

A Brief Survey of the Development of Turkish Library Catalogues

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Previous articles have dealt with various aspects of the Ottoman library system including the catalogues of the collections. However, since their publication, new material has come to light and this is now the opportune moment to review the development of cataloguing, from the foundation of the first Ottoman libraries to the present century. In this article, Turkish library catalogues and cataloguing shall be dealt with in three distinct periods. The first period covers

the history of cataloguing from the very beginning to the second half of the 19th century, dealing in particular with three of the earliest catalogues, dating from the 16th century. The second period deals with the attempts to prepare union catalogues of the collections in the libraries of Istanbul, together with the appearance of the first printed catalogues for individual libraries. The third is the Republican period, covering the seven decades from 1923 to the present day.

Introduction

We are fortunate to have, almost from the very beginning of the development of Ottoman libraries, documents that give us an insight into the minds of the founders of the first libraries and the librarians working in these institutions. It was customary for scholars, statesmen and people of wealth to accumulate books and to endow them to institutions. In some cases, collections could be quite sizeable and the benefactor would also make provision for personnel to be appointed to look after the books. The endowment was established by means of a trust deed, on which details of the endowment were recorded. As time went on these deeds became longer and more detailed, giving not only the number of books but also their titles. These primitive lists constituted the earliest type of catalogue, but in effect were intended as inventories by which the foundation might be given the assurance that the books intended for the library were actually delivered. The identification of these books was a problem, for in the Islamic manuscript tradition, generally, not only was there no title page for the title and author's name, but sometimes there was no indication of the title or author in the text [1].

A well-known text might have been referred to by a variety of titles just as the author might have been known by more than one name. Sometimes a title might have been written on the fly-leaf, on the spine or the edge and sometimes there was no outward indication of the contents of the book. Thus inventories often gave information intended only as a guide in identifying which books were the subject of the endowment.

Before the sixteenth century these inventories were often haphazard lists of books giving only a short title of the text. In some inventories, we find that the language in which the books are written is indicated, a useful aid to identification when we bear in mind that many Persian and Turkish works had Arabic titles. In some lists, the number of volumes in which a work had been copied was also noted to aid identification. However, in some inventories we can observe the beginnings of rationalisation, in other words, the first steps towards developing a proper catalogue. In some inventories, multiple copies were listed together and noted as being a second or third copy of the same text [2].

By the end of the fifteenth century there were inventories noting the subject matter by indicating how many books there were on Koranic com-

mentary, how many books on jurisprudence, how many books on Traditions, and so forth, without actually naming the books. In one case, in fact, we now know that the reason the books were not named was that there was a separate classified list with the names of the books which was intended as an appendix to the endowment deed itself [3].

Up to the time of the conquest of Istanbul, in 1453, the job of caring for the books was given to a member of the staff of the institution where the library was housed. He was essentially a part-time librarian with a commensurate salary. With the foundation of the college library of Mehmed the Conqueror in the latter half of the fifteenth century, provision was made for a full-time librarian and an assistant librarian to be appointed with appropriate salaries. What is interesting here is that it is stipulated that one of the tasks of the assistant librarian was to draw up a list of the books in the collection. This is the first reference to the work of cataloguing.

One of the three earliest extant 16th century catalogues describes the books in this library (Bavşekalet Archive). The catalogue was drawn up on the orders of Sultan Bayezid II (1481–1512). It has a short introduction describing the subject headings under which the books are to be classified and where each collection is to be stored. This catalogue describes the books in considerable detail: title, author, paper, nature of binding, colour of binding, number of folios, colour of the inks and in many cases other characteristics or peculiarities, such as the name of the copyist if known, illustrations and ornamentations. In many ways the description of the manuscripts are far more sophisticated and detailed than most modern manuscript catalogues. At the end of the introduction, it is noted that there are a total of 1,241 books: 796 had been donated by the Conqueror, 41 endowed as replacements by a former administrator of the endowment, 389 endowed by various scholars and 15 books the provenance of which was unknown [4].

