



The Khalidiyah Library

*Dr. Nazmi al-Jubeh has just completed the first catalogue of the manuscript collection in the Khalidiyah Library. **The Catalogue of the Khalidiyah Library of Jerusalem** is being published by Il Furqan Press (1998 forthcoming) in four volumes. Martina Rieker spoke with Dr. al-Jubeh in Jerusalem on August 28, 1998.*

Located on Bab al Silsila Road near *al-Haram al-Sharif*, the Khalidiyah Library is housed in the oldest Mameluke structure in the Old City, originally a mausoleum for two Khawarizmis—prebends that reinforced the region against Mongol aggression in the mid-thirteenth century. The Khalidiyah Library is the largest and one of the most important Islamic family libraries in the world today. The family of jurists, writers, and copyists first began to assemble a private collection under the auspices of Sanallah Khalidi, the founder of the first family *waqf*, approximately 230 years (1,200 *hijra*) ago. The idea of

opening the library to the public stems from the 1880s when Rajab al-Khalidi persuaded his mother to endow the collection. The Khalidiyah Library was officially opened in 1901. Although the pre-1948 collection was never formally catalogued, it is believed to have contained around 2,000 manuscripts, a collection of printed books (dating mainly from the end of the nineteenth century), and the Khalidi family papers.

In 1948 the library collapsed due to numerous factors. The *nakba* drove family members into exile. Even before this, the library was struggling financially; throughout the 1940s, income from the *waqf* could no longer cover the running costs. Between 1948 and the late 1970s the collection decayed, until the grandson of Rajab al-Khalidi, Walid al-Khalidi, was able to raise money to begin to restore the family library and the building.

Today the library contains three collections. It has about 6,000 books, mostly out-of-print publications from the nineteenth century. Then there are the papers of the Khalidi family. Yet unclassified, the papers consist, among other things, of secular and religious decrees announcing professional appointments of members of this prominent Jerusalem family. Thirdly, the library contains 1,300 manuscripts (about half of its pre-1948 collection), which are the subject of Dr. al-Jubeh's catalogue. Out of the 1,300 manuscripts, three hundred are considered to be rare. About one third of the total number are currently in need of restoration. The manuscripts—the majority in Arabic, but a few in Persian and

Turkish—span the Mameluke (1260-1516) and Ottoman (1516-1917) periods. The oldest one is just over 1,000 years old, the youngest barely 100. The bulk of them are theological in nature. Besides *Qur'ans* and *hadith* collections (sayings of the Prophet), the Khalidiyah Library manuscripts give special emphasis to inheritance law, *fara'id*, and to works in praise of visits to the Holy Land. Other categories are logic and philosophy, Arab literature and linguistics, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, history, and geography.

The Khalidiyah Library has just completed the restoration of a building across from the historical library. Conceived of as a research center, the new building contains the printed book collection and the manuscripts currently available on microfilm. The research center plans to open its doors to the public sometime in early 1999.