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Transcribing Craft (Warraqi) and Transcribers (Warraqan) in Islamic Civilization

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Abstract

There is probably no need for extensive exploration to believe that movable type invention had a tremendous and historical impact on expansion of science and emergence of renaissance in Europe, as tens of articles and research books have already been dedicated to this fact; but the real question which requires historical explanation is how the man before invention of printing had preserved his written inheritance or had passed it to his successors? The present article is actually an effort to answer this question in the realm of Islamic Civilization. In addition, this study while defining transcribing craft and mentioning the works copyists did, it also discussed the origins of this craft in Islamic Civilization. Then the crucial elements of transcribing such as handwriting, style of writing, methods of transcribing, social position of transcribing profession and copyists' earning, the success of copyists' business, and their verification and control by the government have been discussed, based on historical documents. Finally, a short list of some well-known copyists in Islamic Civilization are presented.

Keywords: Copying, Copyists, Handwriting, Transcriber, Writing, Book

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Introduction

The invention of movable type is undoubtedly a turning-point of man's culture and civilization history. Guttenberg in mid 9th/15th century (840/1436 or 841/1437) introduced a new age with all its characteristics to man with his epochal invention (Robert, 515). The revolution in printing induced the rapid growth of publication and distribution of books and as a result, different sciences became available for the public. Perhaps that is why the movable type invention is known as one of the most significant factors of Renaissance and cultural revival of the west (Fisher, 1/466 & FF; and see As'adi, 79-91). This epochal invention had wide impacts on developing various thoughts and ideas of different cultures and civilizations and provided a capacious basis for cultural and intellectual interactions between societies (Fögel, 549-550). With this invention, man could take an important step toward preserving his written heritage and keep it from degeneration and annihilation. The main question in this article is that, before this invention what has been the Muslims' way of preserving and publication of their written heritage? And who have been the people shouldering such a momentous responsibility? While searching historical writings of the Muslims, we came across terms such as transcribing (Viraqa) and transcribers (Warraq) which indicate the profession and craft that today we generally refer to as publication industries. In other words, the transcribers in world of Islam did the works that today are handled by publication centers. In fact, the transcribers did the whole range of works including preparation of books and presentation it to market or their customers in its finalized form. In transcribing craft, the major works of book publication such as making copies, correction, bookbinding and illumination were done by owners of the craft. In addition, they also undertook extraneous works related to the craft such as dealing paper (waraq), different kinds of stylus, ink, etc. The main objective behind this profession in Islamic Civilization was to prove the fact that transcribers in Islamic Civilization by taking much pain accomplished such works with their hands' art and accurate sight that today the printing machines do with high speed in a large extent and the same results.

Transcription Definition

Ibn Khaldun in Muqaddama defines transcription craft as: making copies of books, correction, bookbinding, and doing the other works related to books and divans (P. 421). Sama'ani defines that a transcriber (warraq) is the one who writes down Qurans (Masahif), tradition books (Hadith) and the like and sometimes the people who deal paper (waraq) are also called transcribers (al-Ansab, 5/584). Ibn Athir believes that a transcriber is the copyist of books and a paper dealer (al-Lubab fi Tahdib al-Ansab, 3/357). Ibn Mandur has defined a man who writes a book page by page a transcriber (15/274). Therefore, the transcribers in Islamic Civilization shouldered all the works and operations, which are normally done in publication centers today.

The Beginning of Transcription in Islamic Civilization

Most probably, the first step toward making written copies by Muslims, dates back to writing Mushaf (Quran). The Companions (of the Prophet)

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and the Followers wrote Quran for themselves based on the devotion and interest, they felt toward Quran. Then a number of Muslims who were skillful in writing and enjoyed a desirable fair handwriting, began to write Quran for the others too. At later stage, the copy work was extended to tradition (Hadith) and other religious sciences and finally with expansion of the scientific development among Muslims and the increase of Muslim scientists' works, import of the scientific heritage of other civilizations to world of Islam and the beginning of translation movement and abundance and relative improvement of stationery, the transcription was formally established and were widely spread in all religious and non-religious fields.

One of the predecessors of transcribing who took wage in return for transcribing and copying Quran was Khalid Ibn Abi al-Hayyaj. Who wrote Quran, poetry and news for Valid Ibn Abd al-Malek, the Umayid ruler. Ibn Nadim says, "Umar Ibn Abd al-Aziz asked Khalid Ibn Abi al-Hayyaj to write a Quran similar to that of Masjid al-Nabi Qibla. Umar approved Khalid's work and paid him more than they had agreed upon (P. 9). Malik Ibn Dinar (d. 131/748) was also one of the transcribers of Quran (Ibn Rusta, 193). Once Jabir Ibn Zaid-e Azdi who was fond of Malik's work came round to him, and whilst Malik was busy writing Quran asked, "you have no profession and craft other than writing and copying the word of God from one paper to another! I swear God that this sustenance and business is definitely licit (Sejestani, 131). It is clearly understood from what was mentioned that transcription and copying Quran in return for taking wage, has had priority over transcribing and copying other books with different subjects.

