

## Historical Narration of the Ottoman Empire: An Overview

*Suleiman Shammasi Ali and Roslina Othman*

Department of Library and Information Science, Faculty of Information  
and Communication Technology, International Islamic University Malaysia

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**Abstract:** This study is a review of various scholarly works that manifest the development of information organization and dissemination in Ottoman Empire between 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries. It gives a brief political history of the empire in regards to its demographic power and thereafter, outlines various reasons for its fall ranging from economical, religious orthodoxy to abuse of scholars. The study focuses more on information organization mechanism previously utilized by scholars to preserve and disseminate scholarly works within the empire with particular focus on codicology, watermarks and dating, manuscripts, *ihmal* and paleography. It critically analyses the above mechanism and hence, recommends the way forward in regards to its advancement *vis a vis* current technological advancement. The researchers reutilized on various academically published materials as the source for the analysis.

**Key words:** Manuscripts • Ottoman Empire • Codicology • Islamic Codicology • Paleography

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### INTRODUCTION

We are living in the information age where information is very crucial for development. Development of any nation depends on how much information it is getting from its information organizations or institutions. The study of Islamic manuscripts has become very important to every Muslim seeking knowledge or evidence to support his ideas. It provides the evidence on how Islamic civilization acquired and developed knowledge for more than 250 centuries.

This paper presents review of several Witkam works on Islamic manuscripts that present to Islamic manuscripts in different centuries with emphasizes on 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in Ottoman Empire.

**The Ottoman Empire:** For more than half a millennium, the Ottoman Empire was world power, determining the fate of many European, Asian and African regions. The western border of the Empire was, for quite a while, at the Danube in Eastern Central Europe and the gulf Region was the Eastern frontier [1]. The Ottoman Empire was well recognized not only for its power, but also for its role

model of its rulers. Ottoman empire was seen by contemporaries as very much part of Europe in the early modern period, not only as the successor to the Roman–Byzantine empire, but also as polity directly involved in the struggle for power and influence in Europe. This power gets her apogees between the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries [2].

Furthermore, the empire had profound impact in Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, especially, during the apogee of its power between the 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries [3]. Besides, most of the of the Balkans and eastern Europe remained under Ottoman Imperial rule for centuries and many of these countries today still reflects the remnants of the various institutional features inherited from the Ottoman Empire[3]. Thus, between the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Ottoman Empire was one of the greatest empires of the world, starting from Caucasus to the Balkans to North Africa [4].

However, from the second half of the 16<sup>th</sup> century until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the empire slowly lost its momentum, a period referred in the literature as the declining period.

On the other hand, the Ottoman Empire maybe said to be a major factor that contributed to the fall of knowledge power in Islam. Researchers have propounded different theories in an attempt to explore the ease of the fall of knowledge in Islam. While some suggests that religious orthodoxy became hurdle in the way of scientific progress, others think that economic system and non productivity of science compelled Muslims to give up socio-economic and scientific research [5]. Tartars' invention in the East and Muslims expulsion from Spain deprived them of their past position. They caused the death like gloom in the centers of learning at Muslims lands. Humans were killed in indiscriminately and books in libraries were burnt to ashes [6].

The dispute over the possession of churches in 16<sup>th</sup> century in Istanbul has been extensively used and abused in modern scholarship, both within and outside the discipline of history. Such use and abuse was more dependent on their approach to different version of the story which is sometimes related to contemporary ideology [7]. Whereas, the remnant of Christian contributed by destruction of intellectual life of the people in Spain [6, 8], Ottoman Empire came to the end on November 1, 1922 when the Ottoman Sultanate officially gave up all authority [9].

**Codicology in Scholarship:** The discussion on codicology, focused on writing surface such as the papyrus, parchment, paper and organization of the codex instruments. The emphasis was based on the techniques of ruling, lay-out craftsmen scripts: paleography, styles, calligraphy ornamentation: illumination, illustration, book-binding and dating of manuscript, collection of manuscripts terminology in use [12]. The researcher discusses history of data collection, the removal of great quantities of manuscripts from the Ottoman capital in the course of 16<sup>th</sup> century, from where some were in turn exported to western collections in the 17<sup>th</sup> century [10].

