilā tāriḫ nāshīr al-tarīkh al-ʿarabī, Cairo, 31-58. The book also contains short sections on most other countries of the Arab world. The famous press at Bulaq in Cairo
subsequent translation into Arabic\textsuperscript{19} made it the most influential work on the subject, for reasons that will become clearer shortly.

Arab scholars, all of them experienced editors, began contributing theoretical works to the field of editing Arabic manuscripts since the fifties of the twentieth century. These works fall into three categories. The first consists of review articles of edited books. Since these tended to be mainly critiques of particular readings within those books, their contribution to the theory of editing was minimal and did not exceed incidental remarks.\textsuperscript{20} The second consists of lectures delivered at the training workshops held by the above mentioned “Ma'had al-Makhṭūṭāt” and other institutions in various Arab cities about rules for editing Arabic manuscripts. Such reports were by their very nature practice-oriented and didactic, and their use, thus, for editorial theory is minimal.\textsuperscript{21} The third and principal category consists of books whose purpose was to describe the editorial process and, through that, to teach it, in a manner reminiscent of Bergsträsser's pioneering lectures.\textsuperscript{22} Although they varied greatly in scope and detail, they generally discussed topics like how to collect the manuscripts of the work to be edited; how to relate and rank manuscripts; how to ascertain the manuscript's author and title; how to prepare for the process of editing; how to select readings; what to include in the critical apparatus; how to make indices; and so on. Most of those books included a discussion of the art of editing, posing the question: Was it really the modern Westerners who first fell upon it or was it actually the medieval Muslims/Arab scholars who did that many centuries before, albeit without such modern trappings as indices?\textsuperscript{23} Although the answers to this question varied in emphasis,

\textsuperscript{19} Translated by Anis Frayha as Manāhib ar-‘alamā’ī al-muslimīn fī l-bahth al-‘ilmī (Beirut 1400/1980).


\textsuperscript{21} For some of these lectures, see the list provided by ‘Usayyīn 1994: 319-321, nos. 5-7, 9, 11, 14, 19. The last reference consists of the rules of editing and publishing texts as designated by the “Ma’had al-Makhṭūṭāt.” Unfortunately, these rules never became perceptively effective in editing Arabic manuscripts.


there was a general tendency to give the Muslims precedence over the Westerners; and it was because of that that Rosenthal’s study mentioned above came to have a strong presence in these books. The same study also contributed to a tendency in those books to refer sometimes to the practices of medieval Muslim scholars in such areas as selecting and comparing manuscripts, using symbols in lieu of punctuation and other editorial necessities, and recording variant readings, glosses, and comments in the margins of manuscripts. Consequently, and also due to the ‘didactic’ orientation of most of these studies, their discussion of the theory of editing proper was not systematic; it remained, overall, secondary to their interest in the practical aspects of editing. Despite that, when one wants to find out how the authors of these studies viewed certain issues, it is quite likely that one will find an answer somewhere in them. For our purpose here, we will concentrate on their opinions on the issue of how permissible it is for an editor to interfere in the text he is editing. This issue is usually discussed in the chapters/sections on selecting manuscripts and editing/selecting readings.

In the area of selecting manuscripts, all Arab scholars placed manuscripts in a “ranking order” of reliability, with the author’s autograph holding the highest rank and the late, unauthenticated, “secondary” copies the lowest.24 While those scholars were aware that finding the author’s autograph was only rarely possible, certainly for manuscripts whose author lived before the fourth/tenth century,25 and while they were conscious of the practical problems connected with the autograph (draft versus final copy; multiplicity of versions; falsifications by copyists), some of them insisted on sticking to the “ideal”26 driven by the didactic nature of studies, whereas others, following Bergsträsser, added more practical criteria for the classification of manuscripts (age; accuracy; completeness; etc.).27

In the area of editing/selecting readings, the Arab scholars were clear only when dealing with the author’s autograph, saying that the editor is not permitted to change anything in the author’s autograph other than errors in Qur’anic citations.28 Outside of that sphere, however, they were far less clear, almost confused, and sometimes contradictory, perhaps because they were trying to propose solutions for innumerable potential situations.29


26 Actually, the title which ’Usaylān (p. 117) gave on his manuscript copies and how to deal with them is “the most ideal editorial method (al-munajja’il al-amīru’l bi-l-ṣabīlī)”.27


The strongest statement on interference with the text came from ‘Abd al-Salām Hārin: he made the editor’s non-interference in his text the very essence of editing as a moral undertaking, and the trait that makes the editor rise to the ethical and historical requirements of his profession:

The editing of a text consists of neither improvement nor correction; rather, it is the fidelity of rendering as required by fidelity to history. For, the text of the book is a judgement on its author, and a judgement on his entire epoch and milieu, and these are considerations that have their sanctity. This kind of behavior is also an aggression on the author’s right, for he is the only one who has the right to substitute and change. If the editor were characterized by boldness, it is better for him to step aside from doing such work (i.e., editing) and let others who are characterized by concern and caution do it. Indeed, editing is a moral enterprise, borne only by those characterized by two traits: fidelity and patience.30

In a different context, however, Hārin extended this restriction on the editor’s role beyond the author’s autograph to “the high copies,” considering changing their texts a “gross scholarly crime.”31

With this in mind, Hārin then uttered the most powerful and theoretically clear statement on his perception of the goal of editing: editing, by definition, means that a book be rendered truthfully as its author wrote/composed it, quantitatively and qualitatively, as much as possible (tablqā’i mān al-kitāb: wa mā’i khat yū‘adda kīsīā taddār ikhān navād-wadah humma wa’alikhā humman wa kaysīn kuq-and al-ikhtimā’).32 The force of this statement was not lost on one of Hārin’s aspiring pupils, Ramadān ’Abd al-Tawwāb: according to him, “editing a text means restoring it to the form it had when its author issued it (tablqā’i mān al-nisā’ ya‘nī wa’dul-hi shārī‘i l-latī kāna ‘alayhā ‘inda mu‘allajū wa’alikum).”33

These clear theoretical statements indicate that Arabic scholars basically agreed with the pre-Gregorian textual theorists’ position that the goal of editing is the establishment of texts as finally intended by their authors; and in fact there is no trace of any post-Gregorian theory in their works. What remains problematic, though, is that, with the predominance of interest in procedure over theory in those works, even when Hārin and ’Abd al-Tawwāb expressed the same theoretical idea, they drew diametrically opposed practical conclusions from it. According to Hārin’s view of editing meant that the editor should not interfere with his text by way of improving its style, replacing its words by better, nicer or more

31 Hārin 1977: 79.
32 Hārin 1977: 46.
33 ’Abd al-Tawwāb 1985: 60. Other Arab authors expressed the same idea when defining editing, saying that it is the establishment of the text according to authorial intention; see Munajjib 1955: 320; Fadlī 1982: 33-36; Mǎltāb 1982: 23; Halawi 1986: 266; ’Umārī 1995: 141.
appropriate words, correcting its presumably wrong attributions of citations, fixing its grammatical errors, adding explanatory sentences, or rectifying its identification of a person.35 ‘Abd al-Tawwâb, on the other hand, concluded from his definition that the editor should correct the distortions and corruptions of the text’s words and free it from what was added to or deleted from it.36

This is how the modern Arab scholars approached the subject of editing, and what they proposed regarding editorial intervention. What I would like to do in the remainder of this part is to propose a different approach. I would like to highlight certain aspects of Islamic history and civilization that have a bearing on editorial policy in general and on the question of how ‘sacred’ the text of a medieval Arabic manuscript is in particular, since that history and civilization are the cradles in which the Arabic manuscript tradition was born and with which it developed. Underlying this approach is the assumption that the material and intellectual context of a certain area affects many of its features; understanding this context, thus, leads to a more meaningful, perhaps more accurate, and certainly more reasoned decision about a certain issue in it. In this sense, unlike earlier scholars, I am not only concerned with concrete conclusions but also with the thought process that leads to those conclusions. This means that, although some of the aspects that I will highlight have already been mentioned in one form or another by earlier scholars, the manner in which these aspects are related to the conclusions is for me conceptually causal, not merely procedurally consequential.37 On a more concrete level, the approach I have chosen has to do with my belief that the Arabic medieval manuscript corpus is far too varied to allow for the identification of editorial rules that apply to all of its components, due precisely to specific aspects of medieval Islamic history and civilization. Isolating some of these aspects ought, then, to allow us to break up this corpus into categories, to each of which a different set of editorial criteria could apply, when considering the degree of interference which an editor is allowed in his text.

The aspects of medieval Islamic history and civilization that I believe influenced the medieval Arabic manuscript tradition are the following.

1. Transition from orality to writing in the formative period of Islam

One of the most important factors that characterizes the corpus of Arabic manuscripts is the almost complete lack of samples on paper or in book form before the late second/eighth century. This is due to the predominance of orality in the transmission of knowledge for over a century in some branches of knowledge.