Some other transcribers and copyists of the Qurans are: Abu Huday who wrote delicate Qurans during Mu'tasim Abbasid's time, was one of the noblemen of Kufa, and was quite skilful; Ibn Umm-e Shayban, Mashur, Abu Khamira, Ibn Homayra (Ibn Nadim, 12), Abu Abdullah Asbaq Ibn Zaid (d. 159/775) and Abu Ishaq Ibrahim Ibn Maktum (Sama'ani, al-Ansaab, 5/584). Some other known figures were Yaqtini, Ibrahim al-Sagir, Abu Mussa Ibn Ammar, Ibn al-Saqti, Abu Abdullah al-Khuzaimi and his son in illumination of Qurans and the ones such as Ibn Abi al-Harish, Abu Issa Ibn Shiran, Ibn Hajjam, Ibrahim and his son, Hossein Ibn Saffar were considered masters in bookbinding of Quran and other books (Ibn Nadim, 15-16).

The Important Elements in Transcription

As it was mentioned, the transcribers accomplished a wide range of works including copying, binding and illuminating the books. Achieving each of these goals required means and materials like paper, with difference in types and quality and this could influence the price. But we can definitely say that the most significant factors required for and influential in transcription profession and success of transcribers were having a fair handwriting and precision in recording subjects while copying. The famous authors and compilers while transcribing and copying their books, selected the individuals who could write both beautifully and precisely. Having a fair handwriting was a very positive characteristic of all, the scientists who wrote their

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books themselves, the transcribers who served the scientists or worked independently and the divan's transcribers.

In many literary books and the divan records or the works, which in a way or other dealt with books and transcription a special part has been dedicated to stationery, different types of font, stylus and other related topics (e.g. see Qalqashandi, 2/469-517, 3/3-228; Raqeb-e Esfahani, 1/197-224; Sama'ani, Adab al-Imla wa al-Istimla, 165-192; Zarnuji, 45-46).

Importance of handwriting was to such extent that in some biographical books, the beautiful handwriting of the scientists and great people have frequently been mentioned as a biographically significant feature; for example Yaqut-e Hamawi has continually referred to this characteristic of the literary and great people in Mu'jam al-Udaba, and has praised the biographees for having a good handwriting or in the contrary has blamed some of them because of their illegible handwriting and inaccuracy. For example with regard to Ali Ibn Mohammad Ubaid Asadi, known as Ibn Kufi (d. 348/959) he says, "Considering accuracy of recording and fidelity to the original text, I have never known any man superior to him in transcribing. His handwriting was so beautiful that today his works are traded in the market and the fragments of his books are sold for one Dirham each page" (14/153-156). He also remarks about Ali Ibn Abd al-Rahim Ibn Hassan known as Ibn Assar, "He was a knowledgeable man and was very well versed in Arabic language. He possessed such a fair handwriting that many people were interested in learning his style of writing" (19/11; for more examples see: ibid, 13/218-219, 14/5, 16, 245, 15/97, 120-134, 16/45, 47, 59, 171-172, 17/58, 19/60, 205, 276). Regarding his profession, trading and copying books, Yaqut highly esteemed the fair handwriting and the importance of transcribers' work, therefore has paid a specific attention to the life and biography of transcribers and calligraphers; to the extent that in Mu'jam al-Udaba he includes some biography only for the sake of their fair handwriting or their high skill in transcribing, though they are not men of literature (e.g. see: 13/212, 17/230).

The Special Fonts of Transcription

Perhaps, we normally expect transcriber to have his own special style; but it is interesting to know that the professional font of transcribers with which they wrote the books was a special font called transcribing font, or Muhaqqaq or Iraqi (Ibn Nadim, 14). Although, no source is available about the transcribing font but we may presume that it was written with broad-tipped stylus, because it required bigger and more pages and transcriber could easily write many pages at a short duration. Furthermore, transcribers wrote easier with broad fonts and as a result could take further wages because their wages were often on the basis of the number of pages they had written (Zayyat, 15).

The transcribers' style was quite opposite to that of scholars of Hadith (Muhaddith) who wrote for themselves. Tradition scholars utilized round-tipped stylus and decreased the space between the lines. The reason was the high cost of the paper that made the tradition scholars to economize on it. Because the tradition scholars' font was small and

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thin and there was little space between the lines, they called it Muqarmat (Sama'ani, Adab al-Imla' wa al-Istimla', 187; Waheeb al-Jaburi, 79). The other writers and scientists utilized the round-tipped stylus and consequently small fonts as well. One of the evidences indicating the discrepancy between the transcriber's style of writing with that of other scientists is what Ibn Asaker mentions in his biography of Abu Ali Hussein Ibn Ahmad Ibn Mohammad Neishaburi (d. 365/975), "he passed all his life collecting and writing al-Musnad al-Kabir. This book is 1300 parts with his style of writing and I definitely believe that this book if written by transcribers would exceed 3000 parts. And also Neishaburi collected Abu Bakr Seddiq's Musnad along with its commentaries and evidences in ten parts and a little more, while transcribers have written it in 60 parts and some more" (Ibn Asaker, 14/294-295; Badran, 4/354-355).

