Muhammad Shaykh Nabhany

Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (Arabic).
Description of collection: A copy of Kitāb uṣūliya fi 'l-madhī, copied at Pate.

Sayyid 'Umar 'Abdallah Saggaf

Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: 3 (Arabic).
Description of collection: Three copies of Kitāb uṣūliya fi 'l-madhī, all copied at Barawa (Somalia).

Nasir Sayyid 'Umar 'Abdallah Saggaf

Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: 19 (Arabic).
Description of collection: The collection comprises nine Qur'āns, all copied at Siyu, and ten copies of Kitāb uṣūliya fi 'l-madhī.
INTRODUCTION

When I started writing this report, the State of Kuwait was trying to re-establish herself after the Iraqi invasion, which was characterised by the plundering of the country’s institutions and assets and the destruction of all aspects of its daily life. The libraries, both public and private, were no exception and suffered greatly from acts of looting. In these circumstances the task of establishing what remains, or has been recovered, has been a difficult, and in some cases impossible one. Further information which will help to complete the account will be gratefully received.

UNION CATALOGUES & SURVEYS


Al-Kuwayt, p. 703.

INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIONS

KUWAIT CITY

Al Ibrahim, Shaykh Muhammad al-Salih

PO Box 1578, Safat, 13016 Kuwait
Tel.: 5315381, 5315382
Fax: 531681. Telegraph: Aal Ibrahim
Status: Private
Conditions of access: Open to serious researchers (see below). All correspondence is to be directed to the owner and should be in Arabic. Total number of Islamic MSS: 662 (623 Arabic; 5 Persian; 11 Turkish; 21 Arabic & Turkish; 1 Arabic & Persian; 1 Arabic, Turkish & Persian).
Description of collection: The manuscripts deal with a variety of subjects, including 'aqīdah, ši'ah, exegesis, sermons (mawaṣṣl), fiqh, grammar, linguistics, literature, biographies and medicine; there is also a collection of Qur'āns.

The owner has devoted a special building to the library in which a separate room is used for the manuscripts. Great care is given to the manuscripts, and proper conditions of temperature, humidity and light are provided. The MSS are placed in secure steel safes (which protected them greatly from plunder during the invasion). The owner pays great attention to the preservation of his collection, and has produced microfilm copies of many manuscripts; but he could not microfilm the entire collection because his equipment was either looted or destroyed during the invasion.

Although the main motive for establishing the library was to meet the needs of its owner, he has later made it accessible to serious researchers. However, purchase of manuscripts and books depends solely on the owner’s taste. The important MSS in this collection include: 1) Sharḥ al-Sirājīyya fi ‘l-farā’id (Dawūd al-‘srāj) by Shams al-Dīn ibn al-Ṣalāḥ Maḥmūd al-Najjārī al-Ṣalāhī al-Ḥanāfī, an autograph copy, 676 H. [1277 CE], in good condition, with extensive marginal commentaries; 2) ‘Uṣūl al-sharḥ al-waṣfī fi ‘l-fiqh wa-‘l-nahw wa-‘l-tarīkh wa-‘l-ta‘rīq wa-‘l-qawāfī by Shārīf al-Dīn ibn al-Muṣṭafī Ismā‘īl ibn Aḥmad Bākī al-Yamanī al-Maghribī (d. 837 H). This book is composed in a unique form, since its text is written in such a way that it can be read either horizontally or vertically.

30 MSS were stolen during the Iraqi invasion. Unpublished catalogue: The card index is photographed and reproduced in the form of a catalogue for internal use in the library. It consists of three sections:

1. ‘Aqīdah, fāsīd, adhīya, manaqib, ṣihr al-qirā’āt, fatūd, sīra, grammar, logic, astronomy and rhetoric (‘ilm al-ma‘āni wa-l-bayan).

