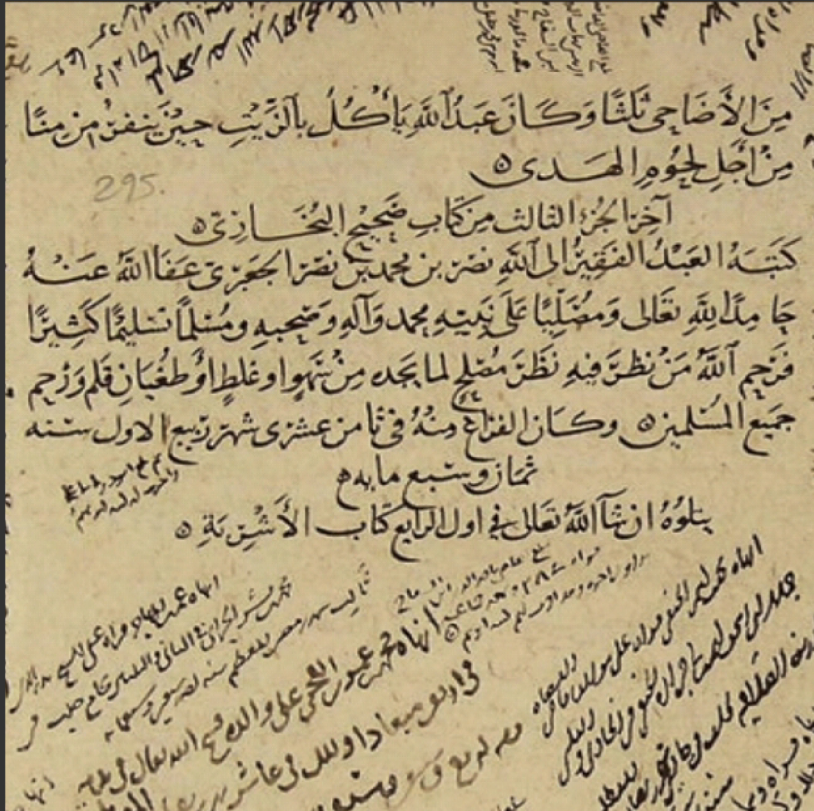# A Beginner's Companion to Arabic Manuscripts

Compiled By

Muntasir Zaman

Qalam

A Beginner's Companion to Arabic Manuscripts

Adapted from an Intensive on Arabic Manuscripts by Shaykh Ṣāliḥ al-Azharī

by

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CONTENTS

PREFACE

While the invention of the typewriter in the 19th century opened avenues to proliferate knowledge that were hitherto unfathomable, it also led to a host of negative consequences. For one, it created a disconnect between modern readers—who are accustomed to typed writing—and classical handwritten manuscripts, leaving in its wake a generation that struggles to tap into a rich resource of knowledge. Dealing with manuscripts is a science in itself. Therefore, one way to remedy the current situation is to increase exposure to classical manuscripts and study the fundamentals with experts in the field.

Shaykh Ṣāliḥ b. Muḥammad al-Azharī, a seasoned curator at the Egyptian National Library, conducted a ten-day intensive on studying Arabic manuscripts. The intensive was divided into fourteen lectures. It comprised a theoretical exposé of the most important concepts that a student should be aware of when dealing with Arabic manuscripts. With over a decade of professional experience in handling manuscripts, he seamlessly explained fundamental concepts in the field and provided countless practical examples.

The following companion is based on notes that I took during the intensive. By no means are these notes exhaustive nor are they intended to make one an expert on Arabic manuscripts. At most, it is hoped that they can help students develop familiarity with some of the basics of dealing with manuscripts and pave the road for further

study. Works like Adam Gacek's *Arabic Manuscripts*: *A Vademecum for Readers* should be consulted by those seeking more detail in English. To make this companion more comprehensive, I added personal notes, illustrations from other manuscripts, and a few excerpts from other sources; my own notes are in square brackets and the excerpts are referenced. All shortcomings and errors are solely mine.

Muntasir Zaman

Key Terms

In terms of its composition, a manuscript consists of a cover page, main text, marginal notes, and a concluding passage, each of which plays a crucial role in unlocking the manuscript's secrets. The following are some commonly used terms when discussing the pages of manuscripts:

- Waraqa refers to a folio. Abbreviation: qāf.

- Wajh is the front of the folio (a-page recto). Abbreviation: wāw or alif.

- Ẓahr is the back of the folio (b-page verso). Abbreviation: ẓāʾ or bāʾ.
    - e.g. (ظ/ه ق) is a reference to the back of the fifth folio of the manuscript.

- Lawḥ is a scan of two pages, comprising the ẓahr of one waraqa and the wajh of another. Symbol: lām.

- Kurrāsa refers to every ten folios. Abbreviation: kāf on the top left corner of the page.

- Mujallad is a codex comprising many kurāsas.

- Majmūʿ is a codex comprising multiple manuscripts.

- Nuskha Mulaffaqa is a manuscript written by multiple scribes.

- Taʿqība, or a catchword, is the practice of writing the first word of a page in the bottom corner of the previous page to alert readers to potential omissions. [fa-qultu]
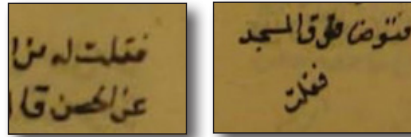

Often the pagination found on manuscripts was a later addition. This is important to note because a manuscript may have missing pages, but the pagination continues uninterrupted because it was written by a later scribe.

The cover page (ṣafḥat ʿunwān) usually contains information like the book title, author name, book's chain of transmission, ownership statement (*tamalluk*), endowment notice (*waqfiyya*), study notes (*muṭālaʿa*), audition certificate (*ṭibāq al-samāʿ*), and other miscellaneous notes. This information can be vital when working on or consulting any manuscript; it should not be dismissed as random scribbling.
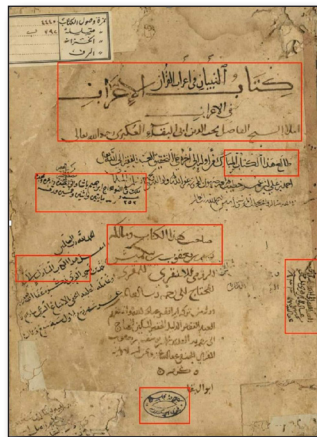
The concluding passage (*khitām*) of a manuscript is akin to an ID. It contains the name of the scribe, date and place of transcription, authorizations, and other important details.
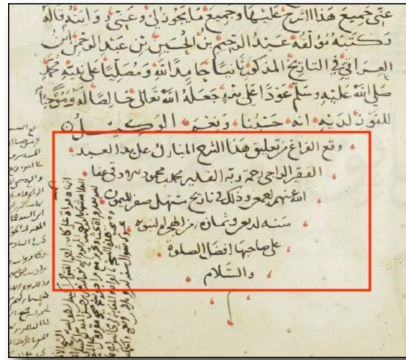
Margins (*ḥāshiya*): scribes often used the margins to add notes, make amendments, and so on. If the notes were lengthy, they were written on a separate page and appended.
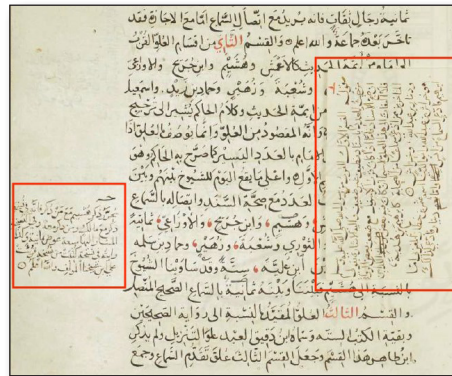
Gathering Manuscripts

