

## Bibliothèque nationale de France : Manuscripts catalogue "Archives et manuscrits" Marie-Geneviève Guesdon – BNF, Arabic manuscripts

"BNF Archives et manuscrits" is available on-line at the address [www.bnf.fr](http://www.bnf.fr), choosing "Archives et manuscrits", or directly at "<http://archivesetmanuscrits.bnf.fr>". At the first address, images of the printed catalogues are also available, if you choose "Accès aux catalogues numérisés". "Archives et manuscrits" contains descriptions of very different types of documents : archives, like writers papers and correspondence, documents about theatric representations available in the Department of Performing Arts, Eastern and Western medieval manuscripts in various languages and scripts. The alphabets in use in this catalogue at the moment are the Latin, Greek, Japanese, Hebrew and Arab ones, and some descriptions contain Chinese script. In the future, all documents of the Department of manuscripts will be included.

Arabic manuscripts 7267 to 7291, which entered in the library after 2000, and 6754 to 6950, entered after E. Blochet's publication<sup>1</sup>, whose printed description is not yet published, are described in BNF Archives and manuscripts, with a full description. The catalogue contains also the result of digitization of G. Vajda's Index, published in 1953<sup>2</sup>. Other descriptions of Oriental manuscripts available are for Hebrew, for Pelliot fund, Chinese documents whose paper catalogue has been digitized, some Sanscrit and some Japanese documents, and the small fund of four African manuscripts.

The software in use for consultation and research is named Pleade (available at <http://www.pleade.org/>).

BNF Archives and manuscripts offer two possibilities for consultation and research:

- By collection: this way is recommended for exploring archives funds
  - With the research form: "free text", call-number, name, title, date, geographic name, and subject.
- Indexes are available.

Research is possible using all Unicode characters. In the Arabic new printed catalogue, titles and names are entered in Arabic and Latin characters, using ISO 233-2:1993 *Information and documentation – Transliteration of Arabic characters into Latin characters -- Part 2: Arabic language -- Simplified transliteration* with some modifications: " aġ ", for 'tā marbūta', not available in current Arial Unicode font, is not in use. Arabic characters are not in use in Vajda's index. Its transliteration is near of ISO, and has been transformed after OCR for a better compatibility with ISO. We have removed the assimilation of solar letters: for example, *ar-risāla* has been converted to *al-risāla*. Transliteration raises the problem of keyboards available to users. In BN Opale +, a research with or without diacritic signs gives the same result. This would be a solution for BNF archives and manuscripts. Until now, we have to use the indexes, common for all languages and scripts.

Descriptions are complete, short, or in different level which result of digitization in their various forms. Complete descriptions of Arabic manuscripts contain :

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<sup>1</sup> E. Blochet, *Catalogue des manuscrits arabes des nouvelles acquisitions (1884-1924)*. Paris, 1925.

<sup>2</sup> G. Vajda, *Index général des manuscrits arabes musulmans de la Bibliothèque nationale de Paris*. Paris, 1953.

- Bibliographic information: title and authorship, work object of the commentary if necessary. A link with the authority file of the printed book catalogue BN Opale + is done for authors if available: the rejected forms of the names of persons in BN Opale + give an access to Archives et manuscrits.

- Description of content: commentary on authorship and authenticity, alternative titles if necessary, completeness of the work, incipit and explicit, bibliography (reference works, edition, translation, mentions of the manuscript), date, place and circumstances of copy (colophon), transmission (sama's). Names of persons, geographic names, titles (except in bibliography) are indexed. Titles and names of persons are indexed in Latin and Arabic characters.

- Material description: script, decoration or illustration, marginalia, support (type of paper, watermark), number of folios, dimensions, number of lines per page, codicological description, description of binding.

- History of the manuscript: ancient owners (indexed), waqfs, provenance

- Subject: we decided to index the manuscripts following G. Vajda's list of subjects<sup>3</sup>, facilitating researches in the totality of the Arabic fund, recently described or not. Some precisions, like for example *Mantiq* or *Fiqh mālikī* may be added in new descriptions, but they have to be attached to this classification.

Digitization of Vajda's Index gives access to titles, names of authors, and subjects, of the Arabic Islamic (except Qur'an and Christian works) manuscripts in the library in 1950. Research by subjects was not available in the printed book and is a new possibility offered by digitization.

Digitization of all printed catalogues of Arabic manuscripts will be included in Archives et Manuscrits. A first group is underway. It comprises W. M. G. de Slane (1895), E. Blochet (1925), G. Troupeau (1974), G. Vajda, Y. Sauvan, M.-G. Guesdon (1978-1995) catalogues<sup>4</sup>. A second group will comprise the catalogue of the Library of Segou and F. Deroche's catalogue of Corans<sup>5</sup>. This one is more complex with the necessity of links from descriptions to images and parts of the paleographic study for the first volume, bindings typology for the second one.

