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Human Values in the Arabic Manuscript Heritage; Civilizational Dialogue Is an Outcome and A Horizon for Coexistence

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Introduction

The Arab-Islamic nation excelled in various forms of human knowledge, embracing an immense intellectual and scientific material in its manuscript heritage that no civilization had embraced before the discovery of printing and the press. This rich material contains diverse sciences, arts, literature, and human achievements, as well as encapsulating the essence of previous human knowledge contributed by nations and peoples fortunate enough to accumulate more comprehensive knowledge and greater experience in specific fields. This is evident in neighboring civilizations such as Greek, Persian, and Roman.

An examination of the contents of Arab manuscripts, whether by Arab or foreign scholars, reveals the significant contribution made by the Arab-Islamic civilization to the building of the edifice of human civilization. The knowledge contained in Arabic manuscripts, spanning various disciplines and arts, aided the West in reaching its "enlightenment" moment and advancing in its scientific and technological renaissance.

This reference to the importance of Arab-Islamic contribution to human civilization is not intended for boasting about the heritage of the ancestors. Rather, it is a call to undertake a grand Arab project aimed at collecting, documenting, researching, and classifying scattered Arabic manuscript heritage around the world. The ultimate goal is to initiate high-level research projects to understand the causes of some of our current societal issues and overcome them. Furthermore, it aims to use the successes of our ancestors as sources of inspiration for the spirit of challenge and the desire to keep pace with the scientific developments witnessed by the contemporary world.

Beyond this, the Arab manuscript heritage is not just a transfer of knowledge and sciences across generations or dry arts and literature lacking spirit; it is a repository of values and ethics. Muslims have excelled not only in various fields of human knowledge over centuries but have also stood out in the realm of civil behavior, advocating dialogue between peoples, accepting others, and promoting other noble human values.

This discussion, after providing a terminological overview of the significance of manuscript heritage, aims to shed light on the importance of this heritage in the past, present, and future of the Arab nation. It also highlights the relationship between heritage and the dialogue of civilizations, addressing some manifestations of the call for civilizational dialogue within the content of Arab heritage.

Significance of Manuscript Heritage: There is no doubt that every nation has its own heritage, and more broadly, there exists a universal human heritage that represents the collective past of all nations and pertains to humanity as a whole. Human societies vary in the depth, magnitude, or scarcity of their cultural heritage. Heritage is considered a component of a nation's life, and when abandoned, a nation relinquishes its authenticity. Heritage represents a nation's personality in its past, present, and future,

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embodying its cultural and spiritual characteristics. National identity is not born in the present; rather, it is the product of generations' legacy throughout history, experiences, and ideas that cannot be replicated but can be renewed and developed.

Therefore, it can be said that Arab manuscript heritage is just one link in a long chain of successive human civilizations. It continues to play a fundamental and essential role in enriching and developing human civilization. Those who explore Arabic manuscript heritage find a vast and multidimensional treasure trove encompassing various sciences such as philosophy, literature, medicine, mathematics, optics, social sciences, and more.

Hence, the care for heritage and civilization is a necessary and humanitarian task. Revitalizing heritage is an optional process that requires an objective understanding and comprehension. This involves understanding and developing it towards the betterment and linking it with contemporaneity, which means understanding the present and its peculiarities. The dialogue of civilizations is considered the optimal and correct approach for cooperation, exchange of benefits, knowledge, and ensuring the cumulative civilization that allows humanity to progress to higher levels of sophistication.

Importance of Manuscript Heritage in the Present and Future: We stated that manuscript heritage is the result of cultural and civilizational accumulation, making it crucial as the foundation upon which any society is built. As much as manuscript heritage in the past played a role in human civilizational contributions, representing milestones in human history, it will achieve a leap for humanity from one historical period to another, realizing humanitarian gains that will remain valuable because they are achievable and can be beneficial. If otherwise, its value ends with the expiration of the past in which it existed.

It is worth mentioning that some individuals are content only with heritage as an irreplaceable source, venerating and exalting it. Others may view heritage as a source hindering progress and development, advocating for its negation, as it is a part of the past that has passed and concluded. Here, it is essential for us to deal with manuscript heritage not from the perspective of glorification or denial but rather:

- Taking into consideration suitable scientific and heritage methods and working on developing and refining them appropriately.
- Paying attention to social values, customs, traditions, and all aspects of humanity, science, literature, art, and even architecture, working on their development without exposing them to the loss of their essence and identity.