This collection was catalogued again in 1560 by a teacher at the college where the library was located (Topkapı Palace). This catalogue is interesting because in it, the cataloguer, Hacı Hasan-zâde, provides an Arabic introduction in which he states the purpose and aims in compiling the catalogue. Essentially, the catalogue was an in-

ventory of books used to check the books against the previous catalogue. However, the cataloguer takes this opportunity to explain the importance of libraries for the well-being of society. He states that when he drew up the catalogue he thought about how it should be done, and chose to adopt the method which Hacı Mehmed, the former librarian, used for a previous catalogue, which unfortunately has not survived. The catalogue measures 35 x 12.5 cm and consists of 87 folios. It describes the entire collection numbering 1,770 works.

The catalogue describes each work in detail, within classifications according to subject matter. The following is a typical description of a work:

"The Koranic commentary of Beyzavi: all Damascene [paper] bound in full red leather, decorated with ornamentation. The following sentence is in white lead: "Opening chapter of the book, of seven verses [revealed in] Mecca". The noble Besmele (the words In The Name Of God etc.) in gold. The first two pages with gold margins. Also a *tezhib* (ornamentation) at the top of the Chapter entitled Mary. The first half of the Koran text in *celi* calligraphy. Ink sometimes red sometimes black, but in second half all red. At the end of the book: imperial seal, imperial endowment. 510 folios. (5a)

Between the composition of the two extant catalogues for the library attached to the Fatih complex, there was compiled a third catalogue, this time for the Imperial library (Magyar Todoman-yos n.d.). The catalogue was drawn up in 1502 and describes the books extremely briefly, giving only the author, title and number of folios. However the importance of this catalogue is the classification system and the classification rule adopted by the librarian. As a preface to the catalogue, the librarian states what rules he has adopted in the classification of the works in the library. The overriding principle is that the title of the work should be recorded as given on the fly-leaf of the work, even though the work may be better known under a different title. This presumably was to facilitate the task of checking the works against the catalogue. Once again, the catalogue is acting as an inventory, but when it comes to classification it can be seen in this catalogue an attempt to make the library as accessible as possible via the catalogue. The cataloguer naturally suggests that all books on a given subject should be catalogued under a single subject heading, but points out difficulties which may arise, when, for

example, several books dealing with different subjects are bound together. The cataloguer then suggests that this type of work should be catalogued under the subject headings of the work considered the most important or the one that would be most in demand.

Another problem of classification is when a book deals with two distinct subjects, as for example, a book dealing with a mystical approach to Law. The cataloguer's solution is to place multiple copies, when they exist, in each of the categories. In this case, one copy under the subject heading "Mysticism" and another under "Law" [5].

We therefore have three early catalogues, two of which belong to the college library of the Fatih complex and one to the Palace library. The college library catalogues are radically different from that of the Palace library, in that they are concerned with describing the physical appearance of the book, while the Palace library catalogue is more interested in describing and classifying the contents. The essential difference in these two distinct approaches is that the College library was a lending library, and paramount importance was given to the preservation of the collection. In order to protect the books and ensure that valuable copies were not replaced by inferior copies, it was important to describe the books in as much detail as possible. The Palace library, however, had restricted access and was for the use of the Sultan and the court. Here prime importance was given to the finding of information as quickly as possible, and for this reason classification became important.

As would be expect in an essentially conservative society, such as the Ottoman Empire, once a working catalogue proved itself to be adequate for the task demanded of it, little subsequent development took place. Up to the middle of the 19th century the library catalogues essentially remained the same. The one development that can be seen was that with the enlargement of the collection it was possible to create new subject headings or sub-headings. Books which had previously been lumped together under a subject heading such as "Koranic commentary", were now classified under various sub-headings such as "Supra commentaries" and "Glosses". In complying with this principle there were some problems which were never solved. The most important was the assigning of subjects for some

books which did not easily fit under already established subject headings. Another was how to classify a book that dealt with more than one distinct subject. Thus in later catalogues it can be seen that a given book may be found under different subject headings in different catalogues.

