TUNISIA

by

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1993
UNION CATALOGUES & SURVEYS

MSS in Kairouan and Tunis.


Libraries in Tunis and Kairouan.


INDIVIDUAL COLLECTIONS

BIZERTA (BINZIRT)

Al-Maktaba al-Lazzāmīya

Status: Private

Conditions of access: By arrangement with the owner.

Total number of Islamic MSS: 20.

Description of collection: Founded by ʿAbd al-Raḥmān al-Lazzām in the city of Bizerta.


Describes the manuscripts and printed books of the collection.

DJERBA (JARBA)

General


TUNISIA—DJERBA


Sālim ibn Yaʿqūb

Status: Private

Conditions of access: By arrangement with the owners.

Description of collection: Founded by a notable Iḥāṣī jurist. The collection is of particular importance and contains some old and rare texts. Number of MSS is not known.

Published catalogue: 1970. See Ennami under General above.

FIRYĀNA

Zāwiyyat Sidi Aḥmad al-Tīlīlī

Date of establishment: ca. 18th century

Status: Private

Conditions of access: Visits by permission from the local authorities.

Total number of Islamic MSS: 242.

Description of collection: Stored in one room of the Zāwiyya. Most of the MSS deal with Mālikī fiqh. They are not catalogued. The MSS are kept by the descendants of the founder of the library.

JARBA—see Djerba

KAIROUAN (QAYRAWĀN)

Markaz Dirāsāt al-Ḥaḍāra wa-ʾl-Funūn al-Islāmīya (Centre d’Études de la Civilisation et des Artsl Islamiques)

Palais de Rekkada (Raqqāda) (15 km south of Kairouan)

Status: Public library/archive

Conditions of access: Confined to postgraduate students or recognised researchers.

Total number of Islamic MSS: ca. 8,000.
Description of collection: In September 1967, a presidential decree stipulated that all Tunisian collections of MSS belonging to public organisations should be centralised in Dâr al-Kutub al-Watâniyya in Tunis. These included the endowments (awqâf) of the main mosques, zâwiyyas and madrasas, as well as MSS from public libraries. This decree remains in force but an exception was made for the collection of Kairouan in September 1982. Most of these MSS were then taken, together with other important collections which had not been included in the consolidation, to be deposited at the Centre for the Study of Islamic Arts and Civilisation, which was charged by law to collect, preserve, catalogue and study the manuscripts and documents.

An advanced laboratory was set up at the Centre for the preservation of its many parchment manuscripts. The laboratory is well known for its high standard of its repair work on paper and leather, and is one of the most important centres for book repair in Tunis and perhaps in the whole of the Maghrib.

The manuscripts of Kairouan include the following collections:

(i) Al-Maktaba al-‘Amma (The Public Library)
So-called because most of its MSS were donated by families of Kairouan to the public library in the city. Most were given by the Bouras (Bûrâš) and Addoum (‘Aţţûm) families. Most have been catalogued on index cards. They total 637 MSS. Notable MSS include Shâbẖ tahdîb al-mudawwana by IbN Nâfî al-Qayrawânî and Al-ajnîbta al-‘Aţţûmîa by Qâsim ‘Aţţûm.

(ii) Al-Maktaba al-‘Atîqa (The Ancient Library)
So-called because most of its contents are written on parchment. It used to be kept in an enclosure in the mosque of ‘Uqba ibn Nâfî (the Great Mosque), and began to attract interest at the end of the last century, when the following article described the lamentable state of the collection:


The MSS of this collection cover the following main areas: (a) Old copies of the Qur’an (masâḥîf). Most are incomplete or with loose pages, and written on parchment. Some date from the second century AH and are written in Hijâzî script. They also include one which bears the date 290 AH, copied by a woman of Kairouan named Fâdî. They also include the remnants of the rare masâḥîf written on blue parchment (4th century AH), which was originally in six volumes. Parts of these masâḥîf have been reassembled by comparing their sizes and the handwriting of their copyists; (b) taṣfîr, (c) fiqh and associated disciplines: 1,823 MSS, some multiple copies. Catalogued by subjects, authors, dates of copying and approved public readings [sana‘a‘āt]. These include some rare and ancient sources for Mâlikî fiqh in particular, such as Kitâb al-bashî ‘wa-‘l-ghina’ by ʿAbd Allâh ibn Wash, copied in 290 AH, Kitâb al-‘ilm by the same author, Kitâb adab al-qâdî ‘wa-‘l-ghina’ by al-Haytham ibn Sulaymân, Taṣfîr al-Muwaṭṭa’ by Ibn Mizayn, some works of Sa‘îd ibn Abî ‘l-Hâddâd, the Kairouan theologian, the biographical works of IbN Sâgûn, part of the Taṣfîr of Yahyâ ibn Sâllâm and Al-‘adâbîa by IbN Ḥârîn; (d) literature; (d) mathematics and astronomy.

