

## Malay Manuscripts in Germany: a review of their catalogues

by

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**Abstrak:** Koleksi manuskrip Melayu yang terdapat di dalam koleksi-koleksi Jerman adalah kurang daripada seratus buah jumlahnya. Usaha untuk mendokumentasikan manuskrip-manuskrip ini bermula lebih seratus tahun dahulu. Beberapa jenis katalog telah disediakan dan diterbitkan di dalam bentuk makalah, buku dan juga sebuah katalog pameran. Usaha mutakhir ialah sebuah katalog induk yang amat teliti yang diterbitkan oleh Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia.

**Abstract:** The Malay manuscripts known to be available in German collections are less than one hundred in number. Efforts to document these manuscripts began over a hundred years ago. Several types of catalogues have been prepared and published in the form of articles, books and even an exhibition catalogue. The latest effort is a detailed union catalogue published by the National Library of Malaysia.

German repositories holding Malay manuscripts can boast of having some of the earliest extant specimens. That they have survived the ravages of war and destruction is testimony to the care and attention which scholars and librarians have devoted to their safety and preservation for posterity.

Information on Malay manuscripts in Germany may be found in a few catalogues produced over the last hundred years. These have appeared as articles in learned periodicals, as monographs, union lists and even as an exhibition catalogue.

Christiaan Snouck Hurgronje's *Katalog der malaiischen Handschriften der Koniglichen Hofbibliothek in Berlin* was completed in 1889, but it remained as a handwritten catalogue in the University of Leiden Library (Cod. Or. 8015) until 1989 when the publishing house of Franz Steiner produced a facsimile edition of it as supplementary volume no. 29 in the series *Verzeichnis der orientalischen Handschriften in Deutschland*.

Seventy Malay Manuscripts are described in this catalogue under six subject headings:

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|--|------------------|
| 1. Fiction and narrative                                   | - 23 manuscripts |
| 2. Poems   | - 6 manuscripts  |
| 3. Muslim dogmatics, law, mysticism and edifying legends   | - 27 manuscripts |
| 4. History of East Indian dynasties                        | - 4 manuscripts  |
| 5. Codes of East Indian empires                            | - 2 manuscripts  |
| 6. Politics, didactical works, calendars, prophecies, etc. | - 8 manuscripts  |

The manuscripts are described in great detail. Each entry begins with a serial number followed by the press-mark of the manuscript; title; material; foliation; size and number of lines per page. These preliminaries are followed by detailed notes on the contents with references to manuscripts with similar titles in other repositories and their catalogues.

Carl Brockelmann's *Katalog der orientalischen Handschriften der Stadtbibliothek zu Hamburg; mit Ausschluss der Herbraischen* (Hamburg: Otto Meissners Verlag, 1908) holds descriptions of manuscripts in two parts: Islamic and Christian. Five Malay manuscripts bearing serial numbers 293-297 are described

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briefly under the section on Islamic manuscripts.

Hans Overbeck produced the first English catalogue in his 'Malay manuscripts in the public libraries of Germany', *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, vol.4, pt.2 (1926) pp. 233-259. This is a union list of Malay manuscripts known to be available in German collections to the compiler. The repositories and the number of manuscripts in them are:

1. Preussische Staatsbibliothek, - 64 manuscripts  
Berlin
2. Sachsische Landesbibliothek, - 2 manuscripts  
Dresden
3. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, - 6 manuscripts  
Munich
4. Stadtbibliothek, Hamburg - 1 manuscript

Under each repository, the manuscripts are listed according to the numerical sequence of their press-marks. The description of each manuscript includes make of paper; size; foliation; and lines per page. The titles of manuscripts of texts with known titles are provided. Otherwise a note on the contents of a manuscript serves as title. Scribes' names and dates of copying are noted wherever these are available. Manuscripts with more than one text have the texts listed in order with indications of the folios on which they begin and end. References to published catalogues and information on similar manuscripts elsewhere are also provided.

