BAHRAIN

by

Bakri Musa Abdul Karim

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Sheikha Nafa Al Khaleda, Director of the National Museum of Bahrain and her assistant Maryam Mohammed Ali and Eyad Al Ghamidi; Dr. Ali Aba Hussein, Director of the Historical Documents Centre; and Ashraf Al Ansari, Curator of Manuscripts in Bayt al-Qur'ân.

UNION CATALOGUES & SURVEYS


This catalogue lists some 656 manuscripts. About 60 per cent of these are held in the National Museum of Bahrain. The rest are scattered in private and public collections. Among these is the private collection of ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Taḥrīr, from which about 90 MSS appear in the catalogue. It does not include any of Dr. Kanoo’s manuscripts. The Bayt al-Qur‘ān collection is also not covered, perhaps because of its relative newness.

The catalogue gives full details, including title, author, subject, language, date and place of copying, name of scribe and style of script. It also has author, scribe and title indexes. The present location of each title as well as its previous owner are also given. At the present time some attempts are being made to update this catalogue.

An abridged English version was published in 1986 (see below).


INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIONS

MANAMA

Dr. Abdul Latif Jusim Kanoo (ʿAbd al-La‘īf Jásim Kânû)

c/o Ministry of Housing,
Manama, Bahrain
Tel.: (973) 534443
Status: Private home library

Total number of Islamic MSS: About 200.
Conditions of access: By appointment with the owner.

Description of collection: Dr. Kanoo, a scholar and prominent collector of Islamic MSS, is the mastermind behind the idea of Bayt al-Qurʾān (see below) and is currently its Secretary-General. In 1991, a selection of about 100 rare works of his collection was exhibited in Bayt al-Qurʾān to commemorate the birth of the Prophet Muhammad (p.b.u.h.). As far as can be ascertained, most of Dr. Kanoo’s collection is related to the Qurʾān. Many of the works in the exhibition are elaborately designed and are very attractive examples of the Islamic binding craft. All the volumes appear to be in their original bindings, with no serious cracks or damage to their contents. It was not possible to establish whether the collection is catalogued or not.

Mathaf al-Bahrain al-Waṭani (the National Museum of Bahrain)

P.O. Box 2199
Manama, Bahrain
Tel.: (973) 292977
Telefax: (973) 293020
Date of establishment: 1976
Status: Public (affiliated to the Ministry of Information).
Total number of Islamic MSS: 435 (Arabic).

Conditions of access: Part of the collection is on display in the Manuscripts and Archives Hall in the Museum, which is open to the public Saturday to Friday, 08.00 – 14.00. The vast majority of the MSS are kept in a special room and are only accessible to serious researchers on approval from the Museum administration.

Description of collection: The majority of the collection is on Islamic subjects, with 47 works on the Qurʾān and related studies, 94 works of fiqh, 29 on Ḥadīth, 46 on ‘aqida, 14 on Sufism, 10 on Sīn and about 45 fakhrūl. The field of Arabic language and literature comes second, with about 94 titles. Physical and applied sciences seem to be the least represented: there are 10 works on medicine and only 3 on astronomy.

The MSS were collected from various sources, both within and outside Bahrain. Many of them appear to have been donated by individual collectors. The oldest work in the collection dates back to the 7th Islamic century and is entitled Jami‘ al-wālī fi Ḥadīth al-Rasūl.

About 45 MSS are displayed in glass cases in the Museum. These are all bound, well preserved and appear in perfect condition. The remaining 390 titles are kept in acid-free cardboard boxes. A random inspection of the collection suggested that many MSS had been affected by termites and humidity. At present, seriously affected ones are being fumigated. This process is slow; moreover, it does not help to conserve the documents, most of which need major repair work.

Published catalogues:

1976. The survey by Aba Ḥusayn (see Union Catalogues above) covers 10 MSS in this collection.

1977–83. The union catalogue by Aba Ḥusayn (see above) describes ca. 400 of these MSS.
Unpublished catalogues: All of the collection is fully catalogued. The catalogue, which is in card form, contains all standard MSS cataloguing information such as title, author, scribe, type of ink, dimensions, etc. At present, steps are being taken to feed this information into the computer for public access.

Mathaf al-Hayá (Museum of Life)
Báy al-Qur‘án, P.O. Box 2000, Manama, Bahrain
Tel.: (973) 290101 / 290409
Telefax: (973) 292709
Telex: 8599 BN
Date of establishment: 1987
Status: Islamic trust
Conditions of access: Limited to scholars and researchers. The museum is open to the public for viewing only.
Total number of Islamic MSS: ca. 2800 (Arabic; some with Persian, Turkish or Urdu commentaries).
Description of collection: 320 of the MSS are placed on display in the museum halls. The collection is well preserved and contains many rarities, covering a wide range of historical periods. It also represents various styles of script, design and binding. Some are written on parchment in refined Maghribi style and bound with smooth fine-quality vellum. Others are less artistic, with primitive colouring and design. The MSS are housed in a purpose-built building with adequate storage and ventilation facilities.
An estimated 2500 manuscripts are kept in the museum’s depository, pending classification and cataloguing. About 90% of the collection is in the field of Qur‘án and related works. The MSS are in good condition.
Published catalogues:
This catalogue lists some 100 MSS. In addition to standard cataloguing details such as the author, title, scribe etc., a colour photograph of each MS. also appears at the beginning of each entry.

A list of some 220 titles of MSS, as well as some early printed works, which are currently displayed in the museum. Bibliographic description is mostly brief, but much attention is given to the physical details such as the style of writing, type of paper or parchment used and other artistic features.

‘Abd al-Rasúl al-Tájjr
Manama, Bahrain
Status: Private home library
Conditions of access: Requires permission from the family of the late owner.
Total number of Islamic MSS: ca. 500 (Arabic; Persian).
Description of collection: ‘Abd al-Rasúl al-Tájjr, teacher and founder of the first private school in Bahrain, died a few years ago. His private library is estimated to contain more than 500 rare manuscripts. A relative appears to have inherited the collection. According to Dr. Ali Aba Hussain, who catalogued about 90 works of the collection, many of the manuscripts have been damaged as a result of the unsatisfactory conditions in which they were housed. The manuscripts catalogued include works on Arabic and Persian literatures, rare copies of the Qur‘án, medicine, astronomy, philosophy and logic.
The Sharjah-based newspaper Al-Khalij, reported on 2 October 1991 that a team from the Library of Congress had visited Bahrain to document the collection. No further details are available about this task yet.
Published catalogues:
1976. The survey by Aba Hussain (see Union Catalogues above) covers 14 MSS from this collection.
1977–83. The union catalogue by Aba Hussain (see above) describes ca. 90 MSS from this collection.
BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX


Lists catalogues and publications about Arabic manuscripts all over the world. Al-Bahrain, Vol. 1, pp. 266–267, nos. 958–962.


Al-Bahrain, p. 12, nos. 33–34.


Al-Bahrain, p. 8, no. 5.


Al-Bahrain, pp. 692–693.


Bibliotheken und Sammlungen arabischer Handschriften, pp. 311–466: Bahrain, p. 332.

BANGLADESH

by

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