When a researcher sets out to work on a manuscript of a book or simply wants to locate a passage in it, it is imperative to gather as many manuscripts of the book as possible. Common sources for locating manuscripts are the fahāris (catalogs). It should be noted the information found in manuscript catalogs often contain inaccuracies that stem from a poor reading of the manuscripts and citation of unverified information.
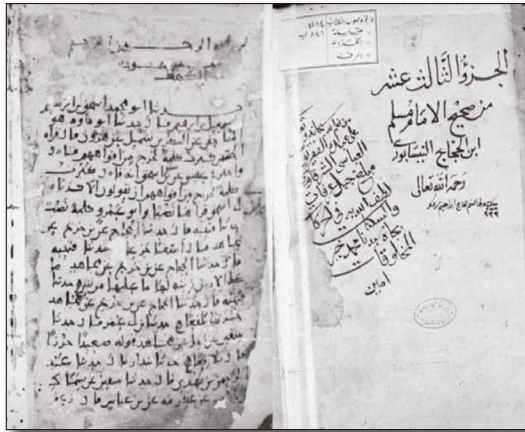
Among the most commonly used catalogs is the German Orientalist Carl Brockelmann's (d. 1956) *Geschichte der Arabischen Litteratur*, translated into Arabic as *Tārīkh al-Adab al-ʿArabī*. The Turkish scholar Fuat Sezgin (d. 2018) wrote *Geschichte des Arabischen Schrifttums*, translated into Arabic as *Tārīkh al-Turāth al-ʿArabī*, in which he builds on and critiques Carl Brockelmann. These are two of the most common books consulted for locating manuscripts. However, they are outdated, and the databases on existing manuscripts have developed extensively.

Subsequent works include *Muʿjam Tārīkh al-Turāth al-Islāmī* by ʿAlī Riḍā and Aḥmad Ṭawrān. Another extensive, updated mega-catalog of manuscripts is *al-Fahras al-Shāmil li al-Turāth al-ʿArabī al-Islāmī al-Makhṭūṭ* by Muʾassisat Āl al-Bayt. None of the aforementioned works are exhaustive; they are only starting points. To gain familiarity with the libraries throughout the world and their respective catalogs and manuscripts, one may read *World Survey*

of Islamic Manuscripts by al-Furqan Islamic Heritage Foundation, translated into Arabic as *al-Makhṭūṭāṭ al-Islāmiyya fī al-ʿĀlam*. There are invaluable online resources to obtain digital copies of manuscripts, such as al-furqan.com/world_library/ and https://www.almajidcenter.org/search.php.

[A researcher should always remember how potentially misleading manuscript catalogs can be. The *al-Fahras al-Shāmil* catalog details a manuscript of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* that is dated to 368 AH, a century after Imām Muslim's demise, located in the Alexandria Municipal Library in Egypt. However, the information provided in the catalog is incorrect. The manuscript held in the Alexandria Library (item no. 836B) is correctly dated to 368 AH and is even titled as the thirteenth codex of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim* on the cover page, but it is not a manuscript of *Ṣaḥīḥ Muslim*. Rather, it is a partial manuscript of Qāḍī Isḥāq al-Bustī's (d. 307 AH) Qurʾānic exegesis. It is possible that the curator who labeled this manuscript confused the two books due to similarities in their structure: al-Bustī's work is a transmission-based exegesis (*maʾthūr*) filled with chains of transmission that resemble the structure of Muslim's *Ṣaḥīḥ*. Then the cataloger recorded the available data without verification.]

٣٩ - الجامع الصحيح - مسلم

١ - البلدية/ الاسكندرية (الشندي/الحديث) ١٢ [٨٣٦ب] - (ج ١٣) - ٣٦٨هـ.

٢ - خدابخش ٧٩/١/٥ [١٩١] - ج ١ ١٣ (١٩٨) - قبل ٤٨٦هـ - ناقص الجزء الثاني.

٣ - نشستربيتي ٦٦/٥ [٤٢١١] - ج ٥ (٢٤٠) - ٥٢٣هـ.

٤ - خزانة القرويين ١٥٥/١ [١٤٨] - (٢١٥) - ٥٣٧هـ.

٥ - جاريت (يهودا) ٥٣ [١٠٤ (٥٨٩)] - (٢١٥) - ٥٥٩هـ - النصف الثاني.

٦ - الأوقاف/ بغداد ٢٢١/١ [٥٧٧]

١٥ - جاريت ٤١٢ - ٤١٣ [1359] 169 B] - مج ٢ (١٩٨) - أوائل ق ٧هـ تقريبا.

١٦ - الأوقاف/ حلب ٥٣ [١٩٦٣] - (ج ١٦ - ٢٢) - ق ٧هـ.

١٧ - دار الكتب/صوفيا ٢١٥/١ [Op 2181] - (٤٦٢) - ق ٧هـ تقريبا.

١٨ - الدراسات العليا/ جامعة بغداد ٢٩٨ [١٠٥٣] - ج ٢ (٢٤٤) - ق ٨هـ.

١٩ - العثمانية/ حلب ٩٦ [٤/٢١٣] - الحديث]- ج ٤ (١٨٥) - ٧٢٣هـ.

٢٠ - نشستربيتي ٣٦/١ [3093 (i,ii)] - مج ١ (٢٦٥) - مج ٣ (٢٩٩) - ٧٣٦ - ٧٣٧هـ.

When searching for a particular manuscript or giving reference to one, take the following points into consideration:

- Understand the numbering and storage system of a library. For instance, citing *Ṣaḥīḥ al-Bukhārī* item no. 300 in the Egyptian National Library can be misleading because there are two sections in the library: 1) the original library and 2) subsequently added libraries, and each has its own numbering system.

- Manuscripts are added to libraries daily, so the absence of a manuscript in a catalog does not mean that it does not exist in a given library.

- Larger libraries consist of smaller personal libraries. After a scholar passes away, his personal library may be endowed to or purchased for a larger library and kept intact. The Egyptian historian Aḥmad Taymūr Pasha (d. 1930) endowed his private library of over twenty thousand books to the Egyptian National Library. Consequently, the numbering will differ for the manuscripts found in these smaller libraries.