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Importance of Paying Attention to the Arab-Islamic Identity Without Violating its Sanctity or Compromising its Privacy: The necessity of paying attention to the Arab-Islamic identity is paramount, ensuring that it is handled with care and respect, avoiding anything that may hurt or violate its sanctity. It is crucial to preserve its uniqueness while also recognizing the diversity that characterizes it, just as with any other identity.

Arab-Islamic Heritage: The term "heritage" can be defined as ancient remnants handed down to us from our ancestors. The term encompasses stones, wood, tablets, and everything related to the creations of Arab intellectuals since the inception of civilization until the last century. Heritage is a single link connecting the ancient with the modern, encompassing all these materials.

It is undeniable that Arab heritage is rich in its distant civilizational elements, benefiting the world throughout various times and overcoming numerous challenges and difficulties. The history of Arab civilization extends to deep-rooted origins, characterized by unique features and its distinct identity. Throughout its long journey, it has been concerned with humanity, nature, land, trees, dwellings, and all

forms of contribution that collectively shape the homeland, expressed in various facets.

Interest in our contemporary culture's heritage has been steadily growing, with a broader understanding emerging after many publishing houses started issuing and printing foundational heritage books authored by eminent scholars of the past. Heritage has always been connected to the efforts of successive generations of scholars within the nation.

Naturally, this interest includes all aspects of scientific, intellectual, cultural, artistic, architectural, and other aspects of life. If we search for the earliest origins among the Arabs, we find deep-rooted roots dating back to prehistoric times. Historical sources preserve information about the legal thought of the Babylonians and the philosophical thought of the Phoenicians. Religious references, whether Islamic, Christian, or Jewish, also preserve some aspects of religious and theological thought that prevailed in the Arab region for certain periods. Arab poetry in the pre-Islamic era, as well as Arab proverbs from the same period and even after the emergence of Islam, carry some of the Arab intellectual traits. Additionally, various knowledge from other cultures such as Persian, Indian, and Greek, which reached the Arab region, formed diverse and important tributaries that contributed to shaping Arab understanding and absorbing its intellectual content, playing a role in shaping its civilization and unique culture.

This indicates that each civilization has its independent cultural and intellectual significance, separate from other civilizations such as Arab, Roman, Persian, Greek, and others. This cultural and intellectual diversity seems to be the fundamental condition for the dialogue of civilizations and intercultural dialogue. It is the duty of each people to be attached to its unique culture and civilization, part of the heritage shared by Arabs. We can point to our Arabic language, which is the foundation of our civilization and future, as the primary representative of Arab heritage in all its components. The Arab identity and the Arab civilization's Arabness are expressed through its Arabic language, which is the language of the people, the language of the Quran, and the language of the people of paradise

- Al-Jabri, Muhammad Aabid. Previous reference, p. 104.
- Al-Jubouri, Abdullah. "Why Arab Heritage and its Renaissance Movement," *Journal of Arab Scientific Heritage*, Year 1, No. 2, (1399 AH - 1978 CE), Baghdad, University of Baghdad, Center for the Revival of Arab Scientific Heritage, p. 83, paraphrased.
- Al-Douri, Abdulaziz. "Arab Cultural Identity and Challenges," *Arab Future Magazine* (Issue 248), Beirut, 1999, pp. 6-8

The relationship between heritage and the dialogue of civilizations is undoubtedly significant

Heritage serves as the cultural identity of a nation, and without it, internal disintegration becomes a possibility. Nations might assimilate culturally into dominant global trends and civilizations, and this is particularly relevant for Muslims who are often pulled towards diverse and contrasting global currents.

Examining the nature of heritage, much of Islamic heritage is embodied in the Arab library, which traces its origins to the early days of Islamic history. The process of codification and classification significantly expanded in the third and fourth centuries. While this doesn't negate the rights or diminish the impact of other aspects of heritage, the Arab library stands out as a crucial component of Islamic heritage.

It's worth noting that transferring heritage to contemporary generations is not without challenges. Deliberate distortion of traditional values is a significant risk associated with cultural invasion. The Islamic civilization faced cultural, scientific, religious, and military invasions, including Western colonial presence in the Islamic East until the 1970s.

In the current global context, the world appears divided into two groups: one seeking to assert

dominance, strength, and culture globally, advocating for a universal culture, and another group admiring, marveling, and fearing the first. This diverse group ranges from those who submit and comply to those who resist and reject.

Evidence of cultural dialogue within the heritage of a nation is crucial.

The dialogue between civilizations on religious, intellectual, philosophical matters has been an enduring aspect of human history. Islam, from its inception, has welcomed dialogue. Prophet Muhammad engaged in dialogue with polytheists, hypocrites in Mecca, as well as Jews and Christians in the Medinan era. The Prophet's written dialogues in the form of letters sent to world leaders introduce Islam and himself as a Prophet and emphasize the principles of Islam.

