

## KİTABXANAŞÜNASLIQ

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**LIBRARIANSHIP IN AZERBAIJAN  
IN THE VII-XI CENTURIES**

*Summary*

*This article briefly discusses and analyzes the scientific problem of the conquest of Azerbaijan by the Arab Caliphate, the culture of Azerbaijan during the Islamic revival (Renaissance), books, and librarianship in the 7th-11th centuries from the point of view of library science, bibliography and bibliology.*

**Keywords:** *book, the Holy Koran, History of Librarianship, Libraries in the Middle Ages, Libraries in the Islamic Renaissance.*

In the middle of VII century Azerbaijan got undergone to occupation of Arabian Caliphate. After the first Arabian occupation the South part of Azerbaijan (Adurbadagan) lost its independence completely and got under Arabian authority. But Albania could keep its political independence partly and paying taxes fell to dependence of Caliphate as vassal. In such a way, after more than 10 years, resistance to authority, since 705 year, the South and North parts of Azerbaijan were occupied by Caliphate army completely. Azerbaijan got under Arabs, command decisively. The country began to be governed by Caliphate governors.

As in first years of spreading Islamic religion in Arabia, this religion was first accepted by force to idolatrous and fire-worshippers, except the people, who were considered "men of book", Christians and Jewish in Azerbaijan. Since Muhammad prophet times, such an idea was formed that, "the people of a book", the members of other religions, which accept the unity of Allah, must be respected. Just because of it, Islamic religion in first turn,

began to get accepted by force to idolatrous and fire-worshippers in Azerbaijan. But, despite of any Arabian pressure, taking taxes, the Islamic religion wasn't spread in Azerbaijan rapidly. In mountains, distant villages this process got slow. Despite of this, after complete occupation of Azerbaijan, most part of South Azerbaijan and a part of Arranian people accepted Islam.

In a result of Azerbaijan occupation, accepting Islamic religion by force, Azerbaijan culture was harmed mostly. In a period of wars and also in a process of accepting Islam, all cultural monuments of local nation, schools and written monuments, books and booklets were destroyed.

As in other occupied countries, also in Azerbaijan, Arabians tried first to annihilate nation's ancient culture, on purpose to spread Islamic religion without any opposition. They destroyed all cultural memorials, written monuments, books and libraries, religious residences, sacred places. They proclaimed all ideologies to be harmful, which didn't respond to Islamic one, and they considered necessary to liquidate them and substitute with new Islamic ideology. Arabians considered all books, which didn't harmonize with the doctrine of "The Koran", harmful. In that period both, in the North and South Azerbaijan, "Avesta", the alphabet, on which this book was written, also Albanian alphabet and writing monuments, books and libraries were destroyed.

In Arabian policy, to spread and make Islam accepted to local natives wasn't only realized by force, showing resistance, but also there was paid special attention to popularize the advantages of Islamic religion, to explain it, among the people, to be sent by Allah (God), being it the last, the most improved and humanist religion. With that end in view, caliphate used to bring a group of Arabian Islamists to occupied zones, offered all necessary facilities for publicity activity. Also they formed religious institutions to popularize Islamic ideology. In occupied countries such religious institutions were - built mosques and later, religious schools - "madrassas". Continuing the Arabian occupation in the Azerbaijan territory for a long time and getting gradually stronger, accepting the Islamic religion by most of people and becoming it to be a ruling religion, caused deep changing in political life of the country. Differently from first occupation years, there began to develop new relations among local people and Arabians, relations became rather soft to regions, which accepted Islam.

Azerbaijan nation, struggled against Sasanid and Arabian occupation for a long time, got more steadfast. Not dependent on invaders, will this struggle brought unity of the nation, gradually forming ethnic unity.



In first years of Arabian occupation lagging, happened in Azerbaijan economy, was stopped in later years, economic development in the country started. Trading ways, which caliphate carried on with other countries, passed through Azerbaijan territory and it showed a big impact on development of trade in the country. Getting wide range of internal and external policy in Azerbaijan caused to development of cities. In VIII-X centuries, there were occurred such countries as Barda, Shamkir, Beylagan, Derbend, Nakhchivan, Ardabil, Sarab, Tabriz, Marand, Salmas, Barand and others. Trade and mastership development, spreading cultural relations with neighbor countries showed positive affect to cultural life of cities, served as a background for creation and development of nation's specific culture.