Transcribers' Method of Work

The transcribers' apply different methods in their works. Sometimes the author himself gave the book to the transcriber or the book came to the transcriber in some way or other. The transcriber had to write the book in several copies to be kept in the library or to be sold. For such purpose, he employed several persons to whom he dictated the book and in this way several copies were prepared. The transcriber both dictated the book for these people and supervised over their work. Sometimes the knowledgeable man himself held a dictation session in which so many people attended. The students wrote the speeches by their master for their personal use and the transcribers attending the session also transcribed the issues exactly the same as uttered by the master and then these handwritten books were sold. In another way, an individual wanted the transcriber to copy a book and he did so in lieu of receiving a wage. This method common for copying Quran. Also there were instances when the transcribers were at service of scientists or sometimes for Emirs and viziers. One example of such transcribers is Farra, the famous lexicographer (d. 207/822) who was appointed by Ma'mun Abbasid to author a book, including principles of Arabic syntax and all he had heard from Arabs. For this, Ma'mun had a room prepared for him and put some servants and bondwomen at his service to prevent his attention to be diverted. These servants even announced the time of praying to Farra. Ma'mun appointed some transcribers to help him and some people to take care of their financial needs and the pertinent costs. Having finished the work, Farra came to people to dictate the book *al-Ma'ani fi al-Nahw*. His transcribers Salama Ibn Asem and Abu Nasr Ibn Jahm were also among the group. Abu Buraida Wazzahi says: "we wanted to count people who attended the dictation session held by Farra which was a useless effort due to the abundance of population". When Farra completed the dictation, the transcribers compiled their writings for commercial purpose and announced that anybody who wants a copy could buy 5 pages for 1 dirham. People complained from the transcribers' greed to Farra who urged the transcribers to avoid such practices but his call was uncared for. To confront them, Farra announced that he intended to dictate the

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book more completely and comprehensively than before. Thus he held a dictation session and dictated 100 pages about *Praise* (Hamd). The transcribers came and told him that they would give people whatever they wanted and so decided to copy each 10 pages for 1 dirham (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba, 20/11-12).

Abu Ubaida Ma'mar Ibn Muthanna Basri (d. 209/824) known as Abu Ubaida Nahwi, was so jealous for his books being distributed among people. Ismail Ibn Subaih brought him from Basra to Baghdad during the reign of Harun al-Rashid. And he summoned Ali Ibn Muqaira Asram (d. 232/846) who was a transcriber and was a student of Abu Ubaida and accommodated him in one of his houses and closed its door and gave him Abu Ubaida's books to be copied. Asram also gathered a group of people and provided them with required papers and books of Abu Ubaida to be copied. Abu Ubaida was not aware of Asram's measure otherwise he prevented him to do so (ibid, 15/77-78).

Abu Mutraf Abd al-Rahman Ibn Fatis, the judge (d. 402/1011), had 6 transcribers in Andalusia who worked for him continuously in lieu of a definite salary (Ibn Bashkuwal, 1/256). It has been said when Ya'qub Ibn Shaiba Sadusi (d. 262/875), began to author his book *Musnad*, 40 blankets were provided for those transcribers who stayed the night at his house to make fair copies of his *Musnad*. To do this, Sadusi spent 10,000 dinars (Khatib Baghdadi, 14/281).

Abu al-Abbas Mohammad Ibn Dinar Ahwal, was a knowledgeable man who worked as a transcriber for Hunain Ibn Ishaq, the physician, and wrote his quotations about archaic sciences, *Ulum al-Awa'el,* (Yaqut, ibid, 18/125 -126). Abu Hayyan Towhidi who himself was a famous scientist worked as a transcriber in the court of Saheb Ibn Abbad, one of Buyid Dynasty's viziers where he copied his favorite books (ibid, 15/34-35).

Other transcribers who themselves were scientists but worked as transcribers for others were:

- Ahmad Ibn Mohammad Ibn Saeid, known as Ahmad al-Qurashi had nice handwriting and worked as transcriber for people in Damascus. He was the transcriber for Abu al-Hassan Ahmad Ibn Umair, the Hafiz from Damascus (ibid, 4/238).
- Abu al-Hassan Ali Ibn Ahmad Duraidi, originally from Persia and was a transcriber for Ibn Duraid the famous lexicographer. When Ibn Duraid passed away, his books were inherited by his transcriber, by virtue of his will (ibid, 12/223).
- Abu Sabet Abd al-Aziz, from Iraq was a great scientist and worked for Abu Ubaid Qasim Ibn Sallam (ibid, 7/142).
- Abu Abdullah Mohammad Ibn Musa Marandi, was one of the narrators of traditions and worked as a transcriber for Abu Nu'aim Jurjani (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, 5/110).

