



BRILL

What Was Philology in Arabic?

If philology—as a set of conceptual tools and material practices concerned with the care for texts—came into being as a discipline in the nineteenth century, then how did scholars, and readers more generally, make sense of texts before that moment? The increasing contemporary interest in studying non-European intellectual histories and philological practices on their own terms, and from an emic perspective, has not only opened up new possibilities for excavating marginalised knowledge practices, but has also reinvigorated critical research on the foundations of the European humanities. In this special thematic issue of *Philological Encounters*, light is cast on the histories of Arabic philological practices on the eve of European colonialism and the legacies of this philological encounter. The contributions assembled in this issue approach this topic by examining a multitude of genres, traditions, institutions, and academic legacies from a global perspective. In particular, they explore four interrelated areas. (1) Text critical practices, including techniques of transmission and methods of verification. (2) Practices of collecting, editing, documenting and publishing. (3) The materiality, growth and evolution of texts, including commentaries, glosses, abridgments, and encyclopaedias. (4) The spread of Arabic language theory and philological practices across the historical territories of Islam and beyond, and the forging of a universal philological culture that has been called the “Arabic cosmopolis” (Ronit Ricci) or the “Islamic republic of letters” (Muhsin J. Musawi), or the *philological ummah*.

The majority of the articles assembled in this special issue were originally presented at a conference entitled “What was Philology in Arabic? Arabic-Islamic Textual Practices in the Early Modern World” at Freie Universität Berlin on 13–15 July, 2017. The conference was generously funded by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation. I wish to thank the members of my research group “Arabic Philology and Textual Practices” at Freie Universität Berlin, Colinda Lindermann, Rossella De Luca and Katharina Kloss, for their valuable help in the conceptualisation and organisation of the event.

Islam Dayeh