

1989. Une exposition de manuscrits arabes anciens à Bamako (1er–6 novembre 1988). By BINTOU SANANKOUA. *Islam et Sociétés au Sud du Sahara* 3, 1989, pp. 272–273.

Report of an exhibition of 100 MSS belonging to the Centre Ahmad Baba in Timbuktu.

Unpublished catalogues:

A card catalogue prepared some years back describes about 200 MSS in this collection.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

ʿAwwād, Kūrķīs. *Fahāris al-makhtūʿāt al-ʿArabīya fī ʿl-ʿālam*. Kuwait: Maʿhad al-Makhtūʿāt al-ʿArabīya, 1984. 2 vols.

Mālī, vol. 2, pp. 199–200, nos. 2346–2350.

Manuscript collections and archives. *Arabic Literature in Africa* 1, 1985, pp. 15–20.

Malian Arabic Manuscript Microfilming Project, p. 17; Timbuktu, p. 20.

Sezgin, Fuat. *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*. Band VI. Leiden: Brill, 1978.

Bibliotheken und Sammlungen arabischer Handschriften, pp. 311–466: Mali, p. 401.

MALTA

by

Hadi Sharifi

1992

INTRODUCTION

Although Muslim rule in Malta lasted for over two centuries (870 to 1091 CE), and despite the fact that the Muslims remained for at least another hundred years the majority of the inhabitants of the Islands*, there is no correlation between that presence and the Islamic manuscripts which exist in Malta today. Among these manuscripts, not a single one—as far as our survey has established—is from the early centuries of Islamic history.

The Islamic manuscripts which are now available in Malta were taken there by Christian missionaries or priests who (for reasons related to their calling) had become particularly interested in the Arabic language and the knowledge to which it held a key. Some of these manuscripts were copied by a Muslim slave named 'ALĪ IBN YAḤYÁ 'L-ZAWĀWĪ BŪ YŪSUF who was given by the Order of Saint John to a Franciscan Father who was the first known teacher of the Arabic language.** This Muslim slave lived in the Franciscan friary during the 17th-century and copied several manuscripts on Arabic grammar and language, as well as those with purely Biblical contents.

Some Turkish manuscripts dealing with history were donated by a priest to the National Library at Valletta and are still held there. However, it is, on the whole, the need of the Christian churches and priests to know the Arabic language and Arabic grammar that explains the existence of Islamic manuscripts in Malta; and that too is why Islamic manuscripts in Malta are to be found mostly in monasteries and church archives.

All the authorities responsible for the collections which we visited in our attempt to carry out the survey of Islamic manuscripts in Malta were most helpful. In particular, Father Azzopardi, the curator of the Cathedral Archives of Mdina, and Father George Aquilina, the curator of the Library of the Franciscan Provincial Archives in Valletta, helped generously and patiently and provided us with valuable information. We should like to express our sincere

* *The story of Malta*, by BRIAN BLOUET, London 1967, pp. 40–43; *Approaches to medieval Malta*, by A.T. LUTTRELL, *Medieval Malta: studies on Malta before the Knights*, ed. A.T. Luttrell, London 1975, pp. 30–40.

** *The study of Arabic in Malta 1632 to 1915*, by DIONISIUS AGIUS, Louvain 1990, pp. 25–26.

thanks to them. We also wish to thank Dr Dionisius Agius, lecturer at the Department of Arabic Studies of Leeds University, who kindly gave us the benefit of his advice prior to the journey.

UNION CATALOGUES & SURVEYS

1930. Manoscritti e documenti orientali nelle biblioteche e negli archivi di Malta. By ETTORE ROSSI. *Archivio Storico di Malta* 2 i, 1930, pp. 1–10.

This is the first attempt to give some description of the Islamic MSS in Malta as well as the places where they are kept. PEARSON's survey of Islamic MSS in Malta (see Bibliographical Appendix below) is exclusively based on ROSSI.

1933. *Malta e i luoghi santi della Palestina*. By GIORGIO SCERRI. Malta, 1933.