At the beginning of the 19th century, we see a different type of catalogue being prepared for some libraries; this usually gave the title of the work, sometimes the author's name and an indication of its location. These catalogues were often described in their introduction as "el defteri" (handbook). It is clear that they were intended for the reader, as well as the librarian.

Up to the 19th century all catalogues prepared for Ottoman libraries were subject catalogues, adhering to the same basic pattern, with some variations. In general, all library catalogues had subject headings for "the Koran and its recital", "Koranic Commentary", "Islamic Tradition", "Jurisprudence", "Theology", "History" and "Literature". Other subject headings and sub-headings were added according to the richness of a collection. Although there was a general increase in subject headings from the beginning of the 18th century, they remained inadequate to cover all the books, and the cataloguers were constantly struggling to assign all their books to appropriate subjects.

In the middle of the 19th century the Ottoman Empire witnessed a process of reform and restructuring which pervaded all areas of life, not least of all education. As Istanbul was already well furnished with books covering all sorts of subjects, it was natural that an attempt would be made to make these works more accessible to the readers. The most important single facility was a union catalogue of the Istanbul libraries [6]. The first attempt to list all the Istanbul library books in one catalogue was made by Ali Fethi Bey. Between 1850 and 1854 he put together a classified list of all works in 46 foundation libraries in Istanbul, under 14 subject headings [7]. His two volumed work, entitled the *el-Âsârü'l-Âliyye fî Hazâ'ini'l-Kütübi'l-Osmaniyye* took four and half year to compile, at the end of which he submitted his work to the Sultan. However, for whatever reason, it was never published and remains in manuscript form in two copies [8]. Although this first attempt at compiling a union catalogue of works in the Istanbul libraries has been deemed

praiseworthy by several scholars, in fact, the work was flawed in several respects. Firstly, the alphabetical listing of books came within each subject heading, so that to find a book one had to know under what subject heading it was placed. Secondly, Ali Fethi Bey indicates in which library a book was to be found but does not give the location number of the book. Thirdly, the bibliographical references have little consistency, and the author's name is sometimes not given, and finally, there are inconsistencies in establishing headings and sub-headings in the classification.

A second attempt was made, probably a quarter of a century later. This time the work was published in 552 pages. However, the catalogue bears no date and no mention of an author. One suggestion is that the author was Abdurrahman Nâcim Efendi, who was inspector of Istanbul libraries between 1861 and 1870 and was responsible for drawing up catalogues for the Ragıp Paşa and Damad Ibrahim Paşa libraries. Curiously enough, only one copy of this printed work has survived to this day [9]. The main improvement in this catalogue was that it provided the location number of the books in the libraries. However, once again the books are listed alphabetically under each subject heading, and for some reason this work included books from only 24 of the Istanbul libraries.

During the reign of Abdülhamid II (1876–1908), under the minister of Education, Münif Paşa, an attempt was made to publish catalogues for all the Istanbul libraries. In a 12-year period starting from 1884, the catalogues of 67 libraries in Istanbul were published in forty volumes. While it was worthwhile having printed catalogues to increase access to these libraries, the catalogues are quite disappointing in their organisation. Apart from providing the location number of the books, the printed catalogue makes no improvement on the previous manuscript catalogues and in respect of the physical description of the works is a good deal inferior to the first independent catalogue, drawn up 370 years before. However, for lack of anything better, they continued to be used in manuscript libraries until card catalogues were introduced in the 1940's.

It is evident that these printed catalogues and the organisation of Istanbul libraries were felt to be inadequate; the Grand Vizier Hüseyin Hilmi Paşa invited Ahmed Zeki Paşa from Egypt to

