

## THE CONTRIBUTION OF IBN MUḤLAH TO THE NORTH-ARABIC SCRIPT

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The nature of Ibn Muḥlah's contribution to Arabic writing was for centuries confused and misunderstood. It is only recently that research has clarified the problem and identified his epoch-making invention. This was undoubtedly the "proportioned writing," *الخط المنسوب*. It is now clear that this was not a specific script—one of many such—but a mathematical control of the basic forms of the letters of the Arabic alphabet.<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Eric Schroeder has recently published an article entitled "What Was the Badī Script?"<sup>2</sup> which is likely, if allowed to go unchecked, to involve Ibn Muḥlah's contribution in another series of misunderstandings. Schroeder has unfortunately limited his study to meager sources. He has accepted Huart's pioneer work<sup>3</sup> without further investigation. Valuable as this pioneer work is, it is nevertheless based largely on later Persian and Turkish sources, which should be checked by the earlier and therefore comparatively more reliable Arabic works now available to us to a much larger extent than in Huart's day. Furthermore, Schroeder has misunderstood and misquoted his one early Arabic source, the *Fihrist*, and has most unfortunately taken for his starting-point a passage from Ḥajjī Khalifah, one of the latest of our sources.

Schroeder (p. 234) credits Ibn Muḥlah with three distinct inventions: the introduction of round scripts into Qur'ānic writing; the use of a geometrical control to regulate writing; and the invention of an individual Qur'ānic script called *badī*. The literary sources at our disposal are silent on the first and refute the third. They point to the

<sup>1</sup> For discussion and details of the *khatt al-mansūb*, compare Edward Robertson, "Translation of an Arabic Manuscript on Calligraphy" in *Studia Semitica et Orientalia* (Glasgow University Oriental Society, 1920), pp. 59–64, 71–75, 80–83; Nabia Abbott, *The Rise of the North Arabic Script . . .* (University of Chicago, Oriental Institute Publication, Vol. L [to be published in 1939]), pp. 35–38.

<sup>2</sup> *Ars Islamica*, IV (1937), 232–48.

<sup>3</sup> Clément Huart, *Les Calligraphes et les Miniaturistes de l'Orient Musulman* (Paris, 1908).

conclusion that the fame of Ibn Muḳlah rested, in the field of Arabic writing, on the general excellence of his penmanship, and on his specific invention of the *khatt al-mansūb*, and that the term *khatt al-badī* used by Ḥajjī Khalifah refers to this same *khatt al-mansūb*, or "proportioned script," which consisted of a geometric control regulating the basic letter forms, that is, the second of the inventions listed by Schroeder.

The question of the relationship of the angular and the round scripts, generally but erroneously grouped as Kūfic and *naskhī*, respectively, has been fully dealt with elsewhere.<sup>4</sup> Just as round secular scripts existed before Ibn Muḳlah's day, so there also existed a comparatively round variety of several Ḳur'ānic scripts, for example, the Makkan, Kūfic, *mā'il*, etc., before his day.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, nowhere in the numerous references to Ibn Muḳlah is he ever associated with specific reforms in Ḳur'ānic scripts as such. It is true he is credited with the writing of two or three copies of the Ḳur'ān,<sup>6</sup> but we are not told that he wrote them in any particular script. Yāqūt<sup>7</sup> reports the following significant story connected very likely with one of these very Ḳur'āns written by Ibn Muḳlah. Ibn al-Bawwāb, while in charge of the library of the Buwaihid Bahā' al-Dawlah at Shirāz, came across a *juz* of the Ḳur'ān written by Ibn Muḳlah. The manuscript, he tells us, pleased him or excited his admiration (فاعجبني). He searched diligently for other sections, and was able to locate, in all, twenty-nine of the thirty *ajzā* of the Ḳur'ān. When he drew Bahā' al-Dawlah's attention to it, the latter remembered the copy and asked Ibn al-Bawwāb to replace the missing *juz* in his own handwriting. This Ibn al-Bawwāb agreed to do, but stipulated a reward should the *juz* to be written by him prove indistinguishable from the rest. Ibn al-Bawwāb took his time, matched paper and binding materials of his *juz* with the others, and gave its illumination and general appearance the necessary antique look. Something like a year passed before he presented Bahā' al-Dawlah with the now complete copy of

<sup>4</sup> Abbott, *op. cit.*, pp. 15 f. and 30-32.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 23 f. and 29-32.

