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A Practical Research Guide to Islamic Manuscript Libraries in Regional India

石田友梨\*  
Yuri ISHIDA

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### Introduction

This paper provides information on Islamic manuscript libraries in regional India based on field research conducted by the author in March and August 2015.<sup>1</sup> As pointed out by Omar Khalidi, many Islamic manuscripts are in India's possession, as well as in the Middle East and Europe (Khalidi, 2002–2003 : 1). However, from the author's own experience, Islamic-studies scholars whose research target is not India do not visit the country. To support beginner research on India, this paper provides practical information in the tone of a travel guide book, and explains how to visit rural city libraries situated far from New Delhi, the Indian capital, and how to access the manuscripts in them. In addition to the research timeframe, the author visited several Indian libraries in 2011;<sup>2</sup> these two visit periods revealed that four years is sufficient time for changes to the condition of the libraries (for example, publishing and digitization of manuscripts and catalogues are currently in progress). For these reasons, the information provided in this paper will be useful for more established researchers on India as well. Lists of manuscript libraries in India, and their catalogues, have already been provided by Khan (1992) and Khalidi (2002–2003; 2011). Following these publications, this guide will update the latest information on seven libraries in five local cities : Aligarh, Hyderabad, Lucknow, Patna, and Rampur.

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\* 早稲田大学アジア太平洋研究センター Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies, Waseda University

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## Manuscript Catalogues

Some Indian libraries referred to in this paper offer their own manuscript catalogues; although it is difficult to compile every catalogue, the promotion of digitization and the online publication of catalogues has fortunately become a contemporary trend worldwide. Sites that compile online manuscript catalogues can be found via a cursory Internet search (Kopf, 2015; Truschke, 2015). In addition, the Government of India provides a database of manuscripts at the National Mission for Manuscripts (NMM, n.d.) site. However, this database does not reflect all the catalogue data of Indian libraries, and often includes incorrect descriptions. Uncertain research results arising from a lack of comprehensiveness are to be found as well because of disunity in the transcription procedure from Arabic characters to the Roman alphabet. In light of the conditions outlined above, visiting India and flipping through physical catalogues continues to be a necessity for manuscript researchers.

## Documents

For researchers from many nationalities, the journey to India starts from visa acquisition. In addition to general preparation for travel, the following documents must be obtained prior to departure: <sup>3</sup>

**Document I** : A certificate from the dean or someone in a similar position from the academic institution you are affiliated with.

**Document II** : A letter of introduction from the library (or similar) of the academic institution you are affiliated with.

**Document III** : Passport as a means of identification.

**Document IV** : Signed holographic application to use the library.

In many cases, you will be required to submit copies of these documents instead of originals. Thus, extra copies will make your journey easier. In the following section, which provides a guide to each library, submission of documents refers to both presenting the original documents and submitting copies as well, although this is not explicitly mentioned. Furthermore, a pen and an A4-sized notepad are essential items to take to the listed libraries, because you will occasionally be asked to submit a holographic application when you need a copy of manuscript. An e-mailed appointment request to visit each library is not necessary, because the libraries rarely reply to such messages.

## Cities and Libraries

### Aligarh

A train can be taken to Aligarh from main stations such as New Delhi.<sup>4</sup> The support

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<sup>3</sup> Only one of Document I or II is needed as evidence of your researcher position.

available from Aligarh Muslim University (AMU) is useful, as the staff there can book a room for you in one of the AMU guesthouses, since it is difficult to find a hotel room for foreigners in Aligarh. From Aligarh Junction Railway Station, cycle rickshaws are available, but it is better to request transfer by car from the station to the AMU campus, which is only 10 minutes away.

**1. Maulana Azad Library, AMU** (<http://www.amu.ac.in/amulib.jsp?did=10066>)

**Address** : AMU Road, AMU Campus, Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh, 202 002

**Opening hours** : 8 : 00–18 : 30 Mon–Sat; closed for lunch 13 : 30–14 : 30

**Access** : Approximately 15 minutes and 20 INR by cycle rickshaw from the Guesthouse 1.<sup>5</sup> Ask the rickshaw driver to take you to “the library, University Road.” Go south in the direction of the station along the University Road. The library is on the right.

**Application** : The manuscript reference room is on the right side of the aisle on the upper level. Take an application form in the room, and submit it with Documents I, II, III, and IV to the office, which is located in the back room on the left on the ground floor.