Based upon published catalogues available at that time, J.H. Howard published a union catalogue under the title *Malay Manuscripts: a Bibliographical Guide* (Kuala Lumpur: University of Malaya Library, 1966). Fifteen repositories are listed. The German repositories are: Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich; Preussische Staatsbibliothek, Berlin; Sachsische Landesbibliothek, Dresden and Staats- und Universitätsbibliothek, Hamburg.

An exhibition catalogue of Southeast Asian manuscripts appeared in 1976 under the title *Handschriften aus Sudostasien* (Berlin: Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz, 1976). Thirty-one Malay manuscripts are described with information on title (or provided title in German); short notes on contents; press-marks and references to published catalogues.

Adnan Jawad Al-Toma described in detail twenty-five manuscripts in his *Die arabischen Handschriften in der universitätsbibliothek Marburg* (Marburg: 1979). The index to this catalogue indicates that Malay texts are to be found in seven of these manuscripts.

Detailed descriptions of four Malay manuscripts were published by L.F. Brakel in 'Four Malay manuscripts in Hamburg: some problems encountered in describing them', *Majalah Perpustakaan Malaysia*, vol.9 (1981) pp.13-16.

An account of the history of the collection of oriental manuscripts and the inventories available for them in the Bavarian State Library (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek) was published by Gunter Gronbold in 'The oriental manuscripts in the Bavarian State Library', *International Association of Orientalist Librarians Bulletin*, no.21 (1983) pp. 7-17. Eleven Malay manuscripts are noted as available in this collection.

The latest addition to this list of catalogues is *Katalog Manuskrip Melayu di Jerman Barat. Catalogue of Malay Manuscripts in West Germany* (Kuala Lumpur: Perpustakaan Negara Malaysia, 1992). It is based on the research and bibliographical expertise of Asma Ahmat of the Malay Manuscripts Centre at the National Library of Malaysia, and is the eighth number in a series of catalogues on Malay manuscripts published by the Centre.

The catalogue holds descriptions of ninety-one Malay manuscripts in the following repositories:

1. Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz - 64 manuscripts
2. Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Munich - 9 manuscripts
3. Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg - 6 manuscripts
4. Stadtbibliothek, Trier - 1 manuscript
5. Universitätsbibliothek Marburg - 5 manuscripts
6. Universitätsbibliothek Bonn - 1 manuscript
7. Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg - 5 manuscripts

In a short introduction the compiler provides a brief history of the Malay manuscripts held in each repository and provides references to the catalogues which hold descriptions of them.

The description of each manuscript includes the press-mark of the manuscript; name of the repository in abbreviation; title; author/copyist; date of writing/copying; the structure of the manuscript including its foliation, height and width, type of material, watermarks, collation, catch words, number of lines per page and size of the text area. Notes are provided on the style of writing, rubrication and binding; contents with incipit and explicit; summary of contents; bibliography and other related titles and texts.

The compiler has provided detailed descriptions and notes on each of the manuscript which has been examined in the true tradition of bibliographical scholarship. The catalogue is equipped with indexes for titles, authors/copyists, places and watermarks.

The existence of Malay manuscripts in the collections of the Staatsbibliothek Preussischer Kulturbesitz in Berlin, the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek in Munich, the Universitätsbibliothek Marburg and the Universitätsbibliothek Hamburg have been noted in earlier catalogues. This catalogue brings to light the availability of Malay manuscripts in the Universitätsbibliothek Heidelberg, the Stadtbibliothek Trier and the Universitätsbibliothek Bonn.

Classical Malay literary scholarship is manuscript based and the traditional centres of learning have always been those with large collections of manuscripts and accessible catalogues of their holdings. The efforts of the Malay Manuscripts Centre to locate Malay manuscripts in any part of the world and to document descriptions of them will assist scholars tremendously in their search for primary sources. In *Katalog Manuskrip Melayu di Jerman Barat* we have yet another valuable item added to the slowly but steadily growing collection of reference tools for Malay manuscript studies. ■