2. Qur‘ān MSS, mawaṣṣl, composition, dialectics, ṣibā‘āt, fundamentals of jurisprudence, poetry, medicine, stories, philosophy, mathematics, biographies, Persian language, general knowledge, miscellaneous, and works without titles.

3. Hadīth, usūl al-Hadīth, linguistics, fiqh, Hanafī fiqh, exegesis, Sufism, and literature.

The entries in each section are classified according to the subject, and arranged alphabetically by title under each subject.

Jāmi‘at al-Kuwayt (University of Kuwait)

Maktabat al-Makhtūṭāt / Maktabat al-Ādāb wa-l-Ḥuqūq
PO Box 17140, Al-Khalidiyya, 72452, University of Kuwait, Department of Library Services, Kuwait.
Fax: 4834924
Date of establishment: 1976
Status: University library
Conditions of access: Open to students, academics and researchers.
Total number of Islamic MSS: 1,105 (1,078 Arabic; 15 Persian; 10 Turkish; 2 Urdu).
Description of collection: The MSS are well preserved, in a special room inside the Faculty of Arts and Law in al-Shuwaykh. They are in good condition, and great care is given to preservation and restoration from the moment they are acquired.

The MSS are on a wide range of subjects, including pharmacy, geometry, mathematics, history and biography. The most valuable MS in the collection, according to the cataloguer, is a manuscript of Al-Taqāṣīm fi Sharḥ al-Targhib wa-l-Tarīkh by Shams al-Dīn Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. Aḥmad b. Aḥmad al-Munkhūrī (d. 862 H), dated 851 H, i.e. during the author’s lifetime. The introduction contains an indication that the commentator had read his work in ‘ilm al-Hadīth before the author.

Before the 1990 invasion, the Library had 5,500 microfilms of MSS, but only 705 have survived. At the same time the number of missing MSS which have been identified so far is 167.

All correspondence should be addressed to “The Director of Library Services” (Muḥfrīd Istārāt al-Maktubāt).

Published catalogues:


Unpublished catalogues:

Work is in progress to reproduce the catalogue which was ready for publication on the eve of the Iraqi invasion, but was stolen with the looted MSS.

For the time being the card index has been completed and can be used as a catalogue. It consists of four sections: 1) Title index; 2) Author index; 3) Subject index; 4) Classification number.

Ma‘ḥad al-Makhtūṭūt al-‘Arabiyya (Institute of Arab Manuscripts)

Editorial note: Until the 1990 invasion, this Institute, belonging to the Arab League Educational, Cultural & Scientific Organization (ALECSO), maintained a significant collection of microfilms of Arabic MSS at its headquarters in Kuwait. Their present whereabouts were unknown to the compiler of this Survey. A number of catalogues had been published: several of them are detailed in the bibliographies listed in the Bibliographical Appendix below, especially that by ʿAwwād, 1984.

Al-Majlis al-Watani li-l-Thaqāfa wa-l-Funūn wa-l-Ādāb—Qism al-Tūrāth al-‘Arabi (National Council for Culture, Arts and Literature—Arab Heritage Section)

PO Box 6993, Safat, 13100 Kuwait

Fax: 4873694

Date of establishment: 1978

Status: Governmental

Total number of Islamic MSS: The library had 1,600 MSS, but most were stolen during the Iraqi invasion, and only 600 survived. Most are in Arabic, the rest in Persian and Turkish.

Description of collection: The texts cover a variety of subjects, but language and literature predominate. It is difficult to give an accurate description under the present circumstances.

The conditions in which the MSS are now kept are appalling.

They are in cardboard boxes in a classroom in a Kuwaiti school*. The simplest rules of MSS conservation are not observed. Most of the MSS which survived the invasion were damaged by water, and I was told that the Section workers made an inventory of 450 MSS, but they failed to identify another 150 MSS because of the severe damage which they had sustained.

Published catalogues:


Unpublished catalogues:


Apparently a preliminary draft of the 1987 published catalogue (see above). For internal use only.