evaluate and report on the state of the Istanbul libraries. Ahmed Zeki Paşa was known to be a specialist in bibliography and had played a part in organising the Egyptian libraries. In 1909 he submitted a 27-page report in which he noted the many deficiencies in the way the libraries were run [10]. He also remarked on the inadequacy of the existing printed catalogues and the desperate need for a comprehensive union catalogue with proper indexes [11]. Probably in response to this report, Hayri Efendi, the minister of Pious Foundations, and Muhtar Bey, the inspector of the libraries, instructed Ebu'l-Hayr Efendi to begin the work of drawing up a union catalogue in the style of that which had been done for the Egyptian libraries. He began this huge task, and in 1915 he was able to present the first fascicle in printed form to Ministry of Pious Foundations. This catalogue was to be prepared in alphabetical order according to the title of the work, with information on both the work and the author and the location number of all copies in the libraries and discrepancies between copies in terms of title and attribution of authorship. From the one fascicle available, it is apparent that it would have been a very useful and user-friendly work of reference. However, with the departure of Hayri Efendi from the ministry of Pious Foundations, interest in the project probably waned and the outset of the first world war put an end to what would have been a very laudable project.

While the bulk of the books in the Ottoman Empire were in Istanbul, there were however many provinces with a concentration of libraries such as Bursa and Konya. In the 1874 year book for Konya, there is in the form of an appendix, a list of the contents of the 20 libraries in the city. In the 1887 year book for Bursa there is also a list of contents of all the libraries. Both lists are set out very much in the same style that was adopted by Ali Fethi Bey, making them of some limited use.

After this no attempts were made to compile a union catalogue. This was because the traditional libraries was becoming increasingly irrelevant in the face of the modern libraries, which were springing up, and the need for a union catalogue became increasingly less pressing with the passage of time.

In addition, with the abolition of the Ottoman Empire and its replacement by the Turkish Republic, ties with the past were broken and the

Arabic script was replaced with the Latin alphabet. The need for access to the wealth of Islamic Manuscripts was felt to be a matter of relatively little importance as opposed to the quest for Westernisation and modernity.

With the founding of the Republic, we enter the third phase in the history of Turkish library catalogues. But the founding of the Republic was not so much the starting point in a new direction, but rather the culmination of a long process of modernisation which had begun at the end of 18th century .

During the period of reforms, known in Turkish as the Tanzimat, new institutions began to spring up. University colleges and schools were opened, where libraries of printed books, many in foreign languages (mostly French), could be found. However the old foundation manuscript libraries with their classical texts continued to function, but became increasingly the refuge of the conservative elements of society to whom western literatures and *mores* were anathema. The classical library continued to serve society, but only the most traditional members of society; while the modern western institutions dominated over the older institutions. By the beginning of the 20th century, the classical library no longer served the needs of the State and was used only by scholars. Many institutions had fallen into a state of disrepair, and some were closed to the public. The classical library and the classical college system were impervious to change. The cataloguing system used continued to be the same, although there were some attempts to find better forms and systems and to update them.

With the advent of the Republic in 1923, many links with the past were severed. First of all, the traditional colleges were closed. At this point, the classical library ceased to have a *raison d'être*, as most of them had been set up to serve nearby colleges. With the adoption of the Latin alphabet in 1928, it was effectively forbidden to use the old script, and henceforth most school children could not read the contents of the traditional libraries. As the years progressed, the libraries metamorphosed from reference libraries used by ageing scholars consulting sciences which they were no longer allowed to practice, to manuscript collections for the use of historians, theologians and scholars of the classical Ottoman language and literature.

One of the first changes that effected the libraries was their transfer from the control of the Ministry of Pious Foundations to that of the Ministry of Education. With the sweeping reforms taking place throughout the whole educational system it is not surprising that the conservation and cataloguing of antiquarian books was marginalised.

On the other hand, the needs of the modern libraries for printed books had to be addressed, and to this effect courses in librarianship and cataloguing were introduced in the Arts Faculty of Istanbul University. The first teacher was Fethi Ethem Karatay, who having studied librarianship in France, returned to teach modern cataloguing methods. In 1924 three books appeared, the first was a translation of Paul Guyash's book on public libraries by Ahmed Saffet (Halk), while Celal Esad [Arseven] brought out a handbook on cataloguing and classification (Notlar 1924), and Emil Buharioğlu discussed the principles of cataloguing in the introduction of his catalogue of the Library of the Grand National Assembly (Büyük 1924). Further books on cataloguing were to follow, including one by the Ministry of Education itself (Umumi 1939).