<sup>6</sup> Ibn Khalikān, *Wafayāt al A'yān* (Cairo, 1275), II, 90 and De Slane's translation, *Biographical Dictionary* (Paris, 1843-71), III, 269; cf. also A. H. Harley, "Ibn Muḳlah," *BSOS*, III, 229.

<sup>7</sup> *Dictionary of Learned Men*, ed. Margoliouth (Gibb Memorial Series," Vol. VI, No. 5 [1911]), pp. 446-48.

the *Qurʾān*. Despite a searching inspection, Bahāʾ al-Dawlah could not detect the *juzʾ* written by Ibn al-Bawwāb; neither would the latter point it out. Bahāʾ retained personal possession of the copy which thereafter passed in its entirety as that of Ibn Muḳlah. It is to be noticed that no specific name is given to the script in which this *Qurʾān* was written; neither is there any hint that it was written in a "new" style. Furthermore, Yāḳūt in referring to Ibn al-Bawwāb, introduces him as "he of the handsome writing and excellent illumination," صاحب الخط المليم والازدهاب الفائق, or simply as he of the

handsome writing, ذا الخط المليم.<sup>8</sup> He further reports a story according to which Ibn al-Bawwāb was considered unique in all Baghdad in two respects—his beautiful writing, الخط الحسن, and the length of his beard.<sup>9</sup>

The attempt to associate Ibn Muḳlah's invention with a passage in the *Fihrist* (p. 6) referring to the *ḳirāmūz* (not *ḳirāmūzi*) *Qurʾānic* script is unfortunate. That passage, as it appears in the Flügel edition to which Schroeder refers, is very uncertain in parts, and, where it is certain, has been misunderstood and mistranslated. Listing a number of *Qurʾānic* scripts, the passage in question continues with القيراموز ومنه يستخرج العجم وبه يقرؤون حدب قرنا وهو نوعان والمدور والناصرى. This Schroeder translates (p. 239) as follows: "Ḳirāmūzī and from that is developed ʿAdjamī and in that style they write *Ḥadīth* and *Qurʾāns*, and it is in a certain sense the same as Nāṣirī and Mudūr." He does not state on whose authority or on what basis he changes *ḳirāmūz* and ʿajam to *ḳirāmūzī* and ʿajamī; nor does he draw attention to the fact that he has substituted "they write" for "they read." Again, to read "Ḥadīth and *Qurʾāns*," for the two uncertain words that follow is to guess perhaps too freely. Finally the last phrase, clear enough in the text, has been mistranslated, and should read, "and it is of two kinds, the *nāṣirī* and the *mudawwar* (rounded)." It is clear that not much is to be expected from the passage as it now stands. But even if we grant the changes

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 445 and 453.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 453; cf. also p. 450, where a certain Ibn Badr, famed for excellent penmanship, جودة الخط, is compared with Ibn al-Bawwāb.

made in the corrupt passage, we still have no grounds to infer from the passage itself that Ibn Muḥlah was the one who invented this script—call it *ʿajamī* if you will—and introduced it as a round script into Qurʾānic writing. Again, there is nothing in the passage itself that implies that “it was the regular hieratic script of the tenth century,” for in Nadīm’s own day (d. 385/995) Qurʾāns were being written in various old scripts, among them the *muḥakkak* and the *mashk*.<sup>10</sup>

We turn our attention now to the many definite references we have to Ibn Muḥlah in respect to writing. The first mention we have of him is by Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi (246–328/800–940), a contemporary of the famous wazīr to whom he refers as “he whose penmanship (or writing) is characterized by perfection,” *الذي يوصف خطه بالجودة*.<sup>11</sup> Our next reference to him comes indirectly from Ṣūlī (d. 335/946), also a contemporary, who is reported to have said he had not seen since the days of the wazīr al-Ḳāsim-ibn ʿUbad Allāh (d. 291/904) a wazīr who was a better penman, *أما لمع خطاً*, than Ibn Muḥlah.<sup>12</sup>

