

Centre for West Asian Studies
JAMIA MILLIA ISLAMIA
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Organizing a International seminar on October 6-8,2009 on

**“SOURCE MATERIALS IN INDIAN ARCHIVES AND LIBRARIES
FOR THE STUDY OF ARAB HISTORY”**

Concept Paper

When the Scholars of Arab History think of manuscripts in English/Arabic and other related language, they almost invariably turn to the great libraries in West Asia and Europe, forgetting the facts that Indian libraries have nearly **one hundred thousand Arabic manuscripts**. This number is in addition to what may be available as undocumented private collections. As regards to the archives, the National Archives of India, New Delhi and Maharastra State Archives, Bombay, are the two main important sources of the historical materials on modern West Asian history. Historically speaking, the earliest contact of East India Company with the Arabian Gulf in 1616 with a task to finding new markets for trade in Arabia. Within few years company established their factories at Shiraz and Isfahan in 1617 and Bandar Abbas in 1623. Soon the connections established with Turkish Arabia and factory was found in Basra under the administrative control of Bombay presidency. From the last eighteenth century onwards the factories were replaced by a complicated network of Residencies and Agencies whose primary functions were no longer economic but almost entirely political with the chief aim of protection of sea overland route to India and to check any interference from other European powers. Arabia/Gulf became important for Britain mainly to protect India, a jewel in the British Crown.

Indian Libraries have full of manuscript on Arab History. According to an estimate in 2003, India possesses nearly one hundred thousand manuscripts in Arabic script spread over a number of libraries in various parts of the country. This number is in addition to what may be available in the form of undocumented private collections. The Indian collections are renowned for the importance of many individual items, from some of the finest calligraphic and illustrated manuscripts of the Quran to autograph and other high-quality copies of major legal, literary, scientific, and historical works. Manuscripts produced in India but taken away illegally to Europe is another category altogether.

The main objective of this conference is to find out the entire materials on Arab history spread all over the country's Archives and Libraries on Arab History in all languages- English, Arabic, Persian, Urdu and other regional languages. It is hoped that conference will provide an opportunity to unravel the unexplored and hidden materials concerning Arab History. It is also hoped that the proceedings of the conference would be published which would act as reference book.

Following are the tentative themes of the conference:

1. Detailed Survey of the English, Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Turkish Manuscripts and documents of the National Archives of India and Moharastra State Archives- Bombay and other Archives of India on Arab History.
2. Countrywise survey (Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Oman, Bahrain, Kuwait, UAE, Yemen, Egypt, Palestine and Al-Quds Iraq etc)
3. Various Reports and Publications by the Foreign departments on Arab History.
4. Traveler's accounts like G.F.Sadleir's, Major-General Sir Henry Rawlinson missions to Arabia and many others.
5. Wahabism in Arabia.
6. Indian writing on Wahabism (In any languages –English, Arabic, Urdu, Persian, Turkish or any south Indian languages)
7. Various collection of Treaties on Arab Gulf History.
8. Haj Pilgrimages Arabia.
9. Survey of the books and Journals in English, Arabic, Persian and Urdu in the Indian Libraries on Arab History.
10. Survey of the Khuda Baksh Library, Salar Jang Museum and Library,, Reza Library and many others manuscripts in English, Arabic, Persian, Urdu and Turkish on Arab History.
11. Publication of the Dar al-Musannifin on the Arab History.
12. Manuscripts and publications of the National Library of Calcutta.
13. Miscellaneous account of the Arab History
14. All private collections on the Arab World
15. Arabic manuscripts in Indian Libraries, Private libraries, Khankhas, Mosques, Dargahs and other places

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