Furthermore, the paper argues that western classical textual criticism cannot automatically be applied to the editing of Arabic and other Islamic texts. Also, it is important to make use of its methodology.

**Islamic Codicology:** Codicology is derived from the Latin word Codex. This is a quire of the codex consisting of units called bi-folium, folio, page sheet, leaf and page and finally a number of quires sewn together form a codex [11]. Codicology refers primarily to the study of the material aspects of codices that is, manuscripts books comprising

a series of gatherings, or quires, of sheets [12; 13]. Codicology studies the physical details of the book, it concerned with everything that one can know about the book except its contents. Codicology is a well developed branch of book science. Today, it is used for the science of the book in all cultures, not only for books from the Middle East [11].

The instruments used during these periods were like pens known as reed pens and inks made by certain recipes. The inks were kept ready in the ink wells. Also, colored inks were used. These were the mainly instruments used by the copyist after he has made up his mind concerning the lay-out the book.

Codex is an amount of quires consisting of a number of folded sheets, leaves. After the book had been copied by copyist, their leaves are sewn together into a quire; the quires will be sewn together into a volume. These volumes are bound [11].

The copyist must take a number of measures in order to ensure that the leaves of the manuscript remain in their proper order within the quire and, he must equally take care that the quires remain in their proper order within the book. Manuscripts maker is a person who makes the manuscript and the copyist is the person who copies the text. He is usually not the author of the text. Author and copyist must be clearly distinguished. There is no fixed rule or law for the number of sheets in a quire. The copyist is free to do as he likes, but he may feel bound in local traditions [11].

The numbers of sheets differ from one region to another. The number of sheets per quire in the Mashriq is often five, in Central-Asia often four, in the Maghrib often three; it is not rare that one finds other quantities, even within one and the same volume.

The paper shows the importance of the condition of the quires, because they are the physical make-up the architecture of the book [12]. West African manuscripts are usually written on single leaves or one sheet, but these are not made into quires. These leaves and sheets are put onto a pile and then kept in a satchel. [11]. On the other hand andalusia manuscripts are written in a mixed material such as parchment and paper. This, is, because the second half of the twelfth century seems to be the period in which paper started to be used in al-Andalus.

**The Written Surface of Manuscripts:** The written surface can be one of papyrus, parchment, paper and others. In the ninth and tenth centuries, paper has gradually replaced papyrus and parchment. Paper was less cheap than papyrus, but was more stable. At the same time it

was less stable than parchment, but much cheaper. This combination of combined advantages of parchment and papyrus made paper the ideal substitute of either one of them. The papyrus and parchment is made by natural way. The best that can be done with the restoration of parchment and papyrus is lamination by still and transparent materials, such as Japanese paper or purpose-made plastics. On the other hand, paper is much easier to restore and the result of repairs can be absolutely spectacular. Islamic and Middle Eastern manuscripts as mostly known are books made by paper. Papyrus and parchment became obsolete after the introduction of paper [11].

The oldest invented Chinese paper dates back to Christian era, when they import /export paper to Middle East in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The role of paper is well explained in this part, papers have great impact on the development of written culture that can hardly be overestimated. Thus, development of paper influenced unity of culture. This is, because of its cheap media which gave rise to scholarly multiplicity. They made number of numerous copies of one and same text by many students and teachers. Many new text were created and gained right of dissemination.

The Dome of the Rock was a direct beneficiary to the late Architectural tradition, the 7<sup>th</sup> century witnessed astonishing creative moment that led to the transposition of the same principles to the craft of the scribe working with pen and parchment [14].

Shortly, the discussions of these principles initiated in the Classical era found that a continuation in the earliest Arabic scientific writings, started towards the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century A.H. (8<sup>th</sup> century A.D). Materials preferred most for book binding, were leather such as sheep, goat, gazelle and cow leather. Paper seem to have been used in Islamic manuscripts in a manner very similar to parchment [12; 13].

The last page of the manuscripts usually has the author's prayers, the names of calligrapher and illuminator and the date of writing of the manuscript. In some manuscripts, book name and publication date also appear. This information on the hatime page is called ketebe record [15].