Nadīm is our next source. Muḥlah, the father of the famous wazīr, seems to have been a good penman. His two sons, Abū ʿAlī, the wazīr, and ʿAbū ʿAbd Allāh, patterned their writing after him. Perfection (*كمال*) was credited to both of them, and none equaled them up to the author’s day.<sup>13</sup> Nadīm was familiar with the father’s writing. He was also familiar with the writing of the two brothers, though he mentions that of Abū ʿAbd Allāh four times and that of Abū ʿAlī only once.<sup>14</sup> Schroeder (p. 239) has not only confused Abū ʿAlī, the wazīr, with Abū ʿAbd Allāh, but he has failed to realize that in these passages the emphasis is on the authorship and *content* of the original manuscript in question and not on the *script* of Abū ʿAbd Allāh. For the formula, *قرأت بخط فلان ابن فلان*, is the usual way of referring to an original manuscript, and on page 42 of the *Fihrist* it is used in line 14 in connection with ʿAbd Allāh ibn Muḥlah in precisely the

<sup>10</sup> *Fihrist*, p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> *Al-ʿIqd al-Farīd* (Būlāq, A.H., 1293–1305) II, 207.

<sup>12</sup> Ibn Tagh̡rī Birdī, *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah* (*Annales*, ed. T. G. J. Juynboll [Brill, 1861–65]), II, 290 and 138.

<sup>13</sup> *Fihrist*, p. 9.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 39, 42, 53, and 55 for Abū ʿAbd Allāh; p. 125, for Abū ʿAlī, was overlooked by Schroeder.

same sense that it is used in lines 7 and 26 in connection with ʿAbd al-Ḥasan al-Khazzāz and Abū al-Faṭḥ al-Naḥawī, respectively, neither of whom was in any way connected with outstanding penmanship or invention of an individual script. Schroeder (p. 239) is, therefore, not justified in concluding from such passages that "Ibn Muḥlah must have written script in an individualized style."

Thus Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi, Ṣūlī, and Nadīm, the three closest in time to the days of the Ibn Muḥlah brothers, credit neither of them with the invention of an individual script, Qurʾānic or otherwise, but concede to both brothers a general excellence in penmanship, for which they continued to be famous throughout the centuries. Yāqūt, whom we have already quoted in connection with Abū ʿAlī the wazīr remarks also on the beauty of Abū ʿAbd Allāh's writing.<sup>15</sup> Ibn Khallikān, still later, reports a difference of opinion as to which of the two famous penmen is to be credited with the invention of the proportioned script, الخط المنسوب.<sup>16</sup>

Just when this term *al-khaṭṭ al-mansūb* first came to be connected with Ibn Muḥlah, and then with Ibn al-Bawwāb, is difficult to tell. The earliest reference I am able to find is, curiously enough, connected with the latter of the two. Abū Ṭālib al-Mubārak Ibn al-Mubārak (d. 585/1189) "wrote the *mansūb* writing till it was said of him that he surpassed Ibn al-Bawwāb (in that art)" وكتب الخط المنسوب الى ابن قيل انه اكتب من ابن البواب.<sup>17</sup> Ibn Khallikān (608-81/1211-82) a century later speaks definitely of the proportioned script. In his account of Ibn Muḥlah, he first draws our attention to the difference of opinion as to which of the two brothers invented the then current system of writing which was followed by Ibn al-Bawwāb. A few lines farther on, however, he says of Abū ʿAbd Allāh, the wazīr's brother, that he was an accomplished and an excellent penman and that it was in reality he who invented the handsome writing, الخط المليح.<sup>18</sup> Thus Ibn Khallikān expresses his own opinion, at the same time that he calls the invention "the handsome writing." However,

<sup>15</sup> *Muʿjam al-Buldān*, ed. Wüstenfeld (Leipzig, 1924), II, 235.

<sup>16</sup> *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, I, 491, and De Slane's translation, *Biographical Dictionary*, II, 282.

<sup>17</sup> Ibn Khallikān, ed. tr. De Slane, II, 331. I have no access to the Arabic reference given.

<sup>18</sup> *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, II 91; De Slane, III, 271.

in his account of Ibn al-Bawwāb he calls the invention, regardless as to which the two brothers was the inventor, the proportioned writing, الخط المنسوب.<sup>19</sup> It is therefore clear that Ibn Khallikān uses the terms الخط المنسوب and الخط المليح interchangeably to indicate the great reform in writing in general, attributed now to the one, now to the other, of the Ibn Muḳlah brothers, and followed later by Ibn al-Bawwāb.