Although writing began very early, already in the first/seventh century and on a narrower scale in pre-Islamic times, the systematic recording of knowledge did not prevail until the middle of the second/eighth century, and did not overtake orality almost completely until the beginning of the third/ninth century, when paper became widely available and was even adopted by the state for its own record keeping. Before that, in the formative period of Islam, the available writing materials, mainly papyrus, parchment and leather, were relatively rare, expensive, and not particularly user-friendly. The state, with its unlimited access to resources, used constantly these materials, especially papyrus, for its administrative needs, and, for lack of alternative materials, so did authors for their pamphlets and individuals for their business and personal affairs. The area that resisted being put down in writing most was Arabic poetry. This poetry, having been deeply entrenched in its pre-Islamic traditions, stuck in early Islam to the various aspects of this tradition, and this included its transmission orally, often by professional transmitters specialized in single poets. Conversely, the areas that seem to have been more amenable to recording were those connected with the fervent attempt to understand the new religion: the text of its revelation, the Qur’an, the activities and directives of its founder, the Prophet Muhammad, and the experiences of the early Muslim community both inside Arabia and during the conquests in the newly acquired lands. But for those areas to take the path of recording many decades of the first/seventh century had to elapse, with activity in these fields transmitted mainly orally through teaching and discussions, and only gradually did the transition to writing take place.

2. The controversial issue of including images in a text

The Muslims seem to have agreed rather early on the aversion of including pictures of people in the texts of their books, as they did elsewhere. This tendency towards iconoclasm affected Arabic medieval manuscripts in that it made the occurrence of pictorial imaging in them very rare. But this tendency softened with the development of Islamic civilization, the multiplicity in its fields of intellectual and artistic production, and the diversity in the peoples who contributed to it.38 Already as early as the middle of the second/eighth century, Ibn al-Muqaffa’ (d. ca. 144/761), a Persian literary translator of instructive animal tales from Sanskrit via Middle Persian into Arabic, stated in his introduction to the book that colored pictures (khayalât, swara; bi-yiwa’il al-aqâb âdwa l-anwa’in) of animals must accompany the stories of his text, Kathla wa’l Dinna, in order to make his book attractive, entertaining, and profitable for the copyist as well as the

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37 In this regard, Hârin’s early and concise work stands out among the rest of the later and longer compilations on editing as the most historically sensitive and conceptually sharp.
38 For a general survey of iconoclasm and the inclusion of pictures in Arabic manuscripts, with many examples, see Halwâni 1986: 189-201.
painter. Although no early illustrated manuscripts of the *Kalila wa Dimna* have survived, later samples of this book that date to the sixteenth or perhaps even earlier, indicate that Ibn al-Muqaffa’s instructions were not only needed to the letter but also expanded, for the abundant pictures punctuating the surviving manuscripts of this book include images of people, not only animals. About the same time, some manuscripts of the literary but entertaining *Maqāmāt* (Seances) of al-Hariri (d. 516/1122) were accompanied by colored, complex pictures, again showing people, not only animals.40 Furthermore, some scientists, geographers, historians, and litterateurs also resorted to images for clarifying their texts, as did authors of wondrous creatures, notably al-Qazwini (d. 682/1283)41 and of encyclopedic works, such as Ibn Fadlallah al-Umari (d. 749/1251).42 Despite that, pictorialism remained a generally frowned-upon and controversial activity in Islamic book production. Editors have to keep that in mind when they decide their editorial policies.

3. The nature of the Arabic script

The nature of the Arabic script is probably the most observable factor which made Arabic manuscripts what they are, and yet the modern Arab scholars who wrote on the theory and procedures of editing generally assumed its problematic nature and discussed it only in the context of "misreadings."43 This script, written from right to left, is essentially consonantal, with only three vowels, which are written only if they are long and are not when they are short. Furthermore, several consonants are distinguishable from each other by dots (one, two or three) placed above or below the letter, and these consonants (in addition to one of the three vowels) were largely not dotted, from pre-Islamic times and for several decades into Islamic times, making a text not only difficult to decipher but also highly conductive to more than one reading. Another complication in the script arises from the issue of vocalization. For the correct pronunciation of a word, signs were needed on the letters to indicate what short vowels accompanying them were; and the same thing applied to the signs needed for the specification of case endings for nouns and tense, aspect, and mood endings for verbs. These vowels, like the dots, were not written in pre-Islamic times and many decades after the rise of Islam. These difficulties were removed, in principle, in the latter part of the first/seventh century, when the state put down its full weight in supporting the reform of the script and hence the standardization of its dotting (pointing, diacritics) and vocalization. Although the latter needed another century to get simplified, the system was highly successful and gave the Arabic script the appearance it has now. Some hurdles, though, continued to come up even now and then. For one thing, the Western part of the Muslim lands, Andalusia and North Africa developed a slightly differentiated, more angular script with a few variations in dotting (in addition to developing a different sequence for the letters of the alphabet). For another, the difference between the writing and pronunciation of some letters in some areas, particularly the d, (pronounced like a z), made its way into the written texts. And for a third, the cursive nature of the script and the ease and speed which it invited made keeping the dots and vowels accurately on the letters rather tedious, thus causing a fair amount of slackness in the application of the correct rules of writing in Arabic manuscripts. All of these are matters we should keep in mind while we are planning our editorial policy of an Arabic manuscript text.

4. Specific features of the Arabic language

Not unrelated to the issue of the Arabic script is the issue of the development of the Arabic language and its effect on Arabic manuscripts. Arabic was the language in which the scripture of the Muslims, the Qur’an, was revealed, and the Qur’an’s language, though originally one of several Arabic dialects known from pre-Islamic times, became the standard for “high,” *fasih* Arabic. Again thanks to the intervention of the state before the end of the first/seventh century, this language became the sole language of administration. By that time, the Muslim community had already been transformed from a small polity in Arabia into a vast empire extending from India to Spain, and was inhabited by a population whose peoples spoke scores of languages and only slowly converted to Islam. With employment in the civil service, as with conversion, in addition to the religious and historical roots for the rise and development of literary activity, Arabic became also the language of culture, and for many centuries was the dominant language of Islamic civilization. But there is another side to contend with when examining the place of Arabic in Islamic culture. This language was to undergo unavoidable changes over time, and these changes were indeed reflected in the

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40 For a study and several plates from those sources, see al-Nuriyyin, Nahida ‘Abd al-Fattah 1979: *Maqāmāt al-ḥariri al-musawwan*. Baghdad. The oldest known extant manuscript of this work dates to 619/1222.

41 For examples of such pictures, see Schmitz, Barbara 1992: *Islamic Manuscripts in the New York Public Library*. New York, especially the chapter entitled “Arabic illustrated manuscripts,” 1-50, and figures 1-34. Princeton University’s Firestone Library has a sumptuously produced manuscript of al-Qazwini’s *Jāhāb al-madākhšat* with colored pictures of all kinds of real and mythical creatures.


manuscript corpus; the new converts enriched it with materials from their own languages (especially Persian); the civil servants created their own diction and style, one which has been called “Middle Arabic”; those translators into Arabic from Persian, Syriac, and Greek also added to it a new linguistic corpus; the Christians in the Islamic lands developed their own “Christian Arabic”; Arabic in various periods of the medieval times came to be written in non-Arabic characters (mainly Hebrew); and the rise of non-Arabic speaking dynasties, especially the Mamluks and after them the Ottomans, with their entirely new bureaucratic structures and diction, again added another linguistic dimension to Arabic. And throughout the medieval period, while *fāṣāha* was the norm for formal writing, local dialects of Arabic did not disappear, resulting in the well known phenomenon of *diglossia* in Arabic, and this was also reflected in the manuscripts. This is something certainly to be kept in mind when we figure out editorial policy.

5. The nature and volume of compilation in Arabic in the medieval period

There is another factor we have to contend with when thinking about editorial policy, and this is the enormous vigor and breadth in the production of books in Islamic civilization, both of which led not only to diversity in fields of production, but also to the fact that Arabic medieval books tended to be very long, with each frequently consisting of several volumes. The roots of this phenomenon lie probably in the nature of authorial activities in which the Muslims engaged right from the first centuries of Islam. For one thing, the Qur’ān, the cornerstone of the religion and the civilization, became the subject of scholarly study from early on, and exegetical works on it began very early as well; by the beginning of the fourth/tenth century, an exegetical work touching on everything in it, small and big, reached, with Tahāris (d. 310/921), thirty volumes. The Prophet, as a source of the Sunna, or normative behavior for Muslims, also was quick to become the center of scholarly attention, and many volumes were devoted by various authors to the collections of his traditions. The transmitters of the traditions themselves then became the subject of scrutiny and study, for it was important to ascertain who was trustworthy and who was not, and this activity brought about the rise of a whole discipline, *ḥadīth* criticism (or *al-jāmiʿ al-taʾlîth*), not to mention the area of commentary on *ḥadīth* collections. Compilation in *ḥadīth* criticism, in turn, gave birth to one of the most productive areas of Islamic compilation, namely biographical dictionaries, almost all of which were multi-voluminous. And once the tradition of biographical dictionaries proved its appeal, almost every other area of scholarship developed its own biographical dictionaries to historicize its discipline, from the poets, to the grammarians, to the physicians, to the various sectarian groups, and to the legal scholars; even “cities” had their share, and the biographical dictionaries dedicated to the men of learning in them were often notoriously long. The legal scholars group just mentioned made its own contribution to long medieval books, and for reasons that have to do with the circumstances surrounding the development of the field. For, once the medieval Islamic state had given up the idea of codifying the (Shi’ite) law, it was left to the theoreticians to provide the guides to the judges and the jurists. And, since Islamic law by its very nature is an all-encompassing law, the legal collections were only seldom small. On another level, since the Muslims developed quite early a vision of history as a universal history, one which begins with the creation and ends (theoretically) with the day of judgment, the historical chronicles were, more often than not, multi-voluminous; and the later they were compiled the longer they generally became. The geographical dictionaries, having to cover the vast expanse of the Islamic lands, tended also to be quite long. The lexicographers also found themselves doing the same thing, albeit for a different reason, namely the richness of the Arabic language due to its foundation on the principle of derivation and to the necessity of furnishing citations from authentic sources for the meanings proposed. In later medieval times, by which time the branches of knowledge had expanded greatly, encyclopedism – itself an outgrowth of fairly lengthy manuals for the education of the civil servants – dominated the scene, making a ten-volume book a rather short one.