**Manuscripts** : Closed-stack system. Complete a request form with the title, author, name of collection, and call number of the manuscript you require. Catalogues are available on the above website, and online search facilities are also being implemented (AMU, 2014) . Online search options are also available using the NMM database; however, at present, searching using card catalogues is the most exhaustive and conclusive method. Manuscripts of the University Collection can be consulted immediately, but it takes about one week to obtain permission regarding manuscripts of other collections, such as the Habib Ganj Collection. Thus, it is better to seek formal permission prior to your visit to the library. Contact information is also available on the website.

**Copy** : The Staff will provide digital copies on a CD for 1 USD (pay 65 INR) per page with the signed holographic application to copy the manuscript.<sup>6</sup>

## Hyderabad

Approximately 40 minutes and 850 INR by metered taxi from the Hyderabad Airport to Nampally (Hyderabad Deccan) Railway Station, in the city center. Regular buses to the city

<sup>4</sup> Train schedules are available at the Indian Railways website ([http://www.indianrail.gov.in/between\\_Imp\\_Stations.html](http://www.indianrail.gov.in/between_Imp_Stations.html)). The procedure for foreigners to reserve a train seat from abroad often changes, so it is recommended to check the current process using relevant travel sites. However, one of the simplest and most secure methods in which to reserve a seat is via the Foreign Tourist Reservation Office in major stations and cities after arriving in India. Every long-distance train has some priority seating for foreign tourists.

<sup>5</sup> The fees referred to in this paper are correct as of either March or August 2015. Please note that rickshaw charges are decided based on negotiation, which the author did not utilize. The accommodation expense for two nights was 1,600 INR with five meals.

<sup>6</sup> Create a document stating your name and affiliation, the reason for requesting the copy, and provide the title, author name, and pages of the manuscript required. Address this to the Director. You can create this on site, but leave enough blank space at the bottom (at least one third of the page) for signatures and stamps of the persons in charge.

area are also available for only 200–250 INR. Exit the arrival gate, and go down to the ground floor, turn to the right, and you will find the bus stop at the end of the walkway.

**2. Andhra Pradesh State<sup>7</sup> Government Oriental Manuscripts Library and Research Institute**  
(<http://manuscriptslibrary.ap.nic.in/>)

**Address :** Behind Police Station, Osmania University Campus, Hyderabad, Telangana, 500 007

**Opening hours :** 10 : 30–16 : 30 Mon–Sat; closed every second Saturday of the month

**Access :** Approximately 30 minutes and 150 INR by auto rickshaw from Nampally Station. Ask the rickshaw driver to take you to “Osmania University’s police station.” The library building is behind the police station and faces Adikmet Main Road.

**Application :** After checking in with the security guard at the entrance, go upstairs. The manuscript reference room is on the right side at the end of the aisle. Submit Documents I, II, and III, and write your name in the visitors’ book.

**Manuscripts :** Closed-stack system. This library has manuscripts of the Asafiya Collection, and the collection’s catalogues (al-Kanturi, 1942) are available in the manuscript reference room. However, a “Fann Number” and a “Kitāb Number,” as listed in the four volumes of handwritten catalogues, are mandatory to obtain manuscript access. Thus, the best approach is to check the handwritten catalogues. These four catalogues are available on the Internet Archive website (OMLRI, n.d.) , and the reference room staff will provide a copy of the catalogues on a CD for 100 INR.

**Copy :** The first and last four folios are free for each manuscript. The staff will provide digital copies of up to 40% of each work on a CD with the signed holographic application to copy the manuscript and upon payment of the additional charge. This will take 10 days, and the payment amount depends on the staff : about 50 pages of two works cost the author 200 INR in August 2015.

**3. Osmania University Library** (<http://www.osmania.ac.in/oulwebpage/About%20Library.htm>)

**Address :** University Library, Osmania University Campus, Hyderabad, Telangana, 500 007

**Opening hours :**<sup>8</sup> 9 : 00–21 : 00 Mon–Sat, but 10 : 00–16 : 30 every Sunday, the second Saturday of the month, and non-mandatory-closing national holidays

**Access :** Approximately 30 minutes and 150 INR by auto rickshaw from Nampally Station. Ask the rickshaw driver to take you to “Osmania University’s library.” Go straight from the main gate of the University, and follow the small notice on the left of the path to the steps towards the library. If you want to ride the rickshaw right up to the entrance of the library, pass by the notice and turn left at the fountain of the Geography Department; there is a narrow road there that ascends the library’s hill.