Islamic culture, which was in a period of prosperity in VII-XI centuries, showed positive affect to development of the Azerbaijan culture. In those ages, the most prominent scientists, writers and poets were gathered to caliphate palace, there were held scientific researches in meetings. Art works were translated from foreign languages into Arabic, there was taught Greek philosophy, and also paid special attention for learning medicine, mathematics, chemistry, astrology. Serious scientific works were founded in such meetings and they were appeared as achievement of Arabian science and culture. In most historical sources, there is information about Azerbaijan scientists, who lived and showed scientific activity. For example, we can show Ahmed Ibn Suleyman Tabrizi, Baba Kuhi Bakuvi, Pir Huseyn Shirvani, Bahmanyar, and Khatib Tabrizi.

Under Arabian authority hardly, but little by little, Azerbaijan book began to develop and create contrary all over the caliphate. Azerbaijan books, which were spread in caliphate area, earned a great fame. Arabian historians, great prominent investigators and scientists, who lived in those times, wrote in their works about Azerbaijan books, Azeri authors and names of their works with respect, and it was great success of Azerbaijan book to value it highly.

As it was known from historical sources, in VII-XI centuries, hundreds of Azerbaijan scientists, writers, poets and other intelligentsia were moved from Azerbaijan and settled in Iraq. Although most of them wrote own works in Arabic, some of them wrote in native Azerbaijan language. The books, written in Azeri, weren't able to spread widely, a number of them were translated into the Arabic language, and some hardly, but were able to be brought to homeland. Most of them are still kept in big libraries of Eastern countries.

A prominent Arabian traveller and geographer Yaqut Hamavy, who was in Azerbaijan in XIII century, in his very valuable historical work gave infor-

mation about works of 1,100 scientists, literature, culture and religious workers, lived and created from VII century to the first years of XIII century and among them, lots of Azeri authors were called. Being a great cultural significance, this fact put in the forefront that, Azerbaijan book had very ancient history.

One of the most valuable sources, which give information about Azerbaijan book, is "Danishmendani-Azerbaijan" book, written by Azerbaijani scientist M. Terbiyat. This book is a very valuable source about middle-aged culture of Azerbaijan book, and in this book there was information about collection of more than 1,000 author names and lots of books. It was proved in investigations of Azerbaijan literary critics that, in VII-VIII centuries there were many Azerbaijan poets, who lived in Baghdad, Medina, Mecca and etc, and they were distinguished for their talent, numerous books among others. For example to these poets we can show Musa Shahavat, Ismail Ibn Yasar, Abul Abbas and etc. In those times, shown poets, works were well-known not only in Azerbaijan, but also in Arabian countries.

Despite every kind of difficulty, in period of Arabian occupation Azerbaijan librarianship was in develop little by little and new books were occurred. In X century there got more success in this area. One of explorers of "book history" - Imadeddin Zekiyev in his book, named "The way of Azerbaijan book development", showed 54 Azeri authors, names, who were popular with their valuable works in those times and gave information about their books, life activity. It affirms again the words, said above. Among that term authors, we can show Ahmed Bardidzhi, Abu Abdullah Muhammad en - Nisabury, Makki Bardai, Abu Mansur Azhary, Abulhasen Ardabily and etc. Shown authors, and other Azeri ones, works might be met in all libraries of Eastern countries. The information, given in historical sources, affirms historical truth again.

As time passed, traditions of Azerbaijan booking culture got firmly established and in XI century book science developed more. There were qualitative changing's in content of Azerbaijan book and very valuable scientific and historical books, which represented not only religious and art literature, but also various scientific areas, were occurred. We can show books, which enriched national book resources, came from X-XI centuries, pearls of book culture - Baba Kuhi's "Akhbar al-arifin", "Akhbar al-gafilin", Abubakr Ahmed Bardidzhi's "Levels of unique names from the Companions, from the followers and from the authors of Hadith", Abubakr Muhammad Bardai's "Book of thought for learners" and others.



In XI century, the most notable member of Azerbaijan and Eastern philosophical science, Eastern encyclopaedist, Ibn Sina's student and follower, Bahmanyar Ibn Marzban enriched our book culture with his valuable books, attained human importance.

Known as a member of Eastern Peripateticism in the world philosophy science, a notable philosopher Bahmanyar left fertile scientific heritage. Most of very valuable works, appeared from his hand, successfully stood time experiment and came to our term. These books, which serve to human science and culture, nowadays exaggerate the shelves of world libraries. Among his books, "Education", "Ornament for logic", "Beauty", "A music book", "The theme of metaphysics science" and "Levels of existence" have very great scientific importance and also, they were appraised highly by world-wide scientists. Just because of it, his rare books played a very important role in development of philosophical thought in Eastern Moslem countries and became as a pearl of world philosophy.

