GREECE

by

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INTRODUCTORY NOTE

There are numerous Islamic MSS scattered throughout Greece, of which a complete survey remains to be made.

The published catalogues of MSS collections in Greece are nearly all in the Greek language, and their descriptions of Islamic MSS are generally incomplete and defective. But there has been some effort in recent years to classify and catalogue some of those whose contents are important.

INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIONS

ATHENS

Benaki Museum

Odos Kounbari 1
10674 Athens
Tel.: 01-3611617
Date of establishment: 1930
Status: Art & historical museum
Description of collection: This museum has an important collection of Islamic art objects, but it has not been possible to establish whether these include MSS. Pearson, 1971 (see Bibliographical Appendix below) mentions Turkish MSS written in Greek script.

Bibliothèké tès Boulès (Library of the Parliament of the Greeks)

Syntagma Square, Athens
Tel.: 01-3238434
Date of establishment: 1845
Status: Parliamentary library
Conditions of access: Open to the public on production of identity card and subject to security control. One or two days' notice advisable to consult MSS; difficulties may be encountered.

Opening hours: Monday – Friday, 09.00–14.00 (incl. manuscript hall); 18.00–20.30 (not manuscript hall).

Total number of Islamic MSS: 102 (58 Arabic; Persian; Turkish).
Description of collection: The fields represented include: astronomy and astrology, arithmetic, geometry, pharmacology, theology, history and lexicography; there are also a couple of Qur’āns. The MSS were copied in the 9th–12th centuries AH. Several MSS are illuminated and possess artistic merit. Two of the most important and valuable MSS are: a work on astronomy in Arabic written by Muhammad ibn Ibrāhīm ibn Ḥājj Sulaymān, written in 856 AH [1432 CE]; and a copy of the Mufaddāt of Ibn al-Baytar on pharmacology, written in the 11th century AH. No published catalogue.

Unpublished catalogues: 19 MSS have been catalogued in detail. For the rest, either cards or handlists have been prepared which are available in the library: the information given is poor and inaccurate.

Ethnikē Bibliothēkē (National Library)

32, Panepistimiou str., Athens
Tel.: 01-3614413
Date of establishment: 1829
Status: National library
Conditions of access: Credentials required: proof of identity and academic status. One to two days’ delay after applying for the MSS needed.
Opening hours: Monday – Friday, 09.00 – 14.30; 17.00 – 20.30.
Total number of Islamic MSS: 19 (3 Arabic; 8 Persian; 8 Turkish).
Description of collection: There are two Qur’āns, the first dated 1077 AH [1666/67 CE], while the second is undated; also a four-volume Greek-Arabic lexicon of herbs. The Persian MSS include a history of Iran in 3 volumes, the rest being mostly poetic anthologies (diwan). The Turkish MSS are also of great interest. Especially notable is MS. No. 1827, 319ff., by Karaçelebi żade Abdulaziz Efendi, on the history of the world and of Turkey, in 4 parts.
Published catalogues:

Incl. some details of the Library’s Islamic MSS, and mentions also an additional Turkish MS, and other documents.
Uncatalogued MSS: Further uncatalogued items are believed to exist in the Library.

Gennadius Library (Gennadeion)

Odos Sourias 61, Athens
Date of establishment: 1926
Status: Research library
Description of collection: The library belongs to the American School of Classical Studies, to which it was endowed by the bibliophile Ioannēs Gennadion (John Gennadius), whose own collection forms the nucleus of it.

Full details of the small Islamic MSS collection are not readily available, but it is known to contain a 19th-century copy of ʿAttār’s Manṭiq al-tayr and an undated Dīwān of Ḥasan-i Dihlavī, both in fine bindings; and a number of other Arabic, Persian and Turkish MSS, some notable for their calligraphy, as well as Turkish documents. See:
1941. Gli studi orientalistici ... by E. Rossi (details above).


Mentions a “short MS. of Achem” [Ahmad ibn Sirāk] bound with an edition princeps of Arxiomōrous, 1518 (but this may be in Latin or Greek).

This catalogue does not apparently include any Islamic MSS, but
the Introduction by F.R. Walton states that “the Library has . . . a portion of the archives of Ali Pasha of Tekelen (1744–1822)” (p. iv) and that “it is hoped that at some future time a catalogue of the non-Greek manuscripts can be made” (p. v).

Published catalogues:

Unpublished catalogues: A typewritten catalogue, including the Islamic MSS, is available in the Library.

CORSO

Anagnostiki Hetaireia Kerkyras (Corfu Reading Society)

120 Capodistria street, Corfu
Tel.: 0661-39528
Date of establishment: 1836

Conditions of access: Credentials required: proof of identity & academic status.

Opening hours: Monday–Friday, 09.00–14.30.

Total number of Islamic MSS: 8 (6 Arabic; 2 Turkish).

Description of collection: The collection contains one bilingual Arabic–Italian MS., dated 1812 CE, with Arabic poem dedicated to Frederick North upon his arrival in Aleppo. Another MS., dated 1211 AH (1796/97 CE), is a catalogue of Arabic books: history, poetry, literature, geography, etc. The most important MS., which unfortunately is undated, refers to the social, economic and political history and customs of the Arab tribes in Lebanon and their independence of the Caliphate. MS. No. A7 deals with the civilisation of the Druzes of Lebanon, their religion, science, etc.