See


(iii) Al-Jâmi‘ al-‘Aṣam (the Great Mosque)
These MSS were formerly kept in cabinets in the prayer hall. Most of them were collected and donated for the benefit of students by the Mufti of Kairouan, Shaykh Muhammad al-Hâdî Bey (498 MSS).

(iv) Balwiya Madrasa
These MSS were kept at the Madrasa of the Companion Abû Ri‘fâ al-Balwî, which was established in the 11th century AH. It contains fine old copies of the Sahîh of Al-Bukhari. Most of the collection treats Mālikî fiqh, Taṣfîr, Hadîth and there are also some individual parts (‘aṣârî) of the Qur’an. The total collection numbers 226 MSS. They have yet to be catalogued.
(v) Ghuryāniya Madrasa
This collection of 246 MSS takes its name from Shaykh 'Urāyḍ al-Ghuryāni. It was not known to the staff of the National Library at the time of the consolidation of manuscript holdings. This fine collection includes autograph MSS by Ibn Ḥajar and others.

(vi) Maydat al-Ḥufyān (Mutaʿawwala' al-Ḥāfi')
These MSS were kept in a corner of the Great Mosque, by the ablutions block. They number 56 MSS. Many are incomplete and mixed up with each other, although most of their pages have been sequentially numbered.

Published catalogues:
1884. See Houças & Basset under Union catalogues above.


1967. See Balwens under Union catalogues above.

1967. See Schacht under Union catalogues above.


Unpublished catalogues:
Card catalogues have been prepared for the following collections: Al-Maktaba al-ʿĀmma, Al-Jāmiʿ al-ʿĀẓam, Ghuryāniya Madrasa, Maydat al-Ḥufyān.

MATMĀTA
Madrasa of Shaykh ʿĪsā ʿl-Jumnī

Status: Private
Conditions of access: By appointment with the family and with the permission of the local authorities.
Total number of Islamic MSS: 415.
Description of collection: Contains fine MSS, some of which bear the handwriting of scholars such as Ibn Ḥajar. The MSS are kept in a small hall, and are supervised by a descendant of the founder of the library.

QAYRAWĀN—see KAIROUAN

TUNIS
Ibn ʿĀshūr (Maktaba Muḥammad al-Ṭāhir ibn ʿĀshūr)

Date of establishment: ca. 19th century
Status: Private
Conditions of access: By appointment with the family.
Total number of Islamic MSS: ca. 1,110.
Description of collection: The collection was started by Ibn ʿĀshūr's maternal grandfather, the minister Muḥammad al-ʿĀzīz Bū ʿAṭṭār. It is kept at the family home in Al-Marsa and has been carefully catalogued by the Shaykh himself (see below). The collection includes rare items such as the only copy of the first part of the Dīwān of Bāshshār ibn Būrū and Kitāb Ihšāl al-qiyās by Ibn Ḥazm.

Published catalogues:
1958. See Al-Munajjam (under Union catalogues and surveys, above), pp. 391–394.
Unpublished catalogues:
Card catalogue. (An additional set is kept at the National Library.)

Baron D'Erlanger
Sidi Bou Said
Tel.: 740102
Date of establishment: ca. 1900
Status: Formerly a private library, presented to the State in 1990.
Conditions of access: Not open to researchers, but to be reviewed.
Total number of Islamic MSS: 462.
Description of collection: Kept at the Villa Al-Najma al-Zahrā, built 1912–22 in the suburb of Sidi Bou Said. The collection is housed in an attractive library. The MSS treat Mālikī fiqh, uṣūl al-fiqh, Hadīth, literature, lexicography, geometry and mathematics. The older MSS date from the 7th–12th centuries AH. They are finely bound in gilded leather. Most are in good condition, although some have been affected by acidity: these will be washed and treated at the preservation laboratory in Rekkada.
Cataloguing is expected to begin shortly.