In XI century, one of the most prominent members of Azerbaijan science and culture was a great literary critic, philologist, talented poet Khatib Tabrizi. Having unexampled attendance in development of Azerbaijan book science, this great person was known with his valuable works in the Near East and he was a scientist, whose works were used most. He was known as (bibliophile), the most book lover in Eastern world. There is very valuable information in historical sources about his love to books, high talent of profession of an explorer, being him a person, who gave a high price for libraries, keeping books in safety and their popularizing. The thoughts about going Khatib Tabrizi to Baghdad have rather scientific importance. A great orientalist Malik Mahmudov gave the first information about it in Yaqut Hamavy's work "Mujamul-udeba". Giving this information with wide commentary, the author writes in his monograph named "Khatib Tabrizi's life and creative work": He got difficulty in analysis of a work "Kitab al-tahzib filluge", written by a famous scientist and lexicographer Abu Mansur Muhammad Al-Azhary (895-980) in Tabriz, scientists advised him to apply to Abul Ula Maary for analysis and studying this difficulty. On this purpose, Khatib Tabrizi had to go to Baghdad, to a great poet. On the way there, he took 17 books from his own library from Tabriz to Baghdad. Not having money to take vehicle, he had to go from Tabriz to Baghdad on foot and the sweat coming from his shoulder made wet his books completely. Being unknown about the event, the people supposed the books being wet from rain. After Khatib Tabrizi's death his books, taken from Tabriz, were displayed.

As a scientist, having an encyclopedic, universal intellect, Khatib Tabrizi investigated lots of areas of science and wrote very valuable works. His works as "Explanation of Abu Tammam's divan", "Explanation of ten odes" and etc. played an important role in development of literary expression of the Near and Middle East nations.

Khatib Tabrizi was famous not only as a great explorer, but also as a talented teacher, pedagogue. Long years he gave lessons in religious school of Mussulman "Nizamiyya", which was very famous for its time in Baghdad and he took part in growth of hundreds scientists. There is a lot of information about his big school and lots of followers. In those times, this great scientist and teacher's work was praised highly and he was assigned as a head clerk to the library of "Nizamiyya", which had 70 thousand books. In middle ages, the most prominent scientists used to be assigned as a head clerk, as a rule.

Among the scientists, who brought fame to Azerbaijan book and raised the Azerbaijan book culture to elevation in the XI century, the Azerbaijan poet Gatran Tabrizi takes a special place. As Bahmanyar earned fame in philosophy, Khatib Tabrizi in history of literature and linguistics, in the XI century Gatran Tabrizi had a notable position in poetry. Beginning the first literary activities in Azeri, the poet wrote in the Persian language. The poet brought novelty to Azerbaijan poetry with loving poems and nature descriptions. Living in various ruler's palaces for a long time (Ganja, Tabriz), the poet was a well-informed man, he could use palace libraries successfully, and he was acquainted with the world science culture and history. Also, Gatran Tabrizi had great attendance in a special and important area of library science as compiling a dictionary. The dictionary, compiled by the poet and named "At-tafasir", is considered as one of explanatory dictionaries in Persian.

The poet's greatest present for his nation was his "Divan", which came to our times. This "Divan" was spread to all Eastern countries for thousand years and it was an adornment of world libraries, funds. Finally, it was published in Tabriz in 1955 year by a well-wisher and patriotic Azerbaijan scientist of the XX century Muhammad Ali Nakhchivani. This work is a valuable source for Azerbaijan book, to have rich history and the most valuable present for Azerbaijan literature, book culture.

In a period of Islamic culture revive; there was serious progress in book culture and establishing libraries. Arabian books earned world fame and were widely spread in all Near East and caliphate territory. There was appeared great changing in the contents of an Arabian book. Besides "Koran" and the literature, devoted to its explanation, also the world literature, belles-letters,



scientific literature passed a great way of development. The books, translated from world languages, began to get a place in library funds and wide libraries were established in the country. In historical sources, in Arabian countries, after spreading Islamic religion, it began to be paid great attention to the development of library work and book science. As Arabs had great respect to the sacred book of Islamic religion - "Koran", they also respected other books, made efforts to save and spread them. Besides spoils of war, the Arabian army began also to bring books from occupied countries. The books, brought as spoils of war, were included into libraries, formed in central cities.

