



Bookmaking

During the rule of the Abbasids, Chinese soldiers captured during a battle in central Asia were discovered to be artisans skilled in paper making. These Chinese prisoners taught their captors how to make paper, and this new skill spread throughout the empire. As a result, books became more available and contributed to interest in all kinds of learning. Furthermore, since both designs and calligraphy were used to decorate books, it became a status symbol to own them. Indeed, a sign of a wealthy person was a well-stocked library.

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House of Wisdom

The House of Wisdom was an educational institution founded in Baghdad by the Abbasid caliph al-Ma'mun, in A.D. 830. At the House of Wisdom, scholars from many parts of the world translated into Arabic, Greek, Persian, and Indian texts on such topics as mathematics, astronomy, and logic. Scholars who came to the House of Wisdom translated Greek classics in philosophy and science into Arabic. These scholars helped preserve Greek classics that might otherwise have been lost or destroyed. The results of their work also assisted in encouraging openness to new ways of thinking. In addition, the House of Wisdom's extensive library, which was open to the public, contained Qur'ans and collections of Hadith (sayings of the Prophet Muhammad) and books on law, poetry, history, and the like. The library was a model for other large libraries throughout the Islamic world.

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