- Be aware of the presence of multiple copies of the same manuscript in different libraries. There may appear to be two manuscripts, one in Dār al-Kutub al-Miṣriyya and the other in the Ẓāhiriyya library in Damascus. But one may be a scan of the other.

- [Early catalogs like that of Brockelmann may reference libraries that have since been shut down or relocated. For instance, the libraries of ʿĀrif Ḥikmat and Maḥmūdiyya in Madīnah were destroyed, so their contents were relocated to the Islamic University of Madinah. Likewise, the books in the British Museum were relocated to the British Library.]

General points to remember: When an expert has worked on a particular scholar's book (e.g. *Ikmāl* of Mughlaṭāy), one would be remiss not to consult that expert's introduction where the book's manuscripts are studied. He

may have pointed out certain inaccuracies that he came across in the process of editing that may provide insights into the manuscript that one intends to study. Books dedicated to specific scholars are must-reads before beginning work on a manuscript. If a researcher intends to study a manuscript of one of al-Sakhāwī's works, he should first consult studies on the scholar himself, like Badr ʿAmmāsh's *al-Ḥāfiẓ al-Sakhāwī wa Juhūduhu fi al-Ḥadīth wa ʿUlūmuhu.* These authors have exerted considerable effort in compiling these books, so the information they share on a scholar's oeuvre may be difficult to learn on one's own. Likewise, works on the field as a whole should be considered. Someone who intends to work on a manuscript related to Sīra is expected to consult *Maṣādir al-Sīra al-Nabawiyya* by Muḥammad Yusrī Salāma.

Styles of Writing

Scribes had different styles of writing based on their region, time, and personal handwriting. The editor of a manuscript is expected to type the text according to modern writing conventions; differences based on writing style should not be pointed out in the footnotes. It is important to familiarize oneself with each scribe's personal style of writing by reading several pages of his manuscript. There were some general scribal habits that are commonly found in manuscripts, and knowing them will help students read the text more efficiently.
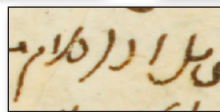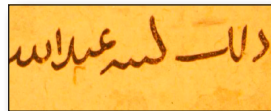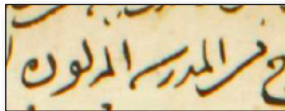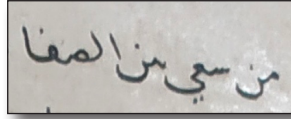
- The omission of a hamza. [innamā jāʾa min/fī-masḥ al-raʾs].
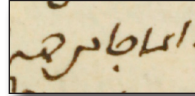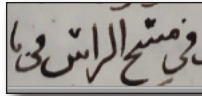
- The omission of an alif. [Abū Muʿāwiya/Muḥammad b. ʿUthmān/yā Rasūl Allāh].
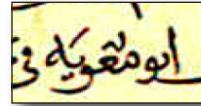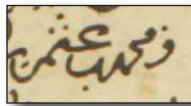
- The omssion of the oblique stroke on a kāf's ascender. [dhālik katabahu ʿAbd/min al-madrasa al-madhkūra/ bal adkhur kalām].
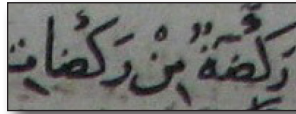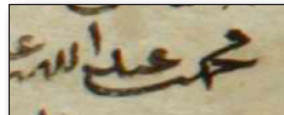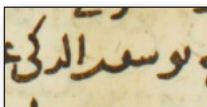
- Writing yāʾ maqṣūra with two dots beneath it. [man saʿā min].

- A fatḥa followed by a ḍamma was often adjoined. [qāl Rasūl Allāh].

- A kasra was sometimes written in the form of a slanted line. [rakḍa min].

- Ibn was often written as a slant to the previous name. [Muḥammad b. ʿAbd Allāh/Yūsuf b. al-Zakī].

Certain words occurred frequently, so scribes used symbols, such as ṣād for *muṣannif*; shīn for *shāriḥ*; or ḥāʾ for *ḥīnaʿidhin* or *taḥwīl*. [For a list of common abbreviations, see Gacek, pp. 313-317].

Scholars from the Islamic West (Maghreb) had a different method of writing and arranging the alphabet. Major

differences include: 1) the shadda is written like a qulāmat ẓufr (see below); 2) fāʾ is written with a dot beneath it; and 3) qāf is written with one dot above it. Hereunder is the Maghrebi arrangement of the alphabet, followed by a table (Gacek, pp. 11, 150) that outlines the varying forms of the alphabet per their method of writing.

ا ب ت ث ج ح خ د ذ ر ز ط ظ ك ل م ن ص ض ع غ ف ق س ش ه و لا ى

[There are numerous Arabic scripts, each with its own history, style, and function. Ṭāhir al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1920) lists the common usages of the canonical scripts as follows: *muḥaqqaq* and *rayḥān* for writing Qurʾānic codices (*maṣāḥif*); *naskh* for literature on Hadith, Tafsir, and the like; *thuluth* for educational purposes; *tawqīʿ* for official documents; *riqāʿ* for ordinary letters; and *muʾannaq* for poetry. See al-Jazāʾirī, *Tawjīh al-Naẓar*, vol. 2, p. 801.]

Scribal Terminology

The following maxim (*qānūn al-nasākha*) informed a scribe's decision to make amendments to a manuscript: "ensure a passage's (1) accuracy and (2) aesthetics; if one of the two is to be compromised, then maintain accuracy." To prevent the reader from confusing words, scribes utilized different symbols to ensure an accurate reading of the text. Here are some of the most common symbols:

