
The Pictures of the Camel In Islamic Codex Munimnemat Al-Hariri

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Abstract

The Arabic Islamic Art had deep roots in history partly inherited by ancient traditions and cultures. Different supports were employed in artistic decoration (metalwork, ivory, glass, ceramics, etc.). The subject of this study is focused on the art of using decorations and illustrations in manuscripts, which is a feature of Arabic Islamic art. One of the most important school in writing and art of manuscripts was the Baghdad School of Illustrations.

Through Islamic art and culture history from the 8th to 18th centuries, codices were one of the most important arts, used by Muslims to transfer the knowledge to the other civilizations. In the first two centuries, drawing in manuscripts was forbidden and disapproved in Islamic religion.

In the end of 10th and 12th centuries a major development in Islamic culture and art occurred, and that made a base for the development of manuscripts art. Many new items were introduced in manuscripts, like pictures. Manuscripts were decorated with many images, such as plants, geometrical patterns, human and animal figures, which were the main subject of the decoration.

But in the end of the 11th century, the Islamic culture found further developments, because of the exchange of culture between the Arabic world and other traditions. So, the drawing and illustrations in the society culture became more open, and the use of illustrations in Islamic codex started to be accepted, while it was forbidden in the eighth and ninth centuries AD.

One of the most interesting manuscript in Islamic history is the *Munimnemat* by Al-Hariri¹ that contains beautiful illustrations.

The key words :

Codex, manuscripts, history. Kamal. Picture monument Al-Hariri, Islamic art, panting, shape,

Introduction :

The image of the camel is one of these subjects presented in manuscripts. It is realistic, near to nature and strong in expression and movement. The camel can appear separately or with a convoy and caravans⁽²⁾.

In the Arabic Islamic School of the drawing and illustrations, animal paintings appeared close to nature, while other materials, especially pottery and wall paintings, were decorated with a repertoire closer to the sense of quietness and calmness⁽³⁾.

The Arabic School of Illustrations used “codex” in order to clarify a specific text through images. The artist took one part of the text, regarding a part of the story, and he changed it into a “codex” in order to make the story easier to understand for readers. The artist used two dimensions of embodiment (height and width); the background was not painted⁽⁴⁾.

The artist made one part of the text, which represented a certain story, or even a main part from it, and change it into codex that contains the events of this text. He acted it in a simple way to represent a complete artistic unit. One of the most important features of the Arabic school of picturing is the embodiment.

Animal Figures in Maqamat Al-Hariri :

Picturing in manuscripts and historical books is known in the third and the fourth centuries after the emigration (9th-10th cent.); but no sample has been found so far in Iraq later than the seventh cent. after the emigration (13th cent.)

"A Maqam (plural: Maqamat) is an Arabic rhymed prose literary form with short poetic passages. The Maqamat, written in a sophisticated rhythm, were primarily aimed at educated audience and left us with an excellent showcase of pictorial traditions of the period. According to Alain F. George "The text is a masterpiece of Arabic literature"⁽⁵⁾.

The most famous manuscripts of the Arabic school of picturing was the Maqamat of Al-Hariri⁶. In which Al-Harith Bin Hamam narrated the adventures of Abi Zaid Al-Seroji.

Many copies of this manuscript had been copied; the most famous are two manuscripts.

The first is found in Leningrad and it is dated to 622 – 632 after emigration / 1225 – 1235 (A. D).

The second manuscript is found in the National Library in Paris⁽⁷⁾ and it was written and copied in 1237 by Al-Wasiti (Al-Wasiti was one of the first artist in 11th century)⁽⁸⁾.

It was characterized with realism, as it gave us an image of details of life and it was simple in drawing and making and in the division of the elements and in what it contains from lines, surfaces and colors⁽⁹⁾.

The artists of this school had achieved a great success in drawing animals in a real way close to nature and paintings of Al-Wasiti are a perfect example. He showed strength in expression and

movement in drawing⁽¹⁰⁾. For sure, the reason of this development is that it is related to what was reached by the decorative arts in Iraq as far as realism in drawing the animal is concerned⁽¹¹⁾ in comparison with the drawings of people, plants and buildings.