Numerous other authors writing in the period between Ibn Khallikān and Ḥajjī Khalifah refer to Ibn Muḳlah's writing in various terms. Thus Ibn al-Tiḡṭakā (660–701/1261–1301) introduces him as صاحب الخط الحسن المشهور الذي تضرب به الامثال, "he of the beautiful and famous writing, the beauty of which has become proverbial,"<sup>20</sup> and goes on to say that it was he who first devised this writing, that is, الخط الحسن, from the Kūfic, and that Ibn al-Bawwāb followed his style. Al-Dhahabī (643–748/1274–1348)<sup>21</sup> and Ibn Tagḥrī Birdī (d. 815/1412)<sup>22</sup> both refer to him as صاحب الخط المنسوب, or the author of the proportioned script. The latter refers also to Ibn al-Bawwāb as the author of the excellent *mansūb* writing, صاحب الخط المنسوب الفائق, who surpassed all his contemporaries in the *mansūb* writing, so that his renown spread east and west.<sup>23</sup> Ḳalkashandī (d. 821/1418)<sup>24</sup> tells us that perfection of writing reached its climax early in the fourth century with the wazīr Ibn Muḳlah and his brother Abū ʿAbd Allāh; that the wazīr and his brother were both unequaled penmen, and that it was Ibn Muḳlah the wazīr who gave geometric form to the letters and perfected their accurate (or elegant) writing, هندس الحروف واجاد تكتيرها; that the system spread east and west and was followed by Ibn al-Bawwāb, who completed and perfected the rules of writing. Muḥammad ibn ʿAbd al-Raḥmān (898–952/1492–1545), writing more than a century

<sup>19</sup> *Wafayāt al-ʿAʿyān*, I, 491; De Slane, II, 282.

<sup>20</sup> *Fakhri* ed. Hartwig Derenbourg (Paris, 1895), p. 368.

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Ibn Khallikān, ed. tr. De Slane, II, 331. I have no access to al-Dhahabī's *Tārīkh al-Islām*.

<sup>22</sup> *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, ed. Juynboll, II, 219, 236, and 289.

<sup>23</sup> *Al-Nujūm al-Zāhirah*, ed. William Popper ("University of California Publications in Semitic Philology," Vol. II [Berkeley, Calif., 1909–12]), p. 140; cf. also Ibn Khallikān, ed. tr. De Slane, II, 331.

<sup>24</sup> *Al-Ṣubḥ al-Aʿshā* (Cairo, 1913–19), III, 17.

after *Ḳalkaṣhandī*, seems to have drawn on a source used by the latter. The Arabic text of this author is not available to me, and I use here the translation of Mr. E. Robertson.<sup>25</sup>

At the beginning of the third century fineness in writing and its embellishment culminated in the *wazīr* ʾAbū ʾAlī ibn Muqla and his brother [ʾAbū] ʿAbdallah. He conceived a new method and brought it into execution. . . . The credit of bringing to perfection this art rightly belongs to the *wazīr* [ʾAbū] ʿAlī, since he invented and gave a geometric cast to the letters. He perfected their reproduction and laid down their rules, and his fame spread abroad to the east and the west of the earth. . . . There learned from Ibn Muqla, Muḥammad Ibn as-Simsimānī and Muḥammad ibn ʾAsad, and they had as pupil the ʾUstādh ʿAlī ibn Hilāl, generally known as Ibn al-Bawwāb. He it was who perfected the laws of writing, but the one who may be said to have invented the pens was he who laid their foundation, Ibn Muqla.<sup>26</sup>

Thus it is clear again that these authors also understood that the innovation introduced by Ibn Muḳlah, later followed and perfected by Ibn al-Bawwāb, was none other than the geometrical principle which is the essential characteristic of the *khatt al-mansūb*.

The section on scripts and writing in the Oriental editions of Ibn *Khaldūn* (732–808/1332–1406) says nothing about either Ibn Muḳlah or Ibn al-Bawwāb. But in the corresponding section, as given to us by Quatremère, Ibn *Khaldūn* has much to say about excellence in writing *جودة الخط*. Abbasid Baghdad, he tells us, revolted against the imperfect script of Kūfah, until finally the standard of revolt was raised by Ibn Muḳlah, who was followed in this by Ibn al-Bawwāb. He treats us to a poem of the latter embodying instructions to be followed by those desiring excellent and beautiful pensmanship. This is followed by Ibn *Khaldūn*'s own conception of excellent writing, *الخط المجود*. Both Ibn al-Bawwāb and Ibn *Khaldūn* have in mind general rules applicable to all scripts.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>25</sup> "Translation of an Arabic Manuscript on Calligraphy," in *Studia Semitica et Orientalia* (Glasgow University Oriental Society [1920]), pp. 57–83.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 73–75. Cf. with *Ḳalkaṣhandī*, III, 17, where the last sentence reads, "and he it was who perfected the laws of writing and invented most of the pens the foundation of which was laid by Ibn Muḳlah." We will refer to these again presently.