Some famous libraries also employed transcribers to provide the best books and replace the old books with new copies and also to equip their libraries with new books authored by great scientists. For instance, the number of transcribers worked in Tripoli's Dar al-Ilm estimated to 180 persons. Among them, about 30 people always attended the Dar al-Ilm without absence,

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alternatively (al-Esh, 372). Various transcribers attended the library of Ya'qub Ibn Kellas, the vizier for Fatimid Dynasty. Some of them were writers of Quran and some others were writers of traditions, literature and jurisprudence and some wrote medical books. Some other of these transcribers compared these copied books with the original ones and dealt with the punctuation and diacritical marks of Qurans (Ibn Khallakan, 7/29). Also, according to Maqrizi's report, many transcribers were worked at Hakim's Dar al-Ilm so that the budget allocated for the buying of the papers required for the transcribing amounted to 90 dinars per year (1/459). Allan Sho'ubi, the transcriber, who himself had a bookstore and used to copy the books needed by people and scientists was also working as transcriber for Abbasid's court (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba 12/191-192). Some transcribers also attended the library owned by Ja'far Ibn Fazl, known as Ibn Hanzaba (d. 391/1000), the vizier to Ikhshidi Emirs. They copied the books and their required papers were bought from Samarqand (ibid, 7/176).

Transcribing and Transcribers' Social Status

Although transcribers played a significant role in the accessibility of various sciences through publishing the authored books, yet their social status was not a meritorious as they allocated the lower social stratums. The transcribing was a difficult job and made the transcribers fagged, however they received no significant wage in return. Thus the transcribing job was dispraised by society.

Abu Hayyan Towhidi who worked in the court of Sahib Ibn Abbad as transcriber recited the transcribing profession as a portentous occupation and stated his hatred toward this job. Ibn Abbad ordered Towhidi to transcribe his belles-letters amounting to 30 volumes. Towhidi tried to summarize them and to avoid transcribing them fully, which provoked Ibn Abbad. Abu Hayyan became gloomy from Ibn Abbad's attitude and said: "What is my fault if I could not transcribe 30 books of such a dog (Ibn Abbad)"? Is any human able to transcribe such number of books and yet expect himself to have healthy eyes and a fresh body. I came to this court from Iraq to get rid of this portentous job although the job was so prosperous there (ibid, 15/27-38). One day Ibn Abbad came to Abu Hayyan while he was writing. He rose as a sign of respect and the latter shouted him to "sit down, saying transcribers are too mean to rise before me as a sign of respect (ibid, 15/26).

Contrarily Allan Sho'ubi, the transcriber faced another situation. Allan resided at the house of Ahmad Ibn Abi Khalid Ahwal, one of Abbasid's noblemen upon his request to work as his transcriber. One day Ahmad went to that house. Everybody rose before him except Allan. Ahmad Said this transcriber is so rude. Allan heard him and said in response: "why should I be attributed with immodesty while all people follow me as a sample of decorum. Why do you expect me to rise before you while it is not me who needs you and it is you who wanted me to write for you in lieu of wage"? Then Allan swore not to transcribe ever at anybody's house since then (ibid, 12/192-193).

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Mohammad Ibn Ahmad Daqqaq, known as Ibn Khaziba (d. 489/1095) who lost his house in the flood of the year 466/1073 was coerced to do transcribing to earn his living. He says: "in those years I made 7 copies of *Sahih-e Muslim* and one night I dreamt it was the Day of Judgment and I was summoned by the herald and I was told to enter Eden. When I entered I reclined on my back and put one foot on the other and said "oh, by God I became relieved from transcribing and copying" (ibid, 17/227-228). Jahiz reprehended the transcribers saying: "although, the transcribers' job is to write news (and copying of books) for literary men and the sages, I have seen nobody worst than transcribers. And the transcribers of Quran are the worst" (Raqib Isfahani, 1/215). Another transcriber describes the era in which he lived reprehending the transcribing profession and says: "my reputation is more fragile than the glass and the ways through which I can earn my living are narrower than ink bottle and the color of my face in the sight of the public is darker than ink" (ibid). In another word, transcribers are considered one rank above than lowbred and harebrained people. People were advised, in case they have to go to the market, avoid sitting in any shop save for the transcribers or chain mail makers, since these two groups are different from lowbred and harebrained people (ibid).