<sup>7</sup> The district of the library has belonged to the new state of Telangana since 2014, where it previously belonged to the state of Andhra Pradesh. The jurisdiction of the library has not been changed on the website.

<sup>8</sup> Manuscripts are not staffed (and are therefore not accessible) on Sundays. Opening hours of the Digital Manuscript Reference Room is 9 : 15–16 : 15 (closed for lunch between 13 : 00–14 : 00).

**Application** : Go to the staff desk and the office on the left side of the entrance, and submit Documents I, II, and IV.

**Admission cost** : 100 INR for a day, 400 INR for a week

**Manuscripts** : In the Acquisition Section, located on the right-hand side of the aisle on the left, and rearmost from the entrance, two handwritten catalogues, one for Arabic manuscripts and the other for Persian manuscripts, are available. Note the “Number” and go upstairs via the steps at the left of the entrance. Digitized manuscripts are available through the PC in the Server Room in the Competitive Examinations Reference Library, also on the left side. Manuscripts in Osmania University have been digitized to JPG files owing to contributions from Juma al-Majid Center in Dubai, UAE. The original manuscripts are unavailable; in addition, severely damaged manuscripts have not been digitized, and it is not possible to refer to them if you find them in the handwritten catalogues. Furthermore, the JPG files have not been adapted for searching, so it is difficult to find the file you are looking for. However, if you enter the keyword “DSC00002” and search the entire Arabic or Persian manuscripts folder, it will generate a list that includes the title, the author, and the number of almost all the manuscripts. You can then check the listed items one by one.

**Copy** : The staff will provide digital copies of up to 30% of each work on a CD with the signed holographic application to copy the manuscript and upon payment of an additional charge. The payment amount depends on the staff : about 750 pages of two works cost 200 INR, and about 1,500 pages of 11 works cost 600 INR in August 2015.

#### 4. Salar Jung Museum Library ([http : //salarjungmuseum.in/html/library2.html](http://salarjungmuseum.in/html/library2.html))

**Address** : Salar Jung Road, Darul Shifa, Hyderabad, Telangana, 500 002

**Opening hours** : 10 : 00–17 : 00; closed on Fridays

**Access** : Approximately 30 minutes and 100 INR by auto rickshaw from Nampally Station. Ask the rickshaw driver to take you to “Salar Jung Museum.” Get off at the entrance gate of the museum facing the Musi River.

**Application** : Write your name in the visitors’ book and submit Documents I, II, and III to the staff at the guard station on the right side of the gate. The staff will take your photo and give you a pass. You can then enter the staff gate on the right side of the front building. After submitting to baggage inspection, go upstairs, and the manuscript reference room is the first one on the right.

**Manuscripts** : Closed-stack system. Ask a member of the staff for the manuscript you need by the subject and the call number, and its “Acc. No.” if applicable. This information can be obtained from the printed catalogues available in the manuscript reference room. As of March 2015, 12 volumes of Persian catalogues (Ashraf, 1965–) and 8 volumes of Arabic catalogues (Nizām al-Dīn & Ashraf, 1957–) have been published. There are also two volumes of Urdu catalogues. A “Cat. No.,” which shows the page for the manuscript in these catalogues, is searchable using other catalogues in the room by the language, subject, title, and author of the manuscript.

**Copy** : Taking photos of up to one third of manuscripts using a digital camera is permitted with a signed holographic application to copy the manuscript at a cost of 2.5 INR per page.

### Lucknow

Approximately 30 minutes and 300 INR by taxi from Lucknow Airport to Mahatma Gandhi Marg, the main street in the Hazratganj city center.

#### 5. Nadwa al-‘Ulamā’ Library (<http://nadwatululama.org/english/lib.php>)

**Address** : Behind Lucknow University, Tagore Marg, Hasanganj, Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh, 226 007

**Opening hours** : 8 : 00–13 : 00; closed on Fridays

**Access** : Approximately 30 minutes and 50 INR by cycle rickshaw from the Hazratganj region. Ask the rickshaw driver to take you to “Dār al-‘Ulūm Nadwa al-‘Ulamā’” or “Lucknow University.”

**Application** : Write your name in the visitors’ book at the guard station on the left side of the gate. Go straight on the right-hand path and turn left to follow the path; you will see a sign to the library on the right. Go upstairs and deposit your bag at the entrance, write your name in the visitors’ book again, and submit Documents I, II, and III to the staff.

