

# Printing



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Legend has it that during Abbasid rule, the secret of papermaking was obtained from two Chinese prisoners from the Battle of Talas in 751, which led to the foundation of the first paper mill of the Islamic world in Samarkand. The invention then spread to the rest of the Islamic world, and from there to Europe.

### What is Taught:

Movable type and the printing press was invented in the West by Johannes Gutenberg of Germany during the 15th century.

### What Should be Taught:

In 1454, Gutenberg developed the most sophisticated printing press of the Middle Ages. However, movable brass type was in use in Islamic Spain 100 years prior, and that is where the West's first printing devices were made, and the use of paper started in the 7th century.

Like the printing press, typewriter, and computer, paper has been a crucial agent for the dissemination of information. This engaging book presents an important new chapter in paper's history: how its use in Islamic lands during the Middle Ages influenced almost every aspect of medieval life. Focusing on the spread of paper from the early 8th century, when Muslims in West Asia acquired Chinese knowledge of paper and papermaking, to five centuries later, when they transmitted this knowledge to Christians in Spain and Sicily, the book reveals how paper utterly transformed the passing of knowledge and served as a bridge between cultures.

### **Ptinted Astronomy Text Book**

Jonathan Bloom traces the earliest history of paper-how it was invented in China over 2,000 years ago, how it entered the Islamic lands of West Asia and North Africa, and how it spread to northern Europe. He explores the impact of paper on the development of writing, books, mathematics, music, art, architecture, and even cooking. And he discusses why Europe was so quick to adopt paper from the Islamic lands and why the Islamic lands were so slow to accept printing in return.

### **Illustration-Book of Kings**

Together the beautifully written text and delightful illustrations (of papermaking techniques and the many uses to which paper was put) give new luster and importance to a now-humble material.

From a review of the book, "PAPER BEFORE PRINT The History and Impact of Paper in the Islamic World" by Jonathan M. Bloom.

Paper, originally was brought by the Muslims from China. It followed the battle of Tallas (751) fought between Chinese and Muslims, when the Chinese prisoners revealed the secret of paper making to the Muslims.

From an art, the Muslims developed it into a major industry. They employed linen as a substitute to the bark of the mulberry, which the Chinese used. Linen rags were disintegrated, saturated with water, and made to ferment. The boiled rags were then cleared of alkaline residue and much of the dirt, and then the rags were beaten to a pulp by a trip hammer; an improved method of maceration invented by the Muslims.

In Baghdad, many paper mills were built and from there the industry spread to various parts of the world. The paper mills constructed in Damascus were the major sources of supply to Europe, which as production increased, became cheaper, more available and better quality.

### **Al-biruni Lunar Eclipse Theory**

Paper mills which first flourished in Iraq, Syria and Palestine, made their way West. Africa saw its first paper mill built in Egypt around 850. A paper mill was built in Morocco, from there it would reach Spain in 950. The centre of fabrication was Xatiba. From Spain and Sicily paper making spread to the Christians in Spain and Italy. The first written reference to paper in the Christian West seems to be in the pseudonymous Theophilus Presbyter's "The Art of the Painter" (first half of the 12th century). In 1293 the first paper mill was set up in Bologna.

In 1309 the first use of paper was in England, then Germany in the late stages of the 14th century. Down through the close of the Middle Ages, the most important paper making centers were in North Italy. Of course, paper seems so ordinary today, but its use is fundamental to modern civilization.

By making use of this new material, paper, and manufacturing it on a large scale, devising new methods for its production, in the words of Pedersen: "the Muslims accomplished a feat of crucial significance not only to the history of the Islamic book but also to the whole world of books." The decisive impact of Muslim manufacture of paper was, obviously and directly to bring about a revolution in preparing the way for the invention of printing.

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The Arabs gave to a large part of the world not only a religion, Islam, but also a language and an alphabet. Where the Muslim religion went, the Arabic language and Arabic writing also went. Arabic became and has remained the national language – the mother tongue – of North Africa and all the Arab countries of the Middle East. Of those people who embraced Islam, but did not adopt Arabic as their everyday language, many millions have taken the Arabic alphabet for their own, so that today one sees the Arabic script used to write languages that have no basic etymological connection with Arabic.

The languages of Iran, Afghanistan, and Pakistan are all written in the Arabic alphabet, as was the language of Turkey until some fifty years ago. It is also used in Kashmir and in some places in the Malay Peninsula and the East Indies, and in Africa it is used in Somalia and down the east coast as far south as Tanzania.

### **Ibn\_al-Baitar Botanical Book**

Another significant difference is that the Arabic script has been used much more extensively for decoration and as a means of artistic expression. This is not to say that the Roman alphabet (and others such as the Chinese and Japanese, for instance) are not just as decorative and have not been used just as imaginatively. **Since the invention of printing from type, however, calligraphy (which means, literally “beautiful writing”) has come to be used in English and the other European languages only for special documents and on special occasions and has declined to the status of a relatively minor art.**

**In the countries that use the Arabic alphabet, on the other hand, calligraphy has continued to be used not only on important documents but for a variety of other artistic purposes as well. One reason is that the cursive nature of the Arabic script and other peculiarities, made its adaptation to printing difficult and delayed the introduction of the printing press, so that the Arab world continued for some centuries, after the time of Gutenberg, to rely on handwriting for the production of books (especially the Quran) and of legal and other documents.**

**The use of Arabic script has therefore tended to develop in the direction of calligraphy and the development of artistically pleasing forms of hand lettering, while in the West the trend has been toward printing and the development of ornamental and sometimes elaborate type faces.**

**Another and perhaps more important reason was a religious one. The Quran nowhere prohibits the representation of humans or animals in drawings, or paintings, but as Islam expanded in its early years, it inherited some of the prejudices against visual art of this kind that had already taken root in the Middle East. In addition, the early Muslims tended to oppose figural art (and in some cases all art) as distracting the community from the worship of God and hostile to the strictly unitarian religion preached by Muhammad, and all four of the schools of Islamic law banned the use of images and, declared that the painter of animate figures would be damned on the Day of Judgment.**

**Wherever artistic ornamentation and decoration were required, therefore, Muslim artists, forbidden to depict, human or animal forms, for the most part, were forced to resort either to what has since come to be known as “arabesque” (designs based on strictly geometrical forms or patterns of leaves and flowers) or, very often, to calligraphy.**

**Arabic calligraphy therefore came to be used not only in producing copies of the Quran (its first and for many centuries its most important use), but also for all kinds of other artistic purposes as well on porcelain and metal ware, for carpets and other textiles, on coins, and as architectural ornament (primarily on mosques and tombs but also, especially in later years, on other buildings as well).**