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Manuscripts and their role in preserving and drawing the image of Arabic calligraphy and promoting Arabic art

المخطوطات ودورها في حفظ ورسم صورة الخط العربي وتعزيز الفن العربي

Khabzaoui Abdelkarim [1], Cherifi Mourad [2]

[1] Assistant Professor - A , University of Souk Ahras, Faculty of Social and Humanities Sciences, a.khabzaoui@univ-soukahras.dz

[2] Assistant Professor – B, Yahya Fares University, Medea Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, cherifi.mourad@univ-medea.dz

خبزاوي عبد الكريم1، شريفي مراد2

[1] -أستاذ محاضر-أ، جامعة سوق أهراس، a.khabzaoui@univ-soukahras.dz

[2]-أستاذ محاضر-ب، جامعة يحي فارس المدية، cherifi.mourad@univ-medea.dz

Corresponding author: Khabzaoui Abdelkarim, a.khabzaoui@univ-soukahras.dz

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Abstract:

(The Arab-Islamic civilization made significant contributions to various fields of science and art, aligning with the developments and intellectual demands of the era. This is evident in the arts of calligraphy and painting on clay tablets, animal skins, and papers that later emerged. Artisans, authors, scribes, and writers creatively and skillfully mastered these arts, using simple tools and techniques for the most part. Despite this, they were able to provide a clear picture of the great cultural development witnessed in the manuscript industry and the art of calligraphy.

In this research, we will explore how manuscripts greatly contributed to the development of various industries, both technically and artistically, through writing tools that combine multiple types of paper, inks, dyes, and vibrant colors, known for their shine and stable characteristics.

Keywords: manuscript, paper, inkwell, pen, art, ink, arabesque.

الملخص:

أسهمت الحضارة العربية الإسلامية بشكل كبير في مختلف مجالات العلوم والفنون، متوافقة مع تطورات العصر ومتطلباته الفكرية. ويظهر ذلك بوضوح في فنون الخط والرسم على الألواح الطينية، وجلود الحيوانات، والأوراق التي ظهرت لاحقًا. لقد أتقن الحرفيون، والمؤلفون، والكتّاب، الناسخون هذه الفنون بطريقة إبداعية ومهارية باستخدام أدوات وتقنيات بسيطة في الغالب. ورغم ذلك، تمكنوا من تقديم صورة واضحة عن التطور الثقافي الكبير الذي شهدته صناعة المخطوطات وفن الخط.

في هذا البحث، سوف نستعرض كيف ساهمت المخطوطات بشكل كبير في تطوير مختلف الصناعات، سواء من الناحية التقنية أو الفنية، من خلال أدوات الكتابة التي تجمع بين أنواع متعددة من الأوراق، والأحبار، والأصباغ، والألوان الزاهية التي تتميز بلمعانها وخصائصها الثابتة.

الكلمات المفتاحية : مخطوط، ورق، حبر، قلم، فن، حبر، أرابيسك.

1. INTRODUCTION

The emergence of writing played a significant role in the development of historical documentation methods, as it constituted a crucial link in this process. It prompted humans to seek various means necessary for preserving the diverse scientific heritage, through manuscripts that benefit both the present and future generations. These manuscripts convey the great cultural and intellectual advancements achieved by Arab civilization, foremost among them being the art of Arabic calligraphy, embodied in handwritten Arabic texts.

Authors, historians, thinkers, and craftsmen laid the foundations and principles—artistic, moral, religious, and aesthetic—for depicting and developing Arabic calligraphy. They also played a vital role in elevating the quality of handwritten Arabic books and spreading Islamic Arab culture. The minds of creators and thinkers contributed to the creation of this scientific wealth, often with the support of some rulers, despite differences in their locations and social statuses.

Returning to the craftsmanship of manuscript production, which utilized raw materials from the environment, these same materials led to the creation of a vast scientific wealth and contributed to the development and diversity of writing tools. This is the true reflection of the impact of Arabic calligraphy, which is considered a crucial link in the production of handwritten books. However, paper remains the sole witness to this process, serving as the mirror that reflects the growth and development of scribes and their craft, including drawing, calligraphy, and decorative arts, from the compilation and editing stages to various publishing processes.

