Conference Paper

Libraries of Islam: Religious Traditions of Spreading Science

Ratih Surtikanti

Information and Document Management, Vocational Education Program, Universitas Indonesia, Depok, Indonesia

Abstract

This article is the result of historical research that discusses the development of libraries in Muslim societies during the period of Islamic Caliphate in the Middle East region and beyond. The results showed that different types of libraries were developed from one period to another within different Islamic caliphates. The development of this library is supported by the principle of seeking and dissemination of knowledge that was practiced directly by the Muslim community at that time. In addition, it is also influenced by other economic, social and cultural conditions that developed during this period.

Corresponding Author:
Ratih Surtikanti
ratih.surtikanti@ui.ac.id

OPEN ACCESS

1. Introduction

Islam as a doctrine gives a distinctive concept of knowledge and the dissemination of knowledge for its believers. The whole concept of the science shapes insights of Muslims live since the beginning of the spread of Islam. Islam really makes the acquisition of knowledge as a religious liability; by definition, be a Muslim means to be actively involved in the delivery, processing, and dissemination of knowledge. Anyway, the concept of knowledge is not an idea that is limited and elitist, and knowledge in view of Islam is knowledge disseminated and distributed should belong to everyone; not only for the individual, group, class, or gender; knowledge is not just for the few individuals so that the majority of people liberated from that; the knowledge that Muslims are also not limited to a particular field. ([17]: 39).

Awareness of the obligation to seeking knowledge that not limited to the obligation to seek and explore has encouraged Muslims to develop institutions that perform functions such as processing and dissemination knowledge; such as educational institutions and libraries. Religion is the center thing for Muslims, the first attempt was made in the context of the spread of science is an effort to spread a copy of the Quran and the

How to cite this article: Ratih Surtikanti, (2018), "Libraries of Islam: Religious Traditions of Spreading Science" in *The 2nd International Conference on Vocational Higher Education (ICVHE) 2017 "The Importance on Advancing Vocational Education to Meet Contemporary Labor Demands"*, KnE Social Sciences, pages 221–231. DOI 10.18502/kss.v3i11.2761

Page 221

hadith of the Prophet Muhammad ([17]: 40) and a document library, the first that can be observed is the document relating to the Quran, that is a copy of the Qur'an belongs to Hafsah, one of the widows of the Prophet Muhammad ([14]: 392).

In addition to the encouragement of the believe that was followed, in fact Islam is growing in areas previously the cultural center of the world. Those areas before entering the territory of the Islamic nation has a library history. Iraq, for example, had cultural heritage of Mesopotamia. In Nippur, in the south of Iraq, there was one section of the library and archive large temple that contains clay tablets. The tablet is largely stamped date Sumerian period (about 4000 BC), and partly from the Babylonian and Assyrian period (about 3000 BC). In the ancient temple there are several rooms used for library and archives ([1]: 63).

Similarly, the Egyptian was one of the territory of the Islamic government. Egypt librarianship can be traced to the time of the Pharaohs. Library of King Ramses II (Ozymandyas) around 1307–1237 BC as famous as the king himself. At the time of Hellenism, the Library of Alexandria is known as a center of science and Hellenism. At the time of the Arab-Islamic enlightenment, mosque library in central Cairo stands as the preservation and spread of Islam, especially after annihilation all the books in the libraries of Baghdad by Hulagu ([3]: 119).

Iran, the region included in the rule of Islam in 21H/641 AD, had a long history of collecting books. Twenty-five centuries ago, the king of Iran, Darius (522–486 BC), put the three language inscriptions at the famous mountains of northern Iran, Bisotun. This inscription contains historical events in Babylonian, Old Persian, and Elawite ([19]: 15). The three major invasions carried out by the Greeks, Arabs and Mongols experienced by Iran have destroyed many libraries in the region. R. Homayoun Farokh, who wrote a history of the library Iran, noted the 459 libraries that ever existed in Iran's history. ([19]: 23). Persepolis treasure or Estakhr library found in 1934 in the ruins of the castle Paladena contains 30,000 clay tablets. Most library's collection was destroyed by Alexander of Macedonia, and others moved to the Library of Alexandria ([19]: 23).