Abu Mohammad Ismail Ibn Mohammad Ibn Abdus Neishaburi, who invested his assets to learn propriety and became proficient in syntax, prosody and lingual sciences, advised his friend through a couplet as follows:

Oh thou Abu Ishaq, I advise you, accept my advice, since I am the faithful and considerate friend of yours.

Learn every science except that of transcriber's because it results in retrogression and retarding.[1]

(Yaqut, ibid, 7/40-42)

Abu Hatam, the transcriber from Kashmar -one of the villages around Neishabur- knows transcriber's job as despicable and says:

Transcribing is a disregarded job which makes one disappointed. I can't earn my living through it.

If I decide to live I will have nothing to eat and if I pass away I have no shroud to cover my body.[2]

(Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, 4/463)

Although transcribing was a hard job, it had a very little income to live on and this is the point highlighted by the above poem and also the poem of Abdullah Ibn Sareh Shantarini (d. 517/1123) one of the Andalusia's poets who emphasized it in his poem as follows:

Transcribing is the hardest and the least beneficial job. Its fruit is frustration. Transcribers are like tailors who dress the naked people while they themselves remain naked.[3]

(Ibn Khallakan, 3/93; Zabbi, 2/438)

In Suli's Adab al-Kuttab, the transcribing profession has been reprehended as follows:

My crying made my eyes tear in blood which caused me suffer and I was depressed.

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١. نَصَحْتُکَ یا ابا اسحاقَ فَاقْبَلْ فانّی ناصحٌ لکَ ذو صداقة
تَعَلَّمْ ما بَدَا لک من علومٍ فَمَا الأدبارُ الّا فی الوراقه

٢. انّ الوراقة حرفة مذمومة محرومة، عیشی بها زَمِنٌ
انْ عِشْتُ عِشْتُ و لیس لی أکْلٌ اومُتُّ مُتُّ و لیس لی کَفَنٌ

٣. امّا الوارقة فهی أنْکَدُ حرفة أوراقُها و ثمارُها الحرمانُ
شَبَّهْتُ صاحبَها بصاحبِ إبْرَهٍ تَکْسُو الغُراة و جِسْمُها عُریانُ

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I inquired to find the most unfortunate person in the world but I could not find any one more unfortunate than transcribers.

When he enters with his clothes worn out and ragged I can see the lovers who humiliate him.

The transcribers are happy with their papers like soldiers who are delighted with their portion. [1]

(P. 95)

Transcribers' Wage

There was no fixed amount to be paid to the transcribers and their payment depended on the quality of work, including beautiful handwriting, the speed of writing, accuracy in copying and exact recording of the materials. Historical evidences show that most often, the transcribers' wage was so trivial that could not meet their needs (e.g. see, Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, 4/463; Mu'jam al-Udaba, 7/40).

Farra (d. 207/822) the prominent scientist of Ma'mun era dictated the book *al-Ma'ani* for people and his transcribers sold it to public 1 dirham for each 5 pages. People complained to Farra who planned to make the transcribers sell each 10 transcribed papers for 1 dirham (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba, 20/11-12). Abu al-Abbas Mohammad Ibn Hassan Ibn Dinar Ahwal, the transcriber of Hunain Ibn Ishaq received a wage amounting to 20 Dirhams for each 100 papers transcribed for Abu Abdullah Yazidi (ibid, 18/125-126). In other words for each 5 papers he received 1 dirham which was twice as much wage as received by Farra's transcribers.

Although that Abu Saeid Hasan Ibn Abdullah Nahwi (d. 368/978) was a judge in some regions of Baghdad, he received no salary and earned his living through transcribing. He did not go to judging sessions unless when he could transcribe at least 10 papers for which he received 10 dirhams, an amount by which he could pay for his living expenses (ibid, 8/146). In other words, 1.5 centuries after Farra's era, the transcribers' wage was increased tenfold. Of course, considering the increasing expenses, the increase of transcribers' wage was not so desirable. And this is why in next periods, transcribing was regarded as a hard and unhelpful job and has been reprehended by transcribers (ibid, 7/40; Mu'jam al-Buldan, 4/463).

Ali Ibn Abdullah Ibn Ali Ibn Hossein, died in the first half of the 5th/11th century, was not only able to earn his living through transcribing but was able to help the poor, as well (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba, 13/271). Abu Mohammad Yahya Ibn-Mohammad Arzani, the instructor of Arabic language in the 5th/11th century, had a beautiful handwriting and could write fast. In the evening he used to go to book sellers in Baghdad where he did not leave until he could copy Fasih-e Sa'lab book and could sell it for half a dinar with which he bought wine, meat and fruits (ibid, 20/34-35). Abu Hanifa Abd al-Rahman Ibn Hassan Zuzani, earned his living through copying Quran. He wrote 400 transcription of Quran each of which was sold for 50 dinars (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, 3/158). It is also quoted that Abu Taqlib Ibn Naser al-Dowla,