- Qulāmat ẓufr, a symbol that resembles a clipped nail (v). Since dots were often omitted from letters, this symbol was placed above some *muhmal* (unpointed) letters to prevent confusion with their muʿjam (pointed) counterparts, such as rāʾ and sīn. [ʿind nafsī/al-nās].
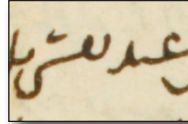
- The miniature form of certain *muhmal* letters (e.g. ʿayn and ḥāʾ) was written as a subscript to prevent confusion with their *muʿjam* counterparts, [ʿalā al-raḥl/ Baḥr b. Naṣr].
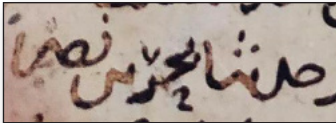
- When a scribe accidently shuffled names or words, he wrote two mīms or qāf and khāʾ (esp. the Maghrebis) on the words to let the reader know that they should be read in reverse order. These terms stand for *muʾakh-khar* and *muqaddam*. [al-hiba wa al-waṣiyya/Musā b. Rizq Allāh].
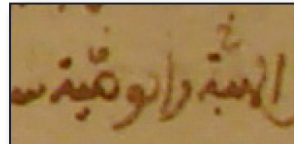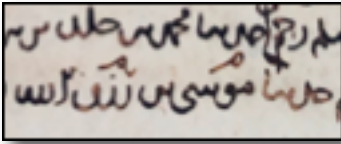
- Ṣaḥḥ: written above a word to indicate that this word is more accurate and should be added to the main text. Or it is placed beside an added word to show that its addition was deliberate. [wa dhālik ann al-maqṣūd/Salmā Suʿdā]
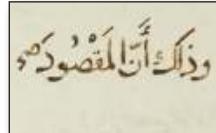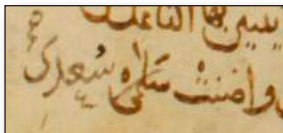
- Ḍabba: an elongated ṣād was written above ostensibly inaccurate phrases to notify the reader that the word is not a scribal error or that the scribe is aware of the issue, but that is how the author wrote it—similar to [sic]. In the following example, a reader may assume that there is a name missing in the chain between Aṭāʾ, a successor, and the Prophet ﷺ. By writing a ḍabba above [the hamza of] ʿAṭāʾ, the scribe indicated that he is aware of this potential confusion, and that is how it was meant to appear in the manuscript.
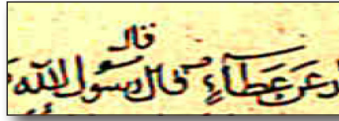
- Khaff: the letter is not to be read with a shadda. [ʿAbd Allāh b. Salām].
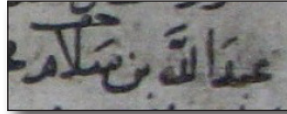
- Maʿan: when there are two vowelizations of a word. [mathal man faqiha or faquha].
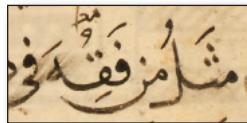
- Variant readings from other manuscripts are noted in the margins with the abbreviation khāʾ (some Maghrebis use the term umm). After revising the manuscript, if a variation is noticed in the exemplar (*al-aṣl al-manqūl minh*) it was noted in the margin followed by the word aṣl. These marginal notes were often followed by the word ṣaḥḥ. [bi al-maghānim * bi al-maghārim/al-Ḥafrī * al-Jaʿdī; Gacek, p. 271, 273].

- Dāra: drawing a circle to sperate between sections or ḥadiths. Originally, it was written as a textual divider, then al-Khaṭīb (d. 463 AH) preferred that a scribe fill the circle with a dot (*manqūṭa*) or a line (*mashqūqa*; the form of a hāʾ) after checking that section or ḥadīth. [fa-rujimā * qāl/ aw baʿdahu * akhbaranā].
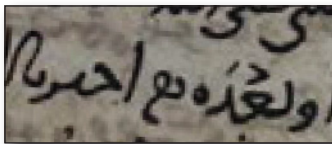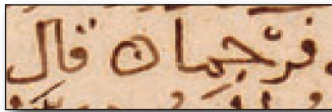
- **Laḥaq:** to draw a curved line above a space where an omitted word should be added; the line will point to the margin where the given word is written and marked with ṣaḥḥ. [wa ḥasuna an * ya'tī].
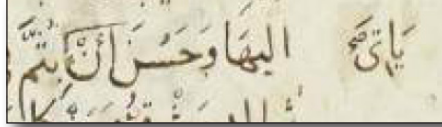
- **Kashṭ**: to erase a word using a sharp object. [qawl Allāh].

- **Ḍarb**: to cross out a scribal error. [kalām al-nāqiḍ nāqiḍ]
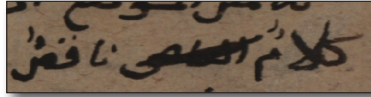
- **Lā ilā**: when the passage is too long to cross over, as it will ruin the aesthetics of the text, the passage that is to be rendered null will begin with lā above it and close with ilā. Some scribes used **min** instead of lā.
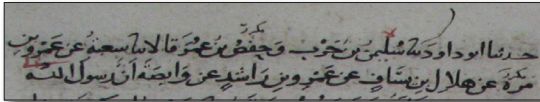
- **Bayān**: when an illegible word was rewritten in the margin, the word *bayān* or nūn would be written above it [not to be confused for the nūn that indicates manuscript-variations—commonly found in the subcontinent]. In some cases, it was written as *badal* or lām.
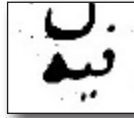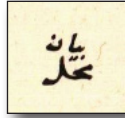
- When a word was illegible in the main text, its isolated letterforms were rewritten in the margins. [bughayl]
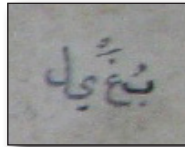
Extra Components of a Manuscript

A manuscript is a historical document that contains valuable information in addition to the main text. The following are the most vital extra components [not from the author] of a manuscript.

Waqfiyya: endowment notice. It is a note or stamp that indicates the endowment of the manuscript. This is typically found on the cover page or last page, but it can also be found in the margins of a random page. This is usually opened with words like *waqafa*, *ḥabbasa*, *sabbala*, and *taṣaddaqa*, and it concludes with the verse: *fa-man baddala-hu baʿda mā samiʿahu* (al-Baqara: 181). A waqfiyya generally contains: 1) the book title and the author's name; 2) the name of the scribe; 3) the name of the caretaker; 4) the conditions of endowment; 5) the names of the signatories/witnesses; and 6) the date of endowment. A waqfiyya can help a researcher figure out information about the manuscript that may not be written elsewhere, like the book title.

Tamalluk: ownership statement. This indicates owner-ship of the manuscript. Phrases like *mālikuhu, min kutub, li, min niʿam Allāh ʿalā, fī nawbat*, etc. introduce the owner of the manuscript. The first example from the right comprises a handwritten ownership notice (tamalluk) from Ibn ʿIrāq al-Kinānī (d. 963 AH), the author of *Tanzīh al-Sharīʿa al-Marfūʿa*. This notice proves—from Ibn ʿIrāq himself—that the name is vowelized as ʿIrāq, and not ʿArrāq, as is commonly assumed.
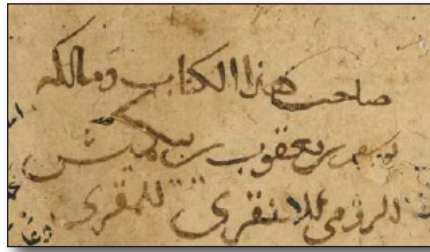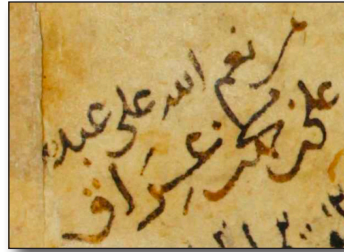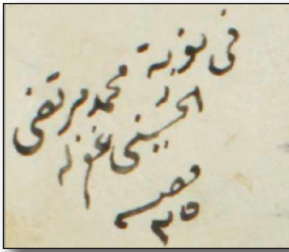
Muṭālaʿa: study note. After reading a manuscript, a scholar may add a note on the cover or end page. This may indicate the value of the book, as well as the fact that this book forms part of the resources of the reader. [*ṭalaʿahu wa naqalahu al-ʿabd*]
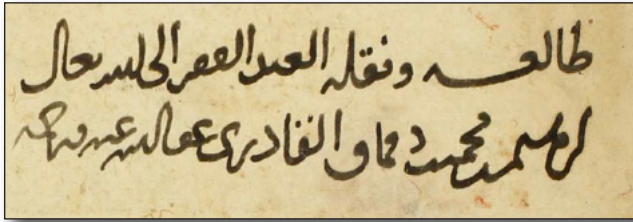
General notes: some scribes or later readers may add couplets of poetry, interesting quotes, or passages from the text itself.