The unity of Arabic calligraphy continues to forge various connections among different Islamic Arab artistic industries. Therefore, manuscripts are considered one of the most important elements of our written cultural heritage, containing valuable information on history, religion, language, philosophy, geography, astronomy, and other essential and fundamental knowledge relevant to their time and place of creation. They represent rare artistic masterpieces, serving as primary sources for the worlds of science and art.

To what extent do manuscripts play a role in preserving and shaping the image of Arabic calligraphy and advancing the arts of libraries and documentation?

1.Towards Manuscript Production:

The introduction of papermaking to the Arab world in the late 2nd century AH (8th century AD) did not immediately replace parchment and papyrus as preferred materials for writing and bookmaking. It took around two centuries for this transition to fully occur. However, the shift from the manuscript era to the era of printing happened more quickly due to the numerous advantages offered by printing. Printing allowed books to be mass-produced at very low costs, which led to the gradual decline of handwritten manuscripts. As a result, libraries saw a decrease in the number of manuscripts, replaced by a growing abundance of printed materials. Therefore, the decline of the Arabic manuscript era can be traced back to the early 19th century AD, or the 13th century AH. (1).

a manuscript encompasses anything written by hand, whether it's a book, a document, or an inscription on stone. However, in terminology, it specifically refers to handwritten books. (2)

Manuscripts are distinct from other forms of writing, such as documents, inscriptions, coins, and textiles, which fall under disciplines like document analysis and archaeology. The study of manuscripts specifically focuses on handwritten books that have not been printed. These books contain intellectual content on various topics and are usually written by hand in limited copies, varying in size, date, pages, handwriting, and copying precision. A manuscript typically begins with a basmala (In the name of God), followed by an introduction from the author, expressing gratitude to God, seeking His help, and sending blessings upon His Prophet. The author then presents the title, subject, purpose, motivation, methodology, and organization of the scientific material (3)

The manuscript can be compared to an ancient tree deeply rooted in the earth, long neglected, yet in need of care and attention to preserve it from the ravages of time. The study of Arabic manuscripts is a sensitive and crucial topic, deeply tied to the heritage of the Arab nation, its sciences, renaissance, and civilization. Preserving, documenting, and utilizing these manuscripts is essential for reviving Arab heritage across various fields of knowledge. By studying these texts, we access a

summary of Arab-Islamic thought accumulated over fourteen centuries. Initially, scholars focused on preserving established positivist knowledge, with the size and limited distribution of books hindering the exploration of emerging theories. The term "manuscript" itself was not used by ancient scholars, who referred to their books as "copies," "parts," or "volumes," instead of the modern term, which was introduced in 1594 as a literal translation of the French term "manuscrit. [4]

Codex is used for manuscripts, a Latin term meaning ancient archaeological writing, or archaeological writing on tablets.[5]

Our rich Islamic heritage is a foundational pillar in building human civilization, with its sciences flourishing and knowledge expanding throughout history. Scientists estimate that there are ten million Islamic manuscripts worldwide, covering all branches of knowledge and constituting a vast intellectual wealth. These manuscripts, passed down through generations, have played a significant role in shaping the nation, providing strength, and guiding progress by offering valuable lessons from the past.

2.The environment in the body of manuscripts:

Since the beginning of history, humans have sought ways to record their thoughts, beliefs, and history to preserve them for future generations. Early on, humans used hard stones for writing, refining and polishing them despite their difficulty in handling due to their strength and weight. This led to the search for more flexible materials, such as tree bark, bones, and leather, which became essential for writing in ancient times. Leather, particularly in the form of parchment, was widely used by the Arabs, especially during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, to create manuscripts, including the Qur'an. The use of materials like parchment, specifically types known as "slavery," "edim," and "qadim," became important for writing, as highlighted in the Qur'anic reference to "parchment.".

Man also found his way in plants such as tree scales, leaves and trunks[6].