There is also a card catalogue by subjects.

Markaz al-Makhtūṭūt wa-l-Tūrāth wa-l-Wathāʾiq (Manuscripts, Heritage & Documents Centre)

Al-Jabriyya, Qīrāt 5, Sharī‘a 9, Number 54

PO Box 13904, Safat, 13040 Kuwait

Tel.: 5320900 & 5326362

Fax: 5320902

Date of establishment: 1981

Status: Non-governmental, belonging to Jamī‘at Iḥyāʾ al-Tūrāth al-Islāmī (Society for Revival of the Islamic Heritage).

* Al-Shāb Primary school for boys, as of 28 June 1992.
Total number of Islamic MSS: 250 (Arabic).

Description of collection: The subjects covered are diverse, with Islamic themes predominant. Thus it contains several copies of the Qur'an, as well as texts on tafsir, 'Usul al-Qur'an, Hadith, Sirah, Fiqh, Usul al-Fiqh, Al-Mawsu'a al-Fiqhiyya (Islamic rules of inheritance), Tawhid, 'aqidah, Arabic linguistics and literature. The majority of the MSS are relatively recent: 10th to the 13th centuries AH, and even some from the 14th century; but a few belong to the 8th and 9th centuries AH.

The manuscripts are kept on shelves which were specially designed for this purpose; the ventilation, temperature and light are adjustable in order to provide the best required conditions for MSS preservation.

It is difficult to describe the most important MSS of this collection because cataloguing and inventory were interrupted by the Iraqi invasion; but fortunately the collection was saved, thanks to the efforts of the persons in charge of the Centre.

Published catalogues:

Forthcoming. The main catalogue is still under revision as it reaches the final stage before being printed. It is divided by subjects into the following sections: Qur'an, Tafsir, Qur'anic sciences, Hadith, Sirah, Fiqh, Usul al-Fiqh, Al-Mawsu'a al-Fiqhiyya, Tawhid, 'aqidah, Arabic language and linguistics, Astronomy, Mathematics, polemics, logic, philosophy, various sciences, addenda and the indexes. The MSS are arranged alphabetically in each section according to the title, and great care was given to the indexes which include: index of books and treatises, index of treatises whose titles are not known, index of treatises by anonymous authors, author index, index of personal names, index of copyists' names, chronological index of the MSS and bibliography. The catalogue title has not yet been decided.

Mathaf al-Kuwayt al-Watan (Kuwait National Museum)
c/o Wizarat al-'Ilaam (Ministry of Information), Kuwait

Date of establishment: 1957

Description of collection: All the contents and exhibits, including the MSS collection, were looted by the Iraqi army and transferred to Baghdad. The museum building itself was burned down. Many of the exhibits were subsequently returned to Kuwait, but they are still kept in sealed boxes in the stores of the Ministry of Information, where they will remain until the museum building is either restored or rebuilt.

In these circumstances, the Museum Director was not able to offer much information about the collection; however, she mentioned that the Museum had a special interest in illustrated manuscripts of fine artistic and historical quality and suitable for display, such as an illustrated copy of 'Usul al-Makhfiyyat by Al-Qazwini. For further information, see the publications listed below.

Published catalogues:

Includes coloured illustrations, with brief specifications, of pages from 8 Qur'ans, one other Arabic MS., 5 Persian MSS and 1 Turkish MS.; also 2 bindings.


Catalogue of manuscripts and scientific instruments.


Includes catalogue descriptions, with colour illustrations, of 8 Qur'ans, 3 other Arabic MSS, 5 Persian MSS, 3 Turkish MSS and 2 bindings: all from the al-Sabah Collection.

Maktabat al-Mawsu'a al-Fiqhiyya (Library of the Corpus of Jurisprudence)

Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Idarat al-Fatwa, al-Mawsu'a al-Fiqhiyya
PO Box 13, Safat, 13001 Kuwait
Tel.: 2466300
Fax: 2499442; Telex: 44735, Awqaf, Kuwait
Date of establishment: ca. 1981
Status: Governmental
Total number of Islamic MSS: 682 (Arabic).