In Part V of his work entitled: "Gli studi della lingua Araba in Malta", pp. 56–66, the author deals briefly with some of the Islamic MSS kept in Franciscan friaries in Malta.

1980. *Malta, centru għat-tagħlim ta' l-Għarbi fil-Mediterran (sekle sbatax sas-sekle dsatax)*. By DIONISIUS A. AGIUS. Valletta, 1980. 54pp.

A brief but comprehensive description of almost all Islamic MSS which are held in Maltese libraries and monasteries is given (in Maltese) on pp. 36–42.

1990. *The study of Arabic in Malta 1632 to 1915*. By DIONISIUS AGIUS. Louvain: Peeters. 52pp.

This is the English translation of the preceding item. "Manuscripts (Arabic, Turkish, Persian) and publications", pp. 31–37, gives English descriptions of the Islamic MSS in Maltese collections.

INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIONS

COSPICUA (BORMLA)

Father Herman Mizzi Collection

Convent of Saint Theresa
Tel: 365-826111

Status: Private

Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (Arabic).

Description of collection: This small collection contains an Arabic translation of passages from the Psalms and prayers.

MDINA

Archives of the Inquisition

Museum of the Cathedral of Mdina

Tel: 356-454697

Date of establishment: 1969

Status: Church archives

Description of collection: This collection contains only a few documents which consist mainly of letters and fragments of prayers and talismans. Prior to 1609, the Archives possessed some 15 Arabic and Turkish MSS which have been transferred to the Vatican Library. D. AGIUS gives the details of these MSS on page 33 of his work (see 1990 union catalogue above).

Published catalogues:

1980. See union catalogue by AGIUS, p. 36.

1990. See union catalogue by AGIUS, p. 31.

A brief description of the existing documents of the Archive of the Inquisition is given. However, he mentions among the documents also a Qurʾān MS. as being part of the holdings of the Archives. During our recent visit to the Archives in May 1992, we were told by the authorities that the Qurʾān MS. belongs to the holdings of the Cathedral (see below).

Cathedral Archives

Museum of the Cathedral of Mdina

Tel: 356-454697

Date of establishment: 1969

Status: Church archives

Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (Arabic), plus Arabic, Pashto & Persian fragments.

Description of collection: The holdings of the Cathedral and of the Inquisition Archives (see above) are housed in the Museum of the Cathedral. The only Arabic MS. which belongs to the Cathedral Archive is a Qurʾān which is badly damaged, burned and worm-eaten. Since the first and last pages of this Qurʾān are missing, it is not possible to establish its date, but it was probably copied in the last century. As mentioned above, AGIUS indicates that this Qurʾān MS. belongs to the holding of the Archives of the Inquisition. Moreover he says that it contains marginal notes in Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Baluchi and Pashto. However, although some fragments of Arabic, Persian and Pashto were found in this MS., they are unrelated to it (see 1979 article below).

The rest of the collection consists of several documents, mostly letters, fragments and bits and pieces of prayers and talismans.

Published catalogues:

1980. See union catalogue by AGIUS, pp. 36–37.

1979. Fragments *paštō*, persans et arabes de Malte. I. Liste de débiteurs en *paštō*. By C.M. KIEFFER and S. SANA. *Journal Asiatique* 267, 1979, pp. 357–371.

Includes a description of the Qurʾān by SUSAN SKILLITER, p. 358.

1990. See union catalogue by AGIUS, p. 31 (last item).

RABAT

Saint Agatha's Museum

Tel: 356-454503

Date of establishment: ca. 1979

Status: Public

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

Description of collection: The Arabic MS. is a history of Egypt in the time of ṢALĀḤ AL-DĪN; its beginning and end pages are missing. The Persian MS. is a copy of the *Maṣnavī* of JALĀL AL-DĪN RŪMĪ, written in 1234 AH. Both copies are damaged and are in need of restoration.

VALLETTA

Augustinian Monastery Archives

Old Bakery Street

Status: Ecclesiastical archives

Total number of Islamic MSS: 1 (Arabic).

Description of collection: According to AGIUS, 1990, the collection contains a translation of a grammar from Latin into Arabic. This information could not be verified since no access to the collection was granted.