Undoubtedly, Islam promotes dialogue and recognition of the other, aiming to develop common ground between human beings. It seeks ways to achieve peaceful and secure coexistence, emphasizing the shared aspects of humanity while respecting diversity

Abdel Majeed, Ismat. "Attitudes and Challenges in the Arab World," Cairo, Dar Al-Shorouk, 2003, p. 31, paraphrased

"And tranquility ensures that a person lives a life free from exclusion and rejection of others. That is why Islam advocates dialogue, promoting the best ways, adopting good manners, and using sound approaches when addressing others. Allah says: 'Invite to the way of your Lord with wisdom and good instruction, and argue with them in a way that is best. Indeed, your Lord is most knowing of who has strayed from His way, and He is most knowing of who is [rightly] guided.'" (Quran, 16:125).

From another perspective, the flourishing of universal values in any civilization is fundamentally linked to its ability to interact with the components of other civilizations, recognizing and engaging with them, accepting cultural diversity, and understanding the concepts and traditions of others. Human civilization is the result of the interaction and mutual influence of civilizations throughout history.

The Islamic civilization, since its inception, has been committed to this framework of seeking interaction with other civilizations, giving and receiving, and experiencing mutual influence. It is important to note that Arab Muslims have solidified the noble values of Islam and actively spread and universalized them worldwide. The interaction between Islamic civilization and other civilizations, such as Persian, Indian, Egyptian, and later Western civilization, has resulted in the formation of a new Islamic civilization that enriched itself through this coexistence.

Regarding Western civilization, it is crucial to emphasize that it did not emerge suddenly but evolved over many centuries, reaching its peak in our present era. This was the result of civilizational interaction with other cultures, cumulative historical processes, and interactive operations of influence and impact throughout modern human history.

The biggest proof that Islamic civilization has never sought to clash with Western civilization is that Arabs and Muslims have never aimed to eliminate the uniqueness and cultural identity of Western civilization. The Islamic civilization is based on dialogue and supports it among humans, as evident in its call for Muslims to engage in dialogue, especially with non-Muslims. Moreover, Islamic civilization has not, at any time, targeted the elimination of Western civilization's specific identity.

Therefore, Islamic civilization is founded on dialogue and actively supports it. This is evident in its call for Muslims to engage in dialogue, especially with non-Muslims, and its emphasis on good manners, wisdom, and positive methods when communicating with others. The Islamic group should distance itself from violence, terrorism, extremism, and divisive rhetoric, opting for peaceful approaches in addressing issues. This is crucial to avoid conflicts that can lead to the destruction of heritage and

civilization, as witnessed in various countries, especially after the so-called Arab Spring."

- Abdul Majeed, Ismat. Previous reference, p. 31.
- The Holy Quran, Surah An-Nahl (16:125).

In conclusion, Muslims are among the nations and peoples with the strongest belief in the culture of dialogue, as their faith encourages it. The Quran is replete with dialogues between the messengers of God and their people, and even between God and some of His creation, including the adversarial dialogue with Satan. Muslims consistently welcome the culture of dialogue, whether among civilizations or between religions. They reject the idea of a clash of civilizations, particularly between Islamic and Western civilizations.

Moreover, the concept of inter-civilizational dialogue is Islamic, as God created different peoples and tribes for the purpose of mutual recognition, dialogue, and interaction. The foundation of civilizations, according to Islam, is dialogue rather than conflict. Therefore, each party must adhere to the ethics, conditions, and regulations of dialogue, respecting the other party, appreciating its cultural identity, and Islam, being a great civilization, laid the foundations for inter-civilizational dialogue and reinforced it throughout human history. It rejects the centralization of civilizations, the annulment of other civilizations, even if they are weak, and the domination of one civilization over the world.

It is undeniable that a deeper study of various human civilizations cannot ignore the cultural role played by Arabs and Muslims in shaping the scientific renaissance of modern Europe. They recognized the potential of Islam in dealing with and embracing all human minds, philosophies, and ideas.

Amidst various forms of misunderstandings between world cultures, there is a major need for an Arab-Islamic plan with other cultures and civilizations, especially Western culture. This plan should involve the crystallization of an Arab-Islamic initiative for humanity, to build the emerging Arab-Islamic civilization and participate in creating the new global society. However, a genuine cultural renaissance is only built on an independent cultural project based on the fundamental pillars of society, which constitute its uniqueness and are related to its roots.

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