In this period, the greatest change was the introduction of the card catalogue, probably on the advice of Celal Esad [Arseven]'s book on cataloguing. The date for this innovation has been given as 1943 or 1944, with the introduction of a card catalogue at the Beyazid state library, but it is clear that at least two other institutions, Istanbul University and the Archaeological Museum Library, had card catalogues before this date.

A uniform system of cataloguing books was introduced to Turkey with the publication of a book of instructions on the alphabetic cataloguing of printed books by the National Library in Ankara in 1957 (Basma 1957). However many libraries were unable to implement the new rules and uniformity was not achieved. By the beginnings of the 70's, attempts at adopting systems to the needs of Turkish libraries had all but ceased and the Anglo-American system of cataloguing was introduced by TUBİTAK, The Turkish Institute of Science and Technology, probably under the influence of American-trained librarians. Adaptations and translations of the Anglo-American guidebook began to appear (Hasan 1987) and have increasing influence on all libraries in Turkey.

As for the collection of manuscripts lying in the classical libraries, little was done to improve their accessibility to scholars in the early years of the Republic. In 1927 a commission was set up by the Ministry of Education to discuss ways of making the libraries easier to use, but it was dissolved after 6 months before anything of consequence could be achieved. Not until 1935 was another commission set up. Consisting of many eminent scholars in theology, literature and history, the commission began the work of overseeing the process of cataloguing the works in the libraries of Istanbul. In 1943 there appeared the first fascicle of eleven fascicles of the Catalogue of Historical and Geographical Manuscripts in the Libraries of Istanbul, a work which was not completed until 1962. Later in 1947, the work of cataloguing the collections of poems was begun, being completed in 1976. Meanwhile, a guide on how to catalogue old printed books – that is to say, books printed in the Arabic script – and manuscripts was issued by the Ministry of Education in 1958 (Yazma 1958). Other government institutions began to take an interest in the manuscript collections under their control and between 1961 and 1969 a catalogue of the manuscripts in the Topkapi Palace Library was completed. Between 1967 and 1972 a catalogue of the manuscripts of the Mevlana Museum in Konya were completed. At the same time several individuals prepared catalogues of various collections. But the most important attempt in cataloguing manuscripts in the Republican period, was the setting up a new office called TUYATOK (Türkiye Yazmaları Toplu Kataloğu under the control of Ministry of Culture in 1978. The aim of this office was to prepare a union catalogue of all the libraries in Turkey. As a result so far several volumes appeared.

At the same time the IRCICA, Research Center for Islamic History, Art and Culture in Istanbul, has taken up the task of cataloguing certain collections, including the Köprülü Library (Ramazan 1986), a catalogue of medical works in Turkish libraries and a catalogue of rare Arabic manuscripts in Turkish libraries has been updated and reissued by Ramazan Şeşen (Muhtarat 1997). A handbook about manuscript libraries in Turkey and publications about manuscripts located in those libraries was recently published by the same center (Nimet 1995).

The latest and most comprehensive work in progress is a computerised catalogue of all manuscripts in Turkish libraries. This data-based catalogue, which is being prepared by the Islamic Research Centre (ISAM), under the aegis of the Turkish Religious Foundation, will include the works in the union catalogue as well as other printed catalogues and the card indexes and other unprinted catalogues of other libraries. So far over 400,000 manuscripts have been placed in the computer and the work of making a uniform format, establishing exact titles and authors will be completed in about five years time. This database should allow scholars to identify the location of all manuscripts of a given work in Turkish libraries at the touch of a button.

