Poverty or richness?
Some ideas about the generation of Islamic texts revisited

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Imagine the scene. Respectable scholars organizing a mourning ceremony, not for the demise of a benefactor, nor for a deceased colleague but for the end of science itself. One luminary in his field after the other denouncing the recent development in the world of learning. They all agree that the news they have just received is absolutely horrifying. Of course they knew it was coming, since times are bad, yet when it came, the news still took them by surprise, and it made them feel sad ... Scholarship as they knew it had come to an end, and collective mourning is indeed appropriate.

If one would indeed imagine such a scene, what would one think? We know, of course, that academic and scholarly life is being threatened from many sides and always has been. A managerial class of semi-alphabetics is taking over institutions of learning and respectable scholars are gradually being marginalized. Especially when their speciality is not recognized as of immediate importance or utility to society, they can be simply ignored.

Yet these managers cannot do without them, and when scientific accomplishments must be shown, a few scholars are paraded in front of a duly impressed audience. The scholar who is unable to quickly explain to the new masters why his discipline is important at all, is ridiculed behind his back. He is treated with contempt (‘senile old fool’), and his days are numbered.

But true as it may be for modern academia, the scene which I have just described is not about that. Maybe there were other reasons for mourning? Would this mourning ceremony have been staged because of inappropriate academic salaries? Can professors nowadays not do their work because of financial strains? Do they have to take second or even third jobs in their spare time? Driving taxis, writing blurbs for publishers, doing journalism under pseudonym, performing translation jobs, or selling good results in examinations, not to mention even more dubious occupations? Or are they perhaps prevented from doing their academic work because these managers continuously want to receive reports, plans and
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