The Image of the Camel in Munimnemat Al-Hariri :

The camel is mentioned many times in the Holy Quran. Also, the name of camel in Ibn Mandhoor is a synonyms of the utterance (Baeer) (Al-Baeer is the camel and it is said that Al-Baeer killed me which means my she-camel)⁽¹²⁾. As it is known, the camel had a direct relation with the life of Arabs from the deep past and it can be noticed in the sculptures which had reached us from the Assyrian period. In addition to that, there are some sculptures belong to rulers of Iraq in the middle of the first thousand (BC). An example representing camels in a convoy to visit one of their kings is from the Arab Peninsula, where the drawing of the camel was found on the site of Barma mountain⁽¹³⁾, which belongs historically to the third and (4th H.A) set engraving on the stones. Also, some inscriptions had reached us from Al-Fao city, which lies near Najran, which represents the capital of Kenda state, dated to the third century⁽¹⁴⁾.

The camel had obtained a special place for Arab artists. It had taken their interest especially in their artistic works; therefore, some samples had reached us and some of them were done on metals, and some other on fences⁽¹⁵⁾, and also some samples on pottery⁽¹⁶⁾, and in some inscriptions.

Al-Wasiti's drawings had achieved a great success because of their realism and being nearer to nature. The strength in the expression and movement was clear in drawing the camel's convoys and this success, which was done by the artist in these drawings, expresses the Arabic style⁽¹⁷⁾.

Al-Wasiti had given a great interest to draw camels in different shapes, in picturing a convoy of camels on their way to Al-Madina Al-Monowara carrying men and goods accompanied by a musical band. This over crowdedness reflects the feeling of moving power of this walking convoy in one direction and in front of them the carriers of flags and trumpets⁽¹⁸⁾.

We can notice that all the persons in front of or in the middle of the ground are a clear evidence of the human and animals crowded⁽¹⁹⁾, and it possible that this convoy was carrying the covering of the Holy Quran. It was put in a special carrier for women and it is suitable for man to sit inside it.⁽²⁰⁾

Al-Wasiti had given this carrier a lot of decorative elements, which gave to it a beauty dimension. It is sure that it was made of wood.

This carrier consists of two parts, the body and the cover and the top of the conic cover that ends with two balls; one on the other with a small size and this was the handle of this cover.

It could be noticed here that the artist wanted to picture the happiness and delight of this occasion in a suitable manner; therefore, he made the flags once in front of the convoy to be seen from those who are in front of the convoy and second he made the flags at the back to be seen from behind of the convoy and he joined one of the flags in the handle of the cover of the howdah and another flag in the protrusion which represented the carrier of the howdah while the other part of the howdah is the body with a cylindrical shape, which had a prominent edge which made the putting of the cover easy. This from this edge we have twelve hangings, six in front and maybe six in the back because. The Muslim artist takes in consideration the process of similarity and resemblance. For the body of the howdah we can see two handles, which are different. The handle in the right of the picture consists of a globular part and for sure these handles are used to lower the howdah from the back of the she-camel, when it sits down. This howdah is put on a wooden base prepared for this purpose and what could be noticed here that the back of the she-camel is covered by a dark green carpet with a decorative tape similar to the written one with a golden color like the howdah. And what it could be noticed here is that the artist has used the bending of the neck of the camel by putting a yellow pillow and a drum on it. It is covered by a piece of clothes or leather because of the folds in this drum and this drum was connected by a rope round the neck of the camel (Figure1).

The best representation of animal drawings in Al-Wasiti's Munimnemat is the picture of a flock of camels with its shepherd, and this picture shows the summary of the shapes of animals and nature. The text talked about a flock of camels that was given as a present to Abi Zaid for a logical and wonderful speech that he gave. This picture contained ten camels walking together, raising their heads and walking along. The artist didn't want to keep this organization by drawing two of them trying to eat the grass. The artist shows by this movement of these two camels a great skill in showing the balance in picturing. These camels were led by a woman raising her hand to urge. The artist here had reached a great extent of realism and trueness in expressing the movements of the moving legs regularly.

The third and the eighth camels by their brown and black colors represented a great importance in feeling the depth. In addition, he gave the black camel more importance than the other camels by raising its right leg behind the head of the tenth camel to reduce the routine of leg's movements in one side and to give a sudden

movement which increase the strength of the expression and give the portrait a special type of beauty in the other side⁽²¹⁾.