The Arabs also utilized green palm leaves for writing, skillfully shaping and sizing them, and used reeds to master Arabic calligraphy, even crafting pens from them. This brief overview highlights some of the natural materials used by humans over the ages, though not arranged chronologically. It's important to note that the longevity of these materials was influenced by factors such as time, climate, and pests. Materials of animal or plant origin did not endure as long, while more durable materials, heavier and less widespread, proved to be more resilient and had a longer lifespan.[7].

Therefore, it is said that the manuscript is the son of its environment and era, and the interpretation of this is that the materials made of it, such as paper, ink and leather, come from the place from which the book was made, and its decorative elegance that purified it, and the volume that it whipped it[8].

3. the origin and development of writing and the factors of its spread:

The first century AD was characterized by the use of several languages in writing systems, such as Syriac calligraphy, for example, but not limited to, writing is one of the characteristics of each civilization from another, and it is among the ways in which the Semitic civilizations in the Arabian Peninsula were known before Islam[9], but after the revelation of the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, he contributed to the process of codifying the

Arabic language, which was still in its beginning limited in use and spread.

After the beginning of the rapid spread of Islam in various countries of the year, he contributed strongly to the dissemination of Arabic writing on a large scale, and thus Arabic calligraphy began to develop and flourish, and dots, vowels and diacritics began to appear with it, to distinguish consonants from others, and we mention among the creators who contributed to the field of improving and reciting Arabic calligraphy, Abu Al-Aswad Al-Du'ali (688), who used fonts and thin dots on vowels, on the oldest ancient manuscripts of the Holy Qur'an[10].

As for the factors that contributed to the spread of Arabic calligraphy, the first is due to the use of calligraphy, in carrying out copying operations for the book of the Holy Qur'an, especially after the death of the Prophet _PBUH_, and the second factor is due to the large and rapid geographical expansion of Islam and the birth of the Islamic empire for control and management[11], for example, what was ordered by the Umayyad Caliph Abdul Malik bin Marwan to use the Arabic language as the mother tongue throughout the countries of the Islamic world, and the geographical scope of Islam from Spain To India, the Arabic alphabet was used to write non-Semitic languages such as Persian, Turkish, and other African languages[12].

Writing occupied an important place in Islamic civilization, and many Islamic languages used the Arabic script in writing, such as Persian, Turkish, Ottoman and Urdu, when non-Muslims who lived in the Islamic House used the Arabic language and composed their works in it[13].

The third factor is due to the large number of commercial activities during the Middle Ages, which also allowed the development of Arabic writing, and the spread of merchants from one place to another contributed to facilitating the transmission of various sciences in various fields[14].

4- Book Tools:

Calligrapher, like other artists, uses some tools in order to perfect his work and its quality, consisting of:

- **Pencil case**: It is the place where the pens are placed.
- **Pens**, or Al-Mazbar : It was said that it is not called a pen until it is healed, but before it is a reed, it was made of the pulp of the green newspaper, and then it was taken from the Persian reed, and the use of reeds and black ink was common until the year 1330 AH, when people knew the use of feather made of metal, so they wrote it in blue ink, and then the use of pocket pens (ink and dry) was common. The reed pens were distinguished from others by the ease of use, and their ability to show the rules of calligraphy, cut by the writer as he wants according to the type of writing and the size of the line, the art of calligraphy lies in the pen, in the art of cutting his tooth or head, which is the secret of the pen, has classified the pen Berri among the Islamic literature, and developed his rules by the most skilled artists of Arabic calligraphy[15].

Reed pens vary from place to place, Persian reeds were the best types of reeds, because they are hard and strong rounded, and the color of its peel is red-black[16].

As for metal pens, they do not perform the rules of calligraphy as they should, although in writing syphilis letters are better than reed pens, because one side of the syphilis letter is thicker than the other, the writer can press on the metal pens and release the metal tooth, thickening the place he wants from the letter, and this does not come with reed pens except

with difficulty, and the pen may be[17] damaged.

Therefore, it is said about the pen that it is one of the two tongues, and it is addressed to the eyes with the secrets of the hearts, in different languages, and from meanings knotted with known letters composed, different images, different sides, its vaccine thinking, and its product is management, and it is one of the greatest things and the strength of the caliphate, and the pillar of the kingdom[18].