Al-Bārūnī
Date of establishment: ca. 10th century AH
Status: Private
Total number of Islamic MSS: 573.
Description of collection: The library was founded by the Ibāḍī jurist Muhammad ibn Zakariyya al-Bārūnī (10th century AH).

Unpublished catalogues:
A catalogue was prepared in 1989 by Ibrahim Shabbū, with the co-operation of a member of the Bārūnī family. A copy is also held at the National Library.

Dār al-Kutub al-Waṭaniya (National Library)
PO Box 42
20 Sūq al-ʿAṭārīn, Tunis 1008
Tel.: 249902-256921-245338. Telex 14032
Status: Public
Conditions of access: Open to university research students with permission from the Administration.
Total number of Islamic MSS: ca. 25,000.
Description of collection: The collections of the National Library are presently situated in a barracks built by Ḥammüda Pasha near the Zaytūna mosque in the early eighteenth century. It was used by the French in 1920 as a site for a French library and was then converted into a public library, which became the National Library after Independence. The collection is one of the largest in the Arab world in terms of quantity and variety of material, after the collections of the National Library of Egypt and the Kingdom of Morocco. It contains many rare works, confirming the significance of Tunisia as a major centre of learning in the history of Islamic culture.

This library houses the collections of various individual libraries, some of which are old, and which were brought here in accordance with the presidential decree of September 1967. The MSS are stored on the ground floor of this historic building, in a large library with an arched ceiling, on old wooden shelving which has marked their decorated bindings and has contributed to the spread of woodworm. Although the library has an old air-conditioning unit, storage conditions are poor.

The library also has a non-functioning workshop for binding and repairing. Efforts have been made to develop this side of the library's work and some facilities have been restored, although the project remains incomplete.

The overall collection, the exact total of which has yet to be assessed, is made up of the following library collections:
(i) Al-ʿAbdaliyya (Al-Shādiyya)
This collection derives its name from prince ʿAbd Allāh Muḥammad ibn al-Ḥusayn ibn Masʿūd ibn ʿUthmān al-Ḥafṣ (899–932/1526), who established it in the eastern cloister of the Zaytūna
mosque, overlooking the fruit market. It was destroyed during the Spanish attack of 980 AH. Restoration was undertaken by Khâyra al-Dîn Pasha during the rule of Marshal Sâdîq Bey, who collected in it the remains of the madrasa and mosque libraries. He also donated his private collection, which contained the manuscript works of the scholars of Al Bayram, and numbered about 1,000 MSS. Sâdîq Bey went on to issue a regulatory edict in 1292/1876, stipulating that the manuscripts may be studied and copied, without being removed. The collection became known at this time as the Sâdiqya Library. A series of bequests followed: Al-Amîr al-Hûsâyînî 'Alî Bey III donated 300 manuscripts in 1500 AH, and his son Muhammed al-Hâni gave 822 volumes in 1320. The total stands at 5,180 MSS. After Independence and the dissolution of the Anwâf, the collection was appened to that of the University of Tunis, and was then moved, after the edict of 1967, to the National Library.

Its rare works include: (i) a fine copy of Al-Fâkhîr by Al-Muqaddam ibn Sâlîma ibn Ǧâsim (d. 290/903), copied by 'Âbd Allâh ibn Yâhîya in 564/1169. MS. no. 7,116; (ii) commentary on the Diwan of Abru Firas al-Ĥamadani by Al-Ġasan ibn Aḥmad ibn Khalâwâny (d. 370/980), copied on 14 Ramaḍân 578/1184, MS. number 8,521; (iii) Suwar al-kawâbih al-thâbita by 'Âbd al-Rajmân ibn Ǧumâr al-Sâfî al-Râzî (d. 376/986), containing graphs, tables and diagrams of the movements of the stars. Nastâ'îq, copied in 1030/1621. MS. number 8,093.