<sup>27</sup> Etienne Quatremère, "Prolegomenes d'Ebn Khaldun" in *Notices et extraits des MSS dans la bibliothèque du Roi*, XVII (1858), 344 and 346 f.; cf. also De Slane's translation and notes in this series, XX (1865), 399 f. and 403 f. These passages, among others, lacking in some MSS of Ibn Khaldun are nevertheless genuine, for it is well known that he revised his text in the years 1387–94. For a critical estimate of the various MSS see De Slane's introduction in Vol. XIX (1862), pp. ciii–cxiii. The passages which concern us here are to be found also in A Silvestre de Sacy, *Chrestomathie Arabe* (Paris, 1826–27), II, 314 f., 318–20; Arabic text pp. ١٢٥, ١٢٨–١٣٢.

We see, then, that beginning with Ibn ʿAbd Rabbihi and coming close to the time of Ḥajjī Khalīfah, the terms repeatedly used with the writing of Ibn Muḥlah, his brother, and Ibn al-Bawwāb are صاحب الخط and جودة الخط, كمال الخط, صاحب الخط المليم, الحسن, and where one of these is not used the characteristic phrase is صاحب الخط المنسوب. It is readily to be seen from the context of the many passages referred to that the first four are used interchangeably for each other and for the *khaṭṭ al-mansūb*, thus making clear that Ibn Muḥlah's fame, and the fame of Ibn al-Bawwāb, rested on general excellence, perfection, or beauty of script and on the specific invention and use of the proportioned writing. They nowhere specify a special individual style or script.<sup>28</sup>

We come now to the passage from Ḥajjī Khalīfah (d. 1068/1658)<sup>29</sup> which is the only one to use the term *badīʿ* and which formed the starting-point for Schroeder's article (pp. 234 and 239). It tells us that among the wazīrs who were penmen was Abū ʿAlī Ibn Muḥlah, and that he was the first to write the *badīʿ* writing, خط البديع. Then came the "inventor" of the *badīʿ* writing, صاحب الخط البديع, Ibn al-Bawwāb, whose excellent penmanship none had equaled or even approached. Immediately following, and still referring to the relationship of these two, comes a passage that is identical with one found in Ibn Khallikān.<sup>30</sup> The passage has been poorly translated by Schroeder; De Slane has done it better justice.<sup>31</sup> Following the latter for the most part, we translate it as follows: "It was Abu ʿAlī Ibn Muḥlah who first took the present system (*of written characters*) from the (*style of*) writing of the people of Kūfah, and brought it out under its actual form. He has therefore the merit of priority; his penmanship also was most beautiful (في نهائه الحسن). But it was Ibn al-Bawwāb who rendered his system [i.e., Ibn Muḥlah's] more regular and simple, and clothed it with grace and beauty." The significant thing about this passage regarding the question in hand is that in

<sup>28</sup> Ibn Iyās, *Badāʾiʿ al-Zuhūr fī Waḳāʾiʿ al-Duhūr* (ed. Paul Kahle and Muhammed Mustafa, in *Bibliotheca Islamica*, 5C [Leipzig, 1936]), III, 419, reports under the year 905/1499–1500 that Shams al-Dīn Muḥammad al-Farnawī wrote the excellent proportioned script, الخط الجيد المنسوب. I have no access to the other volumes of Ibn Iyās.

<sup>29</sup> *Op. cit.*, III, 150 f.

<sup>30</sup> *Wafayāt al-Aʿyān*, I, 491.

<sup>31</sup> Ibn Khallikān, *Biographical Dictionary*, II, 282.