Notes

1. See for problems in cataloguing Islamic manuscripts: Ismail E. Erünsal, "Yazma Eserlerin Kataloglanmasında Karşılaşılan Güçlükler I: Eser ve Müellif Adının Tesbiti" in *Hakkı Dursun Yıldız Armağanı*, Ankara 1995, pp. 233–243.
2. See for the catalogues of this period: Ismail E. Erünsal. 1987. "Catalogues and Cataloguing in the Ottoman Libraries", *Libri* 37(4): pp.333–35.
3. This is the list belonging to the Şeyh Vefa library which I have described in: İsmail E. Erünsal, *Türk Kütüphaneleri Tarihi: Kuruluştan Tanzimat'a Kadar Osmanlı Vakıf Kütüphaneleri*, Ankara 1988, p. 29. At the time of writing this work I had to presume that there was a separate list. Since then I have found a reference to the existence of a separate classified list in the form of a book. Unfortunately this catalogue, for now we can refer to it as a catalogue, has not survived. Reference to this catalogue is published in following article: İsmail E. Erünsal, "Şeyh Vefa ve Vakıfları Hakkında Yeni Bir Belge", *İslâm Araştırmaları Dergisi*, sayı 1 (1997), pp. 47–64.
4. For a detailed description of this catalogue see Ismail E. Erünsal's paper "The Oldest Extant Ottoman Library Catalogues", *61st IFLA GENERAL CONFERENCE, BOOKLET 7* (1995), pp. 58–62.
5. For a more detailed description of this catalogue see my articles: "959/1552 Tarihli Defter-i Kütüb", *Erdem* vol. IV, no. 10 (Ankara 1988), pp. 181–193; "The Catalogue of Bayezid II's Palace Library", *İstanbul Üniversitesi, Edebiyat Fakültesi Kütüphanecilik Dergisi*, no. 3 (Istanbul 1992), pp. 55–66.
6. For a survey of the work of cataloguing in this period see: R. Tuba Çavdar, *Tanzimat'tan Cumhuriyete Kadar Osmanlı Kütüphanelerinin Geli-*

- şimi, Basılmamış Doktora Tezi, İstanbul Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü, Kütüphanecilik Bölümü, 1995, pp. 93–100 and Necmettin Sefercioğlu, “Union Catalogs in Turkey in the Nineteenth Century”, in *Ankara Üniversitesi, Dil ve Tarih-Coğrafya Fakültesi Kütüphanecilik Bölümü XXV. Yıl Anı Kitabı (1954–55/1979–1980)*, Ankara 1981 pp. 91–93
7. Ali Fethi Bey provides an introduction in which he gives the classification of subject headings and instructs the reader on how to find a given work. This introduction has been transcribed by Özer Soysal in his habilitation thesis: *Cumhuriyet Öncesi Dönem Türk Kütüphaneciliği (Sosyo-Ekonomik Yapı Üzerine Bir Araştırma)*, Ankara 1973, pp. 114–118.
8. For documents on the subject see Ismail E. Erünsal, *Kütüphanecilikle İlgili Osmanlıca Metinler ve Belgeler I*, İstanbul, Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1983, pp. 382–386, *Kütüphanecilikle İlgili Osmanlıca Metinler ve Belgeler II*, İstanbul, Edebiyat Fakültesi Yayınları, 1990, pp. 371–372. As Tuba Çavdar points out, the two volumes do not contain the whole work; from the above documents we learn that the two volumes were presented as an indication of what the larger finished work would be like. However, some scholars refer to the work as having been completed, see: Tekin Aybaş, *Toplu Kataloglar ve Türkiye Uygulaması*, Ankara 1979, pp. 35–37. For the location of copies of this work see: Ali Birinci, “Abdurrahman Naâcim”, *Müteferrika* no. 8–9 (1996), p. 114.
9. Osman Ergin claims to have the only copy of this work and scholars use a microfilm of Osman Ergin’s copy kept in the Süleymaniye Library.
10. In fact, almost 50 years ago, Ahmed Fâris el-Şidyâk, Lebanese Arab writer, journalist and intellectual, having difficulties in using İstanbul libraries, made the same sort of criticisms. See: Geoffrey Roper’s excellent 1998 article: “Ahmad Fâris al-

Shidyâq and the Libraries of Europe and the Ottoman Empire”, *Libraries & Culture* 33 (3, Summer): 233–48.

11. For the text of this report see: Ismail E. Erünsal, *Kütüphanecilikle İlgili Osmanlıca Metinler ve Belgeler*, İstanbul 1982, pp. 323–352.

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