(iii) Ahmadiya

This library was founded by Marshal Aḥmad Pasha Bey in 1256/1840-41 and stored in twenty cabinets along the qibla wall at the Zaytuna mosque, in which were also stored the remains of the Pasha’s library at Bâerd, which had been brought by Prince 'Alî Pasha ibn Muhammed (1153 - 1169 AH) from Istanbul. The remaining MSS from the collection of the minister Hûsâyîn Khawâja were also stored there, as were the collections of Shaykhi Ibrâhîm al-Rivâî (d. 1286/1869), the minister Muḥtyâr Khaznasâr and the collection of the historian Aḥmad ibn Abru 'l-Dîva'r. When the collection was incorporated into that of the National Library in 1967 it numbered 6,464 MSS, covering most fields of Islamic culture.

Its rare items include: (i) Tajrîr of Yaḥyâ ibn Sâlîm al-Bâshî al-Taymi (d. 201/816), parts 13-19, copied on parchment in 383/933. MS. no. 7,447; (ii) Mukhâṣsar Ibrâhîm al-qiyâs wa-'l-ma'y wa-'l-isti'bâm wa-'l-taqdîs by Ibn Ḥazm, copied by Al-Hâfirî al-Dhahabî (7th century AH). MS. no. 8,804; (iii) Al-taqrib li-ṣâlîd al-mantiq by Ibn Ḥazm; a fine copy, MS. no. 12,777; (iv) Al-kâfî fi-'l-ḥayzara by 'Âbd al-Rajmân ibn Muḥammed al-Alâdârî. MS. no. 14,290; (v) Al-mîdâkî by Al-Jawâhîrî; large, fine copy, vocalised text, copied 665/1264. MS. no. 12,333.

The founder was an authority on the canonical readings (qirâ'ât) of the Qur'an. He collected a large library whilst studying in Egypt, the surviving elements of which were incorporated into the National Library after 1967. It numbers 1,363 manuscripts. It was previously kept by the founder's descendants in Sâdiqya (Sfax).

(iv) Aṭṭârîn

This collection takes its name from the market in which its building (now the National Library) is situated. The development of this collection began in the 1920s, with the total number of manuscripts growing from about 300 in 1925 to a collection number of thousands, thanks to the efforts of the first curator, Ğumâr al-Kašî. The collection continued to grow after Independence, and important private collections were acquired, such as the manuscripts of Shaykhi Aḥmad al-Juraydî, Muḥammed Bîlghûja (Belkhodja) and Muḥammed al-Qarâwî, when the manuscripts numbered 4,900, in addition to about 80 manuscripts in French and Italian.

Operating under conditions which had hampered the growth of other collections, the Aṭṭârîn Library carried out a survey of titles available in the book market and set about acquiring the rare items which give this collection its distinctive value. These include: (i) Sharh Muḥaffle gìyâl al-Dârî by Abru Zakarîya Yaḥyâ ibn Abru al-Kârîb al-Tâfrîzî (d. 502/1109). Autograph MS. copied in Baghda'd in 486/1093. Also written on by scholars who quoted from it or heard it being read, like Al-Jawâhîrî and others; (ii) Atlas balad Ǧafrîq wa-qirâhî by students of the school of architecture at Bâerd, under the supervision of General Rashîd, Commander-in-Chief of coastal stations in 1274/1857; (iii) Al-1ez wa-'l-ma'ânî li-'l-mudhîrîn fi subîl Abru bi-'l-mahîtî by Ibrâhîm al-Ruḥâbî al-Andalûsî. Translated from Spanish by Aḥmad ibn Qâsim al-Ḥaṣrî. Copied by Ibn al-Mü'tarîm, with explanatory illustrations, in the 11th/17th century.

(v) Ǧusnî Usnî 'Abd al-Wâhhab (1884 - 1968)

The owner was a government minister and historian who donated
his manuscripts as a waqf to the Zaytuna mosque and subsequently to the National Library in 1969. The collection was carefully built up during the owner's life which included various visits to the cultural capitals of the Muslim world. The total number of MSS is 1,297.

The collection contains numerous rare items, including: (i) Sharh al-Ḥamāsa by Al-ʿAṯām Al-Shuṣṣāfī; fine copy dating from the 7th century AH. MS. no. 18,656; (ii) Muḥkam of Iḥṣan Iṣa (d. 458/1066). Vol. VIII, copied 601/1205; (iii) Al-dhurriyya al-ṭāhira al-nabawīya by Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ḥammād Al-Dūłārī (d. 320/932); (iv) Kāb al-fārūd by Al-Jāvānī, fine copy from 7th century AH. MS. no. 18,670.