**Manuscripts** : Closed-stack system. Ask a staff member for the manuscript you need by the subject and the call number. The library has published two volumes of catalogues (MTZFH et al., 1986a; 1986b) , but some handwritten corrections on the catalogues are available in the reference room.<sup>9</sup> Thus, you have to check the subject and the number again here.

**Copy** : Taking photos of manuscripts using a digital camera is permitted at a cost of 10 INR per page.

### Patna

Approximately 20 minutes and 400 INR by taxi from Patna Airport to Patna Station.

#### 6. Khuda Bakhsh Oriental Public Library (<http://kblibrary.bih.nic.in/>)

**Address** : Ashok Rajpath, Patna, Bihar, 800 004

**Opening hours** : 9 : 30–17 : 00; closed on Fridays

**Access** : Approximately 30 minutes and 50 INR by cycle rickshaw from Patna Station. Go north towards Gandhi Maidan and turn right to Ashok Rajpath. An entrance gate with a small notice for the library can be found on the left side. The pink-colored building on the left is the library.

**Application** : Deposit your bag, receive a baggage tag, and write your name in the visitors’ book at the library entrance. Submit Documents I, II, and III to the staff, and complete the

<sup>9</sup> The previous call numbers of some manuscripts in the library are searchable using the NMM database. For example, one of manuscripts of *Ḥama’āt* of Shāh Walī Allāh is “298/251” according to NMM, but the actual call number is “298, radīf 251” in the catalogue and has been corrected to “298, majāmi’ 187” by hand.

library's application form.

**Manuscripts** : Closed-stack system. Ask a staff member for the manuscript you need by the "HL Number." The reference room has card catalogues and 43 volumes of printed catalogues (Abdul Muqtadir et al., 1908–2010) , a list of which is available within the "Manuscript Catalogues" menu on the above website; you can also manually search by subject and title with the indices contained within the actual catalogues. Furthermore, in order to access manuscripts in the early catalogues, the HL number must be identified from within the index,<sup>10</sup> and variants of the manuscript are included under different subjects.

**Copy** : The staff will provide digital copies of up to 40% of each book on a CD with the signed holographic application to copy the manuscript and the library's original copy application form, at a cost of 5 USD (pay 320 INR) per page and an additional 20 INR to cover the cost of the CD.

### Rampur

Rampur can be accessed via rail from the main stations. There are a few hotels for foreigners in Rampur. Hotel Delite is approximately 10 minutes and 20 INR by auto rickshaw from Rampur Railway Station, and enables easy access to Raza Library.

### 7. Rampur Raza Library (<http://razalibrary.gov.in/Razalibnew/index.html>)

**Address** : Hamid Manzil Qila, Rampur Swar Bazpur Marg, Rampur, Uttar Pradesh, 244 901

**Opening hours** : 10 : 00–17 : 00; closed Fridays (closed for lunch around 13 : 00–14 : 00)

**Access** : Approximately 20 minutes and 50 INR from the Rampur Railway Station and 10 minutes and 20 INR from the Hotel Delite by auto rickshaw. Ask the rickshaw driver to take you to "Raza Library."

**Application** : Deposit your bag, and receive a baggage tag. The manuscript reference room is on the left side in the middle of the gallery that connects to the reading room and exhibit hall. Submit Documents I, II, and III to the staff.

**Manuscripts** : Closed-stack system. Ask a member of staff by the "Accn. No." of any Arabic manuscript required, and the "Book Number (*Shumārah-i kitāb*)" of any Persian manuscript; these are available from the printed catalogues in the reference room. Three volumes of Persian catalogues (Siddiqi, 1996–2000) are available from the Internet Archive website, and the book numbers are searchable within the NMM database. As of 2015, volumes 7 and 8 of the Arabic catalogues ('Arshī, 1963–) have been published, and the previous six volumes are available on the above website. The Rampur Publication Division located to the right of the library offers a 30% discount for students and scholars and a 40% discount for publishers on the library's publications, including these catalogues, and orders for these can be placed online.

**Copy** : Taking photos of manuscripts using a digital camera is permitted free of charge for the first two pages of each work; photos of further pages are charged at 20 INR per page.

<sup>10</sup> The NMM database shows the HL numbers of several manuscripts in the library, but these are actually the catalogue numbers.

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