This vigorous activity in book production means that, when we talk about the corpus of medieval Arabic manuscripts, we are talking about an enormous quantity which is impossible to pin down except, perhaps, to say, that it is in the tens of thousands, if not the hundreds of thousands. It is, however, important to remember two things. The first is that a large portion of these books were lost, because of natural disasters, sweeping wars, frequent civil disturbances, personal or political actions, or simply through the passage of time; we know that from the few annotated bibliographies that have survived, like Ibn al-Nadim’s (wrote 377/ 987) *Fihrist*, and Haiji Khalifa’s (d. 1067/1656) *Kashf al-ʿurrūn*. The second thing, which is not entirely unrelated to the first, is that while medieval authors generally strove at making original contributions in their respective areas, the conditions under which they worked, particularly their living in a vast empire, caused in some cases a great deal of overlap. This overlap, however, was sometimes not accidental, since many authors perceived of their work as a link in the chain of knowledge in their respective fields, and hence their view that the field’s growth was cumulative and that part of their duty consisted of mentioning the achievements of their precursors in their own works, most frequently citing them, sometimes quite extensively, by name, often adding, too, the titles of the books they were deriving their material from. These are factors that left their mark on the

44 This phenomenon is still with us today, and has indeed taken a far more acute character since the rise of European colonisation of many Islamic lands, the fall of the Ottoman empires, the rise of nationalism, the secularization of education, and the breakup of the lands of Islam into differentiated political entities.
Arabic manuscript corpus, and must be taken into account while drawing the editor's editorial policy.

6. The transmission of learning in the medieval period

This brings us to another factor that characterized Islamic book writing and that we have to take into consideration when deciding our editorial policy, namely the way the medieval Muslim authors conducted and organized the transmission of knowledge in the midst of the overwhelming variety and quantity of book production.45 This transmission was, in general, extremely well organized and well controlled, and it produced a system of internal authentication of manuscripts that led into manuscripts being placed in a sort of "hierarchical" structure, with the most authentic, and hence valuable, manuscripts being on top of the structure and the least at its bottom. The system was tightly connected with teaching and with the networking of scholars and students throughout the Islamic world; and, while knowledge was considered "the common property of the community," as Carter says,46 the individual ‘territory’ of the scholar, represented by his word, written but also oral, was recognized and valued. More often than not, scholars posed as teachers, and the materials they taught consisted of either their own compilations or those of others. Variations and exceptions aside, teaching was conducted either by the teacher dictating to the students, usually from a written text but possibly from memory, or by students reading out their texts to the teacher for verification of correctness and/or for commentary. In this setting, the manuscripts that the students came out with would be valuable if the teacher in question was a recognized scholar, and even more so if he were the author of the work they wrote or read out in class. While the author’s autograph, signed by him, would be the absolutely most valuable, or "highest," manuscript, the manuscript dictated by the scholar to the student and read back to him would be the next most valuable, specifically when the scholar testifies to this "hearing (samā‘)" fact, in writing, on the student’s manuscript.47 The next most valuable manuscript would be one which the student read back to the scholar and the scholar indicated, in writing, that this "reading (qirā‘a)" had taken place. This is followed by the manuscript which the student copies from his teacher’s copy, be it his autograph or a copy thereof, when the scholar hands over (munawwala) this copy to the student with the permission to make his own copy of it; in this case, the copy would be considered quite valuable due to the collation (maw‘irada) with the author’s copy. In a similar manner, the scholar could issue a license (qiyāza) to a student to transmit either a specific work of his or all his works, in which case the student would indicate that in his copy, but the scholar’s testimony to that effect would not be actually written in the text of the manuscript, and hence the manuscript would carry less value than the manuscripts in which the author’s wish is verifiable. License could also be obtained from the scholar not only through teaching but also through the networking in which scholars and students alike engaged when they were interested in obtaining reliable copies of books. This normally took place through some form of correspondence (kisā‘ah, mukātā’ah), whereby a scholar or a student received the permission of the scholar to transmit his book/s. Again here, the recipient would write this permission in his copy of the manuscript; and here also the value of his copy would be less valuable than the copies made by the above certifying means, although the recipient’s standing in scholarship does play a role in deciding this value: the more recognized in scholarship this recipient is, the more reliable the manuscript is considered. Other avenues could add to the value of a manuscript, such as its being copied independently during the lifetime of the author with written testimonies of recognized contemporary scholars that they have read it. After such levels of manuscripts, we go, with very few exceptions, outside of the transmission sphere, and copies written after the author’s time without any testimonies of any scholar written on it come to occupy "lower" levels on the hierarchical scale of authenticity, reliability, and hence value.48

All in all, the rigorous system in the Islamic lands made Carter rightly state that the attitude of the Western scholar toward copy-text and reconstruction of "trees" was "inherently different from that of the Arab editor,"49 and that the system was "intended not only to guarantee the integrity of a manuscript but, equally important, to safeguard the professional activities and income that this method of publishing of the work generated."50 This brings us to another observation, namely that the system betrays a very important feature inherent in it: it is the absolute centrality of the scholar, particularly as author, in the transmission process, so that whatever manuscript carries his name or testimony immediately gives it a guarantee of the text’s integrity. In fact, in the transmission process, "no one was allowed to transmit a work without the personal authorization either of the author or another licensed transmitter ... and the ownership of the rights to an important text was a valuable asset for the more prominent teachers ..."51

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45 For a general overview on this subject, see Berkey, Jonathan 1992: The Transmission of Knowledge in Medieval Cairo. Princeton.
it is because of this system, with the scholar/author at its center that the number of truly anonymous works in Islamic culture is by far lower than that of the same works in medieval European literature.\[33\]

7. Copying and the copyists

One of the most important factors in shaping the Arabic medieval manuscript corpus is the role that the copyists played in the production of those manuscripts.\[34\] We have already seen in the previous paragraph some of the people involved with copying in connection with the transmission of knowledge: the author, his students, and his licensees, in addition to independent scholars. These, however, represent a minority of the copyists in the medieval Islamic world; some authors did not even write their own books but rather had their own private copyists\[35\] or hired copyists as need arose. The vast majority of the copyists were professional copyists (\textit{warrāqī}, pl. \textit{warrāqīn}), full-time copyists whose sole (or, at least, major) source of livelihood was copying manuscripts. Due to great demand for books both by individuals (patrons, scholars, bibliophiles) and institutions (libraries, both private and public, mosques, colleges), these copyists were very numerous, so that, unlike the situation in the medieval West, there was no shortage of copyists, as Rosenthal remarked.\[36\] Unlike in the medieval West, too, as Carter has noted, "[t]he physical production of manuscripts in the Arab world was essentially a secular activity. There being no monasteries in Islam, the equivalent of the \textit{scriptorium} was the workshop of the \textit{warrāqī}, literally "folio-specialist," that is, the stationer and the copyist combined, who functioned in an urban and secular environment."\[37\] A minority of the copyists worked in a scholarly atmosphere (the house of an author, the library of an institute); but the majority of them worked in workshops (\textit{hānsī}) in the marketplace, and as early as the fourth/tenth century, possibly a century or more earlier, we learn that there was a special market for them in Baghdad called \textit{sāq al-warrāqīn}, or, briefly, al-\textit{warrāqīn}.

The copyists would take orders and work in their shops for a fee, and could also lend some of their own copied books for others to make copies from them, again for a fee.\[38\] In the vast majority of cases, the copyist copied by himself a book no matter how long. \textit{Precia}, well known in the medieval West, existed in the Islamic lands only in exceptional cases, as when Ibn \textit{Asikir}'s History of the city of Damascus, which was in 80 volumes, was distributed among 10 copyists; altogether they needed two years each to finish one copy of the book.\[39\] In their own opinion, the copyists seemed to have considered their profession as a demanding and draining one: the great prose writer Tawhidi (d. 114/1023), who was by profession a copyist, and a good one, nicknamed copying as "the profession of ill omen" (\textit{bihjat al-shu'ūn} and \textit{kharṣat al-shu'ūn}), because it destroys both the eyesight and life itself and hardly keeps the copyist out of poverty.\[40\] In the opinion of the outsiders, the copyists' occupation with generating an income for themselves made them have a low reputation as evil, and their social status was not only low, but was also quite closed to social promotion.\[41\]

