

ON THE BERTOLD SPULER COLLECTION FOUND IN THE LIBRARY OF ISTAC

*Ernest Wolf-Gazo**

The library of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization, or ISTAC as it is more commonly referred to, is a multilingual library with a current holding of over 150,000 volumes. These are rare works including encyclopaedias of religions, cultures and sciences; dictionaries of Islamic Oriental and Occidental languages; bibliographies of various disciplines; indexes of different sciences; works of major thinkers in many disciplines in the human and natural sciences, religion, metaphysics, theology, law, poetry, art, architecture, fine arts, science and technology; catalogues of rare collections of Arabic, Turkish, Persian, Malay, Urdu, and other Muslim manuscripts, and many more. Its collection of rare Islamic manuscripts exceeds 2,000, and is in various Islamic languages, excluding the 3,500 manuscripts acquired in microform. Also of note is the fact that, since 1996, ISTAC has been actively involved in the duplication of all

* The first three paragraphs of this paper are adapted from the writings of ISTAC's acting deputy director Professor Dr. Wan Mohd. Nor Wan Daud, "The ISTAC Experiment: A Brief Outline of What ISTAC is All About", paper presented in Cape Town, and from the same author's book entitled *The Beacon on the Crest of a Hill—A Brief History and Philosophy of the International Institute of Islamic Thought and Civilization* (Kuala Lumpur: ISTAC, 1991). Professor Gazo's actual paper begins with the section entitled "The Spuler Collection". Professor Gazo was ^{off} Visiting Professor for one semester at ISTAC in 1995, and spent a great deal of time in the stacks of ISTAC's library going through especially, the books in the Spuler Collection there, which he found fascinating. This brief paper of his (written during one of his later visits to the institute) is the result of his fruitful perusals of the Collection, and his effort to make known the gems contained therein. [Editor's note]

the 10,000 manuscripts and the thousands of rare documents and records of the historic 16th century Gazi Husrev Beg Library of Sarajevo. This library was bombed several times during the recent Bosnian war and is of great importance in housing records of the history of Islam in Bosnia and the Balkans, especially so in light of the fact that all other comparable libraries in Bosnia have been destroyed by the Serbs and Croats, most notably the Oriental Museum housed in Vijećnica in Sarajevo, its 2,000 manuscripts destroyed by the Croats in the early days of the war in Bosnia. The Gazi Husrev Beg Library in Sarajevo is the only library in Bosnia whose collection has been saved, and this is due in part to the efforts of ISTACs founder and director Professor Dr. Syed Muhammad Naquib al-Attas in signing an agreement to this effect during the war with the Bosnian authorities concerned, to the effect that ISTAC will see to the duplication in microform of all the library's manuscripts (this work was in fact begun during wartime), with the duplicates to be housed in ISTACs library in Kuala Lumpur.

ISTACs unique library therefore stands in a class of its own in the region, reflecting the cultural, religious, intellectual and artistic traditions of both the Islamic and the Western civilizations. The library consists not only of materials on all aspects of Islamic thought and civilization but also of other religions and civilizations that Islam has influenced and vice versa. Thus the major works on the Greek, Roman, mediæval, and modern Western civilizations have been and are yet to be acquired. And since the Malay world is at the intersection of India and the Far East including China, Japan, and Korea, with which it has historical and contemporary contacts, ISTACs library has and will continue to obtain materials on important aspects of the thought and history of these civilizations as well. For example, Professor al-Attas recently acquired a unique collection on sinology, which will further enhance ISTACs sources and understanding of the Chinese civilization, thought, and culture.

As a token of respect for their scholarship and contribution to the advancement of knowledge, ISTACs library has also acquired the valuable collections of important scholars of Islamic