
BOOK REVIEWS

Catalogue of Arabic Manuscripts in SS Cyril and Methodius National Library, Sofia, Bulgaria. Hadīth Sciences. Compiled by Stoyanka Kenderova. London: al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation, 1995, 459 pp., with 8 Plates.

Since last five years Al-Furqān Islamic Heritage Foundation proved to have been one of the most effective structures in the world doing a lot to support cataloguing, restoration, research and publication of Islamic manuscripts. One can mention the success of the publication of four-volume "World Survey of Islamic Manuscripts" (the final volume of English edition appeared in 1994, the Arabic one will be published in 1996). Following this project the Foundation has initiated a program to bring to light the contents of so far uncatalogued collections of Islamic manuscripts. Al-Furqān has already published handlists of the Library of Makkah al-Mukarramah and several private libraries in Yemen. The Foundation supporting activities in this field were a success in Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal or are near to be successfully terminated by the publication of the catalogues and handlists of several important public and private collections. The expansion of the handlisting work with the financial support of the Foundation is expected to take place in Benin, Chad, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Ivory Coast, Sudan, Togo, the Republic of South Africa, Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Albania, and Pakistan. The full catalogues of the collections in Byelorussia, Lithuania and Tatarstan are being prepared now as well. The work under review has also been done within this important project.

The collection of the Islamic manuscripts (Arabic, Persian and Turkish) of the Oriental Department of the SS Cyril and Methodius National Library in Sofia was formed soon after the Library's foundation in 1878 with the acquisition of 2,485 manuscripts and old printed books from the Library of Mehmed Hüsrev Pasha in Samokov. In 1888 the collection was enriched with another 650 manuscripts and old printed books from the Library of Osman Pazvantoğlu of Vidin. A significant part of manuscripts has been acquired in the following years from the *waqf* libraries in Küstendil and Sofia, from the state and municipal institutions of many towns, as well as from private collections.

At the end of 1993 the total number of Oriental manuscripts was 3,698. The most numerous is the collection of Arabic manuscripts, which numbers more than 3,000 items. The Turkish collection includes about 500 manuscripts, while the Persian one — about 140.

The manuscripts represent a wide scope of Islamic science and literature. These are the copies of the Qur'ān and works on exegesis, *ḥadīth*, theology, law, and philosophy, works on history, geography, literature and language, etc.

Many scholars contributed to the compiling of the general catalogue of the Islamic manuscripts of SS Cyril and Methodius National Library in Sofia. A Bulgarian scholar Boris Nedkov devoted about twenty years of his life (from 1942 to 1960) to the describing of 450 Turkish manuscripts representing 350 works (unfortunately, his catalogue has remained unpublished). It should be noted that among those who participated in the work on the collection was a Russian scholar A. Shishmanov, a pupil of the famous arabist I. Yu. Krachkovsky. In 1913 he described 37 Arabic and one Persian manuscript of the Pazvantoğlu library collection.

'Adnān Darwīsh from Syria, after his six months' work in the Sofia National Library in 1963, published a two-volume catalogue (the first volume in 1969 and the second — in 1974) containing 1,025 codices (Qur'ān, *tafsīr*, works on geography and literature). Furāt Muḥammad Maḥdī al-Jawāhirī from Iraq made, between 1965 and 1967, about 1,830 short card descriptions of nearly 900 codices. Another specialist from Iraq, Yūsuf 'Izz al-Dīn, published in 1967 a catalogue of Arabic manuscripts, which includes 141 codices on history, geography and literature. The catalogue of Arabic manuscripts with a description of 95 copies of the Qur'ān was compiled and published by a Bulgarian scholar G. Petkova-Bozhanova in 1977. A little earlier, in 1973, the catalogue of the Persian manuscripts of the collection was prepared by Jamshīd Sayyār, who described 118 manuscripts representing 75 works.

However, many years had passed till the catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts on *ḥadīth* sciences was published. Its author, a curator of the Islamic collection of the SS Cyril and Methodius National Library Dr. S. Kenderova, is well known to specialists for her contribution to the studies of the Ottoman (Turkish) archival documentary materials of the same Library. In the Catalogue under review she is meticulously following the traditional practice of describing of Arabic manuscripts.

The Catalogue comprises 243 descriptions representing 124 works which are preserved, either completely or in fragments, in the Library. The material is divided into four parts: 1) *Uṣūl al-Ḥadīth*; 2) *Al-Ṣiḥaḥ al-Sittah* (The Six Greatest Collections); 3) Other collections; 4) *Arba'ūn Ḥadīthan* (Forty *Ḥadīths*) Collections. The author describes