

**THE EMERGENCE AND EARLY ACTIVITY OF LIBRARIES IN THE
FERGANA VALLEY**

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Abstract

This article examines the history of libraries in the Fergana Valley and their role in scientific and cultural development. The libraries of the Fergana Valley initially began by collecting religious and scientific works, later including valuable manuscripts in fields such as medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy. The article highlights how these libraries served as sources of knowledge for students and scholars, contributing to the development of science and playing a significant role in culture, literature, and the arts. Despite damage during the Mongol invasion, the libraries were restored, continuing to support the creation of new scientific works. Libraries have played a crucial role in preserving and developing the cultural heritage of the Fergana Valley.

Keywords: Fergana Valley, libraries, science, religious and secular knowledge, manuscripts, culture, literature, Mongol invasion, scientific works, cultural heritage.

Introduction

The Fergana Valley, one of the oldest and most culturally rich regions of Central Asia, has a history dating back to ancient times. Over centuries, due to its location at the crossroads of civilizations and trade routes, especially between nomadic and settled peoples, the area became a center of learning and enlightenment. The earliest cities in the valley, particularly Kokand, Margilan, and Andijan, played a significant role in the development of science and knowledge.

Libraries have long been essential sources for sharing knowledge and information. They served not only as places to store books but also played a substantial role in the

development of science, literature, art, and culture. Through libraries, written culture was passed down through generations, with knowledge and experiences systematically preserved. The emergence and early activity of libraries in the Fergana Valley had a profound impact on the cultural and spiritual growth of local society.

This article studies the origin, establishment, and early activities of libraries in the Fergana Valley. It also discusses the societal role of these libraries and their contributions to the progress of education and science¹.

Main Section

The appearance of libraries in the history of the Fergana Valley is closely linked to early written sources of local culture. Religious and scientific works served as the primary sources of cultural development in this region. The initial formation of libraries took place in palaces, religious institutions, and madrasas.

In the Middle Ages, scholarly and educational activities flourished in the Fergana Valley, particularly in the 10th-12th centuries, when madrasas were established alongside the spread of Islam. Libraries within these madrasas became essential resources for the scholarly community, housing not only religious texts but also books on astronomy, mathematics, medicine, and philosophy. These libraries were utilized by local scholars and students, furthering the advancement of science.

During the Timurid era (14th-15th centuries), a new phase of library development began. Amir Timur and his successors prioritized the promotion of science and culture. Libraries of this period were enriched with books on both religious and secular knowledge. Notably, the observatory and madrasas in Samarkand, built under the guidance of Mirzo Ulugbek, housed large libraries containing sources from global sciences.

Libraries in the Fergana Valley were mainly established by local scholars and rulers. The first book collections consisted of religious works, collections of famous hadiths, and Arabic texts. Over time, the libraries' collections expanded to include works in Persian and Turkic languages. These libraries preserved the works of local scholars, intellectuals, and

¹ Ҳайдар Дўғлат, М.Х. *Тарихи Рашидий*. Тошкент: Фан нашриёти, 1991. Бу асарда Фарғона водийсидаги маданий ва илмий ҳаёт ҳақидаги қимматли тарихий маълумотлар келтирилган.

writers, serving as an invaluable source for the advancement of knowledge and enlightenment.

Historical written sources and archaeological evidence provide essential information on the emergence and development of libraries in the Fergana Valley. Works by Ibn Battuta and Muhammad Haidar Dughlat offer valuable insights into the cities, madrasas, libraries, and scholarly communities of the valley, confirming the development of library science and its contribution to scientific progress.

Early libraries in the Fergana Valley served as cultural and scientific centers of their time. The organizational structure and societal role of these libraries were linked to various periods and rulers, with each library fostering unique traditions. The spread of both religious and secular knowledge had a significant impact on the activities of these libraries. This section analyzes the main areas of library activities, the preserved works, and their societal roles.

Libraries in the Fergana Valley were typically located within religious institutions, madrasas, or palaces. They performed numerous functions, such as book preservation, rental services, and copying services. Librarians, known as "kitobdors" (librarians), played specific roles, including book preservation, analysis, and scientific manuscript collection. Some libraries were specially organized for the copying of books and manuscripts².

The organizational structure of libraries in the Fergana Valley was closely connected to the scholarly and educational environment of madrasas and palaces. Scientific discussions and readings were often organized within the libraries, facilitating the dissemination of knowledge among students and scholars.

The libraries in the Fergana Valley were enriched with valuable works dedicated to both religious and secular sciences. The earliest libraries widely contained the Quran, hadiths, jurisprudence, and Sufism books, which served as primary sources for popularizing Islam and its related sciences³.