- **Medea**: It is the knife with which the pen is sharpened and dropped.
- **Picker:** A solid stick, and a surface on which the tips of the pens are taken.
- **Inkwell**: It is the one in which the ink is placed.
- **Spoon**: It is a stick - preferably ebony - with which the ink is stirred in the circle, preferably round, conical, wide-headed and thick.
- **Marbala**: Its old name is dusty, and it is a box in which yellow or red sand, or what is between red and yellow, is placed to sprinkle the writing after writing it, increasing its beauty.
- **Facility**: A can in which starch is placed after cooking, where it forms an adhesive such as glue.
- **Port:** It is an awl-like machine for packing paper.
- **Binding:** Two woods whose waist is tightened with an iron to prevent the paper from slipping when writing, and locks it in the valve, which is known today as the paper catcher.
- **Mattress:** It is a rag of linen, or wool and the like, spread under pens.
- **Mop:** It is called the notebook, which is a rag superimposed of wool or silk, the pen is wiped with its soles when the writing is finished, so that the ink does not dry on it and spoil, and it is often rounded with a hole in the middle, or rectangular.
- **Masqa'a:** It is a gentle vessel that pours water, or rose water into the inkwell, and is called Mawardiya.
- **Ruler:** It is a straight-sided wooden machine, on which the writing and its belongings are underlined, which is the currently known ruler, and what is needed most by the doctrine.
- **Polished**: It is the one with which gold is polished after it is written.
- **Herring**: It is the stationery in which it is written.
- **Elder**: It is a machine taken to sharpen the knife.
- **Ink and ink**: It is called the ink because it extends the pen, that is, it helps it, and the oil is called an extension, because the lamp is supplied with it, but the ink is originally colored, and the finest is what was taken from oil soot, and some of it is suitable for Kagd (paper), which is smoke ink, and some of it is suitable for parchment and ink is called the head, and there is no smoke in it[19], and it is said in the description of the ink:

ink ink ok men *** and good women saffron
This is befitting the garments of the *** and this is befitting the dress of a horse[20]

There was silver ink made of white lead and mercury, mixed and grinded, until they became like kohl, then washed with water, and glue was added to it until it became coherent and written with it[21].

5.Al-Warraqa and Al-Warraqun, the cradle of the manuscript book in Arabic calligraphy:

The paperers are responsible for tasks such as copying, correcting, binding, decorating, and selling books. They are skilled in identifying various types of paper, selecting the best and finest ones, and are well-known for their expertise in book copying. Paperers operated

their own small shops filled with books and writing tools, including pens, inks, and papers. In this way, their profession represents an ancient form of publishing, actively contributing to the promotion of authorship.[22].

The profession of Al-Warraqa (paperer) played a crucial role in the development of Arabic calligraphy, enhancing the quality of Arabic script and fostering an artistic sense that led to the creation of new calligraphic styles. Over time, Arabic calligraphy became a distinct art form, independent of other artistic expressions, with prominent figures contributing to its evolution. Intellectual independence was a key factor in the growth of the Warraq profession, as many paperers were scholars, philosophers, and religious figures who sought to preserve their dignity and spread ideas free from government influence. This independence helped shape the identity of the Warraq .profession

The study of Arabic calligraphy and the history of the Waraqin holds both cultural and practical importance, as language and writing are continuously evolving. The profession exemplifies a blend of craftsmanship, creativity, cultural awareness, and personal responsibility. The Warraq profession, prevalent in medieval Islamic societies, laid the foundation for modern printing and publishing, encompassing tasks such as copying, correcting, binding, calligraphy, gilding, book decoration, and the sale of paper and writing tools..[23].

The profession of *Al-Warraqa* (paperer) played a pivotal role in the development of Arabic calligraphy, fostering an artistic sense that elevated the quality of Arabic script. Over time, the concept of good calligraphy became a cornerstone of the *Al-Warraqa* profession, leading to the creation of new calligraphic styles that accompanied the work of paperers. Eventually, a specialized form of calligraphy emerged, independent of other art forms, establishing Arabic calligraphy as a distinct art with prominent figures contributing to its development.

