GHANA

by

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1990
INTRODUCTION

Investigation into many parts of the Republic of Ghana has revealed that no Islamic manuscripts are available in public libraries. Moreover, private collections include very few books and manuscripts on Islam. The problem with the latter is that their physical condition is so bad that their collation and cataloguing will be a time-consuming process.

It has furthermore come to light that, although some Islamic manuscripts were at one time available in the regions, they have been handed over to the library of the institute of African Studies, Legon (q.v. below). Copies of Islamic manuscripts at the Ghana National Archives are also available there.

See further:


INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIONS

ACCRA

Malam Ibrahim Abdul-Rahman

No. E. 5/2, Tudu, Accra
Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: 11 (9 Arabic; 2 Arabic/English).
Description of collection: Half of the MSS are on local topics, such as manunmission, exhortation, Friday sermon and birth certificate. Not catalogued.
Alhaj Yusif Yacub Hassan
House No. E418/16, Mamobi, Accra
Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (Arabic).
Description of collection: The manuscript was with other books on a shelf in the sitting-room. Not catalogued.

Mallam Hussein
House No. E176/11, Nima, Accra
Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (uncatalogued).

Mallam Ishaq
E452/16, Mamobi, Accra
Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (Arabic, uncatalogued).

Mallam Mamuni
House No. D862/3, Cow Lane, Accra
Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (Arabic, uncatalogued).

National Archives of Ghana
Castle Road, Adabraka, Accra
Status: Public archives
Total number of Islamic MSS: 4 (2 Arabic; 2 Hausa).
Description of collection: The MSS deal mainly with the history of Wa, Gonja and Samuri. Copies available at the Institute of African Studies, Legon (see below).

LEGON
Balme Library, Africana Collection
University of Ghana, Legon
Status: University Library
Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (Arabic/English, uncatalogued).

Institute of African Studies Library
University of Ghana, Legon
Date of establishment: 1961
Status: University Library
Total number of Islamic MSS: 355 (325 Arabic; 24 Hausa; 2 Hausa/Arabic; 2 Ghanjito; 2 Gonja or Dagbane).
Description of collection: This is the largest collection of Islamic MSS in Ghana. Prominent among them are the works of Al-Ḥājj ʿUmar or Sālāga (1858–1934), which cover almost every topic concerning Muslims in Ghana. There are so far some forty-four excellent literary works by that prolific writer in manuscript form in the Institute’s Library. These invaluable works have no doubt generated interest in the collection of other manuscripts.

The significance of the literary works of Al-Ḥājj ʿUmar is shown by the fact that some of them, though in manuscript form, were used as text-books by West African Arabic scholars. Mention should also be made of his work entitled ‘The History of the Hausa People’ which provides ample material for a sociological study of Hausaland. The manuscript was the subject of a Ph.D. thesis by Dr. Ferguson of the University of California, U.S.A., in 1973.

Most of the manuscripts are written in Arabic verse, although a few are in prose. They treat a variety of topics including the following:

1. The pre-Islamic period
2. Praise of the Prophet Muhammad
3. Islamic jurisprudence
4. Jihad
5. Biographies of prominent Ghanaian Muslims.
6. Genealogy of Kings and Imams
7. Tunkuyawa—an influenza after World War II.
8. Salaga civil war
9. The art of epistemology
10. Astronomy, astrology and mathematics
11. Moral teachings and advice
12. Friday sermon
13. Mağānit al-Ḥarīrī in translation
14. History of Hausaland
15. The early Europeans in Ghana.

The exact age of the collection is difficult to assess. But judging from the themes of most of the manuscripts, it will not be far from the truth to say that they belong mostly to the past few centuries during the advent of the Europeans to Ghana.

The manuscripts are recent and mostly in good condition. Their compilation dates back to about 25 years ago, when they were collected from the Ghanaian ‘ulama’, xeroxed and the originals returned to them.

At present, the manuscripts are all kept in a room separate from the Library of the Institute of African Studies. The room, which is about 30 x 40 feet square, is equipped with an air-conditioner. But the bad state of a few of the manuscripts no doubt indicates that they had only recently been transferred from an unsuitable place.

Most of the manuscripts are kept in large card boxes, while a few are in envelopes deposited on the floor. New shelves and other library facilities, such as catalogue boxes and cupboards with locks for precious manuscripts, have been provided. It is therefore hoped that all will be well when the manuscripts are classified and properly arranged on the shelves. There is no cause for alarm about the safety of the manuscripts, since most of them have already been numbered and are about to be arranged on the shelves, with an appropriate card provided for each of them.

There are a few unclassified manuscripts which need urgent attention, in order to avoid disappearance or damage. They should also be catalogued, to make reference to them possible.

Published catalogues:


Details of 232 MSS, including authors, titles, subject-matter, dates, provenance, number of leaves, dimensions, cross-references to other copies, notes.

Unpublished catalogues:
Typescript list of IASAR 1 – 465 (but with some gaps). Details as in 1965 – 68 publication (see above).
Typescript list of ‘Islamic MSS at the Institute of African Studies Library which have not been catalogued’. 22 MSS.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX


Pearson, J.D. Index Islamicus: Second Supplement, 1961 – 1965: a cata-
logue of articles on Islamic subjects in periodicals and other collective publica-


Bibliotheken und Handschriftensammlungen: Ghana, p. 344.