TEXTS AND MANUSCRIPTS: DESCRIPTION AND RESEARCH

A. Gacek

SCRIBES, AMANUENSES, AND SCHOLARS.
A BIBLIOGRAPHIC SURVEY OF PUBLISHED ARABIC LITERATURE FROM THE MANUSCRIPT AGE ON VARIOUS ASPECTS OF PENMANSHIP, BOOKMAKING, AND THE TRANSMISSION OF KNOWLEDGE

Introduction

The Arabic literature of interest to manuscript studies and produced in the manuscript age is so extensive. Apart from numerous statements and passages scattered in Qur’anic and Hadith literature, biographies, and historical accounts, there are substantial chapters of works and complete compositions, rich in technical vocabulary, on various aspects of bookmaking and penmanship [1]. This should not be surprising as Islamic civilization is, for all intents and purposes, a civilization of the book. The vast intellectual output, which has emerged from the manuscript age, is a testimony to this phenomenon. This literature constitutes a written tradition that is very important for the overall picture of manuscript making in the Islamic context.

Although a good number of relevant works has survived, albeit in some one copy only, a substantial amount of compositions are known to us only by name. Some of them may still be hidden in unexplored public and private collections and others in brief or rare catalogues, while yet others are certainly lost.


On the other hand, we are fortunate to have access to a substantial and growing number of works spanning the period between the 39th and early 1420th centuries, which have either been edited or translated or analyzed in one form or another. And thus the present survey lists some 148 important extant compositions by 12 authors. Prominent among these works are administrative manuals, which contain a wealth of information on writing, writing implements, calligraphy, and paper formats. It is thanks to these compositions that we can gain a better understanding of the development of Arab calligraphy and penmanship, for it was the chancery and its secretaries (maṭāḥīd) who often initiated new reforms in this area. Calligraphy and penmanship, from the early ‘Abbāsid period on, became the most important art of the book and it is not surprising that Arabic authors often refer to this field as the “science of writing” (lām al-khiṭṭa, lām al-qalam).

Among the early chancery manuals mention should be made of Kitāb al-kāntash of ‘Abd Allāh ibn al-Baghdādī (590h c.), Risālah fī al-khiṭṭa wa-qalam al-qalam of Ibn Qutaybah (d. 576/1180), Abū al-kutub al-Sulṭān al-Dīn Muhammad ibn Ḥusayn al-Din al-Muwaffaq (d. 630/1232), Maṣūṣī al-khiṭṭāṭīn of Ibn Ṣūḥāl al-Qaraqqāṣī (d. 625/1228). Later examples include works by such famous Makālik writers and calligraphers as Ibn al-Wahlād (d. 711/1312), al-Nuwayṣī (d. 732/1332), Ḥusayn al-Khtīb (f. 781/1379), al-Zāhirī (f. 806/1403–4), al-Qāṣīf al-Jannālī (d. 821/1418), al-Fihrist (d. 828/1425), Ibn al-Saḥī (d. 845/1441), ‘Alī al-Hirf (d. 891/1486), and al-Tibī (f. 908/1502). Indeed, the
Mamluk period produced, doubt not, the most important literature on Arabic calligraphy. The production of the book in the Middle Ages was accomplished by concerns for its proper transmission. Many scholars and scribes, without perhaps being aware of it, practiced primitive codicology and palaeography. Tacitly, looking at the material aspect alone, the Qur’an and Hadith literature, for instance, provides us with a mass of information dealing with orthography, variant readings, technical terminologies, abbreviations, and the construction of a primitive critical apparatus. For the contemporary codicologist and palaeographer, therefore, it is imperative to explore this literature and subsequently to contrast the gathered findings with the extant heritage.

Hence the question of proper transmission of Hadith is the topic of many early scholars, and their work is still of significance. Mention should be made here of such names as al-Rahmān al-Murdi (d. 360/970), al-Ṭabarān al-Baghdadi (d. 463/1071), al-Qasī al-‘Uyayn (d. 544/1154), al-Sam‘ al-Qasri (d. 562/1167), Ibn al-Salih al-Shahrazuri (d. 643/1243) and Ibn Jam‘ah (d. 733/1333). This process of formulating correct procedures in transmission of texts culminated in the most comprehensive chapter on the topic composed by Badr al-Dīn al-Ghuzā‘ (d. 948/1537) and included in his al-Durar al-muḥtāf fi al-fu‘ād al-mufaṣṣal wa-al-muṣūfīl. In the area of the arts and ends of the book section should also be made of a number of works that provide us with information on bookbinding, papermaking, writing materials and implements. Foremost among them are two manuals: 'Umād al-ṣaḥīḥ wa-‘udad al-‘alāhīt attributed to the Zāhid ruler al-Mu‘izz ibn Bīrūd (d. 453/1061) and Muḥammad ibn al-Sam‘ of the same period by the Rasūlīd ruler Yūsuf ibn Umm al-Malik al-Muqaffar (d. 694/1294). These works, apart from dealing with writing implements and ink, also includes chapters on papermaking and bookbinding.