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١. أدْمَى البُكاءُ جَفْنَيَّ وَ الماقى وظَلْتُ ذا هَمٍّ و ذَا احْتراقِ
مَا انْ أرَى فِي الارْضِ و الافاقِ أدْنَى وَ لا أشْقَى مِنَ الورّاقِ
اذا أتَى فِي القُمُصِ الاخْلاقِ رَأيْتَهُ مَطْنَزة العشّاقِ
يَفْرح بالاقلامِ و الأوراقِ كَفَرْحَةِ الجُنْدى بالأرزاقِ

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ordered his servants to fetch him a copy of Al-Aqani book. They bought the book for 10 thousands dirhams and presented it to him. When he was informed about the price, he said: "the poor transcriber of this book has been object of oppression and injustice. This book valued 10,000 dinars to me and if it becomes scarce, the kings can not obtain it unless by spending a large sum of money (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba, 13/125-126). Based on historical records, we can find out that the transcribing profession in the sight of people and transcribers were weak or mediocre who could not earn a desirable income. However the occupation had another face which was more desirable than the one illustrated above and could satisfy the transcribers. Sometimes the transcribers earned a good income because of their speed of writing, beautiful handwriting, the prestige of the book or the characteristics of the individual for whom they worked. For instance one of the transcribers of Jafar Ibn Fazl, known as Ibn Hanzaba the vizier (d. 391/1000), who used to work in his library, resigned from continuing the work. The vizier ordered his servants to settle his accounts. The amount that had to be paid to him was 100 dinars. The transcriber repented after knowing the amount of his wage (ibid, 7/176).

Abu Ali Ibn Shihab-e Okbari (d. 428/1036) was a fast writer and earned twenty five thousand Dirhams by transcribing. He himself once said: "I bought paper for 5 Dirhams and wrote Mutanabbi's Divan on the papers in three nights, and then I sold it for 200 Dirhams or at least 150 Dirhams". He had accumulated such fortune that Sultan took 1000 Dinars of his heritage (as tax) and this did not include the gardens and real estate he had left (Khatib-e Baghdadi, 7/329-330; Ibn al-Juzi, 15/257-258). Another transcriber, called Abu Ubaid Ali Ibn Hussein who was a Shafi'i jurisprudent of 4th/10th century and also the judge of Egypt felt compunction and incommodity for leaving transcription and practicing in court and said: "what have I got to do with judgment! If I had remained in transcribing profession, I would have had a reasonable income. He believed so whereas his salary (as a judge) was 120 Dinars (Kindi, 531). Abu al-Qasim Ibn Binte Mani' (d. 317/929) was also a contriving transcriber who earned a good income by transcription. He says, "I asked my grandfather, Ahmad Ibn Mani', to take me to Sa'id Ibn Yahya Ibn Sa'id-e Umavi and request him to give me the first part of Maqazi (Prophets' wars) which he had quoted from his father and his father had quoted from Ibn Ishaq, to copy it under his supervision. My grandfather did what I had asked and Sa'id Ibn Yahya gave me the book and I took the book to different people and informed them of my intention. The first man I conferred was Abu Abdullah Ibn Muqallas. I showed him the book and told him that I intended to read it before Sa'id Umavi. He gave me 20 Dinars to make him a copy of the book. Then I went to other people and they too gave me 10 to 20 Dinars each, to have me transcribe a copy for them. I got 200 Dinars that day and transcribed the required number of copies in a very low cost, so I saved most of the money I had received (Khatib-e Baghdadi, 10/113-114).

Transcribers' Market

After expansion of compilation and collection of books in various scientific subjects and relative

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abundance of stationery needed for writing, on one hand and necessity of publishing the original books on the other, transcribing work also improved drastically. In a way, some big cities, which were the center of scientific assembly, emerged a new phenomenon called transcribing markets. In addition to transcribers who copied different books and traded them in the market, it was a hub for the scientists and a place for holding debates and scientific circles. Ya'qubi, died in the second half of the 3rd/9th century, giving a detailed account of Baghdad and its districts, mentions a region called Qasr-e Wazzah where there were a number of markets, belonged to transcribers and other individuals who dealt with books and more than one hundred shops in the region belonged to transcribers (P. 17).

One of the most famous persons who often called on transcribers' market was Jahiz (d. 255/868), a great man of Mu'tazila hired transcribers' shops, stayed in the shop whole night and used the books he needed or made copies of them for himself (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba, 16/74-75). Allan Sho'ubi, a great transcriber of Abbasids' house of knowledge (Beit al-Hikma) had a shop in Baghdad in which transcribers were busy copying and trading different books (ibid, 12/191-192). Abu Bakr Ahmad Ibn Mohammad Senowbari says, "in Edessa lived a transcriber called Sa'd (d. 568/1172). He had a shop where he was occupied transcribing. His shop was a center of attraction for every literary man. He himself was a man of science and intellect too and composed fair poems. Some poets from Syria (Shaam) and Egypt and I frequently gathered in his shop and didn't leave there (ibid, 4/116-122).