The marbling art, whose history dates back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, has an important place in the Ottoman Book-binding art. The edges of marbled binding covers were usually covered with leather in order to prevent them from demolition. In the Ottoman manuscripts, marbling was mostly used in the inner cover as well as book protection pockets and boxes [16]. Therefore, the 19<sup>th</sup>

and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries found an unprecedented flowering of sciences and literature in the Middle –East. Also, bureaucracy profited from the wide availability of paper.

**Watermarks and Dating:** In the study of manuscripts watermarks and dating plays an important role. It observed that water mark allows the place and date of production of the paper bearing it and employed in the copying the manuscript to be identified [12]. The utility of watermarks in dating a manuscript is often overrated. Most importantly, at best a watermark can corroborate or refute a proposed dating. Sometimes it can provide an approximate date. The illustrations of the reference works on watermarks provide us with an overview of trends in watermark design and of the periods and the places in which these were used [11]. It was mentioned that the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards the number of papers with watermarks became too large for any meaningful determination [11].

During the tenth- sixteenth century, European paper and no-water marked paper coexisted in roughly equal proportion throughout the Ottoman Empire, exactly the same manner as the concurrent quire formats of the quaternion. Also, no congruence has been demonstrated between the use of quinions and water marked papers [12].

Therefore, the most materials for making books are papyrus and parchment, these two materials has been gradually replaced by paper [12; 13]. The Islamic and Middle-East is usually manuscripts on paper. In the history, other materials have been used for writing text. The early collection of the Qur'ans consisted of a multiple of materials for instance: textile, palm leaves, bones, animals' leather and etc. Their determination was as long as the more or less flat and smooth surface, to write on.

In the history of writing or paper china was the well known before other countries. Thus, Islam since in early age encourages people to seek knowledge even if they were to travel to china [11]. In the eleventh – seventeenth centuries, in Turkey, Syria and Egypt, as in the Maghrib, the vast majority of manuscripts were being copied on watermarked paper [12, 13].

**Ihmal in Arabic Manuscripts:** The term 'ihmal' is the non-writing of diacritical dots and the use of a whole range of signs to indicate the certain letters do not carry dots. Regarding 'neglect neglected' the author refers to the fact the description and the use of the *alamat al- ihmal* have hardly object of scholar research.

The sciences in which the form of the word (lafz) is as important as was its meaning there was a concern for orthography. God's word (Qur'an) and that of the Prophet (Hadith) should be written correctly and unambiguously. The professionals who would have most concern over the exact orthography of these texts were grammarians, Qur'anic scholars and Traditional scholars [11].

There are many grammarians in Islamic manuscripts for instance Ibn al-Sarraq. An example of a Qur'anic scholar is al-Dani, with his works *al-Muhkam fi Naqt al-Masahif* and his *al-Muqni fi Rasm al-Masahif al-Amsâr, Kitâb al-Naqt*. Traditional scholars often write about the making of books and usually about ihmal signs as well: *al-Ramahurmuzi*, in his *al-Muhaddith al-Fasil* and Ibn al-Salah al-Shahrazuri in his *Muqaddima*,

Later use of ihmal has lost its original functionality. In some regions of Yemen, ihmal signs remained in use up till the transition from manuscript to printed book in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. In other areas, the ihmal signs completely disappeared at a much earlier date. By their very nature, they are redundant, provided the copyist is careful in his punctuation [11].

The ihmal signs were commonly used by calligrapher as a graphic asset. Therefore, the ihmal signs are presented in many calligraphic samples, but they seem to serve more as space fillers, rather than really differentiating between homographs. In these samples, they are not different from other reading marks, such as hamza, shadda, vowels, sukun, etc.

Sometimes later, calligraphers even expanded the existing ihmal system by using ihmal marks where these were originally not used for him ihmal was never necessary [11].

The shifting of manuscript to printed book is the main cause of ihmal disappearance. Calligraphers lost their attention on use of ihmal in essence that it has nothing to do more than space filler [11]. This has affected not only the beauty of manuscript but also the difference between the words with the same meaning.

