

TEXTUAL CHARACTERISTICS AND GLOBAL CIRCULATION OF AL-SAKKĀKĪ'S MIFTĀḤ AL-'ULŪM

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Abstract: This study examines the historical and linguistic significance of al-Sakkākī's seminal 13th-century treatise, *Miftāḥ al-'Ulūm* (The Key to the Sciences), a cornerstone of medieval Islamic pedagogy and Arabic linguistic theory. Developed during an era of intensified Quranic and Hadith exegesis, the work established a comprehensive theoretical framework for Arabic grammar and rhetoric, eventually becoming a standard curriculum in madrasas across the Islamic world.

The primary focus of this research is the physical and textual analysis of Manuscript No. 7843, housed in the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. This particular codex is an incomplete copy, lacking the initial sections on morphology (*ṣarf*) and syntax (*naḥw*), as well as the author's original introduction. However, it preserves the critical third division of the work dedicated to semantics (*'ilm al-ma'ānī*) and rhetoric (*'ilm al-bayān*).

The investigation details the manuscript's structure, noting that the text begins abruptly on folio 329a with linguistic examples of restriction (*qaṣr*) and concludes on folio 502b. While the colophon identifies al-Sakkākī as the author, it omits the scribe's identity and the date of transcription. Furthermore, the paper provides a comparative overview of the work's global dissemination, citing extant copies in international repositories—including Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain, India, and Iraq—and identifying newly documented manuscripts within Turkish library collections.

Keywords: *Al-Sakkākī, Miftāḥ al-‘Ulūm, Arabic linguistics, Islamic rhetoric, Codicology, Manuscript No. 7843, Oriental studies, Semantics.*

During the early and medieval periods of the Islamic world, there was an intensified focus on the exegetical study of the sacred texts—the Quran and the Hadith. This scholarly impetus necessitated a profound linguistic analysis of the Arabic language in which these texts were revealed, leading to the development of the theoretical foundations of its linguistic system. Consequently, specialized scientific treatises dedicated to Arabic grammar emerged. One of the most preeminent works in this field is Sakkaki’s “Miftah al-Ulum” (The Key to the Sciences). This manual proved so indispensable that its pedagogical reach extended far beyond Central Asian institutions, becoming a staple curriculum in madrasas across the Islamic world. The immense demand for this work resulted in the production of numerous manuscript copies and transcriptions to facilitate widespread scholarly access.

The manuscript collection of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan (hereinafter referred to as IOS AS Uzb) houses a handwritten copy of *Miftah al-Ulum* under accession number 7843. Manuscript No. 7843 is a codex (compendium) comprising four distinct works, the fourth of which is *Miftah al-Ulum*.

This particular copy is extant but incomplete; the sections pertaining to Arabic grammar (*sarf* / morphology and *nahw* / syntax) are absent. The manuscript contains the third part of *Miftah al-Ulum*, which focuses on semantics (*ilm al-ma'ani*) and rhetoric (*ilm al-bayan*). The fragmentation of the semantic section is evident from the fact that the text commences abruptly with a linguistic example:

“انما هذا لك لا لغيرك وانما لك هذا لا ذاك وانما يأخذ زيد لا عمرو” (“Verily, this is for you and not for another; and verily, this is for you and not for that; and indeed, Zayd takes [it], not Amr.” fol. 329a).

In addition to the missing morphological and syntactical sections, the author’s original introduction to the semantic division is also absent in this manuscript. Within the surviving portion, section headings are rubricalized (inscribed in red ink).

The treatise occupies folios 329a to 502b and concludes in its entirety. The colophon reads:

تم الكتاب لامر الدين يوسف بن ابي بكر بن محمد السكاكي الخوارزمي صاحب المفتاح جزاه الله “The book was completed by order of Amr al-Din Yusuf ibn Abi Bakr ibn Muhammad Sakkaki al-Khwarazmi, the author of the 'Miftah'. May Allah the Almighty reward him with the best in both worlds”).

The date of transcription and the name of the scribe are not recorded in this specific copy.

Our current investigation has established that several manuscript copies of the *Miftāḥ al-‘Ulūm* are extant within the various library collections of Turkey [see Appendix 4]. The German orientalist Carl Brockelmann previously identified several codices of this work preserved in international repositories:

1. Germany: Berlin, State Library (Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin), MSS Nos. 7184, 7185, 7186; Library of the German Oriental Society (Deutsche Morgenländische Gesellschaft), MS No. 93.
2. United Kingdom: London, British Library, MSS Nos. 294, 295, 296; British Museum, Department of Arabic Manuscripts, MSS Nos. 550, 551, 981.
3. Spain: Madrid, El Escorial Library, Department of Arabic Manuscripts, MSS Nos. 205, 232.
4. India: Patna Manuscript Fund, MSS Nos. 1674, 1675, 1676; Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library (Bankipore), MSS Nos. 20/6142, 6143, 6144; Rampur Raza Library, MSS Nos. 1/568, 87, 88, 89, 90.
5. Iraq: Mosul Central Library, MSS Nos. 184, 247 [96: 249].

Furthermore, our research has identified the following manuscript copies of Abū Ya‘qūb al-Sakkākī’s *Miftāḥ al-‘Ulūm* held within the manuscript departments of Turkey:

1. MS No. 19 Hk 3171: Çorum Hasan Paşa Public Library. Dimensions: 185x135–130x90 mm; 21 lines per page; 188 folios.
2. MS No. 60 Hk 390: National Library of Turkey (Milli Kütüphane), Ankara. Dimensions: 210x145–110x70 mm; 13 lines per page; 215 folios.

