MALAYSIA

by

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INTRODUCTION

A new Malaysian resurgence in the study of Malay-Islamic civilization has had, among others, the following consequences:

(1) existing educational and cultural institutions in the country have stepped up their activities of collecting and preserving Malay-Islamic MSS;

(2) new institutions with a similar interest in MSS have started up; during the period in which this survey was undertaken three such institutions were established, each having its own initial collection of MSS; these are (a) ISTAC (Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization), headed by Professor S.M.N. al-Attas in Kuala Lumpur, (b) The Malay Academy (Akademi Pengajian Melayu) of the University of Malaya, Kuala Lumpur, and (c) Islamic Museum of the state of Sarawak;

(3) more attention is being paid to privately owned MSS; and

(4) more funds are available for cataloguing: in fact, a number of catalogues are being prepared in several of these institutions. We ourselves have completed a catalogue of MSS kept at the Islamic Centre of the Prime Minister’s Department, Kuala Lumpur, which is to be published by the Malay Academy.

It is difficult at this stage to undertake a survey of individual MSS contained in the different collections. New MSS are continually being added to each collection. In many of the institutions concerned, particularly the state museums, not only the new additions, but also those MSS which have been kept there for a considerable time are not properly looked after and documented. In this survey, the main aim is to provide an up-to-date list of institutions that are in possession of significant collections of Malay-Islamic MSS.

One encouraging development is the rôle of the National Library of Malaysia in trying to coordinate the activities of these different institutions engaged in the collection and preservation of Malay-Islamic MSS.

A high proportion of Malay-Islamic MSS is believed to be still in private hands. In the last decade or so there have been notable discoveries of such collections, but also some careless destruction—through burning, for example (see the ‘Prakata’ [Foreword] by Siti Hawa Haji Saleh in the 1984 union catalogue below).
both under Western colonial rule and the pre-colonial Muslim sultanate. No catalogues are available.

Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka (Language & Literature Board)

PO Box 10803
50926 Kuala Lumpur
Tel. 2481011

Date of establishment: 1956
Status: Governmental (part of the Ministry of Education)
Total number of Islamic MSS: ca. 200, plus microforms.
Description of collection: MSS are mostly in Malay, in Jawi script; the rest are in Arabic and Javanese.

Most of the MSS belong to the 19th and early 20th centuries. But there are a few which are quite old; for example, MS. 27, which is a commentary on hadiths, is dated 1511, during the reign of Sultan MAHMUD OF MALACCA, the year Malacca fell to the Portuguese. Another MS. (MS. 176), which is in Arabic, is dated as far back as 1372.

More than half the MSS deal with folk literature. Other fields covered by the collection include theology (aqid al-din), jurisprudence, Qur’anic sciences, Hadith commentary, history, religious worship, astrology, traditional medicine, biographies, poetry, Sufism, psychology, cosmology and interpretation of dreams. The whole collection is catalogued (see below).

Only a few MSS are without titles, and practically all of these are in very poor condition, with many pages missing or partially or totally damaged. Those with titles are generally in good condition.

Also available in the library collection are more than 100 microform copies of MSS in various libraries outside Malaysia. The main source of these microfilm and microfiche copies is Leiden University Library (see NETHERLANDS survey in this volume). The remaining few were obtained from the National Library of Singapore, Singapore National Library Archives and the Royal Asiatic Society, London.

Published catalogues:


International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization (ISTAC)

PO Box 11961
50762 Kuala Lumpur
Date of establishment: 1991
Status: Academic
Description of collection: The total number of MSS is not known, but we are told that on the initiative of its Founder-Director, Professor Syed Naqib Al-Attas, the Institute has already acquired a large collection of invaluable Malay and Arabic MSS, mainly in the fields of Islamic philosophy, theology and Sufism. The collection includes some very old MSS.

No catalogues are yet available.

Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia (National Library of Malaysia)

Bukit Naga Complexes, Jalan Semantan (temporary address).
Soon to be transferred to a permanent location at Jalan Tun Razak.
Date of establishment: 1971
Status: National library
Description of collection: The initial holdings consist mainly of the rich collection formerly at the National Museum (Muzium Negara). The number of MSS is not known, but is very substantial. The Library is actively acquiring MSS from other institutions and private collections.

A brief survey of some of the MSS shows that these are mostly in Malay (Jawi script); others are in Arabic. They deal with a vast range of Islamic subjects. Many of the MSS are relatively old.

Published catalogues:


Pusat Islam (Islamic Centre)

Research Section
Prime Minister’s Department, Jalan Perdana
(next to the National Mosque)
Total number of Islamic MSS: over 300 (Arabic; Malay).
Description of collection: Most of the MSS are in Malay (Jawi script), many of the texts being translations from Arabic. A few are in Arabic.

Most of the MSS have titles and are in good condition. The Centre has good facilities for their preservation and has taken encouraging steps in that direction.

This is a rich collection. Firstly, it covers practically every branch of Islamic sciences. Secondly, the collection includes many theological, philosophical, scientific and Sufi works written by famous Malay thinkers, including al-Raniri, Abdul Rauf of Singkei, Abdul Samad of Palembang, and Shakh Daud al-Fatani. Thirdly, in the context of Malay-Islamic history, a significant number of the MSS are relatively old, belonging to the 16th and 17th centuries.

The great majority of the MSS deal with the different branches of Islamic jurisprudence, Sufism, and traditional medicine.

Published catalogues:

Unpublished catalogues:
Uncatalogued MSS: New accessions have been received from time to time since the above catalogues were compiled.
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia)

see under SELANGOR: BANGI

Universiti Malaya (University of Malaya)

Library
Lembah Pastai, 59100 Kuala Lumpur
Tel.: 575887
Date of establishment: 1957
Status: University library
Description of collection: A rich collection of a few hundred MSS and another few hundred microform copies of MSS in various libraries throughout the world. Most of the MSS are in Malay (Jawi), but there is also a significant number of Arabic MSS.

Many MSS lack titles and names of authors. A significant number are in very bad condition, with many pages missing or seriously damaged.

Except for the first four volumes of Al-Râfî’s seven-volume Bustan al-salâhin (first half of the 17th century), the Malay MSS generally belong to the 19th and 20th centuries. Most of the texts are literary; other fields covered include Qur’anic sciences, Hadith commentary, history, taṣawwuf and traditional medicine.

In 1965 the late Za‘ba (Zainal Abidin bin Ahmad), a famous Malay man of letters, donated his entire collection of books and MSS to the University of Malaya Library. But it was only in 1974 that the transfer of the whole collection to the Library was completed.

The Za‘ba collection includes a significant number of Arabic MSS attributed to such famous Muslims as Ibn al-‘Arabi, Ibn al-Farid, al-Mas‘udi (historian), Ibn Tufayl, al-Ghazali, Ibn Qayyim al-Jawziya (1292–1350) and Ibn ʿAṭa’ Allāh al-Iṣkandarî. There are also Arabic MSS of works written by 19th- and 20th-century Muslim reformers such as Jamāl al-Dīn al-Afghānī and Rashīd Rūḍa. In addition, there is an Arabic text attributed to Ibn Baṭṭuta and several copies of Malay translations of Ibn ʿAṭa’ Allāh’s Kitāb al-Hikam.

Published catalogues:
Sabah Museum
Jl. Muzium
88000 Kota Kinabalu
Tel.: (088)53199
Date of establishment: 1886 (in present location, 1983)
Status: Museum library
Description of collection: According to Dr. Ismail Mat of the Faculty of Islamic Studies, National University of Malaysia, who has carried out considerable research on fiqh MSS, the collections here and in the Majlis (see above) are considerable. But there is no catalogue, and further details are unavailable.