Abbet al-‘Abbār fī al-ṣaḥīḥ al-‘Abbār by al-‘Abbār. [For interest are the sections on the ethics of copying and handling of copies of the Qur’an].


Chronological list


1. Al-Farrâ‘ (d. 207/822)


2. Abū ‘Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn as-Sālim (d. 242/858)

Abu ’Ubayd al-Qāsim ibn as-Sālim al-Harawi (GAS, i, pp. 48), Fadl al-‘Arabī (GAS, i, pp. 48).

3. Ruzbihan al-Mu‘izz al-Muzaffar al-Ma‘rūf al-Ma‘rūf (Cairo, 1989); others.

30. Ibn Sidah (d. 458/1066)

31. Al-Ṭabīḥ al-Baghdādi (d. 463/1071)

32. Taqī al-Dīn (d. 757/1356)

33. Muhammad al-Ḥusayn (d. 688/1095)

34. Ibn al-Ṣanʿāʾi (d. 652/1254)

35. Al-Ṣanʿāʾi (d. 688/1290)

36. ʿIyād al-Ṭabarī (d. 544/1149)

37. Al-Ṭabarī (d. 544/1149)

38. Al-Waṣāʾif (d. 672/1274)

39. Al-Ṭabarī (d. 544/1149)

40. Ibn ʿAbd al-Quraysh (d. 625/1228)
59. Ibn Fadl Allah al-Umari (d. 749/1349)

60. Ibn al-Rajzi (d. 747/1347)

61. Ahmad ibn al-Mansur (d. 748/1348)

62. Al-Dirazi (d. 860/1454)

63. Al-Maqrizi (d. 860/1454)

64. Al-Qaasimi (d. 821/1418)

65. Ibn Ishaq (d. 833/1429)

8.1. El-tibi (d. after 908/1502)


8.1. Ibn Abī Hamidah (9/15th c.)


8.2. al-Suyūtī (d. 911/1505)


8.2.1. al-tayr fi ‘ilm al-Qur‘ān. [In particular: New 76 – fi marzum al-khutbat wa-khībat al-tasfīr.]


8.2.5. ‘Arab al-maqālāt wa‘imā‘ mamā‘ al-darṣā bi-wu‘ayyād al-Nasrī [Ma‘ārakat], see especially the section on ‘ilm al-Qur‘ān (‘uruzah).


8.2.7. A commentary on the Alifliyyat al-labidy by al-‘Ira‘ī (d. 806/1404) (q.v.).

8.3. al-Sam‘ālī (d. 914/1508)


8.4. al-Wanqārist (d. 914/1508)


8.5. al-Anṣārī (d. 926/1520)


8.6. Ibn Kāmil Pāṣā (d. 940/1533)


8.7. al-Sha‘bīl al-Thānī al-‘Amlī (d. 966/1558)


A. GACEK, *Scribes, amanuenses, and scholars*.
112. al-Bilbaṣyti (1319/19 h. c. —?)


113. al-Sībī’i (f. 1332/1913)


Anonymous compositions

116.

“ریالیت al-f al-kubba al-manṣuhah” [ed.]. کنیف al-Muhaddid’i al-taṣawq al-maṣṣi al-أرحبی، I (1955), pp. 121–7. [Composed most probably in the late 4th/10th or early 5th/11th c. This edition of the text is based on Rizālī fī ilm al-kubba, a MS copied ca. 900/1494, see VA I, No. 7].

117.


118.


119.

Rizālī fī sīnāt al-albāb. [ed. Al-Zawīn (Baghdad, Matha’ al-Iskand, 1986). Based on a 1218h. c. MS preserved in Maktabat al-awdiq, Baghdad, No. 32176].

120.


121.

Arrī al-liyāq wa-sīnāt al-albāb. See Barwān Badrī Tawfīq, “Rizālī fī sīnāt al-albāb wa-al-liyāq”. [Based on a MS, Maktabat al-awdiq, Baghdad, No. 600227].

122.

ریالیت al-albāb فی bary al-qalam wa-‘alam al-albāb. [This work appears to be an adaptation of ‘Umād al-kutub by Ibn Bādh (q.v.). The chapter on papermaking has been published by Qasim al-Samārī] on the basis of a MS preserved in Tetoaman, al-Muktabah al-‘Ammah, No. 190 (see his Ilm al-zahiri ma’ al-arhabī al-islāmi (Riyadh, Markaz al-Malik Faysal Ilbūbū, wa-al-dārāsi al-islāmiyyah, 2001), pp. 263–4].

123.

Muhammad Báqqar’i al-Sībī’i, “Rizālī”. [Based on a MS, Maktabat al-awdiq, Baghdad, No. 13716].

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