The artist could avoid the routine in picturing successfully by drawing the camels with many degrees from the two colors, the brown and the black. He made most of the composition of the bodies in balance in a shape which is different to that of the shepherd who seemed away from harmony⁽²²⁾.

The Arabic artist had done well in using the colors and the color wasn't alone a simple element for those who drew Al-Munimnemat, but it was important and had a special feature. The effect of the color in the beauty of Al-Munimnema is not less than the effect of the proficiency of drawing or the decoration. The colors were characterized by happiness and softness and the mixing and this was one of the most important elements in formation⁽²³⁾.

Al-Wasiti had showed a great skill in drawing camels by all the details which is put on the bodies of the animals and their carriers and other things, but all these things cannot be found in the previous Munimnema (Figure 3). The reason of this was probably that there was no need for these things in the process of grazing, especially in the near grazing ground because their necks and backs are Empty (Figure 2). It seems it is not used for transport for remote distances only, but it is also used for transport for near distances.

In (Figure 3) we can notice Aba Zaid Al-Sourooji and his friend Al-Harth bin Hamam riding a camel moving in one of the villages, searching for food. The camel was pictured while it was walking fast throughout the movement of the head and the legs. The whole view consists of a group of houses built on stones and their roofs were built with a shape of domes. Most of those buildings are located in the right side of the photo and made low in the opposite side. Among Al-Wasiti's representation, we can notice the mosque of the village with its minaret and also the movement of the camels through the variation of the shops and the movement of the buyers and sellers and the waiting of the shop owners of costumers and also, we can see another animal. There were a cow and a flock of goats drinking water from a pond and the scenes were gathered within a frame represented a woman in front of catching a spindle in the right side and a date palm in the left side. And the artist had pictured a living village with all its aspects and showed all the accidents, works and relationships.

It seemed that Al-Wasiti in all his pictures tried to move away from stillness and he was always achieving new styles concerning the things which are put on the back of the camel and that was clear in his Munimnema (Figure 4). He put two carpets, the upper one ends with fringes and those carpets were decorated by a golden tape round the neck of the she – camel; while the other carpet was often repeated as

we had noticed in another Munimnema (Figure 1). But the camel of this Munimnema had two decorative tapes and we can see in this picture that Aba Zaid and his friend sitting on two dark red pillows.

In another representation, (Figure 5) we can notice that Al-Wasiti had given a great interest for the drawing of the camel with some clear details. He put a decorative saddle on its hump and it was tied to its body. This Munimnema is characterized by the movement in all its structure as the movement of the grass or the camel. And it seemed that Abu Zaid Al-Souroji was motivating his camel and he raised his stick to make it move fast as it was mentioned in the text ⁽²⁴⁾. The picture, for the first time, seems to be active because it contained a man and an animal without a background, but it is full of details. Al-Wasiti had skillfully drawn the saddle and the position of the pillows. Al-Wasiti had pictured Abu Zaid Al-Serji sitting on two pillows put on the hump of the camel and from their state, it is clear that they were filled with cotton or feathers because they cannot be bend easily. In front of each pillow there were a group of threads and maybe they used as a handle to carry the pillow. And what could be noticed in this representation is that Al-Wasiti in his drawing had made a cover to the camel from thick clothes covering the whole back of the camel. Its color is light blue, which gave harmony with the color of the dark blue color of the front of the camel.

From our notice to this piece of clothes, we can feel that the artist didn't leave it without adding touches of beauty throughout the decorative tapes, which is represented in a linear or cross way and restricted within them a group of plants and also some inscriptions and these elements had given this beautiful carpet gravity and respect to the camel and that was reflected to the owner of the camel.

We can notice here that he was sitting on the middle of the saddle instead of its back and made him depend on it. The artist had drawn bundles of tapes round the neck of the camel and Al-Wasiti had controlled on the shape of the camel more than his control on its rider (Figure 6).