**Palaeography:** Reading scripts is something for which one must have a talent, or else one will never be able to do it well. Talent is important not only in paleography but in all walks of life. It is a craft that can be learned by everyone who can read and write [11].

Palaeography is the study of the history of scripts, their adjuncts such as abbreviation and punctuation and their decipherment. It is the science of deciphering and determining the date of ancient documents or systems of writing. Arabic palaeography is the study of the development of Arabic script through time and place [11].

Paleography is defined as the science or art of deciphering and determining the date of ancient documents or systems of writing [13]. The study of palaeography, codicology and epigraphy they will usually end up as bibliographers, authors of manuscript catalogues, historians of the handwritten book, librarians. The study palaeography and codicology and epigraphy as auxiliary sciences will usually end up as a philologists, editors of texts, historians, antiquarian booksellers, etc. [11]. The differences between the modern printed Arabic and the manuscript sources. Copyist of manuscripts has an enormous repertoire in letter shapes. Copyists use a great number of ligatures. A ligature is the linking of two or more letters into one graph, in which the original letter forms have been altered.

Palaeographer's work is based largely on comparative analysis. Technology that emerged during the nineteenth century has extended the amount of documentation available for the search for parallels and toady scope is very large [13]. Following this, [11] observes that most students have not idea of the constituent elements of letter. Therefore, they should be made aware of what they actually write and read. The knowledge that acquired it makes sense only if they wish. Paleographers are specialists whose knowledge and methods should in theory make it possible to identify the date and origin of a given piece of writing [13].

**Teaching Palaeography in Practice:** In real work practicing, [11] states that student should first concentrate on the script that he sees; only later he may satisfy his curiosity by trying to find out what the next means. The student is unable to exactly copy a text. This has been taken away from the school curriculum. It means that, he will make many copying errors while writing. It necessitates that he gives much of his time and efforts to correcting his own work. He should collate several times, till he is sure that his copy is free of error. The copyist should make exercises from paleographical atlases and similar teaching aids [11].

The study of the history of scripts, their adjuncts such as abbreviation and punctuation and their decipherment is very important for understanding and acquiring knowledge from Islamic scripts. It was very important to learn and teach how to write and read Arabic scripts not only acquiring and seeking knowledge for the current generation but also to preserve and to transmit knowledge for the future generation. Now, we still need to know this knowledge in order to preserve and transmit the knowledge from our libraries in an automated form. This requires the knowledge and skills of Islamic manuscripts to our librarians.

**Scientific Manuscripts:** The scientific manuscripts in the collections of Leiden University Library, Jacobus Golius was primarily looking for Islamic books of manuscripts which could be useful for his research and the academic research imperatives in Renaissance Europe [17].

Jacobus Golius had a keen eye for works related to Classical antiquity, more specifically, scientific works which were direct translations from Greek into Arabic, or scientific works by Muslim scholars which contained elaborations of Greek works and original contributions by Muslim scholars to fields of science. The author explored some of the manuscripts which Golius collected in the Levant. All manuscripts shown have been preserved in Leiden for almost four centuries and have been important sources for European research on Oriental languages and cultures [17].

Some of the very important manuscripts on the work of the Aleppo for instance, include: the beginning of the fifth maqala of the Arabic translation of the Book on Conic Sections (Kitab al-Makhrutat) by Apollonius of Perga (c. 262-190 BC). The Arabic version gave text that was lost in the Greek tradition. Golius had privately acquired a magnificent manuscript of the text. This copy he had made to serve as a working copy. It was copied by a scribe in Aleppo, Derwish Ahmad, the illustrations were drawn by Golius himself [17].

There are various copies such as the copy of Algebra by the mathematician ‘Umar Khayyam: Maqala fil-Gabr wal- Muqabal and other copies from different disciples and scholars gives clear understanding of how much the flourish of Islamic civilization survived in various centuries. It gives the proof that Islam is the source of knowledge and how knowledge was seeking and transmitted in various regions in Islamic state [17].

Therefore, it is glaring that Muslim scholars contribution to the development of knowledge affects positively the enter world. The study of Islamic Manuscripts gives the evidences to prove that Islam is the sources of various aspect of knowledge.