3. MS No. 37 Hk 277/6: Kastamonu Public Library. Dimensions: 208x145–140x85 mm; 19 lines per page; Folios 62b–81a.
4. MS No. 37 Hk 995: Kastamonu Public Library. Dimensions: 190x140–130x95 mm; 17 lines per page; 263 folios.
5. MS No. 45 Hk 1899: Manisa Public Library. Dimensions: 275x170–200x112 mm; 21 lines per page; 256 folios.
6. MS No. 45 Hk 1902: Manisa Public Library. Dimensions: 204x122–150x62 mm; 17 lines per page; 180 folios.
7. MS No. 60 Hk 282: National Library of Turkey (Milli Kütüphane), Ankara. Dimensions: 207x150–142x90 mm; 13 lines per page; 212 folios.
8. MS No. 50 Ür His 29: National Library of Turkey (Milli Kütüphane), Ankara. Format: 175x115–120x75 mm; 15 lines per page; 105 folios.
9. MS No. 19 Hk 5523: Çorum Hasan Paşa Public Library. Format: 240x170–150x100 mm; 15 lines per page; 106 folios.
10. MS No. 45 Hk 1981: Manisa Public Library. Format: 185x135–130x85 mm; 17 lines per page; 130 folios.
11. MS No. 45 Hk 6479: Manisa Public Library. Format: 275x190–170x115 mm; 19 lines per page; 101 folios.
12. MS No. 07 A 139: Konya Manuscript Library (Konya Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi). Format: 203x142–124x67 mm; 15 lines per page; 174 folios.
13. MS No. 37 Hk 1979: Kastamonu Public Library. Dimensions: 181x142–133x105 mm; 17 lines per page; 257 folios.
14. MS No. 45 Hk 1903: Manisa Public Library. Dimensions: 170x120–105x58 mm; 10 lines per page; 295 folios.
15. MS No. 45 Hk 1904: Manisa Public Library. Dimensions: 215x120–145x73 mm; 15 lines per page; 191 folios.
16. MS No. 45 Hk 1905: Manisa Public Library. Dimensions: 254x174–195x120 mm; 25 lines per page; 73 folios.
17. MS No. 27 Hk 211: Konya Manuscript Library (Konya Yazma Eserler Kütüphanesi). Dimensions: 180x125–125x75 mm; 19 lines per page; 133 folios.

18. MS No. 19 Hk 4794: Çorum Hasan Paşa Public Library. Dimensions: 290x170–210x115 mm; 21 lines per page; 129 folios.
19. MS No. 67 Saf 189: Ankara Regional Directorate Library (Ankara Bölge Müdürlüğü Kütüphanesi). Dimensions: 207x148–137x67 mm; 11 lines per page; 313 folios.
20. MS No. 45 Hk 8166: Manisa Public Library. Dimensions: 208x148–146x87 mm; 15 lines per page; 144 folios.
21. MS No. 45 Ak Ze 651: Manisa Public Library. Dimensions: 210x145–155x75 mm; 19 lines per page; 124 folios.
22. MS No. 21 Hk 662/1: Diyarbakır Public Library. Dimensions: 230x140–135x78 mm; 21 lines per page; Folios 1b–87b.
23. MS No. 21 Hk 396: Diyarbakır Public Library. Dimensions: 200x150–120x85 mm; 19 lines per page; 125 folios.

The primary source for this study is the manuscript preserved in the National Library of Ankara under accession number 26 Hk 192. The codex is currently held within the Eskişehir Public Library collection. Its dimensions are 294.4 x 171.1 mm, with each folio containing 21 lines across a total of 244 folios. In the context of this research, this witness is designated by the siglum MU.

While the exact date of transcription is not specified, an attribution to the calligrapher is preserved on folio 1a, stating:

هذه النسخة بخط الإمام الشيخ العلامة شمس الدين محمد بن سيد الناس اليعمري (This copy was transcribed by the hand of the Imam, the Sheikh, the Erudite Scholar Shams al-Din Muhammad ibn Sayyid al-Nas al-Ya'mari) [MU, 1a].

The manuscript is written entirely in Arabic, utilizing a script characterized by Kufic-like features, with extensive vocalization and diacritics applied to the text. The orthographic typification is maintained consistently throughout the work. This particular witness was selected as the base text for this study due to its superior state of preservation and its relative completeness compared to other extant copies, as well as its presumed antiquity. Notably, while many manuscripts of this work lack

the first and second parts, the MU manuscript preserves these sections in their entirety.

LIST OF SOURCES AND LITERATURE

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2. Sag.1983 – Imam Abu Ya'qub Yusuf ibn Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad Sakkaki. *Miftah al-Ulum*. Edited by Naim Zarzur. – Beirut, 1983. – 621 p.
3. Sag.2000 – Imam Abu Ya'qub Yusuf ibn Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad Sakkaki. *Miftah al-Ulum*. Edited by Abdulhamid Hindawi. – Beirut, 2000. – 828 p.
4. Sag.2008 – Imam Abu Ya'qub Yusuf ibn Abu Bakr ibn Muhammad Sakkaki. *Miftah al-Ulum*. Edited by Hamdi Muhammad Qabil. – Cairo, 2008. – 535 p.
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