Abu al-Faraj-e Isfahani also had close relations with transcribers and often visited transcribers' market to purchase the books he needed, participated in scientific debates and poetic circles held there and discussed the cited poems with others (ibid, 13/112; Khatib-e Baghdadi, 11/399).

Probably, due to this very status of transcribers' market and its significant role, some noblemen have recommended their children or others not to go to markets and not to stay there and if they have to call market and stay there for a while they had better go to transcribers' or chain mail makers' market (Raqeb-e Isfahani, 1/215; Ibn Qutaiba, 1/212; Jahiz, 1/52).

Audit of Transcribers by Governments

As we have auditing procedures for book publication in many countries specially the countries with religious or ethnic prejudices at the present time, in Islamic Civilization too we sometimes faced with censorship from the governments, applied to copying and trade of books. In other words, transcribers did not have the permission to copy and sell any book. For instance, in 279/892, during Mu'tamid Abbasid era, transcribers were bound to avoid trading philosophical, polemic, and theological books (and avoid copying and transcribing them) and they were forced to swear as a guarantee (Ibn Athir, al-Kamel, 4/564). Likewise, in 309/921 after execution of Mansur-e Hallaj, transcribers were summoned by the government and were made to

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swear not to trade any of Hallaj's books (and avoid copying them) (Khatib-e Baghdadi, 8/141).

A List of Transcribers in Alphabetical Order

- Abd al-Rahman Ibn Musa Ibn Umar al-Nasekh al-Manadili (d. 715/1315): He was a transcriber and book dealer and enjoyed a fair handwriting. He copied many poetic divans (Ibn Hajar, 2/349).
- Ahmad Ibn Ahmad known as Ibn Okhayy Shafe'i did transcription for Ibn Abdus-e Jaheshyari (d. 331/942), chamberlain of the Abbasid viziers and author of the book Al-Wuzara wa al-Kuttab (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba, 2/137).
- Ahmad Ibn Mohammad Ibn Hassan-e Khallal: A transcriber whom Yaqut perceived as having a beautiful handwriting and an extraordinary precision in recording the copies (ibid, 4/264).
- Ali Ibn Hussein Ibn Ali Abasi known as Ibn Kujak the transcriber (d. 394/1003): He was a knowledgeable literary man and transcribed in Egypt. He had also compiled a number of books (ibid, 13/157).
- Ali Ibn Abdullah Ibn Abi Jarada Abu al-Hassan: He was one of the famous transcribers and copyists and made so many transcriptions and copies for himself that could make three libraries, he made enough copies and transcriptions to fill one library for his son Abu al-Barakat and as many for his other son Abu Abdullah (ibid, 16/11).
- Al-Sari al-Raffa al-Museli (d. 362/972): Initially he darned clothes. However, after he improved his poetry, he proceeded to literature and began working as a transcriber. He used to include other poets' poems in his books to increase the thickness so that he could sell it at a higher price (ibid, 11/184).
- Ibrahim Ibn Saleh Abu Ishaq: He was a pupil of Jowhari, author of Sahah al-Luqa and did transcription work for him. Jowhari dictated the book Sahah to him up to entry of Zad (the 15th letter of Arabic alphabet), then after Jowhari's death he made a fair copy of the rest of the book and also expurgated it, in which he made terrible mistakes (ibid, 6/157).
- Ishaq Ibn Yaqub Ibn Ishaq Abu Yaqub: He was one of the iterants (Mustamliyan) and had received dictations from Abu Bakr Mohammad Ibn Abi Attab and Mohammad Ibn Hassan Ibn Qutaiba Asqalani (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, 4/469-470).
- Mohammad Ibn Hibatullah Jamal al-Din Abu Qanim: He wrote many books with his own handwriting, among them were some of Tarmezi's books. He also copied some, concerning asceticism and Quran. He wrote many Qurans with his own handwriting and presented them to his relatives. If he had a spiritual retreat in Ramadan, he transcribed one or two Qurans, completely (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba, 16/34).
- Mohammad Ibn Ishaq al-Nadim: He was a great transcriber and a prominent bibliographer. His father, too, was a transcriber, a rich man who had a transcription and copying shop in Baghdad. Ibn Nadim was educated in different sciences and investigated and scrutinized many books. His well known book called "al-Fihrist" is a lucid proof of this fact (ibid, 18/17).
- Mohammad Ibn Shakir Ibn Ahmad known as Ibn Shakir-e Kutubi (d. 764/1362): He was a

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prominent historian and literary figure. He was very poor at the beginning but later he managed to start book trade and by transcribing and dealing books he earned a big fortune. His famous books are "Fuwat al-Wafayat" and "Oyun al-Tawarikh" (Ibn Hajar, 3/451-452).