The Results of the Research and its Conclusions :

The decorative ideas in drawing the camels is not based on artist's imagination but it is based on what was found in reality, without using all the details. The artist had tried in the Arabic school of illustration to give common features as in other schools of art like the Persian and Turkish schools. The purpose of Al-Wasiti's drawing, including the drawing of camels, wasn't for scientific reasons, but they were drawings accompanied by written inscriptions to clarify certain events to urge the reader to read the stories in a simple style.

The camel had got a special rank by the Arabic Muslims artists because of their natural love for this animal and all the uses of the camel as it is clarified in their drawings. The camel was included in many life aspects because it lives with human beings in most of his life as in grazing, travelling for remote distances or to visit the Holy places and also the camel was used in travelling to near places.

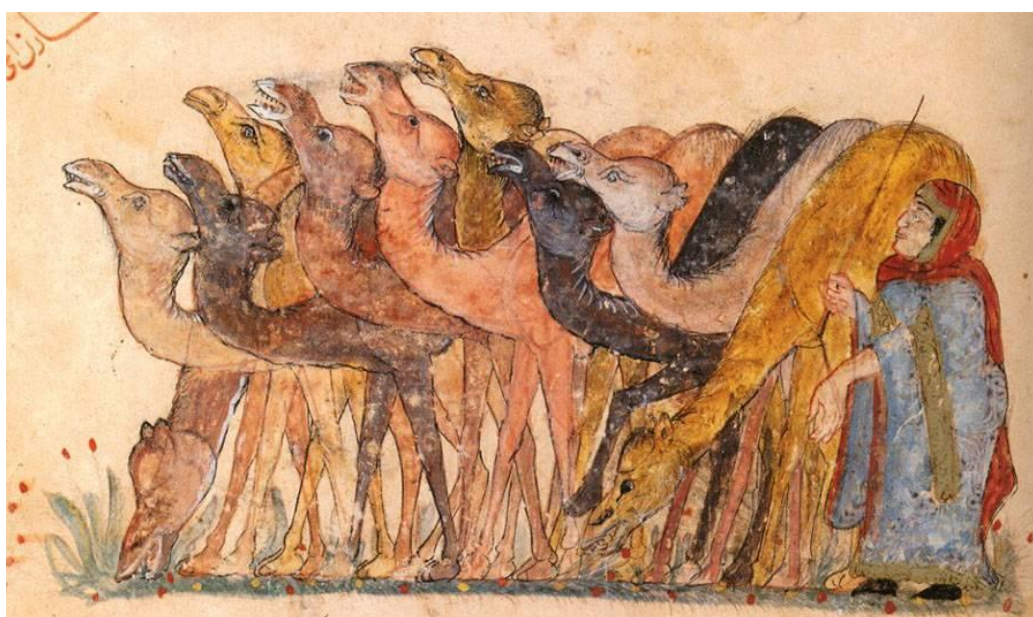
The camel was characterized in all the previous cases by clear details, like the carrier and the saddle and also by very accurate anatomical details.

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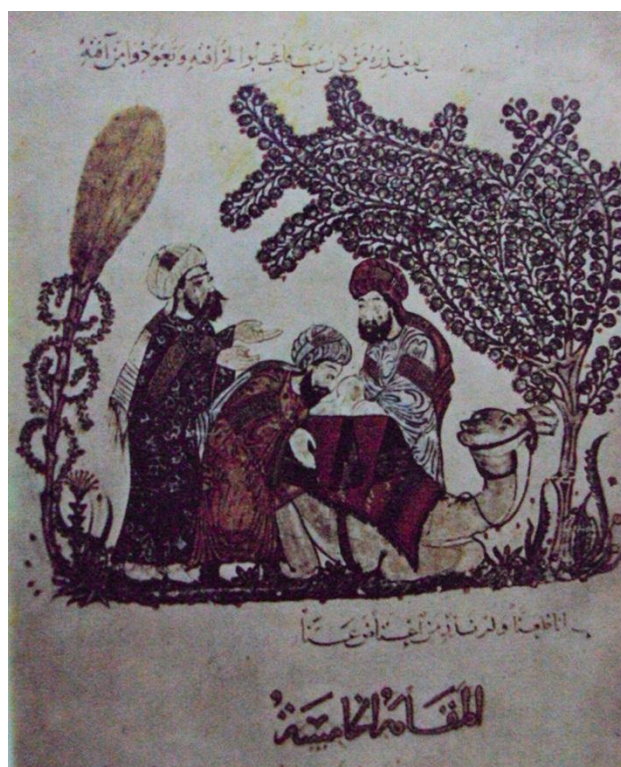
(Figure 1).
Al-Badri, Shaima