Ideally, the copyists had to abide by a rather demanding code: they should write with a good hand, and very carefully, in order to produce reliable copies; and when copying religious books, further requirements of ritual purity and expressions of piety were required of them.\[42\] Whereas many of the copyists did indeed stick to these requirements, many considerations made their work deficient and less satisfactory than it should be. Speed, boredom, oversight, and similar occupational hazards made their copying far from ideal, as did matters like having to copy a work of whose topic they know nothing or too little (especially books with non-Arabic names and terms),\[43\] or working from a corrupt (or undotted) original. Indeed, they could make mistakes in copying simply because they elected to 'correct' what appeared to them to be mistakes in the corrupt original, or to fill out blanks which the authors had intentionally left blank in order to fill out the correct information later, or to incorporate in the text marginalia that did not belong to the text itself but were rather added by various readers by way of gloss or commentary. Of course it is possible that copyists should commit fraudulent neglect intentionally for marketing purposes, such as compiling books on fables and tales due to their popularity at a certain period,\[44\] or, more seriously, copying the name of the author at the end of the copyist's copy of the former's book in order to deceive the buyer into believing that he is

\[34\] Like al-Wāqiqi, whose copyist was Ibn Sa'd, known thus as "Kātib al-Wāqiqi."
\[36\] Carter 1995: 536; Carter mentions additional sources that can be consulted.
\[37\] The fourth/tenth century litterateur Abū Hayyān al-Tawhidi, in \textit{al-bi'ad} \textit{wa l-masā'īlān}, eds. Ahmad Amin and Ahmad al-Zayy ( Cairo 1939-44): II, 11, mentions this market in Baghdad as "al-warrāqīn." Earlier, under the year 200 [= 815-816], the historian Tabari mentions someone going to the "paper-follies" (\textit{ṣaqāb al-qarāib}) in Baghdad in a context which indicates that he is talking about a market; see al-Tabari, Abū Ja'far Muhammad b. Ja'far: \textit{Tārikh al-rāsīl wa l-mulūb}, I-III, ed. M. J. de GoGe (Leiden 1879-1901): III, 999.
\[43\] See Hārūn 1977: 25, where he mentions the copyists' engagement in forging stories and fables.

\[58\] This is a matter to which Rosenthal attracted attention.
\[64\] See Hārūn 1977: 25, where he mentions the copyists' engagement in forging stories and fables.
buying the author’s autograph. But Rosenthal notes that fraud was relatively rare. Despite that, the copyists came to have a reputation for making mistakes, and perhaps this is what explains the dictum that “accuracy and correctness” was more important than “the quality of handwriting.” And it was, in part, because of the copyists’ repeated mistakes that books on misreadings (al-tabāqāt, al-tabā‘īn) were compiled and became a genre in Islamic civilization.

There is another aspect to copying that we must mention due to its importance in shaping the corpus of Arabic medieval manuscripts. This is what I would like to call the relatively large degree of freedom the copyists had in their profession and the concomitant lack of institutionalization of the profession. Let us first note that employment as a copyist was not subject to examination, and although copyists with better hands and greater accuracy were preferred to those who did not possess such qualities, there was sufficient demand to keep the less qualified employed. And in spite of rules being laid down by scholars, the professional copyists had a great deal of latitude whether to abide by these rules or not, and it is not inconceivable that many of them learned their craft on the job and were hardly aware of the stringent rules put down by the elite; anyway, in the absence of oversight and enforceable regulations, there was not much that could be done to ensure the application of the ideal laws of the profession. The nature of the Arabic script also increased the copyists’ freedom, for how can one fully control such an elusively elusive, dotted and potentially vowelled script? In fact, many scribes, centuries after the standardization of the dotting and vowel- ing system, still wrote texts almost completely without dots, and often when some of them did indeed put the dots, they did so quickly without attention to accuracy; some copyists even came to use the vowelings almost as a form of decoration rather than a necessary auxiliary of orthography. Such matters made Arabic manuscripts often filled with so many errors that understanding the text became a great challenge for the reader. And there are other things that made reading manuscripts and understanding them more difficult. The copyists did not develop a unified system of punctuation or paragraphing, and different copyists used different symbols or phrases for the period (like a circle), for

example, or the end of a quotation (like the word intabā‘, ‘finished’), or the beginning of a chapter or section (like using a larger font, or red ink), even the introduction of a line of poetry can occur within the prose text without any kind of warning, like starting a new line with it, or making it preceded by the word “ší‘,” or by the name of its meter. The copyists also did not develop pagination until very late, and hence some of them used catchwords instead, but the majority of them did not use anything at all, and a great deal of harm resulted from that, especially when the folio title fell from a manuscript and was by mistake added to another, or when the folios of a manuscript got mixed up when its binding gave way. Again, since the Arabic script is by its nature a shorthand script, abbreviations were slow to develop in the medieval Arabic manuscripts, and when they did, they were only seldom applied universally. Such matters created some chaos in the corpus of manuscripts we have received, and all of this has to be taken into account when deciding editorial policy.

III

Having highlighted some of the historical and cultural factors in Islamic civilization that stand out as crucial for determining what editorial policy the scholar-editor decides to follow, I would like now to examine the practical consequences of these factors when attempting to answer the question posed at the beginning of this paper: how much should an editor interfere in the text of his Arabic medieval manuscripts, or, conversely: how sacred is the text of such manuscripts? The answer that I shall give will necessarily be informed by the general principle which I subscribe to and which I articulate at the end of section I. There, I indicated that my approach was essentially historical, where the primary goal of editing is to receive a communication from the past. This communication, in my view, should be as accurate as possible, and for that purpose the editing can be either author-based or text-based, depending on the individual manuscript at

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65 See Bergsträsser (ed. Bakri) 1969: 18 with regard to some manuscripts of al-Dinawari’s historical work, al-Ahkār al-rumāl.
70 This is an experience I had with the best manuscript of al-Baqā‘ī. This made reading the lexical parts of the text very difficult indeed, for how can one guess the meaning of a word when one cannot read the word to be explained itself?
71 See, for example, ‘Umar 1989.
74 This is what happened in Abū Ḥayyān al-Tawfīqī’s volume 7 of al-Baṣā‘īr wa-l-dhāhībā‘īr (ed. Wādād al-Qādi, Libya-Tunis 1978). The title folio stated that the book was al-Nannāhib wa ḫukum bi al-‘amānh bi al-Sūn; its first folio began with: “Būdī‘ al-‘amīn al-Hanādhānī said ‘...’ As the editor showed, and another manuscript confirmed, the manuscript was volume 7 of Tawfīqī’s Baṣā‘īr, see her introduction: 7-63.
75 This is what happened in Ibn ‘Aṣwāl’s (d. 513/1119) Kitāb al-funūn (2 vols., ed. George Makdisi, Beirut 1970-71), which was published without the editor paying attention to the disorder of the folios. This was uncovered by Iḥyā‘ ‘Abbas in his review of that edition in Majallat Ma‘ānī al-Lugha l‘Arabiyya bi-Dimashq (Revue de l’Académie Arabe de Damas) XXXVI (1972): 523-531.
hand; in no way, however, can it censor any part of the manuscript for extratextual, personal reasons. It should also be as accessible as possible to its target audience, just as its author had meant it to be accessible to his audience when he first wrote it many centuries ago. In this approach, the scholar-editor’s critical judgement is constantly called upon to balance the accuracy of the text with its accessibility to a different audience at a different time and place.

The first thing that comes to mind is that the Arabic manuscript corpus is too varied to allow its being edited according to one procedure. Are the texts of the anthologies of Arabic letters written several centuries into Islam, for example, as sacred as those of the early Arabic letters from the first Islamic century which have survived on papyrus? Certainly not, for the latter are single, unique documents, whereas the former are reproduced in many forms in several manuscripts. Or, can we editorially interfere with an author’s autograph the same way we interfere with an undated late manuscript? Or, again, can we be as aggressive in changing the text of a highly corrupt manuscript as were when we are confronted by a very well preserved manuscript? Such and many other questions necessitate that we break up the Arabic manuscript corpus into categories, to each of which a different editorial procedure applies, a procedure which ensures that the texts of that particular category will come out as the most accurate and most accessible communications from the past, so that if their authors – when such authors exist – saw them in their edited form they would recognize them as their own despite the changes that they had undergone.

In light of the above, I would like to propose that we break the Arabic manuscript corpus into three categories. In the first, the texts of the manuscripts are completely ‘sacred’ and must be reproduced by the editor with no interference at all; they include written documents of the formative period, pictures and illustrations, poetry, proverbs, and dialectical expressions. In the second, the texts of the manuscripts must be interfered with minimally, mainly formally, in order to ensure access in particular; they include principally manuscripts written by the author or authorized by him according to the tightest transmission rules of Islamic scholarship. And, in the third, the editor has a fairly wide range of freedom in interfering with his texts; they include all the other manuscripts not mentioned in the first two categories.

Category A: The editor as passive preserver and cautious reconstructor

This category includes a variety of manuscripts or parts thereof, all of which share the common trait that they are unique communications from the past and there is no other means for us to recapture that past without them. Since they bring with them as they are this unique illumination of the past without which this past would be lost to us, they should be considered documents, and, as such, must be preserved exactly as they are: their texts are sacred, and the editor plays the role of the ‘passive preserver’ when he edits them. Understandably, much of what falls under this category belongs to the early, formative period of Islam, when orality was predominant and writing rare; but there is within this category a fair amount of variety, as we shall see. It is to be noted that, while such an editorial policy gives priority to the accurate preservation of the past, it does allow for making this past as illuminating as possible and hence to make it as accessible as possible.

Several classes of manuscripts or parts thereof fall under this category.