Ṭibāq al-Samāʿ: audition certificate; see below.

AUDITION CERTIFICATE (ṬIBĀQ AL-SAMĀʿ)

Scholars held auditions (*majālis al-samāʾ*) to dictate books to students and the general public. Apart from the teacher, there were other key roles in these auditions, such as: 1) the *mustamlī*, who was responsible for conveying the teacher's words to the audience; 2) *kātib al-samāʿ*; the registrar, whose duty was to take note of those who attended, the state of the attendees, those who were absent, etc.; 3) the *qāriʾ*, the lector who was appointed to recite the text. Once a student finished listening to the text he would go to the teacher and get his book signed to testify to his attendance. At times, if the registrar was qualified, students would go to him to get their books signed. The audition certificate that was written upon successful completion of a text consisted of several parts.

1. **Opening words**, such as *samiʿa ʿalayy*, *qaraʾa ʿalayy* [from author], *balagha samāʿan*, *samiʿtu* [student].

   a. The phrase *wa-ṣaḥḥ* was added as an attestation to the validity of the audition.

2. **Title and author's name**: Book titles were often abbreviated in audition certificates, like *al-Ṣaḥīḥ* instead of *al-Jāmiʿ al-Musnad al-Ṣaḥīḥ* or *al-ʿIlm* instead of *Jāmiʿ Bayān al-ʿIlm wa Faḍlihī*.

3. **Name of the teacher**. This was prefaced with honorifics and titles like al-ʿālim, al-wariʿ, and al-fāḍil.

4. **Chain of transmission to the book**. If the teacher was not the author of the audited text, he would cite his chain by writing *bi-ḥaqq ijāzatihi* or *bi-samāʿihi*. If the chain was not mentioned, it was indicated with words like *bi-sanadihi fī-awwalihi* [cited in the beginning of the text] or *bi-sanadihi tarāhu* [via his transmission that can be found before or after].

   a. The bāʾ in this phrase is sababiyya, i.e. due to the right of transmission that he received from so-and-so.

5. **Name of attendees**. Concision without confusion (*ikhtiṣār ghayr mulbis*) was key. Titles were omitted or kept to a minimum (e.g. *amīr* for a governor or *wajīh* for a nobleman), and the names of relatives were recorded together. Mention was made of the number of sessions from which a student was absent.

   a. The phrase *ḥaḍar* or *ḥuḍurᵃⁿ* was used to show the attendee was around five or younger; the age was spelled out or the number was written.

6. **Name of the lector**. The duty of reciting the text was consigned to someone with knowledge of vowelization and pronunciation and one who had a loud voice. The name of the lector was introduced in the certificate with the words *bi–qirāʾa*.

7. **Kātib al-Samāʿ**: the registrar who recorded information about the attendees and wrote the audition certificate. He is similar to an invigilator. He is often distinguished from *ḍābiṭ al-asmāʾ*.

    a. The phrases *wa dhā khaṭṭuhu* and *wa-lahū al-khaṭṭ* mean that it was written by the named person.

8. **Owner of the manuscript**.

9. **Signature of the teacher**.

10. **Date and place of completion**.
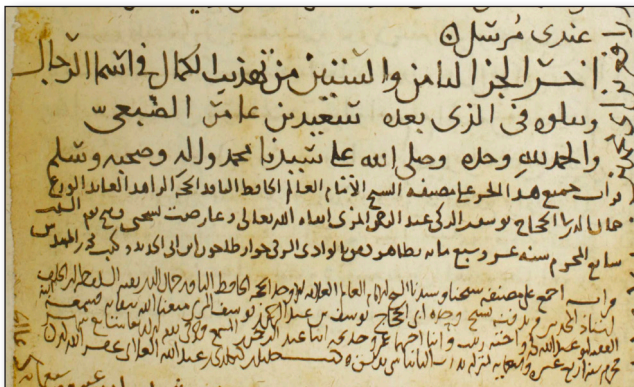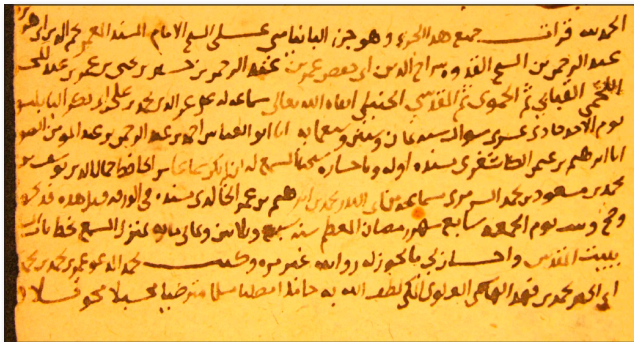
An audition certificate is a valuable document that establishes authorization for texts. Bearing in mind the scope of potential fabrication, scribes would draw a line or box around the certificate to prevent the insertion of other names. In the case where a name was accidently omitted, the scribe would amend and point out that a name was added. Divergent handwriting generally indicates false insertion; there may be exceptions. It was in this context that scholars said that bringing a knife was suspicious because someone may use it to alter the words on a certificate. In biographical dictionaries, one will find people impugned for tampering with an audition certificate.

Understanding these components of an audition certificate and the various phrases used to introduce them is crucial as it equips the reader with the ability to navigate illegible passages. Due to a failure of recognizing these components, many editors have misunderstood and incorrectly edited passages; see case study. Moreover, a close study of these components can paint a picture of a manuscript's journey (*riḥla*) over the centuries [see, for instance, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ḥumaydī, al-Uṣūl al-Khaṭṭiyya al-Ḥadīthiyya, *Majallat al-Turāth al-Nabawī*, no. 3, pp. 125 ff.].

Book Title

The title of a book constitutes its identity and explains its contents. As such, a researcher should exert all possible means to determine the accurate title. The title of a book can be learned from external sources, such as the biography of the author; it could be mentioned by the author in another book; or other scholars could have quoted in their own writings, especially in books on the same subject. *Fahāris* and cover pages (that were not written by the author) are among the worst places to determine book titles. Ziriklī (d. 1976) in *al-Aʿlām* and Ḥājjī Khalīfa (d. 1068 AH) in *Kashf al-Ẓunūn* utilized these methods frequently. A researcher is, therefore, cautioned from relying too heavily on these sources to establish book titles.

