

AFGHANISTAN*

by

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* The political circumstances in Afghanistan do not allow a comprehensive field survey of all collections of Islamic MSS there. The compiler who, until 3 years ago, was a member of the committee set up by the Government to oversee its cataloguing programme has put together this survey on the basis of his knowledge and involvement in that process, and through correspondence with his colleagues in Kabul.

This survey is not as detailed as the Foundation would normally wish, but the compiler regrets that, owing to the present circumstances in Afghanistan, a comprehensive survey cannot be fully realised.

UNION CATALOGUES & SURVEYS

1935. Ba^ʿzī az nuskhah^ʿhā-yi nāyāb-i qalamī-i Kābul. By S.G. I^ʿTIMĀDĪ. *Sālnāmah-ʿi Kābul*, 1314 sh., pp. 173–188.
57 Persian & Arabic MSS.

1964. *Manuscripts d'Afghanistan*. By S. DE LAUGIER DE BEAURECUEIL. Cairo: Institut Français d'Archéologie Orientale (Recherches d'Archéologie, de Philologie et d'Histoire, 26). 420pp.

Catalogue of 1596 Arabic, Persian, Pashto, Turkish (incl. Chaghatay & Azeri) and Urdu MSS in 6 libraries of Kabul and Herat. Titles, authors, measurements, no. of folios, lines per page, dates, scripts and some notes on bindings, condition & contents.

1968. Chand nuskhah-ʿi khattī-i kitābkhānah^ʿhā-yi Afghānistān. By MUḤAMMAD TAQĪ DĀNISH PAZHŪH. *Rāhnāmā-yi Kitāb*, 10, 1346, pp. 520–529, 627–637.

1971. Notes on some public and semi-public libraries in the Near and Middle East containing Persian and other Moslem manuscripts. By BO UTAS. *Acta Orientalia*, 33, 1971, pp. 169–192.

Herat, pp. 189–190; Kabul, pp. 190–191. Brief notes on the contents of 7 libraries.

1974. Chand nuskhah-ʿi khattī az Afghānistān. By MUḤAMMAD TAQĪ DĀNISH PAZHŪH. *Nuskhah^ʿhā-yi Khattī*, 7, 1353, pp. 562–565.

1983. Turkish manuscripts: cataloguing since 1960 and manuscripts still uncatalogued. Part 3. By ELEAZAR BIRNBAUM. *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, 103, 1983, pp. 691–707.

Afghanistan, pp. 699–700. Mentions Turkish & Chaghatay MSS acquired by libraries and collectors since the 1964 catalogue of Laugier de Beaucueil (see above), or omitted from it.

INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIONS

HERAT

Herat Museum (Kitābkhānah-i Mūziyum-i Harāt)

Total number of Islamic MSS: 102 (44 Arabic; 1 Pashto; 51 Persian; 6 mixed) [1964 information].

Published catalogues:

1964. Included in union catalogue of LAUGIER DE BEAURECUEIL (see above), pp. 313–331.

Kitābkhānah-i ʿĀmmah-i Harāt

Pārkh-i Nādir-Pashtūn

Status: Public library

Total number of Islamic MSS: ca. 100 (mostly Arabic; few Persian) [1971 information].

See:

1971. Survey by UTAS (above), p. 190.

Unpublished catalogue: Handwritten lists, including both MSS and printed books.

KABUL

Ākādimī-i ʿUlūm-i Afghānistān Library

Sher pūr, Kabul

Date of establishment: 1979

Status: Governmental

Total number of Islamic MSS: Over 2,000 (Persian, Arabic, Pashto).

Conditions of access: Open to members of the Academy and scholars.

Description of collection: The Academy of Sciences of Afghanistan came into existence in 1979 on a Russian model. Several institutes already in existence were merged together under the name of the Academy of Sciences. These included Pashtū Tolānā (Academy of Pashto), Anjumān-i Tārikh-i Afghānistān (Historical Society of Afghanistan), Markaz-i Bayn al-Milālī-i Muṭālīʿāt-i Pashtū (International Centre for Pashto Studies), Dāʿirat al-Maʿārif-i Aryānā (Aryana Encyclopaedia Directorate), Kabul Museum and Markaz-i

Muṭālīʿāt-i Kūshānī (Kushan Studies Centre). All the MSS belonging to these institutions were brought together in the Academy's Library.