(a) The early Arabic papyri and their cognates that have a documentary value

To this class belong the Arabic manuscripts written on papyrus, parchment, or leather. Not unlike the texts inscribed on wood, glass, metals, and stone, which are normally studied by archeologists and art historians, our papyri and the like are veritable artifacts of the past that witness to the production of a unique product at a particular moment in time, irrevocable and unrepeateble, so that, in a way, although they belong, strictly speaking, to Tanselle’s ‘intangible media,’ they do partake of the characteristics of his ‘tangible media,’ too.78 Because of that, they are considered ‘museum-quality’ pieces – and some of them are actually preserved in museums79 – even though most of them are normally kept in libraries.80

A very large number, but not all, of the manuscripts of this class come from the first two centuries of Islam, the time when we have little written contemporary historical evidence as to how the Islamic community was developing, as we have seen in II/1 above. Given the importance of this period as formative in Islam, these manuscripts become nothing less than truly unique physical documents which provide invaluable contemporary, authentic information found nowhere else about early Islamic political, social, economic, military, literary, and even linguistic history, and that mainly in the form of official letters, tax records, government accounts, various lists, private contracts, and private letters. Even the later manuscripts on papyrus and parchment – and writing on such materials continued until the early fifth/eleventh century – add to the information in books, and pose as criterion for authenticity when suspicion in the authenticity of the written text is an issue. Because of all that, it is extremely important for the editor not to change anything at all in the legible parts of the texts of those documents, even though these might contain what in his opinion are ‘errors’ in

soon, for the advent of the digital camera and the Internet has already prompted some universities and groups to put color digitized pictures of the papyri they possess on the Net. \(^{82}\)

Almost all the material that has survived on parchment (see also the next paragraph) consists of copies of the Qur’an. Many of these have attracted the attention of paleographers and art historians for their special calligraphic qualities and lavish decorations. Since such copies come from after the beginning of the third/ninth century, there is little that an “edition” can do to them, given that the text of the Qur’an had been long standardized by then, hence their being viewed as objects of art in museums or Islamic art historical manuals. \(^{83}\)

What the field has to deal with soon is the edition of the valuable and numerous (around 40,000) pieces of parchment and other materials which were found under the roof of the Great Mosque of Ṣan‘ā between 1964 and 1971. Some of these fragments were exhibited in a special exhibition in Kuwait in 1980, and are still being restored in Yemen. What makes these documents extremely important is that the texts written on them are parts of the Qur’an dating from the first/seventh until the fifth/eleventh century. Already some journalistic and semi-scholarly statements have prematurely started to make a lot of noise about some of these texts, suggesting that they differ from the texts of the standard Qur’an. \(^{84}\) Whereas such statements appear to me to be irresponsible, I firmly believe that every single document has to be edited according to the strict rules of editing documents outlined above, regardless of what the outcome is, i.e., regardless whether the editions show that their texts agree or disagree with the standard text of the Qur’an, and this is particularly important for those fragments that belong to the early, formative period of Islam. And it is at this work is done that scholarly conclusions on the history of the development of the Qur’an’s text can be drawn. For the moment, however, it is too early to make any broad conclusions.

(b) The drawings and pictures in manuscripts that have an artistic value

Unlike the class of manuscripts mentioned under (a) above, those of this class are not ‘sacred’ in their entirety but only the parts thereof that are pictorial. As was mentioned in II/2 above, iconoclasm was quite strong in Islamic civilization throughout the medieval period, and all kinds of imaging, especially of the human form, were strongly disliked, making decoration of books, as well as

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81 What I mean by ‘hyphenation’ is that a word should be started on one line and continued on the next. It is not allowed in Arabic, but it does indeed occur in the early documentary texts on papyrus.

82 See, for example, www.princeton.edu/~petras.

83 For a general book on the subject, with a good bibliography, see David James 1988: Qur’an of the Manmillah, New York.

84 See Ṣaḥīḥ Ṣan‘ā’ 1980, Kuwait.

structures, depend on exploiting the artistic properties of the Arabic script and the use of various geometric forms in addition to colors. Despite that, as we have seen, some authors did indeed choose to include pictures in their books for a variety of purposes, ranging from ornamentation to profitability. Such authors remained a very small minority indeed, and the pictures we can find in the many millions of folios of Arabic medieval manuscripts may not exceed a few thousand at most. In other words, they are very rare; and they are extraordinary in Islamic civilization, too. In this sense, they are to be treated like documents, or even like a form of "tangible media," to use Tanselle's terminology—a artifacts, the importance of whose preservation cannot be overstated, due to the 'illuminating' aspect of the information they provide us with about the past in one of its most controversial niches. Such pictures must, in my opinion, be reproduced photographically, with their captions, within the text being edited, in color when they are in color in the original manuscript, and as sketches or skeletons of (unfinished?) pictures when this is how they are in the manuscript. Furthermore, I believe that each picture should be placed in the edited book in exactly the corresponding place it occupies in the manuscript, even if it appears on a separate folio, or if it is not quite upright, or if it is placed next to a particular entry in a particular position.

This proposed editorial policy works perfectly well, however, only in the cases where we have only one illustrated manuscript of a book, or when other manuscripts of the same book are not illustrated. There are, however, some Arabic books which have proved to be particularly attractive to pictorial artists, and we have thus several manuscripts of the book many of whose manuscript copies are illustrated, normally by different artists, using different styles, deciding to draw at different points of the narrative, and living in different times and places of the Islamic empire. Two such books are known to have attracted the imagination of many an artist: Ibn al-Muqaffa’s Kitab wa Dimarn and Harîn’s Muṣâma, both of which have been mentioned under II/2 above. If the basic principle I advocated above should apply, then we would end up with as many edited works as there are manuscripts. This is a costly way to do editions; ideally, though, it is not only the best way but the only one. Given its cost and low marketability, neither editors nor publishing houses have shown any interest in it. The more practical way is to choose the best manuscript, artistically and textually, to make it the base manuscript for editing, to use its pictures and place them in the text exactly where and how they appeared in the manuscript, and then to include the pictures of the other manuscripts, each set from each manuscript separately, and with proper identification, in an appendix or a series of appendices, at the end of the edition, with a clear indication as to where exactly in the edited text each picture falls. As far as I know, this editorial policy has not been applied in neither Kitab wa Dimarn nor in the Muṣâma. Rather, what we have, on the one hand, are unillustrated editions of both books done by editors of varying scholarly abilities, and, on the other hand, studies on the manuscripts of each work filled with examples of pictures from all extant manuscripts done by scholars interested in art history.

(c) Early Arabic poetry which has a linguistic and philological value

What I mean by early Arabic poetry is both pre-Islamic and early Islamic, in other words, poetry that falls within the formative period of Islam as identified above under 1. This class of manuscripts is different from the class mentioned under (a) above in that the manuscripts being edited do not date to the formative period, but the poetry contained in them does. It is, however, similar to the class of manuscripts mentioned in (b) above in that the 'sanctity' of the text is limited to the poetry and does not extend to the rest of the manuscript, unless, of course, the manuscript itself is that of the djawain, or collected poems, of a certain poet or a group of early poets.

Early Arabic poetry, as is well known, was, together with the Qur’an, and to a lesser extent the Prophetic hadith, the main sources for documenting the Arabic language in the areas of lexicography, morphology, syntax, grammar, semantics, dialects, idioms, figurative expressions, and eloquent speech. The Arabic tradition is thus replete with citations of 'proof-texts,' shawahid, derived from early verses of poetry, and the purpose of these citations is to explain the ambiguities of texts in all fields; even the texts of the Qur’an and hadith had to be explained sometimes by reference to Arabic poetry. In addition, and as is well known, pre-Islamic poetry was practically the sole repository of Arabic lore, including language, and, as was mentioned under II/1 above, it was the area that resisted being written down most, in keeping with its deep-rooted pre-Islamic tradition—in contrast to the early recording of the Qur’an and the gradual recording of the Prophet’s hadith. The oral mode of transmission which poetry adhered to for almost a century and a half, and its transmission by different transmitters of different backgrounds and capabilities in different places and different times, made the verses of early poetry prone to come in varying words, phrases, idioms, dialects, syntactical constructions, and at times, though to a lesser extent, in line

87 For rare examples of rough drawings and what seem to be unfinished pictures, see the manuscript of the afore-mentioned Kitab wa Dimarn preserved at the Oriental Institute, the University of Chicago, no. A 12101. See Krek, Miroslav 1961: A Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in the Oriental Institute of Chicago. Chicago, 34.
88 For examples of such drawings and pictures, see, again, the Chicago Oriental Institute manuscript mentioned in the previous note.
89 See above.
90 For Kitab wa Dimarn, see Gruber 1991; for Harîn’s Muṣâma, see Nu’aymî 1979.
order and rhyme. It also allowed for clever (but still early) forgers to add to its authentic corpus single verses or entire poems that were so similar to early poetry that detecting them was excesively difficult. The result of this rather chaotic situation in early Arabic poetry was that much of that poetry has come down to us in many versions and recensions. Since, however, it is extremely difficult, and sometimes impossible, to know what the original versions were, or to distinguish the authentic from the forged, practically all of the variants have been considered to be part of the proof-texts literature, and this literature became the corpus from which the lexicographers, grammarians, Qur‘an exegetes, hadith commentators, and others, drew in their respective works. Because of that, I believe that, with a few exceptions, the editor should keep the version that he finds in his manuscript as is and not change it by referring, say, to the supposedly more authoritative version of the poet’s diwan, if such a work exists, for his manuscript’s version could very well have been a proof-text from which one lexicographer or another drew on in their works, and the diwan itself is representative of only one version among several. But, in order that the editor be fair to his audience and to his text, he should cite in his footnotes all the other recensions he has come across, for it is in this way that he can convey the vast dimensions of the proof-texts corpus. In the end, I think that the editor’s retention of the readings of his manuscript makes us understand the past better, perhaps even more accurately, and in a more illuminating way.

