

Ramin Khanbagi

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Islamic Manuscripts:

A Bibliography

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PREFACE

The importance of book and its role, as well as the written word, in Islam can hardly be neglected or underestimated. Muslims, from the very inception of Islam, through the emphasis of Qur'anic verses and also through the teaching of prophet Muhammad (PBUH) have always insisted on the importance of education, reading and teaching, which could not have happened except through written materials, i.e. books in general.

More probably the emphasis on the importance of the Holy Book gave the book in Islam its central role. In the course of time, this fundamental importance of the book in Islamic culture has only increased. The result is that, despite the destruction of many libraries throughout Islamic civilization and history, there still remains millions of Islamic manuscripts, ranging from the earliest period till the today. Doubtlessly, one can claim that, in numbers of texts, the Islamic manuscripts are the largest manuscriptal literature on earth.

It should also be taken into consideration that, throughout the history of Islamic literatures, manuscripts have been copiously available. Private collections of manuscripts, often with large and important holdings, were, and still are, a common feature in the Islamic world. One can very well maintain that the combination of scholarly activities with texts and the respect for the book has resulted in this astonishing accumulation of handwritten books in Islam.

Even in the 20th, and specially, 21st centuries, where the mechanized print factories have drastically changed the realm of book industry, still in countries like Iran, Qur'anic manuscripts, or poetic corpus of renowned Persian poets (such as *Hāfiẓ*, *Sa'dī*, *Nizāmī* or *Firdawsī*), through efforts of various famous Iranian calligraphists, are produced in handwritten forms as examples of Islamic art, *par excellence*, where people are more in tuned to buy and use such books than the modern printed materials.

The Islamic books are doubtlessly the repository of a large spectrum of knowledge of an increasingly internationally orientated culture. Whereas in the earlier period the language of the manuscripts was Arabic, with the emergence of the other languages that used Arabic scripts as tool to express their respected written materials, most notably Persian and Turkish, manuscripts in the other Islamic languages, were made with the use of Arabic script. In later time, Islamic manuscripts were also written in other alphabets than the Arabic.

Manuscripts, in general, and Islamic manuscripts in particular, with regards to the Aristotelian logic of the distinction between causes, can be considered in four different ways:

1. Material cause
2. Formal cause
3. Efficient cause
4. Final cause

Among the four mentioned causes, the most important, are the first two with respects to Islamic manuscripts.

With regards to the material or physical aspects of the manuscript (material cause), the study of the handwritten book is called codicology or sometimes 'archaeology of the book', concerning itself with the materials as well as techniques used to make books, including the manufacture of bookbindings and the production of inks. The technical term, not only refers to the study of the codex, but also for the study of the non-codex forms of manuscripts, such as letters, documents and books that were written on papyrus, parchment, hides and palm leaves.

With regards to the formal aspects of the manuscripts, paleographical aspect of the manuscript, that traces the importance and significance of the developments of the styles of writing of the Arabic script (*al-khaṭṭal-'arabī*), is the most important feature that need to be mentioned, which in turn, manifests itself mostly in the art of Islamic calligraphy.

Arabic script, as the Islamic script par excellence, was adapted by many non-Semitic Muslim languages, notably Berber, Persian, Turkish, Pashto, Kurdish, Urdu, Sindhi, Kashmiri & Uyghur, which consequently, brought about, through the efforts of mostly non-Arab calligraphists, the creation of various types of scripts, geographically and artistically (e.g. *Hijāzi*, *Andalūsī* & *Maghribī script/Kūft*, *Dīwānī*, *Muḥaqqaq*, *Naskh*, *Nasta'īlīq*, *Rayḥan*, *Riq'a*, *Shikastih*, *Ta'īlīq*, *Tawqī'* & *Thuluth*).

What appears in the title of the book, i.e. Islamic Manuscripts, is a name that mostly denotes what in Arabic is called *nusakh* (singular *nuskhah*), which is a common word for 'transcript', or 'copy', a medium of transmission of Islamic texts with exclusive reference to manuscripts. The term *nuskhah* is what in Persian is called *dastnīvishtih* or *dastnībishtih*, and in Turkish *yazmalar*. It

includes, not only, books, but as well, letters and documents written on papyrus, parchment, hides, paper and painting materials or anything, so to speak, produced by 'hand' and has some relation with 'paper'. Moreover it should be mentioned that the attribute 'Islamic', does not in any way signify the religious aspect of the term, but rather it pertains to things created or produced in the atmosphere of Islamic civilization.

Some twenty five years ago, I had the privilege to get acquainted with a young man, that had devoted himself to anything pertaining to Islamic manuscripts. He, as a young man who was faced with numerous difficulties earning money, spent almost all he earned, in gathering catalogs, facsimile copies, collecting materials dealing with codicology and the like matters. I was then working on different bibliographical projects that one day, we were introduced to each other. Through several meetings, he proposed that, besides continuing on my ongoing works, I begin gathering bibliographical data that deal with Islamic Manuscripts, written in European, or better to say, in Latin script languages.

This was the beginning of a long journey of gathering bibliographical materials dealing with Islamic manuscripts which took me more or less 25 years. After rendering the present book into its final stage, I asked, through a friend of mine, the late Iraj Afshar who was an international renowned scholar on Islamic Manuscripts, to see whether he finds it suit to have this bibliography published. Upon seeing the work, he felicitated the work, and he even accepted to write a thorough introduction to it. Unfortunately, after his medical treatment journey to the U.S., we lost him forever. (*Ut pacem cum eo*).

This bibliography encompasses materials written in Latin script languages up to 2010. As for the internal classification of the book, it should be stated that all records have been numbered and listed alphabetically according to the authors' name, and in the case of lack of author the title of the book has been taken into consideration. Three more indexes, i.e. Name, Book & Subject Index, have also been added to facilitate an easier access to each entry. It must, furthermore, be stated, that numbers appearing in the Indexes pertain to those of each record, not to the pages.

Last, but not least, I would like to thank Mr. Imanipour, a very dear friend of mine, for his ever lasting friendship and his long efforts to have this book published.

Bi Mannihī wa Karamihī
Ramin Khanbagi
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