(Figure 3).
Al-Naimi, Nahida



(Figure 3).
Al-Naimi, Nahida



(Figure 4).
Salman, Issa, 1985

Notes :

- ¹ Al-Hariri (b. 1054 near Basra, d. 1122).
- ² -Salman, Issa, (*Redecorating*) *civilization of Iraq*, Freedom House for printing, Baghdad 1985 C 9, p 479.
- ³ -Animal figures on pottery are generally calm and still, placed inside geometrical shapes. Al-Ali, Zakia Omar, *Islamic ornaments until the end of the fifth century AH, eleventh century*, unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Baghdad, 1990, p. 153.
- ⁴ Some animal figures which were done on the walls were characterized by an acceptable and a clear movement and harmony as in the paintings found in Al-Fao. Maliki, Fawzia Al Mahdi, *the impact of Arabic School in the illustrations on porcelain until the middle of the seventh century AH*, PhD thesis / Baghdad University, 1997, pp.167 – 168.
- ⁵ Guthrie, Shirley. 1995. *Arab Social Life in the Middle Ages, An illustrated*. Saqi Books. 229 p., 16 pp.
- ⁶ -Al-Maqama is the council or the group and it is said that it is the council in which the preacher is urging for charity and some said that it is a piece of advice.
- ⁷ The National Library in Paris <http://www.bnf.fr/fr/acc/x.accueil.html>
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- ⁹ -Al-Alfi, Abu Saleh, *Islamic art assets - philosophy and foundations* 2P., Knowledge Printing House, Cairo, p. 276
- 10-Al-Naimi, Nahida Abdel Fattah, *furniture houses in the Arab School miniatures for portray Islamic*, p 181
- ¹² -Ibin Mandhur , Mohammad Bin Karam Al-Ansari, Lisan Al-Arabs, investigation and comment of Ali Shori , *Arab Heritage Revival House*, Beirut c 1 , 1988, p 444
- ¹³ -Ibin Mandhur , Ibid, p 444
- ¹⁴ -Barma mountain: it's located about 60 km east of Riyadh city.
- ¹⁵ -Department of Antiquities and Museums, Introduction to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia Antiquities, Riyadh, 1975, pp. 97 - 112.
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- ¹⁸ - Al-Naimi, *Illustrated Keys of Hariri*, p 182
- ¹⁹ -Atenkhausn, Richard, *the art of painting among the Arabs*, Translation and Commentary of Issa Salman and Salim Taha Al-Tikriti, printing house of Al-Baghdadi writer, Baghdad 1974, pp. 120
- ²⁰ -Al-Badri, Shaima Jassim, *the continuing influence of artistic styles of the Arab School in imaging of Mughal school*, MA thesis , University of Baghdad, 2003, p 42.

- ²¹-Okasha, Tharwat, Wasti art through Keys of Al-Hariri Islamic illustrated impact, Knowledge printing House, Egypt 1972, p 71
- ²²- Al-Badri, ibid, p 95
- ²³ The formation in language is the form of any event
- ²⁴ Okasha, Ibid, P.77

صور الجمل في المخطوطات الإسلامية لمقامات الحريري

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الملخص :

الفنون العربية الإسلامية لها جذور عميقة في التاريخ وكان جزء منها تم وراثته من تقاليد الحضارات القديمة ، ومختلف الإضافات التي قد وظفت في الزخارف الفنية على (المعدنيات ، العاج ، الزجاج ، الخزف ... إلخ) إن موضوع الدراسة يركز على نوع معين من الفن الذي يستخدم الزخارف والصور التوضيحية في المخطوطات ، وهذه الميزة تميز بها الفن العربي الإسلامي ، وكانت واحدة من أهم المدارس المتخصصة في هذا المجال أي في فن الكتابة والخط والفنون لهذه المخطوطات كانت مدرسة بغداد لفن التصوير .