(4) Colloquial and non-Arabic words and expressions and proverbs that have a socio-historical value

As in the previous group (c), the ‘sanctity’ of the text applies only to these specific words and expressions, and does not extend to the rest of the manuscript. The same applies to the books which deal with proverbs. These books normally include not only the texts of the proverbs themselves but explanations thereof, and in almost all cases, the space allocated for the explanations exceeds by far the one allocated for the proverbs.

52 See Carter 1995: 557. According to him, pre-Islamic poetry confronts us with a special problem, since there is “an insoluble vagueness about its authenticity and a corresponding confusion about its transmission.” Carter, however, adds that “it seems fair to conclude that the likelihood of re-creating perfect texts of ancient poetry is about the same as that of identifying Homer.”

53 See the next footnote.

54 C.F. Bergsträsser 1969: 38-39, where the author requests the editor to cite the recension of the diwan, rejecting whatever other recension he finds in his manuscripts. This, in my opinion, is possible only when the text being edited is corrupt or very late, or when the diwan has survived in a particularly well authenticated recension (like, for example, the Shurkh adh‘ar al-khadurayn, which has survived with the transmission of the famous philologist Abu Sa‘id al-Sukkari).

With regard to the colloquial and foreign words and expressions, this idea is based on the general observation that Arabic manuscripts in the medieval period have all been written (with the exception of the relatively small corpus of colloquial poetry, zajal) in falsid (high) Arabic, the standards of which were set from the very beginning of Islam by the Qur‘an’s language, as was mentioned in II/4 above. Occasionally, however, an author departs from the high language into the locally spoken language, and this is immediately spotted by the reader, given the diglossic feature of the Arabic language referred to under II/4 above. The contexts in which authors normally do that are numerous. They include instances of informal dialogue, which is not uncommon in Arabic literature (e.g. aysib in lieu of agy shay); renditions of jokes, as was legislated from early times by the towering litterateur al-Jāḥiẓ (d. 255/861);55 comments spoken by characters from the lower classes, as one often encounters it in the works of the same Jāḥiẓ, and also those of his disciple Abū Hayyān al-Tawhīdī (d. 414/1023) and his socially inclined contemporary al-Qādī al-Muḥāssan al-Ṭanukhī (d. 384/994); special terms and expressions used by professional beggars and other inhabitants of the Islamic underworld, like the notorious Banū Sāsim of the fourth/tenth century, now available in an English translation,56 as well as the literature which intends to be obscene, as in one of the Maqāmāt (Scéances) of Badi’ al-Zamān al-Hamadānī (d. 392/1000)57 or the notorious Ḥikayat abī l-qāsim al-baghdādī,58 whose author is unknown; and literature which is essentially folk literature, like the famous One Thousand and One Nights, which was marvelously edited with all its colloquialisms by Muḥsin Mahfīz.59 Other instances of the use of the vernacular include the special feature of the khajja in the Andalusi poetic genre called the musawwib, which consisted sometimes of final lines in vernacular Arabic completely or partially in Romance form.60 In all of these cases, the editor has to keep the text as it is for the purpose of making the past more illuminating to us. Such texts, actually, if left as they are, can be invaluable for all medieval Islamicists, especially the social historians and linguists.

As it is well known, proverbs are the product of collective memory, and they belong mostly to a culture’s popular lore rather than to its ‘high’ literature. As
such, and as we see it in the Arabic tradition, proverbs sometimes come in forms which do not comply with the morphological or grammatical rules of the literary products of high literature. Thus, when an editor encounters a proverb in which there is a verb that should be, say, in the third person and yet it is in the second, he should never ‘correct’ it, for this is how it had been memorized over the centuries, and this is how it should remain; any checking of books on proverbs should explain to him the (possibly fabricated) story as to why the proverb came in the ‘defective’ form it did. It should be added that a very large number of the Arabic proverbs go back to either pre-Islamic times or early Islamic times, i.e., to the formative period of Islam, and this is a further incentive for the editor not to interfere with them, for this is how he can bring to his reader the most accurate and illuminating communication of the past.

Category B: The editor as interpreter of authorial authorization

In the previous part II, under 6, we discussed some general features of the transmission of learning in the medieval Islamic world. This brief discussion indicated unambiguously that, through teaching and networking, the author played a pivotal role in the making of manuscripts, and this role allowed him, during his lifetime, to practice firm control over the dissemination of his works. The discussion further indicated that, as a result of this tacitly organized system, scholars, students, bibliophiles, and copyists came to place manuscripts in a hierarchical structure when it comes to their value or worth: the closer the manuscript was to its author, and verifiably so, the greater was its value; conversely, the farther away the manuscript was from its author, and with the lack of any verification of any attachment to him, the lesser was its value. What this means is that the medieval Islamic world, at least in principle, considered it quite possible that the ‘author’s voice’ or ‘intention’ is indeed knowable, and when in fact it is, there is nothing that can replace it as a guarantee for the accurate and reliable publication (and hence duplication) of his work.

This statement reminds us strongly of the positions articulated by many Western theorists of critical editing from the Anglo-American world. But here something interesting comes in being taken into consideration. While the Islamic system did indeed confirm the possibility of direct access to ‘authorial intention’ by students and colleagues in situations of sama’ and qira’at, it also provided other means for accessing it indirectly through a variety of channels: handing over the manuscript to a student to make his own copy without necessary supervision (mu‘annida); correspondence with colleagues who request a copy of his book (kitabahu, maktabahu), whence the book would be copied also without the author’s direct supervision; and through the flexible institution of licensing (juz’at), where the recipient of the license could be restricted to transmitting only one text but could also be allowed to transmit all the author’s works and transmissions. So what we really have here is a slight shift from the author to the author’s ‘authorization,’ and this a issue that was put forward in the German school of critical editorial theory by Siegfried Scheibe – albeit, it must be strongly emphasized, in the vastly different authorial, editorial, and publishing practices of the contemporary world. According to Scheibe, in the words of Hans Zeller, a member of this school, “authorized” manuscripts include, in part, “all manuscripts of a work in whose production the author was involved or that were produced under his instructions (and demonstrably controlled by him).”

We are thus here on the territory of a different school of thought which can be applied better, with necessary variations, I must again emphasize, to the context of the corpus of Arabic manuscripts. Zeller has reiterated even further distinctions between two kinds of authorization made in the German school: “active” and “passive” authorization, and that in words which echo the divisions we have noticed in the Islamic system of transmission of learning – again despite the different context and precise significations. In Zeller’s words:

Not only do authorized and unauthorized witness documents realize the author’s textual intention with varying degrees of purity, but some witness documents stand closer to or further from the author within the authorized transmission. There are thus varying, or higher and lower, degrees of authorization... This merely formal, all-inclusive authorization has been called “passive authorization” (in contrast to the “active” variety of the author’s express approval)...

Accordingly, I would like to list here the Arabic manuscripts which may be considered as having authorial authorization. Beginning with those that have “active authorization,” these are:

(a) The author’s verifiable autograph;
(b) A copy dictated by the author to the student and read back to the author after it was copied, and having a statement indicating the occurrence of the “hearing” (sama’) and “reading” (qira’at);
(c) A copy not by the author’s hand but the author read it and indicated by statement the occurrence of “reading” (qira’at);


4 Other authorized manuscripts mentioned there are "all printings whose production the author wished or approved and whose text he influenced by delivering the setting copy or by revising or arranging for revisions during the printing process." These do not concern us here since they deal with the modern printing process.


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How much should the scholarly editor interfere with the text of these manuscripts? And what does he do if he finds errors in them? Above all, should the manuscripts which are "actively authorized" be treated differently from those which are "passively authorized"? Zeller's answer to the last question is that all author-authorized manuscripts should be treated equally, and that the differentiation between "active" and "passive" authorization "is not a relevant differentiation for editorial practice" since "the difference is theoretical, and not practically applicable." His answer to the second and first questions is clear: "authorization is binding for the constitution of texts except in the case of certain instances termed textual faults, which, if the means of eliminating the error is unambiguous, entitle and oblige the editor to textual intervention (emendation)." Although he later seems less absolute about this statement, saying that in the particular cases he was concerned with, an author's factual errors in the historical and linguistic spheres should be noted in the footnotes rather than changes in the text, his position has probably to do with defining what the "ambiguous" and "unambiguous" impetus for emendation is, among other factors.

While I agree in principle with Zeller's position, I think that a further distinction has to be made when one moves from the contemporary Western world of authorship, editing, and publication to the medieval Islamic world of distant authors whose works are dealt with by modern editors. My observation of the Arabic medieval manuscripts has led me to believe that, unless they are of the class of "active authorization," i.e., they are under the direct control of the author, manuscripts are so much subject to scribal error that editoral intervention in them should be a little more aggressive. To explain my position further, I would say that, if an editor has one manuscript of the class of "active authorization," his intervention in its text should be absolutely minimal, and thus he should always indicate the errors in the footnotes. If he has, in addition to this copy, a second copy of the same work which falls in class of "passive authorization" or has a lower value than any of the manuscripts in that class, then the first manuscript must be considered the base manuscript. More frequently, though, the editor would not be able to have at hand a copy that belongs to the "active authorization" class, but rather one that belongs to the "passive authorization" class. If this is the only manuscript he has, then he might want to consider making emendations in the text rather than noting errors in the footnotes in the cases where the error is absolutely glaring and he is certain, and can provide evidence in the footnotes, that the error could not have been from the author but from the intermediaries between the author and the final product, the manuscript at hand. When, however, the editor has a copy which belongs to the class of "passive authorization" and, in addition, a manuscript of lower status, then obviously the first manuscript would become his base text and would have priority over the second one in deciding readings.