Description of collection: The vast majority of the MSS deal with the following Islamic subjects: Qur’anic studies, ‘ulūm al-Qur’an, Hadith, Shar’īa, fiqh, principles of Islam and ‘aqīdah. There are, however, a few dealing with other subjects such as biographies, grammar, linguistics, literature and collections of poems.

The collection is kept in a room of its own, which meets the required conditions for safety and preservation. The MSS are placed in special glass cupboards. At the time of writing a great effort is being made by the librarians to put the library back into shape after its contents were thrown into confusion during the Iraqi invasion. Fortunately no MSS are missing. Meanwhile the Ministry shows great interest in the conservation of the manuscripts and in the restoration of the ones which were damaged during the invasion period.

The importance of this library is due to the fact that most of its manuscripts were donated or bequeathed by Kuwaiti scholars and notables. They date from the 9th century to the 14th century AH, with the exception of two 8th-century manuscripts.

Unpublished catalogues:
An inventory or register of titles, with authors’ names and dates of copying. No other information given.

There are also card catalogues of authors, titles and subjects.

Ṭāriq Rajab Museum
PO Box 20817, Safat, 13069 Kuwait
Fax: 5319924
Date of establishment: 1980 (official inauguration)
Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: No inventory has been carried out so far, but according to the owner the number may exceed hundreds. The vast majority are Arabic, but there are some Persian and Turkish MSS.

Description of collection: The Museum’s owner is interested in the first place in “Arabic calligraphy and its development throughout history, and the most celebrated calligraphers”. Hence the majority of the MSS are copies of the Holy Qur’an, both full text and single leaves, in different shapes and sizes. However, there are some other MSS on a variety of topics such as literature, history and sciences, in addition to some illustrated MSS which add to the value of this collection. According to Mr. Rajab, the most valuable items are: 1) A page from the Holy Qur’an written in the māl’sī style of handwriting, dated the 2nd century Hijra (8th century CE); 2) a copy of Ibn Al-Kindī’s Al-‘udātāt al-fārīqa, the importance of which lies in both its subject and its illustrations.

There is no catalogue in any form, nor any inventory of any kind.

Some of the MSS are displayed in one of the museum galleries, and preserved in horizontal glass cases under adequate conditions of temperature, light and ventilation. The rest are kept in specially designed steel safes.

Zayd, Khālid Su‘ūd al-

Dahiyat ʿAbdallah al-Salim, Kuwait
Tel.: 2511672
Date of establishment: ca. 1960s
Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: 301 (263 Arabic; 9 Persian; 27 Turkish; 2 Arabic and Turkish).

Description of collection: The subjects include exegesis, ‘aqīdah, fiqh, grammar, literature, philosophy and logic. The dated MSS were copied between the 9th and the 13th centuries AH. A large number of the MSS (as many as 183) could not be dated.

The collection used to be kept in its own cases in the library, but a short time before the Iraqi invasion it had been moved to the building of Kābiṭa al-Udabā in Al-ʿAdiliyya, together with other Kuwaiti collections waiting to be dispatched to the UK as part of an exhibition planned to take place in the University of Manchester. The entire collection was then stolen during the invasion. The owner has informed UNESCO.

Published catalogues:

Classified, with indexes. The compiler does not follow any rule in listing the entries in each section: he neither arranges them alphabetically nor according to their numbers. He provides the title, then a detailed description of the MSS, including the style of handwriting, date of copying and the name of scribe when available, dimensions, number of lines, references where the work is mentioned, incipits and explicitis and some useful remarks.


BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX


Al-Kuwayt, p. 703.


Kuveit, p. 334, no. 1608.


Bibliotheken und Sammlungen arabischer Handschriften, pp. 311–466: Kuwait, p. 399.