One of the key factors for the existence of the paper-making profession was "intellectual independence." Many paperers were intellectuals—philosophers, literati, religious scholars, and linguists—who sought to preserve their dignity by avoiding reliance on government institutions and to spread their ideas free from ideological influence. This intellectual independence was crucial in shaping the identity of the *Warraq* profession.

The study of Arabic calligraphy and the history of the *Waraqin* holds both universal value and practical significance. Language and writing are dynamic and evolving, and the profession of *Al-Warraqa* reflects this living tradition. The cultural interaction within the *Warraqeen* profession demonstrates a balance between craftsmanship, creativity, cultural awareness, and personal responsibility.

Al-Ya'qubi mentions to us in his speech about the lands of Baghdad: "... Then Waddah Mawla Mawla Commander of the Faithful... It has more than a hundred shops for papers."[24]

The *Warraqeen* movement played a crucial role in the development and spread of the Arab-Islamic manuscript book industry across Arab and Islamic countries. Their work encompassed several key tasks, including:

- Selecting the right paper and preparing it for copying.

- Choosing suitable and renowned books after they were written.
- Copying books with good handwriting, correcting errors, adjusting copies, and proofreading them.
- Decorating books, enhancing their appearance, and sometimes gilding them.
- Binding books, where the binding process was either done by the *Warraq* himself or under his supervision.
- Selling and marketing books through specialized shops and paperer markets.

By the beginning of the 4th century AH, Arab libraries and cabinets were filled with manuscripts and books covering a wide range of sciences and literature. The proliferation of these books depended largely on the *Warraqin* scribes who spread their shops throughout the Arab-Islamic state. These scribes copied thousands of manuscripts, and without their efforts, Arabic manuscripts would not have been so numerous.

The profession of *Al-Warraqa* (paper-making) served a role similar to modern publishing houses. Though it held a lower rank than authorship, it was essential for producing high-quality manuscripts, requiring precision, good handwriting, and careful transfer of information. The *Warraqeen* were pivotal in ensuring the survival and distribution of important literary and scientific works, allowing knowledge to be preserved and passed down through generations.[25].

The paperers have their own etiquette during copying, which the copyist adheres to when transferring or copying books, including purity, and to start with the basmala, and to mention at the beginning of the manuscript the phrase said by the Sheikh, or said the workbook, and then proceed to the process of copying, while the conclusion is with praise and prayer on the Messenger of Allah - peace be upon him -, with the phrase "the last part" of the first, second or third part, and if the book is completed, the book is written[26]

The third type of *Waraqeen* were slaves who were owned and did not receive compensation for their work. These slaves were tasked with copying manuscripts, but their work was not remunerated.

There were two methods of copying manuscripts used by the *Waraqeen*:

1. **Direct Copying**: In this method, the paperer would copy the text directly from the manuscript by himself, without assistance from anyone. After completing the copying, others would review his work to ensure its accuracy, confirming that he did not miss any parts or skip lines.
2. **Dictation Method**: In this method, several paperers would gather in their designated places, and another person would dictate from a manuscript from which multiple copies were needed. After the copying was complete, a review or interview would be conducted to ensure the accuracy and quality of the work.

These methods reflect the meticulous care taken in manuscript production, ensuring that the copied texts were faithful to the originals and free from errors.[27]

Interestingly, the profession of manuscript production was not exclusively male, as women also played significant roles as Waraqeen (scribes). One such female scribe is noted by Ibn al-Nadim for her exceptional skills in crafting original and meticulous scripts, showcasing the important contribution of women to manuscript production. This highlights the diversity and far-reaching influence of Waraqeen in the Arab-Islamic world and their role in preserving and transmitting knowledge through the written word.