SARAWAK

KUCHING

Datuk Patinggi Abdul Taib Mahmud
Chief Minister of Sarawak
Status: Private
Description of collection: A small collection of invaluable Malay-Islamic MSS.

Sarawak Islamic Museum
Date of establishment: 1992
Description of collection: The initial collection comprises a few MSS. One of the Museum’s responsibilities is to collect and preserve Malay-Islamic MSS pertaining to the history of Islam in Sarawak.

Sarawak State Museum
Library
Jl. Tun Haji Openg
91566 Kuching
Tel.: (082)24231
Date of establishment: 1886
Status: Museum library

Descriptive of collection: See:
Published catalogues:
1984. Two MSS are described in Manuskrip Melayu Warisan Budaya Negara (see union catalogues section above).

State Religious Council of Sarawak
The Council is known to have a small collection. Now that the Islamic Museum has been set up, the MSS will most probably be donated to the Museum.

Datuk Patinggi Abdul Rahman Yaakub
Status: Private
Description of collection: A small collection of invaluable Malay-Islamic MSS belonging to the former Chief Minister of Sarawak.

SELANGOR

BANGI

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (National University of Malaysia)
Library
43600 Bangi
Date of establishment: 1970
Status: University library
Description of collection: The University Library has a rich collection of MSS, some of which are quite old. It includes works written by famous classical Malay thinkers, mainly in Malay, but also in Arabic, Persian and Javanese. They cover a wide range of Islamic knowledge and Malay civilization.

Published catalogues:

On pp. 214–215 is the list of Malay MSS in the University Library.


Uncatalogued MSS: Three departments/faculties/institutes of the University are actively involved in the collection, preservation and studies of Malay-Islamic MSS: (a) Department of Malay Letters; (b) Institute of Malay Language, Literature and Culture; (c) Faculty of Islamic Studies.

TRENGGANU

GENERAL

A number of private collections exist in Trengganu. Information concerning them may be obtained from the two institutions in Kuala Trengganu of which details are given below.

KUALA TRENGGANU

Muzium Negeri (State Museum)

Description of collection: The collection, containing a good number of MSS, is kept in a small library of the museum, which itself is quite small. The museum has acquired them through its own initiative, as well as from donations by individuals. Unfortunately, the MSS are not well kept, being simply piled one on top of another on shelves. Many have not yet been touched.

The museum is at present merely identifying titles and names of authors. It is understandably a laborious task, since many of the MSS are in very poor condition. Moreover, quite a number of even the relatively good ones have the first and last few pages missing, making the task of identifying titles, names of authors, and dates of authorship or copying rather difficult.

Our examination of some of these MSS, both titled and untitled, shows that this is a rich collection in many respects: in terms of fields covered, old manuscripts, and works attributed to many well-known Malay religious scholars. There are Arabic as well as Malay MSS.

Further additions to the collection may be expected, since the State of Trengganu had in the past many traditional madrassahs (in Malay, pondok) and ulama, each possessing some Malay and Arabic MSS.

Unpublished catalogues:
As mentioned above, the Museum is compiling a list of titles and authors’ names.

Sultan Zainal Abidin Religious College (KUSZA)

Library

Status: An official decision has been made that the college will be turned into an Islamic university within the next few years.

Description of collection: A good collection of MSS, which is growing, as the Library is actively acquiring MSS from private collections in the State of Trengganu, either through donations or purchase. Most of the MSS are in good condition and the Library has good facilities for preserving them.

The texts are mainly Malay (Jawi), but the collection also includes Arabic MSS: one of them is a large Qur’an in the Trengganu style of calligraphy. There are some old MSS (16th–18th centuries); and the works of many leading Malay authors are present.

Published catalogues:
Forthcoming. The first catalogue has been completed and is being printed.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX


Malaysia, pp. 61–62.


Malezyia, p. 337, no. 919.
MSS in Malaya, p. 69.


MALI

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