

E.J. Brill, *Catalogue 500. A Collection of Arabic (and a few Turkish and Persian) Manuscripts. Localities and Dates in Arabic Manuscripts. Descriptive Catalogue of a Collection of Arabic Manuscripts in the Possession of E.J. Brill*. Compiled by Dr. P.S. van Koningsveld and Dr. Q. Al-Samarrai. Leiden 1978. 8°. viii, 186 pp. (including a Chronological Index, an Index of Persons, an Index of Titles, and a General Index). Hfl 45.—

Messrs. E.J. Brill of Leiden have celebrated the occasion of the issue of their 500th catalogue by publishing a catalogue of a selection of their Arabic MSS. Splendidly printed with over one hundred illustrations, mainly of colophons, this catalogue is not, however, an exception to the line which the House of Brill seems to have been pursuing lately. In this respect mention should be made of its catalogues *Diversions* (1973), *Philologia Orientalis* (1976), *Turcica* (1976) etc., which equally deserve our admiration for their careful execution and the quality of their contents. A landmark such as No. 500 should not pass by without some record of it. We are sure that this catalogue will find its due place among the reference works, like the 500th catalogues of K.W. Hiersemann (Leipzig 1922) and, to a lesser extent, of Otto Harrassowitz (Wiesbaden 1966), and also like previous catalogues of Brill (Landberg (Leiden 1883); Houtsma<sup>1</sup> (Leiden 1886); Houtsma<sup>2</sup> (Leiden 1889)). Whereas the latter catalogues were compiled according to the needs of their day, i.e. from a purely philological point of view, this catalogue shows the influence of an auxiliary science which has only recently made its appearance in Arabic bibliography: codicology.

Among the 278 items offered for sale (at a total price of f 235,000) some MSS. are conspicuous. We mention here only the treatise of Ibn Hudhayl on Holy War and Cavalry (No. 4A, 14th cent.), a very old copy of Ġawharī's famous dictionary (No. 29 (1), 11/12th cent.), one of the few known copies of the manual on the composition of legal documents by the Moroccan jurist al-Wansharīshī (No. 192A, 18th cent.) and a treatise on astronomy by al-Bīrūnī with some 13th- or 14th-century notes in *Latin*.

The hope expressed by the learned authors in their preface 'that these MSS. will come into some public institution which will make them available for scholars, without hesitation and without difficulties' does not seem to have come true. The entire collection was sold in July 1978 to an anonymous (a Saudi Arabian?) collector, for which transaction Dr. R.M. Burrell of the Dept. of History of the School of Oriental and African Studies in London acted as an intermediary. Enquiries to him about the present whereabouts of the MSS., their present owner, the possibility of obtaining microfilms and questions of copyright in case of publishing, have so far yielded no result. Purchasing a collection like this one, including its printed catalogue, indeed fits in with Saudi Arabian investment patterns, viz. to acquire sophisticated projects on a cash-on-the-nail basis, be it fully equipped harbours, oil refineries, universities, complete towns, or ... collections of MSS.

Now that we must fear that this collection will not be available to interested scholars for some time we cannot but be grateful to the authors of the catalogue for having included so many illustrations (122 to be exact). Most of these are concerned with a feature of Arabic MSS. which is still very much neglected: the colophon. Stressing the importance of the colophon of a MS. may sound a truism to the student of Western MSS., but it should be borne in mind that in the study of all Oriental MSS. (not only Arabic MSS.) modern codicological concepts are still almost universally ignored.

One can see from the fact that this catalogue bears several titles at a time that the authors faced a dilemma: whether to compile a mere sales catalogue or a scholarly reference work. They have tried to solve this problem by doing both at the same time.

They have certainly succeeded in attaining the former, but not, at least not to the same extent, the latter goal. The descriptions are on the whole accurate enough, but the material contained in the catalogue does not really allow the authors to name it *Localities and Dates in Arabic Manuscripts*. Localities and dates are important for the study of MSS., but the authors of this catalogue have missed the opportunity to tell us *why* they are so important in this case. If one takes a look at the chronological index (useful and accurate) at the end of the catalogue, one finds that the 278 items are divided into 394 datable entities. Of these, only 220 bear exact dates; the others are estimates, accurate only to the century. Of these 220 only 67 MSS. are dated *and* localized with certainty, in 43 places. Of these 43 places no fewer than 24 are situated in Anatolia and what used to be European Turkey, and of the remaining 19 no fewer than 12 are situated in other provinces of the former Ottoman empire (African territories not included). The majority of these 36 places are represented in this catalogue by relatively recent MSS. (11–13th cent. AH/17–19th cent.). This can hardly be styled a representative sample for any research and would not, therefore, appear to justify the general title given to the catalogue by the authors. But apart from this misleading title, Brill's 500th catalogue is a successful venture and a worthy commemoration of more than a century of highly specialized bookselling.

J. J. WITKAM

*Seven Specimens of Arabic Manuscripts Preserved in the Library of the University of Leiden. Presented to the Participants of the 9th Congress of Arabic and Islamic Studies, Amsterdam, 1–6 September 1978.* Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1978. f<sup>o</sup>, 20 pp., Hfl 15.—

The present book was distributed as a gift from the publishing house Brill of Leiden and Leiden University Library to the participants in a congress of Arabists and Islamists. It will be useful chiefly to students of Arabic palaeography, and especially to beginners in the field. The seven specimens (all of 11th–12th-century Arabic MSS. on a variety of subjects, all dated and nearly all localized) are reproduced in colotype of great clarity, with a full or partial transliteration in Arabic characters on the opposite page, where also detailed descriptions of the MSS. and notes on palaeographical peculiarities and punctuation are given. Elementary as this seems, it is a novelty in Arabic palaeography. Apart from a section of Arabic MSS. in the Oriental Series of the *Facsimiles of Manuscripts and Inscriptions*, published by W. Wright for the Palaeographical Society (London 1875–83), no book has been published on these lines before the present work. It is at once clear that the compiler leaned heavily on S. Harrison Thomson's *Latin Bookhands of the Later Middle Ages 1100–1500* (Cambridge 1969) as far as the presentation of his material is concerned. The book is concluded with a meticulous index which deserves special mention for the way the compiler's remarks on palaeography and punctuation as they appear in the course of the book are put together.

ANONYMOUS