(v) Khaldūniyya

The Khaldūni Cultural and Educational Society was established close to the Zaytūn Mosque in 1896, where it founded a library in 1901. It had a public status and was open to all. Its collection of 158 manuscripts was incorporated into that of the National Library after 1967. This collection contains rare works by Tunisian scholars.

(vii) Muhammad Bilḥūja (Belkhdija)

The founder was a former soldier, government minister and historian. The National Library purchased part of the collection, including 94 manuscripts containing some rare items, such as the History (Taʾrīḵa) of Iḥṣan Salāmā.

(viii) Muṣṭafā ibn ʿAlī Ridwān al-Ṣūsī

This collection reverted to State ownership after the son of the founder died without issue. Al-Sūsī was a high functionary of the State with an interest in astronomy, who collected rare works on the subject. The collection numbers 680 MSS, including Al-majṣūṭa by Bāšāmīyyūs al-Quluḥī [Almagest, Ptolemaeus], taken from Al-Ḥayawānīya by Iṣḥāq ibn Ḥasanayn and corrected by Thābit ibn Qurra. Fine Andalusian MS. with geometric diagrams and astronomical tables, copied in 478/1085 from an original collated with that of Abū ʿl-Ḥasan al-Ṣūfī, which had in turn been corrected with reference to the copy of Abū ʿl-Ḥasan al-Ṣūfī. MS. Ridwān 7,116.

See:


Published catalogues:


Describes manuscripts and printed works now held in the National Library.


1884. See article by Houdas & Basset under Union catalogues above.


In 4 parts, describing manuscripts and printed books; presents
only 2,914 manuscripts. Some sources indicate that the catalogue has been completed, but nothing is known of the volumes that were not printed. This catalogue was produced by a committee of scholars of the Zaytuna Mosque.

1947. See Ṭarrāzī (under Union catalogues above), pp. 218–223.


Study of 5 MSS on the astrolabe in the ‘Abdaliyya Library.

1967. See Bauwens under Union catalogues above.


On the library of the Dār Ajlūlī (Jalūlī) Museum: 1,372 MSS, formerly held at Ṣafaqīs (Sfax) now incorporated into the National Library.

1967. See Schacht under Union catalogues above.


Cites 19 valuable MSS in Dār al-Kutub al-Wataniyya.


Describes 1,297 MSS.


Six stencilled vols. published by the National Library. Attempts to catalogue the MSS in numerical order; each volume describes 1,000 MSS. More of a handlist than a catalogue, in view of the brevity of the descriptions.
Muhammad al-Habib

Status: Private

Total number of Islamic MSS: 206.

Description of collection: The founder of the collection (1903–80) was a writer and faqih. Most of the MSS are short essays and primers of Ḥanafi fiqh.

Unpublished catalogue:
A handlist.

Al-Nayfar (Ahmad al-Mahdi)

5Ali Tirad Street, Montfleury

Status: Private

Conditions of access: The library is not open to visitors.

Total number of Islamic MSS: ca. 309.

Description of collection: The owner of the collection (1908–87) inherited many of his father’s MSS and added to them. They are now kept in his house by his sons.

Unpublished catalogue:
The collection is described in a handlist which was prepared by the family.

Al-Nayfar (Al-Shaykh al-Shadhili)

Status: Private

Conditions of access: By arrangement with the owner.

Total number of Islamic MSS: 800.

Description of collection: A building was constructed for the library next to the family’s house in the suburb of Montfleury, bearing the name of the owner’s father, Al-Sādiq Al-Nayfar. The owner inherited most of the MSS from his father.

Published catalogue:
1958. See Al-Munajjid under Union catalogues above.
Unpublished catalogue:
A card catalogue was prepared with the assistance of the National Library.

Sahib al-Tabi Mosque

Baqh al-Halfawin

Status: Private

Description of collection: Kept in a hall in an annexe of the mosque. The MSS originally formed part of the collection of Al ibn al-Khija al-Ashraf. They have not been catalogued.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL APPENDIX


Incl. Tunisia.