Alternatively, a book's title can be gleaned internally from the book itself. The author's introduction is the most authoritative place to determine the title; in the case of conflict, this will be preferred. Titles added by scribes will depend on their qualification. A title written on a manuscript by a scholar, for instance, is more authoritative than one written by an unlearned curator. Titles written by a different pen are often inaccurate. Audition certificates are useful resources for book titles, but one should be aware of the constant abbreviations that occur in these certificates. Historically, book titles were written along the tail of a book; this was due to the positioning of books on shelves.

Writing titles across the spine of a book, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Jabartī (d. 1822) asserts, was introduced by Europeans.

Differences of opinion concerning the title of a book often stem from the author not having mentioned any title. Consequently, scribes often examined the contents and formulated a title of their own. For instance, the manuscripts of Ibn al-Labbān's (d. 749 AH) *Mutashābih al-Qurʾān wa al-Ḥadīth* contain different titles, like *Radd Maʿānī al-Āyāt al-Mutashābihāt* and *Izālat al-Shubuhāt ʿan al-Aḥādīth wa al-Āyāt*. This was due to the absence of a title given by the author which led scribes to surmise a title based on the contents of the book. In *al-Aʿlām*, Ziriklī incorrectly mentioned these as different books of Ibn al-Labbān.

The Scribe

Information about the scribe and the date of transcription is often found on the last page. If there is no mention of it on the last page, one should check if the manuscript is part of a larger collection. The name of the scribe is often found in another treatise in that collection; make sure the handwriting is the same. It is useful to study the handwriting of famous scribes, like Yūsuf b. Shāhīn Sibṭ Ibn Ḥajar (d. 899 AH), who have transcribed countless manuscripts [see Muḥammad al-Sirayyi's *Maʿrifat Khuṭūṭ al-Aʿlām fī al-Makhṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya* and Ziriklī's *al-Aʿlām*]. It is possible that one scribe started transcribing the manuscript, but it was completed by another scribe (*mukammil*); this is known as a *nuskha mulaffaqa*.

While transcribing a manuscript, a scribe often copied all the marginal notes and extra components from the original to the new copy. [See Saʿīd al-Jūmānī, "Ṣūrat al-Ijāzāt al-Manqūla fī al-Makhṭūṭāt al-ʿArabiyya," *Journal of Islamic Manuscripts* 9 (2018)] For instance, an editor mistook a manuscript of ʿAlam al-Dīn al-Sakhāwī that was written in the 12th century as one that was written in the 9th century by Muḥammad b. Mūsā b. ʿImrān (d. 843 AH), due to the presence of the name of the latter. However, he did not realize that the information substantiating Muḥammad b. Mūsā as the scribe was copied from an earlier manuscript.

Some indicators that the details are copied include words like: *naqaltu* and *mā mukhtaṣaruhu*. Another method,

which requires an advanced level of experience, is by determining the style of writing. Someone had claimed that there was a manuscript of Ibn Ḥibbān's *al-Majrūḥīn* written in the 4th century, but the style of writing demonstrates that it could not have been written earlier than the 8th century, if not at a much later date. In the following example, the date of completion given by the author is 855 AH, but the style of writing clearly suggests that the information was copied from an earlier manuscript.
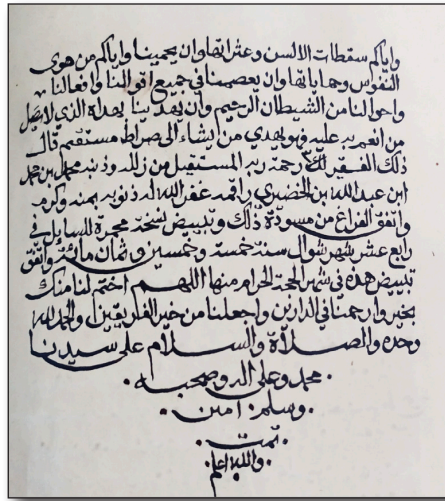
DATES

The date that a manuscript was transcribed was often written in the *khitām*. The date is either spelled out: e.g. *sanat thalāth wa thalāthīn wa thamān miʾa,* or the numbers are written: 833. Certain numbers were written differently from the modern convention. Zero was written as a circle [o]. Four has a unique form that resembles a joined *ʿayn* and *wāw.* Five was written like a B or 8. Sometimes two was written with a flat top similar to a reversed 7. Three was written like a conventional two. [250/23/230/244].
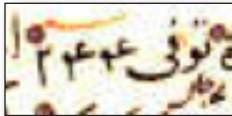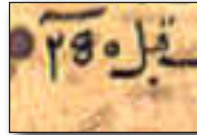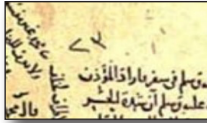
The usage of a chronogram (ḥisāb al-jummal) based on the alpha-numerical system, known as the *abjadiyya*, was a common method of writing the date. The following chart lists the numerical value of each letter and its respective grouping. By way of illustration, a scribe will write that he finished the text in the year 'Ḥasan' [118 AH] (ḥ/s/n) where ḥāʾ equals eight, sīn equals sixty, and nūn equals fifty: 118. The phrase bi-ism Allāh famously amounts to 786.

طريقة حساب الجُمَّل

	الحرف	قيمته العددية		الحرف	قيمته العددية		الحرف	قيمته العددية
	ق	١٠٠		ك	٢٠		أ	١
قرشت	ر	٢٠٠	كلمن	ل	٣٠	أبجد	ب	٢
	ش	٣٠٠		م	٤٠		ج	٣
	ت	٤٠٠		ن	٥٠		د	٤
	ث	٥٠٠		س	٦٠		ه	٥
ثخذ	خ	٦٠٠	سعفص	ع	٧٠	هوز	و	٦
	ذ	٧٠٠		ف	٨٠		ز	٧
	ض	٨٠٠		ص	٩٠		ح	٨
ضظغ	ظ	٩٠٠				حطي	ط	٩
	غ	١٠٠٠					ي	١٠

There was another less common dating method circulated by Ibn Kamāl Pāshā (d. 940 AH) that gained traction among Ottoman writers and scribes. This was known as tārīkh bi al-kusūr, among other names.