² Бартольд, В.В. *Фаргона водийси тарихи*. Тошкент: Ўзбекистон Миллий Энциклопедияси, 1956. Марказий Осиё ва хусусан Фарғона водийсининг маданий ва илмий ривожланишига оид асосий тадқиқотлардан бири

³ Ибн Баттута. *Ибн Баттута саёҳатлари*. Таржима: Х. Ҳасанов. Тошкент: Фан, 1987. Ибн Баттута Марказий Осиё бўйлаб саёҳат қилган даврида Фарғона водийсидаги кутубхоналар ва мадрасалар ҳақидаги қимматли ёзувларни қолдирган

Additionally, works on medicine, astronomy, mathematics, and philosophy were preserved. Local scholars used these books to create their works, making substantial contributions to the progress of science. For example, the medical and philosophical works of Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Farabi, as well as Ulugbek's studies on astronomy, were popular in the libraries of the Fergana Valley.

Libraries maintained close cooperation with scholars and writers in the Fergana Valley. Scholars and intellectuals offered new works to libraries to support scientific progress and enrich book collections. Religious and cultural institutions in the cities invited intellectuals and scholars to scientific discussions and knowledge-sharing events through libraries.

In the 13th century, the Mongol invasion had a severe impact on the activities of libraries in the Fergana Valley. During these attacks, numerous madrasas and libraries were destroyed, and precious manuscripts accumulated over centuries were lost. However, in the post-Mongol period, restoration efforts began, with new libraries established and scholars' works collected.

Due to their location within madrasas, libraries in the Fergana Valley played a significant role in knowledge dissemination. Students and scholars who attended madrasas utilized the manuscripts available in libraries, fostering the enlightenment process. Libraries offered the opportunity to study not only religious knowledge but also various secular sciences, significantly driving scientific progress.

The manuscripts preserved in libraries helped to raise the knowledge level of students and scholars, aiding in the creation of new scientific works. Through libraries, scholars and intellectuals familiarized themselves with innovations, accessing essential sources for creating their works⁴.

Libraries in the Fergana Valley held a highly significant position and influence in society, enriching cultural life, accelerating scientific progress, and shaping educational traditions. These libraries served not only as knowledge sources but also as public spaces for spiritual and scientific interaction.

⁴ АЛИМОВ, А.Қ. *Темурийлар давридаги маданият ва илм-фан*. Самарқанд: СамДУ нашриёти, 2009.

The libraries of the Fergana Valley held a significant place not only in scientific progress but also in cultural life. They encouraged the development of literature and art, preserving and disseminating works of local writers and poets. In addition to Islamic and secular sciences, libraries housed works on poetry, history, geography, and music.

Furthermore, libraries served as centers for cultural exchange. They provided a space for scientific and cultural discussions among scholars, intellectuals, and writers. These discussions played a crucial role in developing written culture and preserving cultural heritage⁵.

Through libraries in the Fergana Valley, numerous valuable manuscripts have been preserved for centuries. Although many of these manuscripts relate to Islamic sciences, some also provide information on the customs and cultural traditions of the local people. Thus, libraries were not only centers of science but also institutions preserving the region's cultural heritage.

Conclusion

Libraries have played a crucial role in the history and culture of the Fergana Valley. Since their emergence, they have significantly impacted the spiritual and cultural growth of the region. Libraries have facilitated the spread of religious, scientific, and secular knowledge, fostering the educational advancement of society alongside madrasas, palaces, and other cultural institutions. The establishment of early libraries has contributed to preserving local culture through written sources, while their activities have served as important centers for uniting scholars, intellectuals, and writers in disseminating knowledge.

The organizational structure of libraries, their book collections, and manuscripts served as vital sources of knowledge for society. Libraries not only popularized Islamic sciences but also played a critical role in preserving and disseminating works on medicine, mathematics, astronomy, and philosophy.

Libraries held a vital place in cultural life, playing a major role in preserving, disseminating, and enriching written culture. Additionally, they served as venues for scientific

⁵ Рахимов, С.Х. *Фаргона водийсида маърифат ва кутубхоналар*. Тошкент: Шарқ нашриёти, 2010. Фаргона водийсидаги илк кутубхоналарнинг тарихи, уларнинг жамиятга қўшган ҳиссаси ва маънавий мерос ҳақидаги тадқиқот.

and cultural exchange, aiding in the scientific and educational advancement of the Middle Ages.

Through libraries, valuable manuscripts that could have been lost have been preserved for centuries in the Fergana Valley. Today, the scientific and cultural heritage of these libraries remains of great importance.

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