The collection covers mainly the fields of literature, history and *fiqh*. Physically the MSS are in very poor condition and most of them are in danger of being destroyed because of humidity, dust and worm problems.

Published catalogues:

1964. The union catalogue by S. DE LAUGIER DE BEAURECUEIL (see above) covers the collections of Kabul Museum, the Historical Society of Afghanistan, and part of the Ministry of Education.

Ārshif-i Millī-i Afghānistān Library

Sālang Wāt, Kabul

Date of establishment: 1979

Status: Public (State Library)

Total number of Islamic MSS: Over 12,000 (8000 Persian, and the remainder in Arabic, Pashto, Turkish).

Conditions of access: Open to the general public; no credentials required.

Description of collection: The Afghan National Archive was established in 1979. The institution is housed in an historic building, which used to serve as King Amānallāh's private office, and is surrounded by beautiful ancient gardens. Sixty years ago, the building was used as a centre for advanced military courses and subsequently as a state guest house. In 1974, it was renovated, but its original features—including all the original doors and windows—were preserved. A ventilation system was installed in order to maintain a dry atmosphere in the basement where all the official and historical documents are housed. These are kept in cabinets and display units specially constructed to preserve them.

On the first floor one hall is designated for the display of manuscripts, calligraphy and miniatures, while another is for the display of a combination of original documents and photocopies in stylish glass cabinets and display units.

When the Ministry of Information and Culture took on the responsibility of running the National Archives, it bequeathed to the Archive a wealth of manuscripts and also brought in experienced personnel to help in the administration. The Archives set up a

committee to encourage people to donate their manuscripts in order to preserve them as part of the Afghan national heritage.

Among the documents and manuscripts collected were some which people had donated, and others which were confiscated from people trying to smuggle them out of the country, as well as those that were taken over from collections of people who either were killed in the civil war or had left the country.

The MSS mentioned by LAUGIER DE BEAURECUEIL all exist in the Archives, including those transferred from the library of the Ministry of Information (as it was previously called), those taken over from the library of the Royal Palace, and those from the libraries of Ghazni and Herat.

Unfortunately, many MSS from the King's private collection were stolen by the authorities. Among these was a valuable copy of *Gulistān-i SA'DI* transcribed only 30 years after the death of the famous Persian poet and author of the 7th century AH.

The National Archive also has over 2000 works of calligraphy, some of which were written by the most renowned calligraphers of their time, including masterpieces presented to contemporary rulers. One of these is a rare copy of *Nafahāt al-Uns* by NŪR AL-DĪN 'ABD AL-RAHMĀN JĀMĪ (the great 9th-century poet). Another is a copy of the *Dīwān* of ḤĀFĪZ, by the famous calligrapher MUḤAMMAD MUḤSIN written in *nasta'liq* on *hibrī* paper scattered with gold dust: certain pages have been decorated with golden motifs of flowers and leaves, and the panels on the title-page have been decorated in gold in the Timurid style. This MS. was commissioned by the Timurid Prince, FARĪDŪN MĪRZĀ, and it also contains beautiful miniatures.

The National Archive is now in a state of disrepair owing to the lack of personnel with a knowledge of maintenance and management systems. The few experienced personnel that did exist have been lost in the tragic civil war.

Published catalogues:

1964. See the union catalogue of LAUGIER DE BEAURECUEIL (details above).

1985. *Fihrist-i nusakh-i khatṭi-i Ārshif-i Millī-i Afghānistān*. By MUḤAMMAD A'ZAM AFZALĪ. Kabul 1363. 3 vols. 421; 194; 330pp. Published by Kumītah-i Dawlatī-i Kultūr.

1986. *Fihrist-i nusakh-i khatṭi-i Pashtū-i Ārshif-i Millī-i Afghānistān*. By 'ABD AL-QADĪR MUSHTARĪ NAJRĀBĪ. Kabul 1365. 124pp. Published by Kumītah-i Dawlatī-i Kultūr.

1987. *Fihrist-i Qur'ānhā-yi Sharīf-i khatṭi-i Ārshif-i Millī-i Afghānistān*. By 'ABD AL-QADĪR MUSHTARĪ NAJRĀBĪ. Kabul 1366. 428pp. Published by Kumītah-i Dawlatī-i Kultūr.