One of the interesting aspects of Muslims libraries are wide variations in the subjects they have. With the exception of different religious works, Muslims gather, transcribe, translate all they can get, in all subjects, from all periods and in all available languages ([12]: 74).

The transition of power that took place in the Islamic domain in the hands of the caliphs and empires did not preclude the development of the library. In fact there is a different level of development of the library is determined by the amount of public interest in science at that time.

2. Research Methods

This research is the result of historical research. The history of libraries is a branch of history that examines human actions, the activities of agencies, the influence of social shifts in libraries, or the influence of social forces that can foster the development of librarianship. The method of historical research is a set of systematic principles and rules designed to effectively help the collection of historical material resources, critically present them, and present a synthesis (generally in written form) of the results obtained ([15]: 298).

The historical study of library conditions in this study is a library of historical research that limits its scope in certain geographical periods and regions. This research is a category of library history research centered on the research of institutions or institutional institutions existing in the Muslim community from the beginning of its development until the decline of Islamic Caliphate due to colonialism. The purpose of the study is to describe or briefly describe the situation or condition of the library as a unit of dissemination of information and science that developed in the Muslim community during the period of Islamic Caliphate in the Middle East region and surrounding areas. This study uses primary and secondary data obtained through literature study, in the form of searching documents containing facts, articles or references, and other materials that support the history of Islamic libraries.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Book industry in Muslim society

In less than a hundred years after the Prophet Mohammad's hijrah from Mecca to Medina, the book has become something that is easily accessible and a primary means of spreading knowledge and information ([17]: 55). This was also motivated by the policies of some of the then royal Islamic governments which included books as tax-exempt ([17]: 53). The books that exist at that time are not always the original work of the author. Many of them are translations, adaptations, and rewrites. The activity is driven by the desire to know what has been written and achieved by people in the past. Muslims when translating books in various disciplines into Arabic have added, made changes, and cultivated them in new forms so that they become their own. ([20]: 205).

During the first century of Islam, oral traditions dominated and were the primary means of disseminating information but once it was realized that the memories were not fully reliable the written record came into use ([17]: 50). The tradition of writing and taking notes is widespread with the development of teaching effort. The obligation of every Muslim to understand the Quran also makes them obliged to have the ability to write and read. ([12]: 69).

At that time the records of scientists were freely interchangeable among fellow scientists and students. These notes are then often quoted in book form ([17]: 41). Renowned scientists of this period are often asked to write books and are encouraged by students to provide instructional materials in an integrated form ([17]: 41). From the manuscripts written by these scientists were born handwritten books which were then multiplied to thousands of them and became a famous book. Among these books are still in the form of handwritten books and named after the author's name and the science in them such as Diktat al-Qali (Amali al-Qali) Diktat al-Murtadli (Amali al-Murtadli) And Diktat ibn al-Hajib (Amali ibn al-Hajib) ([24]: 60).

The growth of writing culture also encourages the development of industries that support that culture. The spread of Islam in a wide area provides a way for Muslims to recognize the cultures of nations that have had the technique of making stationery and printing. The first Muslim city to establish the paper industry was Samarkand. The city fell into the hands of the Muslims in 85H/704 AD and it is estimated that the Samarkand paper industry was founded by Chinese people who were prisoners of war ([17]: 42). This papermaking technique was then expanded by Muslims in almost all of its domains such as Iraq and Egypt and became an indigenous industry. By the end of the tenth century AD the paper had succeeded in replacing papyrus and psrchven for writing throughout the Muslim region ([10]: 415). Paper is cheaper and more readily available than parchments and papyrus. With more economical writing materials, different types of reading materials can reach more readers ([12]: 69).