- Sa'd Ibn Ali Ibn Qassem (d. 568/1172): He was a transcriber, a book trader and a man of intellect who composed beautiful poetry and has written a book called Zinat al-Dahr wa Usrat Ahl al-Asr, which discusses his contemporary poets' facetiae (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba, 11/195).
- Sahm Ibn Ibrahim: He was one of the 2nd/8th century poets and a literary man of Qiravan (ibid, 11/267-268; Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Buldan, 3/282).
- Sandi Ibn Ali: He was a transcriber of Ishaq-e Museli and had a transcription shop in Taq al-Zabl. He compiled a book called "al-Aqani al-Kabir" and published it on behalf of Ishaq-e Museli (Yaqut, Mu'jam al-Udaba, 6/57-58).
- Umar Ibn Mohammad Ibn Hassan (d. 695/1295): He was an Egyptian transcriber and a scribe of the governor general of Egypt. He criticizes transcription profession in a poem as:

Shame on me, while my scrolls are caliginous, that of righteous men is luminous.

It will be an infamy if a censurer (in doomsday) says, "So, this is the transcribers' record!" [1]

(Kutubi, 2/182-184)

- Yaqut Ibn Abdullah Rumi-e Hamawi (d. 626/1228): He was a literary man, historian, and author of the famous books such as Mu'jam al-Udaba and Mu'jam al-Buldan. He earned a living by transcribing and copying books (Ibn Khallakan, 6/127).

Conclusion

Based on the above discussion, the following conclusion found for the current work:

1. There is an authentic relationship between history of publication and transcription craft in Islamic Civilization, in a way that any research concerning publication history in Islamic era and its evolution would be impossible without going through transcribers' biography and searching their names in historical texts.

2. The transcribers were present among different classes of scientists. We can find ineffaceable prominent personalities including tradition scholars, literary figures, poets, geographers, syntax scientists and the like, among transcribers. Hence, in order to study transcribers' career and understand the outcome of their activities and the prodigious impact of these efforts in expansion and growth of sciences, we need to survey biographical and categorical books in different fields. We should also consider the fact that lack of orderly and lexicographically edited sources, which give a brief account of transcribers' biography, brings about some difficulties in researching this field.

3. Considering the congenital and existential values, transcribers possessed a reasonable social status. Moreover, they practically had a significant ineffaceable role in preserving written heritage of the world of Islam and passing it to the next

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١. وَاخَجْلتی و صَحائفی قد سُوِّدَتْ و صحائفُ الابرارِ فی اِشْراقِ
وَ فَضیحتـی لِمُعَنِّفٍ لـی قائـلٌ أکذا تکـون صحائفُ الورّاقِ

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generations and also vitalizing libraries in Islamic Civilization. However, in spite of all facts, they never reached social status and dignity that they really deserved, they always scorned their profession and considered it an ominous and excruciating profession, which did not raise an adequate economic benefit.

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حرفهٔ ورّاقی و ورّاقان در تمدن اسلامی

ولی‌الله برزگر کلیشمی[1]

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شاید باور این نکته که اختراع چاپ حروفی تأثیری شگرف و تاریخی بر گسترش علم و پیدایش نوزایی و رنسانس در اروپا داشته است، نیازمند بررسی چندانی نیست و دربارهٔ آن دهها مقاله و کتاب تحقیقی وجود دارد؛ ولی این که انسان قبل از اختراع چاپ چگونه میراث مکتوب خود را نگاهبانی کرده و یا آن را در اختیار دیگران و نسلهای بعدی قرار داده، پرسشی است که نیازمند تأمل و ژرف کاوی در متون تاریخی است. تلاش برای پاسخ به این سؤال در گسترهٔ تمدن اسلامی، هدفی است که مقاله حاضر آن را دنبال می‌کند. به همین منظور در این مقاله ضمن تعریف صنعت وراقه و بیان کارهایی که ورّاقان در این صنعت انجام می‌دادند، دربارهٔ آغاز شکل‌گیری وراقی در تمدن اسلامی بحث شده است. سپس عناصر مهم در وراقی به ویژه خط و سبک نگارش ورّاقان، شیوه‌های کار ورّاقان، جایگاه و موقعیت اجتماعی حرفهٔ وراقی و وراقان، میزان دستمزد، بازار ورّاقان و ممیزی آنها از سوی حکومت بر اساس مستندات تاریخی بحث و بررسی می‌شود. در پایان نیز فهرست کوتاهی از برخی ورّاقان مشهور در تمدن اسلامی ارائه شده است.

واژگان کلیدی: وراقه، ورّاقان، خط، نساخ، کتابت، کتاب

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۱. استادیار گروه تاریخ و تمدن ملل اسلامی، دانشگاه بین‌المللی امام خمینی (ره)

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