In the VII century, in the first centre of Islamic world – Damascus there was established a state library in a period of Umayyad dynasty. In that library there was kept not only religious, but also world literature. In the fund of the library there were collected books of various science areas - the law, medicine, maths, philosophy and others. That great library had a status of a state library and archives. That's why, there were offered all comprehensive facilities for its development.

The development of Islamic culture and science in Arabia got a great achievement in an authority period of Abbasid dynasty. In Baghdad, considering centre of Islamic world, there was established a great university. This university bestowed scientific discoveries, great gifts for world science development. That university had a rich library and scientific labs, and they were used by Arabian scientists. The library of Baghdad University was considered as the most valuable library for its rich fund and amount of rare books and it was accepted as the most exemplary library of Islamic scientists in the X century. Historical sources show that, in that period libraries of Moslem countries were much higher than Western libraries for their rich funds and service organization for readers. In librarianship area Moslems, impact got stronger. This impact was felt more in Spain. In some cities of Spain there were established Moslem libraries, science and culture centers. Differed with rich fund, valuable rare books Moslem libraries held more liberal character than Western libraries. Having not only religious, but also world-wide books in Moslem library funds and giving them to readers without any obstacle, no doubt, informed about their democratic state. Although, the first - grade importance was given for keeping religious books in Arabian library funds, there were also kept very valuable books of almost all scientific areas - art literature, medicine, law, astronomy, chemistry, philosophy, maths and others. Most of those books were made of papyrus and parchment. The library fund was arranged for subject signs. There was paid special attention to catalogue con-

tent in the libraries. Catalogues were compiled from book funds and they were multivolume. In catalogues the books were described and placed for subject signs. The compiling of the book was realized on high artistic level. There were established workshops for prominent bookbinders to bind a book. In such workshops there were made books, compiled with high artistic taste and decorated with ornaments, graphic.

In VII-X centuries, in Arabian countries, besides state libraries there were also established own libraries, having rich and rare book fund. Besides prominent scientists, poets, cultural workers, also wealthy people of that time arranged own libraries, too. As it shown in historical sources, in that time in Arabian countries there was occurred a big tracery of own libraries.

We must point regrettably that, these rich libraries, which occurred and formed in prospering period of Islamic culture, were destroyed during wars in following years. Also, since the XII century, the interest to country's cultural development and knowledge got decreased and it caused the library work to be weakened.

In the first spreading years of Islamic religion, in Arabian countries mosques and madrassas had an important role in development of librarianship. Mosques and madrassas were centers, which educated Arabian alphabet, spread Islamic religion, popularized the sacred book of Islam - "The Koran". In Islamic world a mosque was considered as a sacred place, Allah's home, centers, where religious ceremonies were realized. To go to mosque, to carry out religious ceremonies there, to respect and esteem them was considered as a duty for each Moslem.

The first mosque was built in Medina by Prophet Muhammad. That mosque was constructed near Muhammad prophet's house in Kaaba's direction in 623. In 623 year Kaaba, its yard and surroundings together were named as "Masjidil-Haram". It is considered as the most sacred mosque in Islamic world. Hadj is the centre of pilgrimage. Kaaba and spring "Zem-zem" are situated in the centre of the mosque. Moslems paid special attention to building mosques, to their decoration as a beautiful, grandiose architectural monument. Big mosques were named "James".

Mosques, in Islamic world are defined not only as a worship place, but also as an institution, which help to solve important problems, attained social importance. Mosques also had an important role in spreading education, training religious workers, collecting and keeping books. Till madrassas were built, mosques, also religious schools carried out activity of the first institutions, forming educative program. In Islamic countries madrassas had a special



role in spreading Islam, training Islamist personnel sing. Madrassas are institutions, arranging the second stage of education, after the training primary one.

In Moslem countries, madrassas trained state workers, religious figures, mullahs for mullah schools, specialists for Mussulman primary schools. In Azerbaijan, in the first spreading years of Islam mosques mostly carried out the function of schools, education, writing books, establishing libraries. In following years, this function was also realized by primary religious schools and madrassas. As the time passed, in territories, occupied by Arabians, because of increasing amount of people, who accepted Islamic religion, the religion spread widely and it began to be paid a special attention to popularizing Islam among crowds and gathering more supporters. On this work, mosques played a great role and that's why, Arabians tried to build mosques in occupied countries. They tried to widen the tracery first in cities and then in big settlements.