Ibn Khallikān it refers to the relationship of these two penmen to the خط المنسوب, and in Ḥajjī Khalīfah it refers to their relationship to the خط البدیع. Therefore it is clear that the *khatt al-badī* of Ḥajjī Khalīfah is none other than the *khatt al-mansūb* of Ibn Khallikān and others. The term *badī*, then, is used in the same sense as كامل, جيد, حسن, and مليح, and characterizes the *khatt al-mansūb* as “new” or “marvelous,” which indeed it was. Thus we are led to the conclusion that there does not seem to have been a specific individual style of script known as *badī*, invented by Ibn Muḳlah and perfected by Ibn al-Bawwāb, and that therefore the script of the Qurʾānic specimens presented by Schroeder cannot be called the *badī* script.

Despite the evidence of the sources already considered, popular imagination came in time to attribute not one but many an individual script to both Ibn Muḳlah and Ibn al-Bawwāb. Ḳalkashandī is aware of this and deliberately points it out as an error. In his reference to Ibn Muḳlah and Ibn al-Bawwāb, he reports, on the strength of the author (as yet unidentified) of *Iʿānat al-Munshī*,<sup>32</sup> that the latter invented (اخترع) most of the scripts for which the foundation was laid by Ibn Muḳlah. But on the following page—speaking this time for himself—on the strength of his account in the preceding pages<sup>33</sup> he says that the names of scripts such as the *thulthain*, *nisf*, *thuluth*, *khafīf al-thuluth*, *musalsal*, and *ghubār* are old, but that many have (erroneously) understood them to have been the inventions of Ibn Muḳlah, Ibn al-Bawwāb, and others after them.<sup>34</sup> Since the names of scripts can hardly precede the scripts themselves, what Ḳalkashandī is trying to tell us is that these early scripts were erroneously attributed to these penmen. This popular tendency to attribute early scripts to famous penmen of a later day is met with repeatedly. Thus Ibn al-Bawwāb is credited with the *muḥaḳḳaḳ*, and Muḥammad ibn Khāzin of the “school of Ibn al-Bawwāb” with the *riḳā* and *tawkī*, despite the fact that these three scripts were listed in the *Fihrist* long before these men’s day!<sup>35</sup>

<sup>32</sup> Ḳalkashandī, III, 17; cf. also Walther Björkmann, *Beiträge zur Geschichte der Staatskanzlei im islamischen Ägypten* (Hamburg, 1928), p. 79.

<sup>33</sup> Ḳalkashandī, III, 15–17.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>35</sup> Huart, *op. cit.*, pp. 80 f.; *Fihrist*, pp. 8 f. For other instances of this practice see Abbott, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

‘Abd al-Raḥmān, in the account already quoted, though apparently using a source common to Ḳaḷkashandī and himself, differs significantly from Ḳaḷkashandī in one passage.<sup>36</sup> Here Ḳaḷkashandī has: “And he (Ibn al-Bawwāb) it was who perfected the laws of writing and invented (اخترع) most of the pens, the foundation of which was laid by Ibn Muḥlah.” The corresponding passage in ‘Abd al-Raḥmān reads: “He (Ibn al-Bawwāb) it was who perfected the laws of writing but the one who may be said to have invented the pens was he who laid their foundation, Ibn Muḥlah.” ‘Abd al-Raḥmān has, I believe, correctly sized up the situation. Ibn Muḥlah’s *khatt-al-mansūb* was applicable to all scripts—was, indeed, their foundation. On the strength of this contribution “he may be said to have ‘invented’ the pens.” Ibn al-Bawwāb, though he perfected Ibn Muḥlah’s system, cannot, on the strength of that alone, be said to have invented the different scripts founded on that system.

Thus, though the evidence of our sources points to no specific individual script or scripts as the direct invention of these famous penmen, yet their influence is to be seen in all scripts of their day and after. The script of the specimens published by Schroeder is no exception. Taken as a group they have a unity of style, with, however, individual variations. As a type they display, in addition to a certain measure of geometric control and an evident element of grace and beauty, several features characteristic of the earlier Ḳurʿānic scripts—a restrained execution common to all early Ḳurʿānic scripts, the long delicate vertical strokes (اصابع) and the bend of the *alif* to the right characteristic of the early Makkan script, and in some specimens the long extended stroke associated with the *mashk*.<sup>37</sup> Furthermore, they share several characteristics common to the early Christian Arabic scripts which were appreciably influenced by the Syriac script. These are the wavy *alif*, the knobbed or hooked heads of vertical strokes, and the peculiar arm stroke, straight or curved, of the *ṭāʾ* and final *kāf*.<sup>38</sup> Schroeder (pp. 233, 242, and 247) has drawn attention to some other characteristics peculiar to the script. So far as the letter forms go,

<sup>36</sup> *Supra*, p. 76 and n. 26.

