

# BADAM: A Public Dataset for Baseline Detection in Arabic-Script Manuscripts

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Benjamin Kiessling <sup>1</sup>

Daniel Stökl Ben Ezra <sup>2</sup>

Matthew Thomas Miller <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Université PSL, Leipzig University

<sup>2</sup>EPHE, Université PSL

<sup>3</sup>University of Maryland

# Motivation

Layout Analysis is a major preprocessing step in any digitization pipeline.

A community of researchers is working on historical document LA and regular competitions display improvements in the state of the art.

Publicly available datasets and competitions are almost exclusively on Western texts written in the Latin script.

Arabic and Persian manuscript culture is several times larger than the European one.

A large number of humanities scholars is working on these manuscripts and there is immense interest in digitizing them.

There exists a wide range of topic and styles, often with a complexity of layout rarely encountered in Latin writing.

Bootstrap the research into machine learning-driven methods for Arabic LA.

# Baseline Detection

A variety of data models for describing text lines have been developed with rectangular bounding boxes being the most widely used in practice.

These are generally unsuitable for Arabic handwriting or require substantial effort in training data generation.

The baseline detection paradigm as defined by the cBAD dataset is both easy to annotate and requires only minimal adaptation to Arabic handwriting.



# Baseline Detection

The annotations in the dataset are baselines, virtual lines on which most characters rest.

These polylines can generally be arbitrarily shaped.

Currently these are not orientated, i.e. there is no annotation on the direction the line should be read.

# Baseline Detection - Arabic

Arabic writing has a number of differences to Western alphabetic scripts.

Naskh and Kufic writing generally has a single baseline per logical text line. Thuluth and Nastaliq display per word slanted baselines.



Walters W579

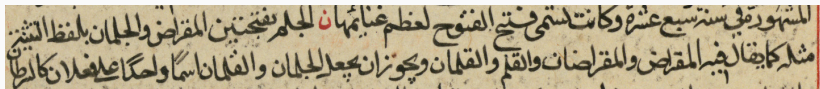
We adapt the baseline definition by drawing a single baseline through an imaginary rotation point at each word.

# Baseline Detection - Arabic

Hyphenation is considered unacceptable in Arabic writing.

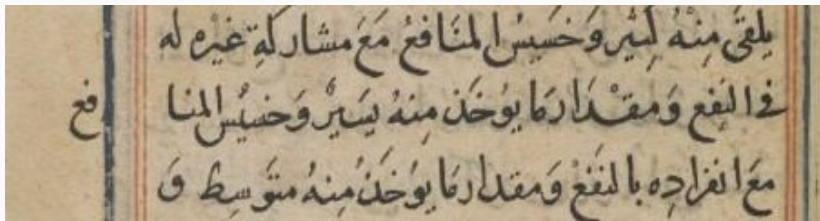
A number of alternatives which complicate annotation have been developed.

The most common feature is warping of the baseline to extend the available space and placing fragments above the text line.



Walters W590

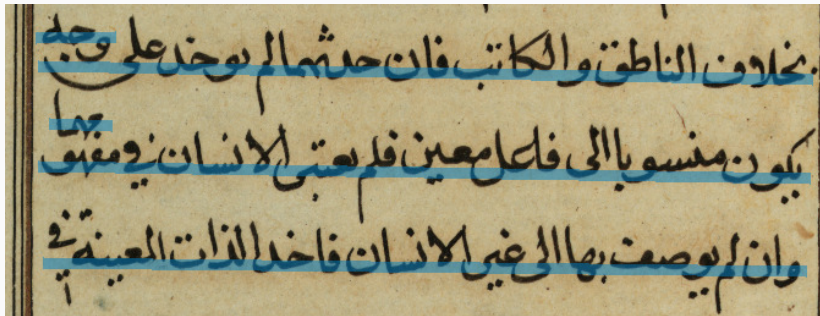
Rarely part of the text is expelled into the margin, instead.



QDL Or 9452

## Baseline Detection - Arabic

In cases of majority overlap between main text line and fragment we annotate the fragment as a separate baseline.



Walters W591

Otherwise it is deemed a warped baseline and annotated as such.

Expulsed fragments are always annotated as separate baselines.

## Baseline Detection - Poetry

Verses in Arabic poetry consist almost exclusively of two hemistichs with the half-verse break forming pseudo-columns.



Walter W619

The pseudo-columns are annotated jointly.

# Baseline Detection - Poetry

In some cases there is a combination of these pseudo-columns and true multi-column text.



Walter W602

The pseudo-columns are annotated jointly while true columns are not.

## Baseline Detection - Poetry

As an additional complication sometimes manuscripts contain 45 degree slanted half-verses.



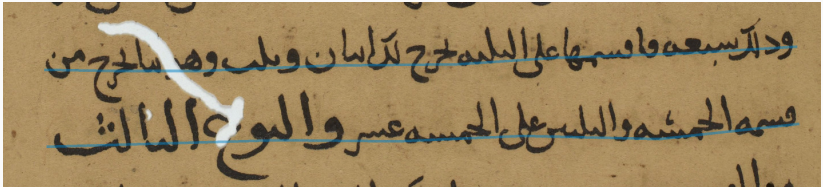
UPenn LJS 44

These are annotated as separate baselines.



## Baseline Detection - Fragments and Damage

For manuscripts with faded ink and holes the baselines are continued.



UPenn LJS 293

The dataset consists of *400* pages sampled from *42* manuscripts of *4* digital collections:

- 15 Qatar Digital Library

- 13 Walters Art Museum

- 6 Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library

- 8 University of Pennsylvania Libraries manuscript collection

All images are in the public domain. The annotation are licensed under CC-BY-SA.

10 representative pages from each manuscript were annotated with the labelme<sup>1</sup> tool.

There are *107700* lines in the corpus with a range of 3 to 176 lines per manuscript page.

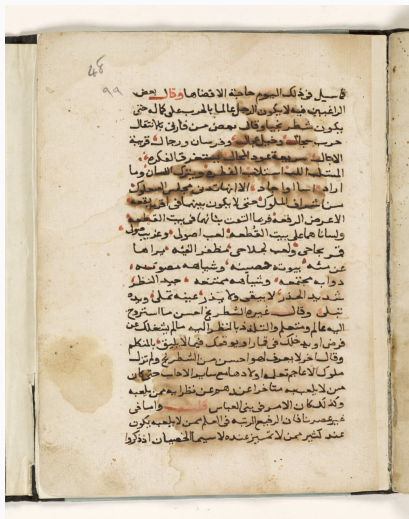
The majority of the corpus is written in Naskh with the remainder being split between Thuluth, Nastaliq, and Kufic.

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<sup>1</sup><https://github.com/wkentaro/labelme>



## Legal texts



## Prayer books



UPenn CAJS Rar Ms 132

# Dataset

## Illuminated poetic works



Walters W619

**Table 1:** Results for the cBAD 2017 dataset and BADAM

	<b>P-val</b>	<b>R-val</b>	<b>F-val</b>
<b>cBAD Simple Track</b>			
BYU	0.878	0.907	0.892
dhSegment	0.943	0.939	0.941
ARU-Net	0.977	0.980	0.978
C-BLLA	0.944	0.966	0.954
<b>BADAM</b>			
C-BLLA	0.941	0.901	0.924



# Conclusion and Outlook

BADAM seems to be significantly more difficult than comparable datasets.

Nevertheless, the current data model is insufficient for an operational layout analysis system.

We hope to further annotate logical text lines and separate main text and notes.

Link: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.3274428>