STAGES OF A MANUSCRIPT

An author first wrote an early draft, known as a *musawwada*. In this stage, the manuscript was filled with *ḍarb* (crossed-out passages), *kashṭ* (scratched-out words), and *bayāḍāt* (blank spaces). The preponderance of these features indicates that the manuscript was an early draft. There are a number of reasons why a manuscript remained in the form of a *musawwada* without moving on to the next stage, such as the author's death (e.g. al-Ḥākim and his *Mustadrak*) and a lack of enthusiasm to rewrite an extremely lengthy document.
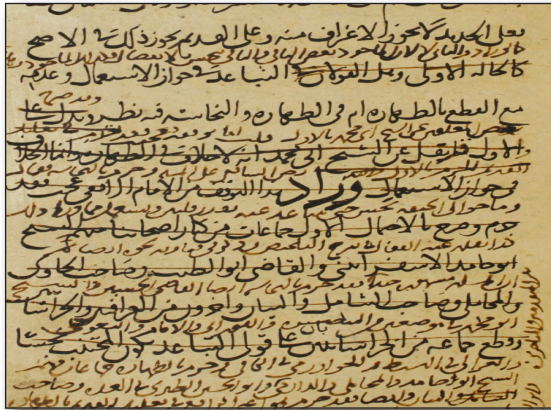
In the next stage, the author would revise the draft and produce a fair copy, known as a *mubayyaḍa*; he may have appointed a student to complete the *mubayyaḍa*. This was the first edition (*ibrāza*) of the text. The author may have added material to the existing *mubayyaḍa*. [See Joel Blecher's *Revision in the Manuscript: New Evidence of Early Versions of Ibn Ḥajar's Fatḥ al-Bārī*.] If the additions were few, they

would have been added in the margins. But oftentimes the additions were so many that the current work became a draft. [In the ending of *Nuzhat al-Albāb fī al-Alqāb*, Ibn Ḥajar writes: "This is the second revision, which has now become similar to a rough draft (*musawwada*)."] After its revision, it was reproduced as a second edition (*ibrāza*). The following is an example of a student-written *mubayyaḍa* of Tāj al-Dīn al-Subkī's (d. 771 AH) *al-Ṭabaqāt al-Shafiʿiyya al-Kubrā*. [katabahu wa al-arbaʿa qablahu li-muṣannifihi].
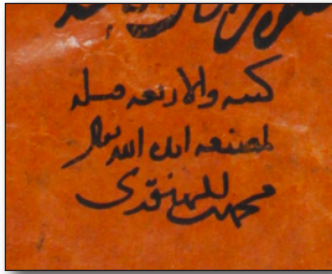
Although a manuscript written by the author (holograph: *bi-khaṭṭ al-muʾallif*) is extremely valuable, it may not always be the best extant manuscript. A later revision by a student that was approved by the author, for instance, is more valuable than the author's earlier handwritten draft. There are indicators that the manuscript was written by the author, such as the mention of it in the *khitām*. The author usually writes words of humility (*al-faqīr* and *al-ʿabd*) before his name and supplications like *nafaʿallāhu bi-hi* after it. Again, one needs to take note of the handwriting and ensure that the details were not copied from an earlier manuscript. In the following example, it was determined

that this manuscript of *al-Muqliq* was written by the author Ibn al-Jawzī (d. 597 AH) himself given the lack of honor-ifics and the supplication [nafaʿahu Allāh bi al-ʿilm āmīn], and later confirmed through a comparison with his other writings.
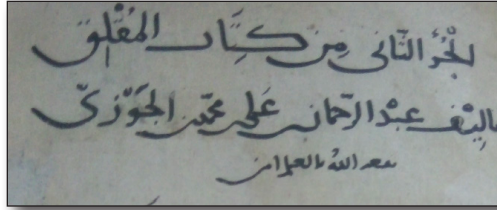
There is a difference between a *riwāya* (recension) and a *nuskha* (manuscript). When the various manuscripts trace back to one edition (*ibrāz*), it is a *nuskha*, in which case when there is a conflict between them, only one man-uscript is ultimately correct. A researcher should compare different *nuskha*s to determine what the author actually wrote. Differences between editions of a book constitute *riwāyāt*, such as the recensions of Abū Dawūd's *Sunan* [al-Luʾluʾī vs. Ibn Dāsa] or Mālik's *Muwaṭṭaʾ* [al-Shaybānī vs. al-Laythī]. The differences between recensions cannot be judged as right or wrong because they constitute different editions. Therefore, it is incorrect for an editor to conflate or combine different recensions.

A manuscript may be the result of a scholar's dictation (*imlāʾ*), like Ibn Ḥajar's *Natāʾij al-Afkār*. In that scenario, students will have many differences based on the level of their proficiency, attendance, and so on. One way to de-

termine that a manuscript was based on dictation is by studying its chain of transmission. For instance, the chain of transmission in a manuscript of Hibat Allah b. Salāma's *al-Nāsikh wa al-Mansūkh* states: *ḥaddathanā Hibat Allāh imlāʾan*, and another manuscript states: *amlā ʿalaynā*. These phrases demonstrate that the manuscripts were written in a dictation session. Aḥmad Shākir gave preference to a manuscript of Ibn Daqīq al-ʿĪd's (d. 702 AH) *Iḥkām al-Aḥkām* over another manuscript because the former was read by Ibn Sayyid al-Nās (d. 734 AH) to the author while the other was a result of a dictation to Qāḍī Ibn al-Athīr (d. 699 AH).

Arrangement of Manuscripts for Editing

The purpose of editing a text is to arrive at the text as finally approved by the author. Simply because a manuscript is older does not mean it is more valuable. Likewise, the fact that a manuscript was transcribed or utilized during a particular dictation does not necessitate that it is the most valuable; it could have been a child's manuscript. A researcher should only compare manuscripts that add value to the editing process. Even if one manuscript is taken as the mother text, editors should not refrain from making alterations based on other manuscripts when they believe there is an error. They should only note substantive variants in the footnotes.

When editing a manuscript, following the cues of the author (*talbiyat raghbat al-mu'allif*) is imperative. If the author writes that a particular passage should be rearranged, his wishes should be carried out. The rule of thumb is that the editor has no right to alter the author's text. For instance, if the author arranged the text in alphabetical order according to the Maghrebi sequence, the editor has no right to rearrange the contents whatever the justification may be, as some editors have done with Ibn 'Abd al-Barr's books. Some scribes would make amendments to the text based on external sources. It is said that scribes of al-Bukhārī's *al-Tārīkh al-Kabīr* amended passages based on Ibn Abī Ḥātim's rejoinder. This is unacceptable. Likewise, the editor

should maintain the author's mode of recitation; if the author wrote according to the reading of Warsh via Nāfiʿ, the editor should not change it to Ḥafṣ via ʿĀṣim. Honorifics (e.g. *ṣalāh* and *taraḍḍī*) and supplications are often later additions by the scribes. Ibn al-Ṣalāḥ (d. 643 AH) writes that these additions are acceptable since they are supplications.

The editor's introduction should be based on the size of the text. The main areas that should be mentioned are: 1) the correct title of the book; 2) ascription of the book to the author; and 3) description of the manuscripts. Unnecessary details should be avoided, like an detailed biography of an author like Ibn Ḥajar. Footnotes detailing biographies, grading ḥadīths, and further references should be written based on the nature of the text and the intended audience. It is pointless to add a biography of Imām al-Shāfiʿī in a book like al-Ghazālī's *al-Mustaṣfā* or to write extensive Hadith grading of a treatise like al-Khaṭīb's *al-Riḥla fi Ṭalab al-Ḥadīth*. Lastly, indices are meant to be efficient and should be written based on the nature of the text. [For a check-list for describing a manuscript, see Gacek, pp. 333-338.]