**Medicine Heritage in Manuscripts:** Greek-Islamic medicine as it is presently used in Pakistan and India is one of the rare instances in which the manuscript tradition is still very much alive. Handwritten notebooks of medical practitioners form a main source of knowledge in the field.

These notebooks (bayaz) were privately compiled by the hakim’s and then, collected, excerpted, expanded, photocopied and sometimes also published, but the manuscript element is its most conspicuous feature [11].

Unani tibb is a system of medicine practiced today in the South Asian country of India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. Unani Tibb provides medical care in both urban and rural communities along with biomedicine, homeopathy and other traditional systems based on ancient and classical doctrines of medicine such, as Ayurveda and Siddha in India and folk and tribal medicine [18]. There were numbers of scholars that contributed in the development of unani tibb in different centuries. It is observed that in its origins in Greek medicine, the theories of Galen are cited as most influential to the system's theories. Contemporary Unani practitioners in India and Pakistan, cite the importance of Hippocrates as well for contributions to the theories of Unani. As the system developed in West Asia- the Middle East, the contributions of the Per-sians, Ibn Sina (Avicenna, 980-1037 A.D.) and Rhazes (ar-Razi, Muham- mad ibn-Zakariyya, 865-923 A.D.) were central to the system's development [18].

Scholars such as Ibn sinas book titled al-Qanun fil-Tibb, with commentary by Al-Nafis. Ibn al-Nafis is known as the discoverer of the smaller blood circulation, centuries before it was discovered again in Europe by Willian Hervey. The second book of Ibn Sina’s Qanun was pharmacopoenia which has often been copied separately [11]. The study of Greek-Islamic medicine in the subcontinent is part of the history of medicine, but because of the fact that it is still in use and that even hospitals exist (in Hyderabad, Deccan, among other places) in which this type of medicine is practiced. It occupies a special place and cannot be considered as just one of the many types of popular medicine, which are practiced all over the world [11].

The Yunani Tibb consists of original medical heritage (Hippocrates, Galen autonomous Islamic Arabic and Persian) developments in medicine in the pre-modern period; Prophetic medicine, a medical approach, derived from Qur’an and Hadith; Specific sub-continental contributions to medicine and pharmaceuticals; Modern additions and techniques, such as Ayurveda and modern western medicine [11].

Prophet medicine is a medical approach derived from Quran and Hadith. It is a typically based on Quran and Sunnah. Natural medicines like Islamic medicines are most suitable for treatment since they produce little or no harmful side effects. It does not disturb humeral equilibrium [18].

The Yunani Tibb was a branch of medicine that was suitable to self help (in contrast to surgery) and that fact too may explain the great numbers of publications in

existence. Many will have found their way into the home-pharmacies of the Indian and Pakistani middle-class. Much may be presumed lost [11]. The analysis of all this material still has to begin. Even the most basic bibliographical control is absent.

### CONCLUSION

The paper has reviewed some Islamic manuscripts and some issues in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries in regards to the Ottoman Empire. From the reviews and literature we conclude that Islamic manuscripts were very important not only for the flourishing of Islamic civilization, but most importantly they act as evidence for knowledge power in Islam. Most of Islamic manuscripts were written in Arabic language at the early era and then were written in different languages. Arab Islamic heritage came into focus as Arabs transmitted to Europe the sciences of philosophy, logic, medicine, chemistry, astronomy and sociology [19]. Therefore, the paper gives evidence to the reader on how Islamic manuscripts were utilized as tools for knowledge power to enhance their civilization to the extent of impacting a great deal of demographic space of the globe for centuries. It takes place in early Islamic era as secondary sources of information, how it is transmitted and survived.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The above historical study of previous powerful Islamic civilization on how information can be stored and transmitted to advance knowledge of various disciplines can be useful in today's world if serious initiative is developed to establish institutions of higher learning. This will have multiple associations both academic and cultural for preserving and advancing research to share knowledge. This will be possible if both political zeal and academic efforts are applied by various stakeholders. Since the end results would be to proof evidence of Islamic manuscript and to also develop a strong urge among various stakeholders in establishing civil *ummah* through knowledge power.

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