<sup>37</sup> Cf. Abbott, *op. cit.*, pp. 24-28.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20 f. for a discussion of the influence of Syriac on Christian Arabic writing; for additional specimens of Christian Arabic see Agnes Smith Lewis, *Apocrypha Syriaca* (“*Studia Sinaitica*” [London, 1902]), XI, ix and plates; Eugenius Tisserant, *Specimina codicum Orientalium* (Bonn, 1914), Pls. 54-55.

these are the use of a thin stroke for the final stroke of *rāʿ*, *zāy*, *mīm*, *nūn*, *wāw* and *yāʿ*, and also for the *hāʿ*, *sīn*, *lām* and *alif* in the later specimens; and the peculiar inclination of the initial stroke of *bāʿ*, *tāʿ*, *thāʿ*, *nūn*, and *yāʿ*, and also of the "teeth" of *sīn* and *shīn*. To these may be added the treatment of the *lāms* in the word "Allāh" and the curved strokes for the *lām-alif*. In addition to all these different elements, the script has several ornamental features that place it among the less elaborate varieties of the later ornamental and flowering "Kūfic," largely inspired and executed by the Persians in the fourth and fifth centuries of the Hijrah, or tenth and twelfth centuries of our era. Taking all these various elements into consideration, we can see that the script is decidedly an eclectic one. That it had a special name is hardly to be doubted. But what that name was and when it was given, is at present not clear. The script may indeed be one of the many as yet unidentified Qurʾānic scripts listed on page 6 of the *Fihrist*.

As a new and flourishing type the script is well placed in the fourth, fifth, and sixth centuries of the Hijrah.<sup>39</sup> Earlier Qurʾānic scripts doubtless continued in use at first side by side with the new one. The fact that we as yet have not come across definitely dated Qurʾāns of the fourth and fifth centuries in these earlier scripts may be accidental. Nadīm mentions the *muḥakkak* and the *mask* "and similar scripts" as being in use in his day.<sup>40</sup> De Slane credits many of the Qurʾāns in the Paris collection to the fourth century.<sup>41</sup> More recently Denison Ross reported a large number of parchment Qurʾāns dating from the fourth to the sixth centuries of the Hijrah; these are at present in the library of the Great Mosque at ʿKairawān.<sup>42</sup> Other large Qurʾānic collections are known to exist in the East and in the West, and work on some of these may be even now in progress. Exhaustive research on such collections will doubtless throw further light on Qurʾānic scripts in general and on those of them which were current in the fourth and fifth centuries in particular.

<sup>39</sup> The headings in *Arabic Palaeography*, Pl. 117, dated 350/961, and Pl. 124, attributed to the 4th/10th century, are of the same general type as that of the Qurʾānic specimen under consideration, though not so well developed or so carefully executed as the latter.

<sup>40</sup> *Fihrist*, p. 7.

<sup>41</sup> *Catalogue de manuscrits arabes* ... (Paris: Bibliothèque nationale, (1883-95), Nos. 325 ff.

<sup>42</sup> *BSOS*, III, 614.

Identification of the "inventor" and the name of the script apart, Schroeder's article has served its purpose in drawing attention to this particular Ẕurʿānic script.

#### ADDITIONAL NOTE

The *Bulletin of the American Institute for Iranian Art and Archaeology*, Volume V, No. 2 (December, 1937), was received at the Oriental Institute Library in November, 1938. Professor Sprengling, to whom the foregoing article had been already submitted, drew my attention to Mr. Mojtaba Minovi's article, "The So-called Badi' Script," published in this number (pp. 142-46) together with a retraction by Schroeder (pp. 146 f.). This I have read with great interest. I am in entire agreement with Minovi's criticism of the colophon in question and with his conclusion that there was no individual script called *badī'*. However, recognizing the irrelevancy of the colophon to the problem at hand and interested in disproving the existence of a *badī'* script as much on its own account as on account of its bearing on the larger and more important problem of the contribution of Ibn Muḥlah to Arabic calligraphy, I directed my criticism of Schroeder's article from this second and wider point of view. And it is for this same reason that I am now led to take issue with Minovi's view of the *khatt al-mansūb*. This I will attempt to do very briefly, since the problem is touched on in the main article here and has been fully discussed in my forthcoming study on the rise of the North Arabic script.