The evolution of Arabic manuscripts is closely tied to the development of Arabic calligraphy. Over time, Arabic calligraphy progressed from simple symbolic drawings to a more refined and aesthetic art form, influencing the design of the Arabic letter itself. This transformation is evident in the various techniques used in manuscript production, with calligraphy playing a central role. The study of manuscripts also involves examining the materials used to create the Arabic script and how the manuscript's image evolved. Furthermore, economic, social, and intellectual factors have all contributed to shaping Arabic manuscripts, illustrating the interconnectedness between the art, culture, and history of the Arabic script..[28]

Man has spent many centuries, not knowing writing, and this is due to his dispensation with it, because of the simplicity of living and the lack of need for codification, until the need came to put pictures in order to draw ideas a real drawing, so he expressed the human being by drawing a picture of man, and the mountain by drawing a picture of the mountain, and so on for the rest of the creatures, and this is what is called symbolic writing[29].

Perhaps the most prominent pictorial feature that hit the Arabic letter is the revival of the Ajam system in the Umayyad era, followed in the Abbasid era by signs of reduction in drawing words, by deleting some letters, as a result of the speed imposed by the nature of the scientific movement, and writing down what scientists dictate in their councils.

The people of the East dot with one above it, and the qaf with two from above it, unlike the people of the Maghreb who dot, the faa with one from below it, and the qaf with one from above it.[30]

7.Techniques and rules of Arabic calligraphy in writing:

Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi, in his treatise on the science of writing, highlights the importance of the pen as the fundamental tool for writing. He emphasizes the need for precision in choosing the right pen, which should be well-shaped, with dried ink in the barrel and a sharpened tip. The pen's size, shape, and sharpness influence the writing quality and should match the writer's hand speed and style. Al-Tawhidi outlines four sharpening methods: Conquest, Sculpture, Incision, and Cat (referring to the typeface). He also discusses the importance of refining letter forms and differentiating each letter for clarity. Ultimately, al-Tawhidi stresses that beautiful calligraphy depends not only on technical skill but also on the writer's character, intention, and care, emphasizing both aesthetic and spiritual aspects of the art.[31].

The control of writing has garnered significant attention from linguists and calligraphers, leading to the development of precise rules for drawing lines and controlling writing. These rules ensure that the proportions and geometric measurements of the letters are accurate, with the length of each line proportional to its width and curvature, based on a specific scale. While applying this scale may make the font look structured, it also requires skill and creativity. Key principles for controlling writing include: underlining for consistency, giving each letter proper space (Tofiya), adjusting letter spacing (Detail), ensuring each letter has the correct size and edge precision (Saturation), and writing smoothly and steadily to preserve the beauty of the script (Transmission).[32].

8.Features of Arab-Islamic Multiple Art:

Islamic art was influenced by Eastern philosophy, which emphasized humanity's connection to the universe and divine power. This philosophy shaped the Islamic artistic style, particularly its rejection of idol worship to distance Islam from pagan practices. This aversion to depicting living beings evolved

over time, with Islamic art gradually incorporating more representations. Artists focused on austerity, using simple materials like plaster and wood, transforming them into exquisite works through detailed decorations. Islamic art emphasized filling spaces with intricate patterns, incorporating Arabic script, geometric shapes, and plant motifs to create beautiful, harmonious, and balanced designs.

Conclusion:

Arabic calligraphy and manuscript creation have played an essential role in Arab-Islamic civilization, with countless intellectual works preserved in libraries and archives. Paper served as the medium that embodied and safeguarded these writings, preserving the contributions of thinkers, historians, and copyists who advanced Arabic writing. This tradition brought together materials, markets, centers of knowledge, and scholarly circles, all within the boundaries of Sharia law and the technological advancements of their time. In an era where the environment shaped intellectual wealth, paper and manuscripts became vital in preserving the written word. Arabic calligraphy, carried on these manuscripts, represented the finest in science and art, establishing itself as a hallmark of authentic Arab art. The rise of printing and modern technology, however, overshadowed traditional Arabic calligraphy and manuscript production in many societies. Yet, those who continue to engage with these traditional practices offer valuable insights that are often overlooked in today's era of intellectual shifts and globalization, which tends to replace the old with the new. Ultimately, the art of Arabic calligraphy within manuscripts still requires in-depth study and exploration, as the field is vast, and related industries remain .underexplored

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