There are a few classes of manuscripts which are author-related and need a few words. The first is the author's draft (mustawadda), of which several samples have survived in the Arabic manuscript corpus. Dealing with them as author's autographs is possible only in the absence of the autograph itself, obviously, but caution should be exercised in treating them as if they were representative of the final form of the text as intended by the author, since they are not so, by definition. In fact, some of the drafts that have come down to us are filled with blank spaces, sometimes rather large, indicating that that author planned to add material which he could not, at the moment of writing, get hold of, and filled also with glued small sheets, indicating that the author fell upon an addition for which

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106 See above for the Muslim scholars' ranking of manuscripts.
108 Ibid., 28. See also: 36-37, where Zeller says, "Following the definitions of Scheibe and Allemann, we can now state as a criterion of the textual fault that it admits of no sense in relation to its context; or with respect to recent literature, defines the specific logic, the internal textual structure, of the given text. The textual fault is an element in the text as documented and transmitted that is contradictory to the structure of the work in question. Implementation: the textual fault requires emendation if the means of eliminating it are unambiguous; if not emended, the textual fault should be marked in the edited text. No textual intervention should occur in cases of doubt."
there was no space in the text. A similar, and yet slightly different, situation arises when the author writes several versions of his book, a phenomenon for which Bergsträsser suggested the term "ibīqa, pl. ibīqāt."

This is not an uncommon phenomenon in the medieval Arabic corpus, and it has to be handled with great care, starting with the study of the history of the book’s versions and comparing them with each other when more than one version is available.

Another matter has to be noted also, namely that, in the Arabic manuscript tradition, cases have been known of copyists who, when copying from the author’s autograph, would copy his name (as author and copyist) and the date of copying, thus deceiving the readers that what they have is actually the autograph itself. As was mentioned above, under II/7, such fraud, whether intentional or accidental, is something the editor has to be wary of, and hence apply all possible means of verification when an autograph falls into his hand, or indeed when any “authorized” copy falls into his hand. These manuscripts are normally so rare and valuable that special care ought to be taken in verifying them before any editing starts.

The last issue I would like to dwell upon in this section is the issue of whether it is permissible for the editor to change the appearance of the manuscript in print by making formal changes in it for modernization and normalization purposes, and that is by adopting what has now become standard orthography and spelling, adding punctuation, breaking the text into chapters, sections and paragraphs, and also providing tables of contents and indices, and, if needed, clarifying charts or tables in attached appendices. This is a very important issue in my opinion, in view of the history of editing in Arabic. The early editors of Arabic manuscripts in Europe and in the Arab world, from the nineteenth century and until the first decades of the twentieth, tended to be puritanical in their approach to editing, in the sense that they tried to reproduce the text of the manuscript with such minimal intervention that they even kept out of their editions almost all punctuation and paragraphing unless absolutely necessary. In Europe, this attitude was understandable in view of the overarching influence exercised by the philological approach to scholarship then, and, in the Arab countries, the early printers/proof-readers (the ‘proto-editors’) simply followed the model of the manuscripts first and then the editors followed the model of the European editions. In a sense, of course, such editions were ‘true’ to the manuscripts they handled and to the Arabic manuscript tradition. In another, however, they were, in my opinion, trying to avoid ‘interpreting’ their texts, since punctuation and other formal aspects of writing pretty much ‘fix’ the text in terms of meaning and message, not unlike translation. And again here the early editors were minimalist and puritanical. But is this really the right way to make editions of Arabic medieval texts?

I ask this question specifically not because editions in Arabic nowadays are like their predecessors, for they thankfully are not – albeit with a few very exceptions. I ask it, rather, because it is related to a matter that is of fundamental importance in my vision of editing, namely that the accessibility of the edited text is of paramount importance, and an editor who can make his edition accessible to his audience today has a moral duty to do so to the best of his ability. But, the puritans would object, that would be at the price of departing from the Arabic manuscript tradition itself, and of preventing readers from producing their own interpretations of the text! Well, my answer to the first question is that, when the authors of those manuscripts wrote their books, they wanted these manuscripts to be accessible to their audiences, there is no doubt about that. In the medieval period, those audiences, having seen no alternatives, took them in the form they came and understood them for what they were, for what the author wanted them to be, although in some rare instances differences in interpretation did arise. Our audiences nowadays are simply not used to texts without the interpreting punctuation, and they resent having to interpret every idea in every line or paragraph; some might even say it is not their business to do that, and we all know how our students suffer (and make comprehension mistakes) when they have to read a thick Bālāq publication with over forty lines per page. And there is another aspect to the issue, namely that when a scholarly editor chooses to edit a manuscript, he chooses one that falls into his area of specialization and expertise – at least ideally this is how things should be. Thus, as the scholarly editor goes about his editing, he is actually undertaking a scholarly enterprise which at times could be as exacting as writing a tome from scratch. As a scholar, then, he is precisely the person who is capable of interpreting the text he is editing, and that he must do, for

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114 Ḥanāfī 1982: 31-57 has an interesting chapter on those involved with correcting the proofs of the early printing presses in Cairo and the books that were published then.

115 A good example would be the 1985 edition of Kitāb al-najāt of Imām Ahmad al-Najātī (d. 315/927) which was edited by the venerable scholar and dear friend Wilferd Madelung (Heiter/Wiesbaden 1985). This book is a Zaydī refutation of Ḥanīfī believers in predestination, and hence is one of the very difficult texts in the Arabic theological tradition. Professor Madelung, working with something close to the puritanism of the early philologists, preferred to be a minimalist in his edition. This has made the book rather inaccessible for the untrained reader, and even to specialists in other branches of Islamic studies, which is a pity, since Professor Madelung is one of the few specialists in the world on Zaydī theology, and his expertise would have really opened the doors for interested but not specialized scholars to understand the book better and to benefit from it in their research.

116 There is a great deal of “commercial editing” in the Arab countries. The people involved in this kind of editing are normally not specialists, and, encouraged by the greed and inscrupulousness of some publishers, they produce works that cannot be the basis for serious scholarship. Such non-professional editing might also be undertaken by individuals or groups for religious, political, or some such purposes.
he has no right to rid his audience of the opportunity of accessing his text, and leaving them in the dark to struggle with it, making them on top of that pay for the price of his sense of puritanism.

The second possible objection of the puritanical editor is that the Arabic manuscript tradition itself did not have the tools of punctuation, and so forth. Yes, indeed, that tradition did not have them; but, then again, and as was mentioned above in II/7, this tradition did indicate its need for them when it created, unsystematically, it is true, various symbols (ṣūq) for a period (full-stop), for the beginning and end of a citation, for the beginning of a new page, for the introduction of poetry in a prose text, and even for what can be easily considered a table of contents – albeit within their introductions to their books rather than at their ends. It even indicated the need for titles within texts by either writing them in red ink or using a bigger font; in some cases, like biographical dictionaries, the subject of the biography is written sometimes in the margin. And the margin reminds us of something else. It is true that the Arabic manuscript tradition knew nothing about footnotes, it nevertheless recognized the need of readers to write comments, glosses, or corrections, and the only space they thought of was the right and left margins of the page, although sometimes they used the top and bottom parts of the page as well. Such features of the Arabic medieval manuscript tradition should encourage us to apply the modern systems of punctuation and other trappings of modern publication to our edited texts. They make them accessible to our audiences. And certainly the author wanted his book to be accessible.

Category C: The editor as active repairer and critical scholar

To this category belong the rest, and the vast majority, of the manuscripts in the Arabic medieval corpus, probably no less than 90 percent of it, so that, for all practical purposes, they are the kind of manuscripts the editor has to deal with, almost all the time. Paradoxically, though, the large volume of these manuscripts does not translate into superior value, nor does it entail the lessening of the burden on the editor’s shoulders when he works with them.

For one thing, these manuscripts have no special initial ‘sanctity’ about them, since they are neither precious documents that must not be touched, nor authorized copies of celebrated authorial pedigree that must at least be respected. For another thing, whereas the editor knows exactly the rules of his role as a passive preserver when he edits documents and their agnates mentioned under category A, and is on firm ground even as an interpreter of authorial authorization when he deals with the authorized copies mentioned under category B, the editor is faced in the manuscripts under this category with such a mind-boggling variety of manuscript types that finding a firm footing in dealing with them in each and every editing project is exceedingly difficult. Despite this variety, though, there are two things that uniformly apply to all of these manuscripts during the editorial process. The first is that, like the manuscripts under B, these manuscripts must be subjected to the same formal emendations in areas such as orthography, spelling, punctuation, breaking into paragraphs, sections, and chapters, indexing, and the like. The necessity of taking this step, as was explained above, is making the edited text accessible to the modern reader in the same way the manuscript was accessible to the medieval reader. The second is that, since there is no prima facie ‘sanctifying protective quality’ about these manuscripts, the editor has no prior restrictions when approaching them; rather he has a broad range of freedom, limited only by his professional expertise and critical judgement, in deciding how much he can interfere in their texts. Because of that, the editor can and must approach them as texts that permit, in principle, of repair in cases of corruption, and this repair has to be done critically and with the use of what Tanselle has called the editor’s ‘trained imagination.’