Published catalogues:


HERAKLION

Bikelia Dēmotikē Bibliothēkē (Vikelaia Municipal Library)

El. Venizelou Square
71202 Heraklion, Crete
Tel.: 086–246551

Status: Public library

Conditions of access: Credentials required: proof of identity & academic status.

Opening hours: Monday–Friday, 08.30–14.00 & 17.00–20.00.

Description of collection: This is the largest collection of Islamic MSS in Greece. It is largely virgin soil. Countless MSS are still uncatalogued, unnumbered & unclassified. This large collection contains among others:
1) A great number of Islamic MSS in various languages, especially Turkish, Arabic, Greek & Persian. The subject matter covered by these MSS includes history, Sufism, tafsīr, fiqh, Qurʾān, etc.
2) 204 codices of the Shariʿa Court of Heraklion (Gandia).
3) 197 codices of waqfs.
4) 107 mortgage books.
5) ca. 11,000 documents and 75 codices translated into Greek during the period 1898–1933 by the Office of Translations, held by the Greek-Turkish committee of exchange.
6) 9 volumes (ca. 10,000 documents) unclassified.
7) 43 miscellaneous volumes (130ff. each) and 240 files (ca. 53,630 various documents & 26 miscellaneous volumes).

The MSS are of long format and written on Turkish paper known as Alikurna. Their binding is mostly of leather with gilt decoration. The codices of the Shariʿa Court are of great historical importance since the Qādīs, under the Ottoman Empire, were the absolute executors of the Holy Law (Shariʿa).

The MSS are in clear writing; some are damaged and in very bad condition. But the Municipality of Heraklion is making great efforts to preserve them. Warm thanks are due to the director of the Municipal Library, Mr. N. Yanadasakis, and to Mr. A. Savvakis, for their co-operation and hospitality.

Published catalogues:
Nikolaos S. Staurinidēs. Ἡράκλειον: Δῆμος Ἡράκλειου. 5 vols.
Details and Greek translations of 2,840 Turkish documents.

RHODES

Fethi Paşa Foundation

This Turkish waqf/library owns a number of important large-format early Qurʾān MSS. See The Times, 4 October 1991.
Further details of its holdings are not yet available.

Tourkikē Bibliothēkē (Turkish Library)

Date of establishment: 1793
Total number of Islamic MSS: ca. 100 (Arabic; Persian; Turkish).
Description of collection: Founded by Hafiz Ahmed Ağa, by the mid-19th century this Library contained over 600 MSS, with a learned librarian, and was in regular use by local medrese students. However, by the 1920s, after the Italian occupation of Rhodes, this collection, or most of it, had disappeared from the island. The library continued, however, to house MSS, and in 1965 Utas (see below) saw about 100 there, including Persian divans. It is not clear whether these are part of the original collection or not, but the poets mentioned by Utas (Hafiz, Sa’di and Sa’dīn) are all included in the catalogue compiled in 1836 and published in 1858. See:

Vol. II, pp. 6–7: Public library at Rhodes; Establishments for education.

1849. Eine orientalische Bibliothek in Rhodos. Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft, 3, 1849, p. 120.

Describes the catalogue, of which a MS. copy existed in Vienna, and its contents.


Rodì, p. 36. No. 2: “Nulla di questa collezione di Ahmed Ağa si conserva più a Rodi”.

1933–34. Information on the library was published in Académie e Bibliothèque d’Italie, 7, 1933–34, pp. 249–251, according to Pearson, 1971 (see Bibliographical Appendix below).


Published catalogues:

Unpublished catalogue: In addition to the aforementioned Vienna MS., there was, according to Utas (see 1971 article above), a handwritten catalogue in the keeping of the director of the Library in 1965.

SALONICA (Thessaloniki)

Historikon Arkheion Makedonias

Panepistēmion Makedonias (temporarily)
Thessaloniki, Greece
Tel.: 031-855255
Date of establishment: 1954
Status: Public archives
Conditions of access: Credentials required: proof of identity & academic status.

Opening hours: Monday – Friday, 08.30 – 14.30.

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

Description of collection: There are a large number of Islamic MSS. The collection is still not classified and enumerated. Most of the Islamic MSS are written in Turkish or Arabic, but some are in Persian. The fields covered are history, fiqh, tasīr, Sufism, geography, etc. The Arabic texts especially are mostly copies of ancient Arabo-Islamic sources. The Turkish MSS cover the historical period between the 17th and 20th centuries CE. See: 1991. Muemün, 13, 1991, pp. 310 – 327.

Thessaloniki University: Central Library

54006 Thessaloniki
Tel.: 031-991618 or 992862
Date of establishment: 1925
Conditions of access: Credentials required: proof of identity & academic status.

Opening hours: Monday – Friday, 09.00 – 20.30. MSS Room open only in the mornings.

Total number of Islamic MSS: 2 (1 Arabic; 1 Turkish).

Description of collection: These two MSS belong to the Library of Ancient History and Classical Studies in the School of Philosophy.

The Arabic one is an illuminated Qurān, dated 1827, in a leather binding with gilt decoration.

The Turkish MS. is written in Greek script and is of late 19th- or early 20th-century date. It is a treatise on popular medicine and magic prescriptions.

A catalogue of the University's MSS, by L. Politēs & others, was published in 1991.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX


Yunanistan, p. 229, nos. 331 – 334.


Bibliography of catalogues and surveys of Arabic MSS. Gretsiya/ Greece, pp. 78 – 79.


This is a reference work listing known collections and catalogues, published and unpublished. Greece, p. 245.