With the paper industry, other industries related to book publishing are also growing rapidly. During this period, the ink industry in various colors, writing technology and illustration facilities developed quite high ([17]: 43). Book binding also requires a considerable degree of sophistication. At first the bindings were rather rough. Book binding with rough and lime skin then book binding becomes fixed, rigid, and hard. Nevertheless, in the presence of an invention in Kufa, the method of binding is made better by enhancing the skin. This technique is done by using dates so that it can produce softer and weaker skin ([17]: 43). The binding company among the Muslims was first known in Egypt in the 8th and 9th centuries AD ([21]: 165).

At the same time, new skills to embellish the binding and techniques to brighten the book grow. The result of all this is a book that not only amazes anyone who sees it, but it is also a work of art ([17]: 43). At that time developed the art of carving the book's skin and decorating it with golden liquid ([21]: 165). In addition to artistic value, the book is also valued for its content, and the books are widely used in society.

One particular activity that was part of the book industry at the time was the activity of making copies of the book. This type of activity is often done in libraries and in bookstores. Forms of business such as the provision of copying, bindery, and other matters related to the making of this book are identified by the name of wiraqah. ([5]: 31).

3.2. Libraries of Islam

The culture of the Muslim community that drives the seek for effort and the dissemination of science has encouraged the growth and development of libraries. From the 2nd century H/9 AD has become a matter of prestige for the nobles and wealthy people of the Islamic world to collect religious, scientific and literary works and make the collection open to scientists and students. Great mosques and colleges are also beginning to acquire similar collections. Many authors began to give copies of their works to mosques and schools to make the work better known. In a relatively short time a number of private collections and public libraries appeared in major cities everywhere in the Islamic kingdom. Libraries thrive through inheritance or sums, and by generous protectors who provide scholarships for educated people working there. Some collections are stored in specially constructed buildings so that books can be arranged according to the subject, and each collection is managed by a staff of librarians, scribes, and bookbinders ([13]: 324).

The Moslem community recognized several types of libraries, but at the beginning of the development of the library, the private library was the most dominant type. Private libraries are primarily owned by scientists interested in the branches of science that evolved from the study of the Qur'an and the customs of the Prophet, such as grammar, theology, law, and history ([14]: 392). The nature of the Muslim community that cannot be separated from their religion has also made them use the mosque as a place to store books so that the library of the mosque is the dominant library in addition to personal library. Collection of mosque library is not limited to religious discipline. Since mosque libraries are used by users of diverse backgrounds, mosque libraries can reflect the Islamic thought of life ([22]: 43). Scientists from different disciplines

give their library collection to the mosque in order to be used by students who use it often ([22]: 44). Many collections from private libraries end up in mosques that have constructed auxiliary libraries in advance in their efforts to aid religious study.

The most important mosque library is the library in the mosque a1-Haram in Mecca and the Nabawi Mosque in Madinah. Founded hundreds of years ago, this library holds a collection of old and important books mainly from donations ([3]: 119). One of the most famous mosque libraries is a library of al-Azhar mosque in Cairo, built in the 2nd century H (900 AD), and gained the status of unit-authority in the 18th century AD ([14]: 392). At Al-Azhar Mosque, astronomy and other sciences are taught together with the science of religion ([8]: 256). The institute's library is open to the public. The floor of this library is carpeted and covered with curtains. The library also employs a number of library staff and helpers to keep all libraries' activities going well ([9]: 83). The institute gained great attention from the government of the Fatimid Kingdom and served as a means of competition with the Bait al-Hikmah in Baghdad. In this mosque all religious, judicial, and educational affairs are managed well together ([8]: 257).

Another mosque library is located in Jerusalem. From the seventh century AD to the middle ages, the al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem evolved into an important center of education and a college for the religious and linguistic sciences. This college attracts many students from various Muslim countries. The library of this mosque has a large collection of several hundred thousand volumes of books and is managed according to the prevailing pattern of large libraries in other centers of science in the Islamic world at that time ([6]: 301).