In that period among Azerbaijan big cities, in Beylagan, Barda, Derbend, Ardabil, Maragha, Urmia, Shirvan, Shamakhi, Shabran, Marand, Ganja, Gabala, Nakhchivan, Tabriz there were built big mosques. In historical sources, there is information about a mosque, which was built in 920 year in the Sundu village of Shamakhi region (nowadays Gobustan region) and attracted with its architecture.

Because of lasting Arabian occupation in Azerbaijan and after accepting Islamic religion by Azeri population on a mass scale, the mosque tracery began to enlarge. And so, in the first time, a new kind of library, religious libraries - "Mosque libraries" appeared in Azerbaijan. This kind of library kept its reality for a long time, since very ancient times of our history - VII century, till nowadays and on limited position rendered our people and religion. But we must note regrettably that, as well in Middle Ages, also in cultural history and statistics of XIX-XX centuries, mosque libraries weren't taken into account as kind of library and their fund, structure and activity wasn't learned. Nevertheless, in all mosque libraries, situated in all territory of Azerbaijan, had very valuable, rare funds and in those funds there were kept not only religious, but also world-wide books. As a rule, mosque libraries were completed with allocations, parted by mosque leadership and mostly with organization books. Because, the mosques were considered as sacred places, their property and books left inviolable. During wars nobody touched these sacred places and that's why, our nation's rare books of science, artistic

literature, keepsake of history came to our times owing to mosque libraries. We are indebted to mosque libraries for this great cultural mission.

As the time passed, near the mosques there began to open libraries and also religious schools. In such schools reading and writing was taught, the religion was popularized, books were collected. Religious schools used mosque libraries in education process widely and that's why, they did a lot of work for development of libraries and enrichment their funds. Later, religious schools began to copy books and increase their amount. There were workshops, arranged for coping books. In such workshops educated men were working. But for coping books, the students of religious schools were also used and they helped much to increase the amount of copies and their popularizing. Also, in such workshops there worked craftsmen, who were busy with compiling and binding books. On this view, mosque libraries and religious schools, built near mosques, were the first and only institutes, which helped in development of librarianship, their founding, completing library funds, keeping and preserving books and deliver them to future generation.

In such a way, in VIII-XI centuries, building and opening mosques began to get popular circumstance almost in all cities of Azerbaijan, big settlements, also villages. As in Arabian countries, also in Azerbaijan, mosques played an important role in teaching Arabian alphabet, spreading education, development of librarianship, founding libraries.

Since the middle period of the XI century, Arabian caliphate began to weaken; its economic and military power got decreased. Leaning to independence in the countries, concluded into caliphate, got more and more powerful. The feudals, ruled the regions, didn't obey to central authority. In regions of Azerbaijan, which used this occurred position, began to appear independent states. In that period, in big cities of Azerbaijan, especially in province centers, the ruler originated libraries in palaces. Although, there is no wide information about palace libraries in historical sources, but it is also noted.

We must note proudly that, as in all developed countries in the world, in middle ages, Azerbaijan thinkers had very rich own libraries and these libraries, as their owners, served in development of science and culture in our country. Collecting own book collection, originate own libraries was spread widely not only in Azerbaijan, but also in the world. Just because of it, in world-wide, famous scientists, works, own libraries are praised as national and cultural riches of the country, they originated. And they are shown as important factors in development of country's science, in forming book and library culture.



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## VII-XI ƏSRLƏRDƏ AZƏRBAYCANDA KİTABXANA İŞİ

### *Xülasə*

*Bu məqalədə VII-XI əsrlərdə Azərbaycanda kitab və kitabxana işinin vəziyyəti, Ərəb xilafəti tərəfindən Azərbaycanın istilasını, İslam intibahı dövründə Azərbaycan mədəniyyəti məsələləri şərh edilmişdir.*

*Açar sözlər: Kitab, Qurani Kərim, kitabxana işinin tarixi, orta əsr kitabxanaları, İslam İntibahı dövrünün kitabxanaları.*

**Элданиз Эльман оглу Мамедов**

## БИБЛИОТЕЧНОЕ ДЕЛО В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНЕ В VII-XI ВЕКАХ

### *Резюме*

*В этой статье анализируется библиотечное дело в Азербайджане в VII-XI веках, завоевания Азербайджана со стороны Арабского халифата, культура Азербайджана в период исламского возрождения.*

*Ключевые слова: книга, священный Коран, история библиотечного дела, библиотеки в Средневековье, библиотеки Исламского Возрождения.*