Published catalogues:

1980. See union catalogue by AGIUS, p. 36.

1990. See union catalogue by AGIUS, p. 31.

Franciscan Provincial Library

291 Saint Paul Street

Tel: 356-234042

Date of establishment: 1629

Status: Ecclesiastical library

Total number of Islamic MSS: 23 (Arabic and Arabic-Italian).

Conditions of access: Application must be made to the Curator of the Library for admission.

Description of collection: The School of the Franciscan Provincial Friars Minors was first established in Malta under the supervision of the Franciscan Fathers to help with the study of the Arabic language. The School had a library with the sort of MSS which were needed to achieve its objectives. The MSS are on Arabic grammar, translations of the Bible and an Arabic-Italian dictionary. The Arabic grammar was copied by an Arab slave called ʿALĪ IBN YAḤYĀ ʿL-ZAWĀWĪ BŪ YŪSUF who lived with the Franciscan Fathers in the friary during the 17th century.

National Library

36 Old Treasury Street

Tel: 356-236585

Date of establishment: 1812

Status: National library

Total number of Islamic MSS: 21 (2 Arabic; 3 Persian; 16 Turkish), plus documents.

Conditions of access: No credentials are required—open to researchers and scholars.

Description of collection: This is the only relatively important collection in Malta which possesses MSS with Islamic content. The collections cover mainly the fields of history, and also Arabic grammar and poetry. Most of the MSS were copied from the 11th to 13th century AH. The MSS are in good condition and in no danger.

The Library also holds the Archives of the Order of Saint John, which contain some Arabic, Turkish and Persian letters of historical significance.

Published catalogues:

1980. See union catalogue by AGIUS, pp. 39–40.

1990. See union catalogue by AGIUS, pp. 33–34.

Brief descriptions of some of the Arabic & Turkish MSS.

Unpublished catalogues: All the MSS have been catalogued. The catalogue includes title, author, date of compilation and copying (if available in the MSS), subject, language and number of folios.

National Museum

Republic Street

Tel: 356-240671 (Director of the Museum)

356-225577 (Museum's operator)

Date of establishment: 1903

Status: Public museum

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

Conditions of access: By application to the Director of the Museum.

Description of collection: The Turkish MS. is a sermon (*hutbe*), written in 1206 AH; the Arabic-Italian MS. is a vocabulary in two volumes.

N.B.: The Qurʾān MS. and Arabic grammar listed by AGIUS, 1990, p. 36, are no longer present.

Published catalogues:

1980. See union catalogue by AGIUS, p. 42.

1990. See union catalogue by AGIUS, p. 36.

The Turkish MS. is not included.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

ʿAwwād, Kūrķīs. *Fahāris al-makhtūṭāt al-ʿArabīya fī ʿl-ʿālam*. Kuwait: Maʿhad al-Makhtūṭāt al-ʿArabīya, 1984. 2 vols.

Māliṭa, p. 198, no. 2345. Title of Rossi's article wrongly cited, evidently following Huisman.

Huisman, A.J.W. *Les manuscrits arabes dans le monde: une bibliographie des catalogues*. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1967. 84pp.

Malte, p. 58. Title of Rossi's article wrongly cited.

Mikhaïlova, I.B. and Khalidov, A.B. *Bibliografiya arabskikh rukopiseĭ*. Moscow: Nauka, 1982. 302pp.

Malʿta/Malta, p. 186, no. 794.

Pearson, J.D. *Oriental manuscripts in Europe and North America: a survey*. Zug: Inter Documentation Company, 1971. (Bibliotheca Asiatica, 7.) 515pp.

Malta, p. 266.

Sezgin, Fuat. *Geschichte des arabischen Schrifttums*. Band VI. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1978.

Bibliotheken und Sammlungen arabischer Handschriften, pp. 311–466. Malta, p. 401.

Simon, Jean. Répertoire des bibliothèques publiques et privés d'Europe contenant des manuscrits arabes chrétiens. *Orientalia*, NS 7, 1938, pp. 239–264.

A list of published catalogues of collections of Christian Arabic MSS arranged by town. (La) Valette, p. 262.