Minovi's failure to grasp the real meaning of the term *khatt al-mansūb* as used by Ibn Khallikān (I, 490) is due in part to a number of widely spread errors growing out of misunderstanding the passage in question as a whole. First, Ibn Khallikān, who says nothing about Ibn Muḥlah having invented any cursive scripts, but speaks only of the present way (*ṭarīkah*) of writing devised from the Kūfic, is erroneously made to hold the view that Ibn Muḥlah invented the cursive scripts (cf. Minovi, p. 145). Next, the cursive scripts were all grouped together and misnamed *naskhī* by Western Arabists. The discovery of early Arabic papyri in cursive scripts called forth a corrective note from De Slane, who, however, at the same time that he pointed out both of these errors, made yet a third when he took the

*khatt al-mansūb* for an individual script. This mistake Minovi considers to be "an error exactly parallel to Flügel's in misconstruing the *badī*<sup>c</sup> into a name" (p. 145, n. 12). It is precisely here that I must take issue with him; for *khatt al-mansūb* is indeed a name, though a name of a general method (*ṭarīkah*) of writing and not of an individual script. Minovi, in reaching his correct conclusion about the so-called *badī*<sup>c</sup>, considered, unfortunately, a limited number of sources, of which Ibn Khallikān alone mentions the *khatt al-mansūb*. He therefore overlooked several others in which the *khatt al-mansūb* is mentioned in connection with Ibn Muḥlah and Ibn al-Bawwāb in such a way as to leave no room for doubt that it was the *name* of a specific method of writing and not, as Minovi interprets it, "the attributed script" (or in effect, 'the script in question')."

In these passages already referred to in the main article, especially those from al-Dhahabī and Ibn Taghrī Birdī, the *khatt al-mansūb* stands alone in the context and therefore cannot be said to be "the script in question," since there is no previously mentioned script or even any reference to writing to refer to. Minovi's manipulation of the term *mansūb* to mean in essence *madhkūr* is not justifiable by either Arabic lexicons or Arabic usage. The term *khatt al-mansūb* as used by Ibn Khallikān does indeed connect it with the previously mentioned "way of writing," but not in the sense of "the above-mentioned script." The *khatt al-mansūb* names and characterizes that way of writing. It is used by Ibn Khallikān to mean just what it says, that is, the "related" or "adjusted" or "proportioned" script. Ibn Khallikān, I am persuaded, fully understood the mathematical nature of Ibn Muḥlah's contribution, as implied in the term *khatt al-mansūb*, and took it for granted that his readers did likewise. Furthermore, the meaning of the term *mansūb* as "adjusted" or "proportioned" is fully substantiated in this connection in the account that Ḳalkashandī (III, 27-38) gives in describing the forms of the letters of the alphabet. He cites Ibn Muḥlah, for the most part, as his authority. Here (pp. 27 f.) we are told that the *alif* is the basis or foundation (قاعدَة) of the individual letters and that these latter are derived from it, related and adjusted to it (منسوبة إليها). *Bā*<sup>c</sup> is next described as a form composed of two lines, a vertical and a horizontal, and its relationship to the *alif* is equality (ونسبته الى الالف بالمساواة). The *khatt*

*al-mansūb* then is indeed the name of a new "method of writing," in which the letters of the alphabet are brought into a proportioned relationship with the basic measurement of the *alif*. A tentative reconstruction of the alphabet in accordance with these directions shows also the relationship of these letter forms to those of the earlier scripts, some of the letters being very similar to the angular Kūfic forms.

To sum up, Ibn Khallikān knew his subject. He does not credit Ibn Muḥlah with the invention of the cursive writing, nor yet with the invention of any one particular individual script. He does credit him with skill and excellence in penmanship in general and with the invention of the *khatt al-mansūb* in particular (it is immaterial for our purpose here which of the two Ibn Muḥlah brothers is so credited). The *khatt al-mansūb* is not an individual script but a mathematical device by which the letters of the alphabet are brought into a proportional relationship with the basic *alif*; it was in part at least devised from Kūfic forms. It was *the* major contribution of Ibn Muḥlah to Arabic writing, an epoch-making one, both new and marvelous.

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