The role of the mosque library also extends to the territory of the Islamic empire in Europe. Arab-Muslim rulers in Spain also use mosque libraries to spread their cultural progress. Due to the explosion of information that occurred in Spain, this institution gained a reputation extending beyond the Iberian peninsula. The role and influence of the mosque library began to decline after the 7th century H/14 AD However, the existence of other secular institutions such as schools and colleges continues the tradition of collecting existing books. ([8]: 259).

The existence of noble figures and government officials influenced the development of libraries in the Islamic Caliphate. At the time of the Umayyad Empire with a vast territory of Islam, stretching from the Spanish border to the Indus River in India gradually advanced intellectual activity ([23]: 16). The activities of science in the Umayyad were mainly done by Khalid ibn Yazid, by encouraging the development of Greek and Coptic studies in chemistry and medicine. It is thought that the first Muslim who started the gathering of written literature was Khalid ibn Yazid ([7]: 128). When the power of the

Umayyad Empire fell and turned into the Abbasid hands, the development of the library continued, even as it was known as the golden period of scientific evolution in Islamic history. During the reign of al-Ma'mun (198–218 H/B13–833 AD). Bait al-Hikmah was built in Baghdad. This institution is open to everyone and contributes greatly to the understanding of Greek science and philosophy. Under the direction and head of the translator, Hunain ibn Isfraq (254–260 H/868–873 AD), the Greek manuscripts obtained, translated into Arabic ([14]: 392) During the Abbasid period, Baghdad was a center of high civilization and its power spread from Central Asia to North Africa and Spain. During the ninth century AD there were 63 libraries in Baghdad. The library is mostly open to the public and scientists. There are also more libraries in other cities in Iraq such as Basrah, Kufa, and Mausil ([1]: 63).

A similar institution was built in Cairo during the Fatimid period (297–573 H/909–1171 AD). The library belonging to the Fatimid Kingdom was founded at the end of the tenth century AD. The library is rumored to have around 200,000 titles, of which there are more than 2000 illuminated rich Qur'ans, and the collection is combined with a collection of Dar al-'Ilm, a Shiite theology academy ([13]: 325). The books in the library were placed in lockable cabinets. Collections are arranged according to the branches of science. Copies of the Qu'ran are placed in special places, usually in places higher than other books. Some book titles are available for more than one piece so that the book can be loaned ([4]: 576).

After al-Hakim's death, this library is still maintained by minister Abu al-Qasim 'Ali ibn Ahmad al-Jarjara'i. In the year 435 H/1043 AD, he ordered to create a new catalog and fix the binding of books in the library. The library was eventually destroyed, especially under the rule of al-Mustansir (427–487 H/103S–1094 AD) ([4]: 576). Following the dissolution of this library at the end of the Fatimid government in 1068 AD, most of its 25 camel-loaded collections were taken by Salahuddin's secretary Qadi al-Fadil and named al-Fadiliyah ([14]: 392).

The third most important library in the period of the first century of Islam is the second court library of the Umayyad government in Cordova, Spain (132–423 H/750–1031 AD). Although not open to the public this library has a large collection ([14]: 392). The Cordova Library built by the scential Umayyad caliph, al-Hakam (788–822 AD), at the end of the 10th century AD is known to have a collection of 400,000 titles.62 Al-Hakam once sent scientists and merchants to the eastern Islamic country choosing for him the best manuscripts and works. The library catalog reaches a total of 44 volumes which each volume consists of 20 sheets ([2]: 13).

Although these three libraries cannot be regarded as national libraries as they are but in any case these libraries are the most prominent institutions in these countries and are indirectly financed by public funds. Unfortunately these institutions often do not survive long due to the frequent political upheaval and the destruction of libraries and their collections.

Another major library that stood in the same period was the library of the Egyptian emir Khalifah al-'Aziz who died in 384 AH/994 AD The Egyptian Amir has a well-equipped library. When he heard the news that Khalil ibn Ahmad had a good book of his books called Al 'Ain he immediately ordered his library staff to buy it. Al-Makrizy the author of Egypt's history books illustrates that this library has hundreds of thousands of expensive books ([2]: 13).