The catalogue is encoded with EAD (Encodes Archival Description) in XML files. This allows entering an unbroken text, tagged in order to isolate parts in "elements", following the status of their content,

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<sup>3</sup> Al-Adab al-naṭrī, Al-Adab al-šīrī, Al-Aḥḡār (wa-al-ḡawāhir wa-al-ḡawāṣṣ), Al-ʿArūd, Al-Bāh, Al-Bayān, Al-Bayṭara wa-al-ḡayawān, Duʿāʾ, Al-Fahāris, Al-Falsafa, Al-Fiqh, Al-Firāsa, Al-Funūn al-ḡarbiyya, Al-ḡurāfiyā wa-al-buldān wa-al-ʿaḡāʾib, Al-Ḥadīṭ, Al-Hayʾa wa-al-tanḡīm, Al-Ḥikāyāt wa-al-siyar, Al-Ḥaṭṭ, Al-Ḥuṭab, Al-Inšāʾ, Al-Kīmiyā wa-al-ṭabīʿa, Al-Luḡa, Al-Maʿārif al-mutaʿaddida, Al-Mūsīqī, Al-Nabāt wa-al-filāḡa, Al-Qirāʾāt wa-al-taḡwīd, Al-Riyāḡiyyāt, Al-Rūḡāniyyāt, Al-Ṣarf wa-al-naḡw, Al-Siyāsa, Al-Tafsīr, Al-Tarbiya wa-al-taʿlīm, Al-Taʿrīḡ, Al-Taṣawwuf, Al-Tawḡīd wa-ʿilm al-Kalām, Al-Ṭibb, and their French translations.

<sup>4</sup> W.M. G. de Slane, *Catalogue des Manuscrits arabes*. Paris, 1883-1895 ; G. Troupeau, *Catalogue des Manuscrits arabes*. 1ère partie. *Manuscrits chrétiens*. Paris, 1972-1974 ; G. Vajda, Y. Sauvan, *Catalogue des Manuscrits arabes*. 2ème partie. *Manuscrits musulmans*. n<sup>OS</sup> 590-1464. Paris, 1978-1985 ; Y. Sauvan, M.-G. Balty-Guesdon, tome 5 : n<sup>OS</sup> 1465-1685. Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> N. Ghali, S.M. Mahibou, L. Brenner, *Inventaire de la bibliothèque umarienne de Ségou*. Paris, 1985 ; F. Deroche, *Catalogue des Manuscrits arabes*. Deuxième partie. *Manuscrits musulmans*. Tome 1 : *Les Manuscrits du Coran*. 1 : *Aux Origines de la calligraphie islamique*,. 2 *Du Maghreb à l'Insulinde*. Paris, 1983-1985

and not their displaying. The tags are useful for research, constitution of indexes, and formatting various displays. EAD is a Document Type Description, containing a tag library, and rules of association between elements, elaborated in 1993 by Society of American Archivists who maintains it. Other DTD for manuscripts are not maintained (for example Master, elaborated for manuscripts and included now in TEI). Maintenance gives a possibility for future exchanges. As EAD, searching compatibility with ISAD-G has been elaborated for archives at first and for manuscripts in a second time, we had to elaborate a local guide of application. We decided to create an EAD file for each manuscript, or small significant gathering. The only problem for manuscripts description we met with EAD was the inexistence of an "Incipit" specific element. We asked a creation, and for the moment, we consider the incipit as a quote, and repeat this quote in a Controlled Access Heading element for indexation.

EAD description of an Arabic manuscript is composed by a group of elements containing "Descriptive Identification": number, title and author, date, physical description, language, a "Scope of Content", "Custodial History", "Acquisition Information" and "Controlled Access Headings" elements (for subject, indexation of incipits and names in Arabic characters which are not in the text of description). A *māgmû'* is described with components : the common information (at least common title, or 'magmū' mention, number of pages, binding, acquisition information) is described at first, and each part, with indication of folios, is described in a Component element, which contains its own 'Descriptive Identification', 'Scope and Content', "Custodial history" and "Controlled access Headings".

The library had to elaborate a system (PiXML) for data management, allowing different persons to work in the same time, managing habilitations and validation of descriptions, giving access to an XML editor.

The online catalogue implies modification in the traditions of cataloguing. We can now publish our descriptions one by one, and we do not have to wait completion of a volume. We can update them without waiting for a new publication. The unbroken tagged text means freedom for the redactor. But the fact that the catalogue of Arabic manuscripts is a part of the catalogue of all manuscripts of the library introduces a kind of standardization: descriptions display data in the same order, screen display is the same, indexes are common. This makes mandatory the use of a standard transliteration. Also this implies some simplifications. For example, EAD gives the possibility to encode hegira dates, but we do not, because the research form has to be simple and not specific to Islamic documents. We mention them in the text but only Gregorian dates are available for a 'date' research. A link with authority files of BN Opale, the catalogue of printed books, will permit a research with any rejected form available to get a result in "Archives et Manuscrits": this implies also that cataloguers of manuscripts are trained for BN Opale in MARC format.

In the future, the EAD descriptions of manuscripts will be available not only in Archives et manuscrits, but also in the Catalogue Collectif de France ([www.ccf.fr/bnf.fr](http://www.ccf.fr/bnf.fr)), containing manuscripts descriptions of French Public Libraries in *CGM* (General Catalogue of Manuscripts, digitization of a catalogue which publication began in 1909) and *Calames*, a catalogue of manuscripts in University libraries ([www.calames.abes.fr](http://www.calames.abes.fr))

The second version of "Archives et manuscrits" is now on-line since the end of July 2008. It seems to meet some technical problems that cannot be solved in the summer period. After the end of September 2008, let us know your criticisms and suggestions at [archivesetmanuscrits@bnf.fr](mailto:archivesetmanuscrits@bnf.fr).