

# Reviews

Dévényi, Kinga, Munif Abdul-Fattah, and Katalin Fiedler, *Catalogue of the Arabic Manuscripts in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*, Islamic Manuscripts and Books, 9 (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2016). Co-published as *Oriental Manuscripts in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences*, 4 (Budapest: Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, 2016). Hardback. xviii + 554 pages. € 135.00. ISBN 9789004306820 (hardback), ISBN 9789004306936 (e-book). Series ISSN 1877-9964.

The collection of Arabic manuscripts in the Hungarian Academy of Science consists of 179 manuscripts many of them collected volumes, making 306 the total number of texts. According to the authors, a substantial number of these manuscripts date back to the period when Hungary was part of the Ottoman Empire (1541–1699), but an even larger number is later, dating from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These later texts were produced by the Muslim minority communities that continued to live in Hungary after the Ottoman presence ended. Thus, as the authors point out, the bulk of the collection was not formed by book collectors but reflected the religious and scholarly life of the Muslim communities in Hungary from the Ottoman period onwards. The fact that the texts are filled with interlinear and marginal notes—often in Turkish—indicates that they were actively used by both scholars and students (Introduction, 8, 12).

The catalogue is arranged strictly according to the subject matter of the texts and further within each subject heading the texts are arranged starting with the oldest main text followed by its commentaries. Several of the manuscripts contain more than one text—some up to ten texts. If the texts within the manuscript deal with widely different subjects, the descriptions are split up and placed under the appropriate subject headings. Even when the subjects of the texts in a manuscript are closely related, the manuscript is not presented as a single unit, because the texts usually belong to different subcategories based on the age and type of the text. On pages 549–556, there is an ‘Index of Titles in Collected Works’ with page references allowing to locate the various manuscript parts within the catalogue.

As the Hungarian Muslims were Turkish or Bosnian speakers, it is not surprising that the largest number of texts in the collection deals with the Arabic language: grammar, lexicography and rhetoric (100 items). The second largest group is formed by *fiqh* (53 items), both practical and theoretical,

reflecting the needs and interests of the Muslim communities (Introduction, 11–12). The authors see a direct link between the texts of the collection and a standard traditional learning curriculum of Islamic religious studies (Introduction, 5–6, 8). This may have inspired them to organize the catalogue accordingly, i.e. starting with Qur’ān, *ḥadīth*, and *fiqh* and placing the auxiliary sciences such as language and logic towards the end. The authors’ focus on Islamic religious sciences may also explain why mathematics does not get its own heading but is placed within *Miscellanea* (492). However, the arrangement hides the interesting fact that mathematics is represented by no less than ten texts (in five manuscripts), which is a relatively high number in a small collection and substantially higher than the number of texts in the catalogue representing history, literature, and philosophy that each have their own subject headings.

Although the catalogue clearly focuses on the individual texts, it also contains codicological information on the manuscripts, giving information on the size, paper, binding, handwriting, ink colours, and decorations. When a manuscript contains more than one text, the codicological information is repeated in the description of each text. The same applies to ownership information, and if the same scribe has copied more than one text within the manuscript, this is also mentioned.

According to the title page, Kinga Dévényi has produced the catalogue together with Munif Abdul-Fattah and Katalin Fiedler. However, in the Foreword (ix–xi) the catalogue is presented as the work of Kinga Dévényi, and no information is given on the character and extent of the co-authors’ contributions.

The printed catalogue is closely related to the Academy Library’s online catalogue; the descriptions were modified during the process of producing the printed catalogue (Foreword, x). The online catalogue can be accessed at <<http://opac.mta.hu/>> (base to search: ‘Manuscripts of the Oriental Collection’; last accessed 10 March 2016), and the entries there contain links to pictures of at least the beginnings and ends of the texts. The printed catalogue has also some illustrations and they are of a very good quality but fewer in number than in the online catalogue.

The printed catalogue was published in co-operation with Brill and therefore it not only appears as Volume 4 in the series *Oriental Manuscripts in the Library of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences* but also as Volume 9 in Brill’s series *Islamic Manuscripts and Books*. The co-operation with Brill allowed the digitization of all the manuscripts described in the catalogue (Foreword, ix). An access to the digitized images can be purchased through BrillOnline Primary Sources.

The catalogue presents a small but interesting collection of Arabic manuscripts reflecting the scholarly and practical needs of the various Muslim communities in Hungary. With its focus on the individual texts, the catalogue may frustrate those who are interested in seeing the manuscripts not only as repositories of texts but also as artifacts in their own right, but for those who are interested in transmission of knowledge the catalogue offers an insight into Hungary's Islamic legacy.

Irmeli Perho  
The Royal Library, Copenhagen