The manuscripts that fall under this category are of every kind and shape imaginable. Some are old, others are much more recent; some are complete, others lack a smaller or larger number of folios; most have their folios in perfect order, others have many of their folios misplaced; some are bound, others are not, and a bound volume mostly includes one book, but it could include several, too – the notorious masūma, some have a title page, some do not, but the cataloguers supply them with a (possibly faulty) title; some are very well preserved, others are distorted by the ravages of time, worms and water; some are beautifully written, others are awfully executed; some are dated, others are not; some carry the name of the copyist, others do not; some have some symbols for rudimentary punctuation and/or pagination, some do not; and some dot and vowel letters and words accurately, others seem not to have heard about dots and vowel-signs, or they have heard about them but do not care where they should sit, or whether the vowel-signs serve a real function or they are nothing but nice decorations to be applied at will regardless of consequence. Again, most of those manuscripts are long, being made up of several to many volumes, others are small tomes; some are written by one hand, others by two, three or more hands; some are collated with other copies, some are not; some have comments on the margins, others do not; some contain texts with which the copyist is familiar, others talk about things the copyist has never heard of – and the result shows immediately; some are written by well-known scholars, others by pedestrian, market-type copyists; and some come in a unicum, other in several, scores, or even possibly hundreds of copies. And one can go on, and on ...

How can a theorist find editorial rules that apply to all these disparate kinds or manuscripts? Although some Orientalist and Arab scholars have made several proposals in this area (albeit always discussing all the manuscripts of classes A, B

and C together), I believe it is not possible to give a single, all encompassing proposal, unlike the case of the manuscripts in classes A and B, given the diversity of situations the editor finds himself facing when he goes from one editorial project to another. What I can do instead is to make some general observations from which some guidelines and perhaps a framework can be drawn.

The first observation is that, in this class of manuscripts, the author's intention has a less commanding presence in his work than in the authorized copies, since there are many intermediaries (copyists, owners, readers) between the author and the manuscript in the editor's hand, and what these intermediaries wrote on the manuscript, or even how they wrote it, affects the manuscript not only in its appearance but also possibly in its text. Although this text is principally the author's, the absence of its original form makes the editor rather than the author take center stage in the editorial process. As such, the editor's critical judgment is constantly called upon to make one decision after another in the editorial process.

The second observation is that the decisions which the editor makes are necessarily connected with the particular project he is working on, which means that they are based on the specific manuscripts that he has collected for the completion of his project. This is important to note because the daunting situation of the Arabic medieval manuscripts, as it was described above, is not his to deal with in its entirety; his concern, rather, is with the few manuscripts with which he is going to work. These manuscripts have specific characteristics, both good and bad, and it is with these specific characteristics that he has to deal. In addition, when editor's project is finished and he wishes to embark on another project, he collects other manuscripts for that project, and his concern now will shift to the specific characteristics of these manuscripts. And the same goes for later projects. This means, of course, that, although the editor might have some constants in his editorial policy, there is a great deal in that policy that is dictated by the specific manuscripts at his disposal at a particular moment in time.

The third observation is that, whether he is aware of it or not, the editor has a goal which he wants to reach by his edition. Assuming that his goal is the one I have stated above, namely that he makes his edition an accurate, illuminating, and accessible communication from the past, he has to decide how the specific manuscripts he has help him best achieve this goal. For, if he has an accurate manuscript, one, say, written by a prominent scholar in the area of his specialization, he can achieve his goal fairly easily, and with little interference on his part. If, on the other hand, he has several manuscripts all of which display several textual corruptions, then the interference required from him is enormous.

What this means is that, before beginning to edit, the editor must be in complete control of his manuscripts and the problems they pose. On the basis of his full knowledge of those manuscripts, he decides how they relate to each other, and, based on that, in what 'hierarchical order' they should be placed, if at all relevant, or some other order that he believes stems from their very natures. Once he has done that, he will have an idea as to how much interference would be needed of him in his edition, and whether that interference will be based on taking one manuscript as the base text to which the other manuscripts are subordinate, or whether all his manuscripts are so equal in inaccuracy that resorting to eclecticism becomes unavoidable, although it might be the least appealing of choices for the editor in principle.

It is at this point that the editor has to define for himself, and eventually for the reader (in the introduction), the framework of his interference policy, and that by explaining its reasons and spelling out the exact criteria for the operation of his critical judgment. This is an extremely important matter for the editor to be crystal clear about, for it is the guarantee for the consistency of his work. As Tanselle says, "[a] coherent rationale of approach is properly a desideratum of textual scholarship, as of other fields, but any rationale of critical editing that seeks to limit (rather than to systematize) the role of judgement is not coherent, since by definition critical editing exists to draw on the strength of human judgment as a means of correcting the defects of documentary texts." 118

The editor's critical judgment, thus, is crucial for the editorial process. Often it is an agonizing process: does he correct a grammatical error in a particular place? And what does he do with historical or geographical errors, or with inconsistencies in the text? Does changing them make the text a less transparent "communication from the past"? What I would like to propose, as a general framework, is that the editor should correct the mistakes in his text whenever he is certain that they are mistakes, and when his correction of these mistakes does not tamper with the "historical" value of his text, nor does it deprive it of its accuracy and illuminating characteristics. His correction, however, should be based on a solid foundation: a variant reading in another manuscript, a citation of the text in another book, a well-known idiomatic usage, a Qur'anic formulaic expression, a famous poetic metaphor, lexical or grammatical evidence, historical or geographical records, and the like. Given the nature of the Arabic script, and the conditions under which the copyists in medieval Islam worked, this is not an unreasonable position to take. Once the evidence is there, and the editor is convinced by it, the emendation is in order. In the class C manuscripts, an editor may make not only formal and caution changes, but also substantive changes which could lead more than the formal changes to the interpretation of the text. But, as I said above, the editor is a scholar who, ideally, is a specialist in the manuscript's field, and, as a scholar, his interpretation should be welcome.

At this point, a person might object, saying: but how can you reconcile this stance with the earlier stance concerning the actively authorized manuscripts, where the errors were allowed to stand? For could not an error in a manuscript in

class C be the author's error? My answer to this objection is threefold. First, in the authorized manuscripts, the author's presence is so strong that the editor retreats before it, allowing the author to bear the responsibility of his work. Secondly, by keeping the author's errors in the edition of his text, the editor preserves a truly illuminating and accurate "communication from the past." And thirdly, while the errors in the class C manuscripts could indeed have been of author's doing not of the scribes', there is no way for us to tell, in the absence of an authorized copy, whose it was; and, in addition, the likelihood that the error should have come from the scribe's hand is, on average, higher than its coming from the author's.

Let me recapitulate.

I have tried in this paper to highlight the impact of principle on procedure in scholarly editing. Concentrating on the editor's ethical and professional responsibilities, I noted multiplicity and conflict in these responsibilities, and that such a situation gives rise to various editorial approaches and theories. The editor, however, remains at the center of the editorial enterprise, and it is his goal that dictates his approach. In the second section, I discussed the approaches advocated by Arab and Orientalist scholars regarding the editing of Arabic medieval manuscripts, concentrating on those approaches that have an impact on how much a scholarly editor should interfere in his text, or, conversely, how 'sacred' the text of a manuscript is. Starting from a historical approach, as defined by Tanselle, I defined the editor's goal, to some extent following Tanselle, as the reception of accurate, illuminating, and accessible communications from the past. On that basis, I proposed that, in the editing of medieval Arabic manuscripts, certain aspects of Islamic history and civilization be examined before a decision is made as to how 'sacred' the text of a manuscript is. These aspects include the transition from orality to recording in the formative period of Islam; the controversial issue of including images in a text; the nature of the Arabic script; specific features of the Arabic language; the nature and volume of compilation in Arabic in the medieval period; the transmission of learning in the same period; and the copyists and their practices then. In the last section, I related those aspects to the issue of how 'sacred' the text of a manuscript is, specifically in the light of my proposed goal as stated earlier. The conclusion I came out with is that there is no one single procedure that can be applied to all of the medieval Arabic manuscripts, but rather three. In the first, the texts of the manuscripts are completely 'sacred' and must be reproduced by the editor with no interference at all; they include products of the formative period, pictures and illustrations, poetry, proverbs, and dialectical expressions. In the second, the texts of the manuscripts must be interfered with minimally, mainly formally, in order to ensure access in particular; they include principally manuscripts written by the author or authorized by him according to Scheibe's criteria. And in the third, the editor has a fairly wide range of freedom in interfering with his texts; they include all the other manuscripts not mentioned in the first two categories.

In the end, there isn't, perhaps, such thing as a 'perfect edition' for medieval Arabic manuscripts; but there can be an 'authoritative edition.' This kind of edition takes a very long time to produce, given the tendency of Arabic manuscripts to be long and scattered. As a result, authoritative editions will continue to coexist with quickly-produced, unauthoritative editions, especially given that team-edition projects have only rarely been successful. The only thing that can change the editing landscape is the aggressive regulatory interference of a culturally influential and politically supported professional board – and this is unlikely to happen in the near future. In the meantime, the editor with professional expertise and critical judgment remains the best guarantor for making our manuscripts carry an accurate, illuminating and accessible message from the past.