At the time of Saljuq (429–700 H/1037–1300 AD) the existence of madrassah became prominent as did the library. Wazir Nizam al-Mulk (456–485 H/1063–1092 AD) who for 20 years held strong power in the Abbasid empire built a large number of high schools throughout the kingdom. The most famous Madrasahs are located in Baghdad and named al-Nizamiyah ([14]: 392). The Al-Nizamiyah Madrasah was founded around 458 AH/1065 AD. It has a hospital. Which is part of the madrasah and is also equipped with a hospital library ([12]: 73). In addition to the famous Nizamiyah Madrasah there is another madrasah which is also equipped with a library. In the city of Fez there is Madrasah al-Saffarin. The al-Saffarin Madrasah was founded by Jacob ibn al-Haqq. His co-books are mostly Spanish ([9]: 122).

In 567 H/1171 AD, Salahuddin al-Ayubi became the new ruler in Egypt to replace the Fatimids. His government also encouraged the development of libraries and educational institutions ([4]: 576). This royal power then turned to the Mameluk group until 979 AH/1517 AD. One of the libraries built during the period of his reign was Qadi Fadil Abu 'Ali' Abd al-Rahim al-Asqalani (1135–1200 AD). This library is located in the academy in Cairo, Madrasah was founded in 580 H/1184 AD. At the time of his establishment he gave a collection of his own libraries. This Madrasah is known as al-Fadiliyyah ([4]: 577).

The eleventh century was marked by the rise of Christian-European countries. They made efforts to regain its territory controlled by the Arab-Islamic kingdom. In 1085 AD, Toledo was again dominated by them, although the greatness of Arab culture and character could not be eliminated. Alphonso VII, a Christian king, took an attitude not to interfere with the creative spirit that existed at the time by encouraging Christians, Jews and Arabs to continue their activities in their institutions ([8]: 259). In the 12th century AD this region returned to the Arab-Muslim power, but the influence of European

mastery in this region led to the growth of small groups of Arab indigenous peoples who had European language knowledge and associated with Europeans ([16]: 10). Until the year 898 H/1492 AD this region remained under the control of the Arabs before being taken by the army of King Ferdinand V and Queen Isabella ([18]: 54). As a result the functions of Mesjid Agung Cordova and Jami 'Toledo Mosque changed and the collection of valuable books in both mosques was destroyed ([18]: 118).

When the Ottoman Turkish Empire (699–1342 AH/1299–1923 AD) came to power, this kingdom made Constantinople its capital. As a result of this move, library activities also moved to the city. Gimbatista Toderini who visited this city in the early 18th century AD reported the existence of 13 large libraries, mostly open to the public and giving insight to his collection (Krek 1975: 392). At that time the territory controlled by the Islamic kingdoms became narrower. Under such conditions, the library in the Islamic world can still grow.

In the city of Mecca there are several libraries that stood after the end of the 9th century H/16 M. Shaykh 'Abdul' Aziz has a large library inherited from his father. He also later added a number of valuable books. Scientists and book lovers have benefited greatly from this library ([11]: 24). There is also a library of scholars Taqiuddin al-Fasi. When Taqiuddin died in 332 AH/1928 AD the management of the library was handed over to his brother, Khatib Abi al-Yemen al-Nawari. Since he does not master the management of libraries, a large number of valuable books are lost and in the end the whole collection is lost and damaged. ([11]: 22).

In 902 H/1477 AD Sultan Qayatabi, one of the Egyptian rulers, founded a school in Mecca. The school is named after its name. Located near Bab al-Salam, this school has a very valuable library. There are special employees to handle this library which is paid monthly. Library provides an ever-updated catalog. Due to the absence of good oversight of book lending, many of the books that were borrowed disappeared ([11]: 23).

Along with the disappearance of the Ottoman Empire all over the Muslim territory suffered a setback and was in an era of colonialism. Because the library is an institution built by the community and its existence is a mirror condition of society then this condition also affects the decline of library institutions in Muslim society.

