
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*Unpublished catalogues:*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**


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

Bibliotheken und Sammlungen arabischer Handschriften, pp. 311—466: Mâli, p. 401.
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 ʿAlī ibn Yaḥyā ʿl-Zawāwī Bū Yūṣūf 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

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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**


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.


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.


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.


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, Aqībīs 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:


Includes a description of the Qurʾān by Susan Skelifer, p. 358.

1990. See union catalogue by Aqībīs, 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 ʿAlāʾ al-Dīn; its beginning and end pages are missing. The Persian MS. is a copy of the Majmaʿ of Jalāl al-Dīn Rūmī, written in 1234 AH. Both copies are damaged and are in need of restoration.
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:

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 (hathe), written in 1206 AH; the Arabic-Italian MS. is a vocabulary in two volumes.
N.B.: The Qur’ān MS. and Arabic grammar listed by Agnus, 1990, p. 36, are no longer present.

Published catalogues:

1990. See union catalogue by Agnus, p. 36.
The Turkish MS. is not included.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX

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

Malett, p. 38. Title of Rossi’s article wrongly cited.

Malett/Malta, p. 185, no. 794.

Malett, p. 266.


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

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