Conclusion

After studying the basics of dealing with Arabic manuscripts, the most effective way to improve one's knowledge in the field is to read and closely study the manuscripts themselves. Alongside a constant exposure to manuscripts, taking the following three points into consideration will build a student's reading ability.

First, the study of Arabic manuscripts, for the most part, is a product of Ḥadīth studies. To understand these concepts, one is required to read the relevant books (e.g. Qāḍī ʿIyāḍ's *al-Ilmāʿ*) and chapters in books of Hadith nomenclature (e.g. chapter twenty-five in *Tadrīb al-Rāwī*: *kitābat al-ḥadīth wa ḍabṭuhu*). Ṭāhir al-Jazāʾirī (d. 1920) was exceptionally skilled with manuscripts. As such, reading the relevant sections from *Tawjīh al-Naẓar* (vol. 2, pp. 775 ff.) is indispensable. Second, books on the etiquettes of seeking knowledge (*ābāb al-ṭalab*) should be consulted, like Abū Saʿd al-Samʿānī's *Adab al-Imlāʾ wa al-Istimlāʾ* (pp. 442 ff.). Third, to develop practical skills one should study the introductions to works by expert editors like Aḥmad Shākir and ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Muʿallimī, taking note of how they examined the manuscripts used for editing (e.g. Aḥmad Shākir's introduction to *Iḥkām al-Aḥkām*, pp. 6-11). Moreover, reading their critiques of other printed books can bring to light common pitfalls in dealing with manuscripts. [The monthly journal *Majmūʿat al-Makhṭūṭāt al-Islāmiyyah* provides unique insights in the field of Arabic manuscript

studies. It is a must-read for anyone interested in improving their knowledge of the field.]

Case Study

The following is an audition certificate (*ṭibāq al-samāʿ*) for Abū Ṭāhir Ibn Fīl's (d. 311 AH) Ḥadīth treatise. The editor of the text failed to read several passages and erred in others. By bearing in mind the components of an audition certificate mentioned above, students should be able to fill in the gaps and correct the misread passages. The correct reading of the passage is included in Arabic below for students to compare with their own reading. While reading the passage, make sure to take note of the laḥaq in the left margin.

عبد الله محمد بن عبد الرحمن بن عيسى بن سلطان الغزي الشـلفعي
يعني سماعه فيه نقلاً من أبي حفص عمر بن محمد الكومي بسنده ..
بقراءة .... الفقير أبي الفضل عبد الرحمن بن أحمد بن اسماعيل بـن
محمد القلقشندي الاثري ..... عفا الله عنه . . محب الدين محمد
ولد القارئ ، وابن أخيه جمال الدين يوسف بن شاهين الكركـــي
سبط شيخ الإسلام شهاب الدين أحمد بن حجر ، وشمس الديـــن
محمد بن محمد بن محمد .... وشرف الدين يحيى بن محمد بن سعيد
القباني التاجر وغيرهم . وصح يوم الجمعة الثاني عشر من شهر الله
المحرم الحرام سنة ثلاث وخمسين وثمانمائة بمنزل .... تجاه الجـــامع
الازهر من القاهرة ..... والحمد لله أولاً وآخراً وصلى الله وسـلم
على سيدنا محمد وعلى جميع الأنبياء المرسلين والصحابة والتابعين .
الحمد لله سمعه على الشيخ أبي عبد الله محمد بن أحمد بن تمام بـن
حبان المكي بسماعه من ابن عوة بسماعه مـــن ..... بقـــراءة أبي
الفتح السبكي عمر بن محمد بن أبي بكر الكومي عبد الله بن محمـد
ابن .... الوالي وكتب السماع في الأصل وفي خطه .... عبــد الله
ابن أحمد ..... وصح يوم الاحد الثاني والعشرين من شهر رجـب
سنة أربع وسبعمائة ...

44
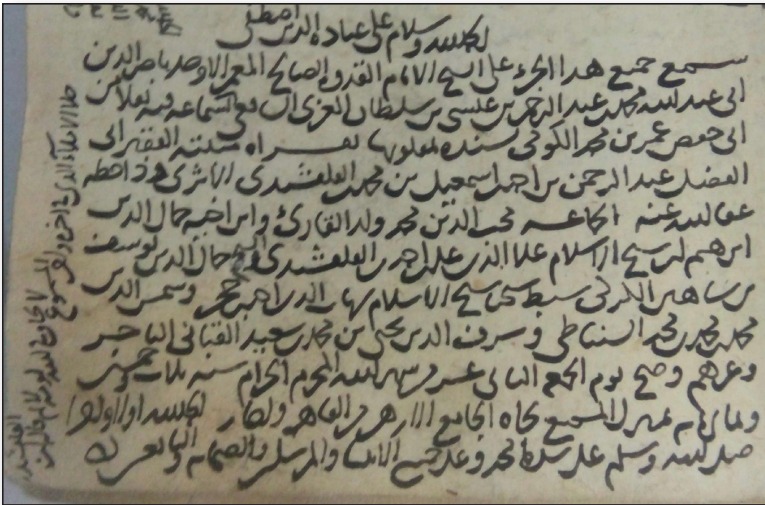
الحمد لله وسلام على عباده الذين اصطفى سمع جميع هذا الجزء على الشيخ الإمام القدوة الصالح المعمر الأوحد ناصر الدين أبي عبد الله محمد بن عبد الرحمن بن عيسى بن سلطان الغزي الشافعي [خلا الإملاء الذي في آخره وآخر المسموع لا يخاف في الله لومة لائم قاله ابن القلقشندي] بسماعه فيه نقلا من أبي حفص عمر بن محمد الكومي بسنده بمقلوبها بقراءة مثبته الفقير أبي الفضل عبد الرحمن بن أحمد إسماعيل بن محمد القلقشندي الأثري وذا خطه عفا الله عنه الجماعة محب الدين محمد ولد القارئ وابن أخيه جمال الدين إبراهيم بن شيخ الإسلام علاء الدين علي بن أحمد القلقشندي والشيخ جمال الدين يوسف بن شاهين الكركي سبط شيخنا شيخ الإسلام شهاب الدين أحمد بن حجر وشمس الدين محمد بن محمد السنباطي وشرف الدين يحيى بن محمد بن سعيد القباني التاجر وغيرهم وصح يوم الجمعة الثاني عشر من شهر الله المحرم الحرام سنة ثلاث وخمسين وثمانمائة بمنزل المسمع تجاه الجامع الأزهر من القاهرة وأجاز الحمد لله أولا وآخرا صلى الله وسلم على سيدنا محمد وعلى جميع الأنبياء والمرسلين والصحابة والتابعين.

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