4. Conclusion

So in summary it can be concluded that libraries will flourish in a society of high economic prosperity, with a majority of its members reading. It also supported the

stable living conditions of the community, whose government encouraged the development of libraries, and already had large urban areas. In addition, the book industry and trade have a strong position. Hence the Muslim community at the time of the Islamic Caliphate/Empire in its greatness periods with a value system that respects the knowledge and mechanisms of wakf in its belief, and inherited the literary and literary culture of the previous society, is a fertile ground for the development of the library.

References

[1] Al-Kindilchie, Amer I. 1975. "Iraq, Libraries in", *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*. New York: Marcel Dekker.

[2] Al-Mahasiniy Zaki. 1956. *Al-Mutanabbiy*. Mesir : Dar al-Ma'arif

[3] Aman, Mohammad M. 1980. "Arab Countries", *International Handbook of contemporary Development in Librarianship*. New York: Marcel Dekker

[4] Aman, Mohammed M. 1975. "Egypt, Libraries in", *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*. New York: Marcel Dekker, jil.7.

[5] Amin, Ahmad. 1983. *Dhuha al-Islam*. Kuala Lumpur: Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, jil. 2.

[6] Asali, K. J. 1975 "Jordan, Libraries in", *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science* New York : Marcel Dekker.

[7] Baksh, **S.** Khuda. 1902. "Islamic Libraries", *Nineteenth Century,* 52, United States.

[8] BenAicha, Hedi. 1986. "Mosques as Libraries in Islamic Civilization, 700-1400 AD", *Journal of Library History,* 21(2), University of Texas Press, United States

[9] Flumbe, Wilfred J. 1975. "Africa, Libraries in", *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*. New York : Marcel Dekker, jil. 1.

[10] Hitti, Philip K. A History of the Arabsi from the earliest time to the present. Ed. 10. London : Macmillan Press.

[11] Ibn Dohaish, Abdul Latif Abdul Latif. "Libraries at Makkah al-Mukarramah", *Pakistan Library Bulletin,* Maret,19(1)**,**

[12] Johnson, Elmer P. 1982. *A History of Libraries in Westren World*. New York : Scarecrow

[13] Ronart, Stephen and Handy. 1959. Concise Encyclopedia of Arabic civilizations the Arab East, Amsterdam: Djambatan.

[14] Krek, Miroslav. 1980. "Islamic Libraries", *ALA World Encyclopedia of Library and Information Service.*New York : Marcel Dekker

[15] Krzys, Richard. 1975. "Library Historiography", *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*, New York: Marcel Dekker, **V**ol. 15.

[16] Lewis, Bernard. 1988. *Muslim Menemukan Eropa,* terj. Ahmad Niamullah Muiz. Jakarta: Pustaka Firdaus.

[17] Sardar, Ziauddin. 1991. *Tantangan Dunia Islam Abad 21*, terj. AE. Priyono dan Ilyas Hasan. Bandung : Mizan.

[18] Sibai, Mohammed Makki. 1987. *Mosque Libraries : An Historical Study*. London : Hansell.

[19] Sinai, Ali. 1975. "Iran, Libraries in", *Encyclopedia of Library and Information Science*. New York : Marcel Dekker, jil. 13.

[20] Syalaby, Ahmad. 1993. *Sejarah dan Kebudayaan Islam.* Terj. Muhammad Labib Ahmad. Jakarta : Pustaka al Husna, jil. 3.

[21] ———. 1973. *Sejarah Pendidikan Islam.* Terj. Muchtar Yahya dan Sanusi Latif. Jakarta : Bulan Bintang.

[22] Taher, Mohammed. 1992. "Mosque Libraries : a Bibliographil Essay". *Libraries and Culture,* 27(1), University of Texas Press, United States

[23] Umar**. A.** Muin. 1988. *Historiografi Islam*. Ed. 1; Jakarta : Rajawali

[24] Yunus, Mahmud. 1981. *Pendidikan Islam : Sejarah.* Jakarta : Hidakarya Agung.