Unpublished catalogues: A hand-list giving some details of 3,551 MSS has been prepared by FIKRĪ SALJŪQĪ and BASHĪR HIRAVĪ and is available in the library. It gives the titles and authors of the MSS. A copy of the same list is also available in Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation's Library.

Jāvid Collection

Nāhiya Chār Shahr-i-Naw

Date of establishment: 1951

Status: Private

Total number of Islamic MSS: Over 300 (Persian, Arabic, Pashto).

Conditions of access: Temporarily closed owing to the political situation and civil war.

Description of collection: There are valuable MSS including a rare and complete copy of the Persian *Tafsīr-i ABŪ BAKR 'ATĪQ SURĀBĀDĪ*, written in *thuluth*, on buff polished paper, some time in the 7th or 8th centuries AH. The script is vocalised. Part of it was photocopied and published in Iran by Bunyād-i Farhang-i Irān.

The fields covered by the majority of the MSS are literature and history.

Parvanta Collection

Share-Nau, Kabul

Date of establishment: 1940

Status: Private

Total number of Islamic MSS: 2,000 (Persian, Arabic).

Conditions of access: Temporarily closed owing to the political situation and civil war.

Description of collection: Precious and rare MSS, including some auto-graph copies. The fields covered are literature and history.

Puhantūn-i Kabul Library

Puhantūn-i-Kabul, Jamāl Mayna

Date of establishment: 1964

Status: University library

Total number of Islamic MSS: Over 1,000 (Persian, Arabic, Pashto).

Conditions of access: Temporarily closed by the Government.

Description of collection: The Faculty of Literature of Kabul University possessed a valuable collection of MSS. When the Central Library of Kabul University was established, all MSS were transferred to it. The Central Library started to acquire more MSS, but owing to the critical circumstances in the country, several precious MSS were stolen, including the following:

- (i) Holy Qurʿān divided by 3 lines of elegant black *muḥaqqaq*, *thuluth* and *naskh*, on polished buff paper plus fly-leaves. Opening page with illuminated headings within gold clouds and gold margins with floral motifs. Punctuation in red, rosettes between verses, without date and name of scribe. Probably 8th century AH.
- (ii) The other main missing MS. is the rare copy of *Majmūʿah-i Laṭāʾif va Safīnah-i-Zarāʾif* of SAYF-I JĀMĪ HARAWĪ. This MS. is from the 7th century AH. There is a photocopy of the original in India at the disposal of Professor NAZIR AHMAD of the Aligarh University.

The fields covered by the majority of MSS are literature, history, and *fiqh*. The physical condition of the MSS is very bad, with poor preservation.

Published catalogues: None

Unpublished catalogues: A hand-list which gives the titles of the MSS and the shelf numbers is available in the library. A copy of the same hand-list is also available at Al-Furqan Foundation Library.

KUNDUZ

See QUNDUZ

MAZAR-i SHARIF

City Museum

According to BIRNBAUM, 1983 (see Union Catalogues above), an 18th- or 19th-century MS. of SHĀH ISMĀʿĪL's *Dīvān-i Khaṭāʾi*, in Azeri, is preserved here.

QUNDUZ

BIRNBAUM, 1983 (see Union Catalogues above) mentions 2 MSS here, but does not state the library or collection to which they belong. They are both works of ʿALĪ SHĪR NAVĀʾĪ: *Majālis al-naḥāʾis*, in Chaghatay, and *Vaqfiyah*, in Persian.

TASHQURGHAN

Bazar Library

Status: Public library

Total number of Islamic MSS: 133 (45 Arabic; 71 Persian; 4 Chaghatay or Uzbek; 13 Arabic/Persian). [1971 information.]

Published catalogues:

1982. Note sur les manuscrits de la Bibliothèque publique de Tāšqurqān (Afghanistan). By M. REUT. *Studia Iranica*, 11, 1982, pp. 301–316.

Incl. handlist, with reg.nos., authors, titles, languages, contents, bindings, nos. of pages, scribes, illumination/illustrations and remarks. Compiled in 1971.

Unpublished catalogues: Register kept by a “young mullah”, on which REUT’s list was partially based.

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Afghānistān, p. 5, no. 36.

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