

**Original Research Paper**

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## ***FATIMID LIBRARY: HISTORY, DEVELOPMENT AND MANAGEMENT***

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### **ABSTRACT**

In demand of time Muslim library has been initiated from the very beginning of Islam like the ancient Mesopotamian, Egyptian and Roman libraries. With the arrival of Prophet Muhammad (Sm.) a new epoch was started in the field of knowledge and science in Islam. From that very day with the appearance of Prophet (Sm.) the beginning of Islamic civilization get impetus and many institutions were established in the Muslim countries and renowned intellectuals and scholars of different fields were associated with those institutions. After this, when the Muslims came closer to the Persian literature and Greek sciences the Islamic library started its journey in the 7th century. So, for the acquisition of knowledge Muslim library has been initiated at Baghdad and later on Muslim Spain and Africa. In this process, as a strong opponent of the Abbasids the Fatimid rulers made tremendous steps in the field of establishing library and library management. As a strong opponent of the Abbasid the Fatimid established royal library and various public libraries. Various important functions such as, collection of books, preservation system, translation, cataloguing, inclusion and clarification of the books were practices in those libraries. Besides these, recruitment, promotion, management of archives and modern system of budgeting were also salient features of their library management. The current research is a humble attempt to find out the functioning, evolution and analyzing of the Fatimid royal, private and public libraries.

### **KEYWORDS**

*Fatimid Library, Library Management, Royal Library, Private Library, Public Library.*

### **PROLOGUE**

The invention of writing is one of the most important components that played major role in the development of human civilization. People started contributing to various sector of social development and enrichment of knowledge with their writings after the invention of writing in ancient civilizations like Egyptian Hieroglyphics, Sumerian Cuneiforms and some other. In this

way when Philosophy, Medicine, Astrology was enriched with profound writings, Library was introduced to bring all this knowledge to man. Thus from the very beginning of the history of civilization library started its journey as one of the best sources of knowledge. In this regard, The Royal Library of Egyptian Court and the Library of Mesopotamian King Ashurbanipal can be mentioned. Evolving through different stages of civilization the Library Science achieved a novelty in Roman Civilization. It is said that during the fourth century at least twenty eight libraries were established only in the Rome city.

In 476 AD, with the fall of Roman Empire, Europe entered the dramatic incidents of middle age which is regarded as the Dark period (Gates, 1968, p. 22). In the meantime the emergence of Hazrat Muhammad (sm.) started a new era in the history of world civilization. As Muhammad (Sm.) emphasized on science and knowledge for the Muslim and it accelerated the growth of knowledge. But Islamic library was set up later in 7<sup>th</sup> century after they came in touch with the Persian and Greek sciences (Padover, 1965, p.347). In the very beginning of Islamic civilization Islamic schools were established for the teaching of Holy Quran and the culture and analysis of Hadith and Fiqh. Here great Islamic scholars analyzed and interpreted the religious theories of Islam. This paved the further way of developing vast educational institution like those of modern universities. Seyeed Nasr Hossain said, “At the beginning of the Islamic period, lots of schools and institutions based on Muslim language and culture were established which were playing a significant role to the foundation of University. And this example of 10th and 12th century was a landmark for the establishment of the European University (Hossain, 1968, pp. 65-66).” The small version of Muslim library started its informal journey centering on those institutions. During the Umayyad period (661-750 B.C), this trend was gradually increased outside the Arab world. But in the Arab world Abbasid Khalifa Al Mamun (813-33) came forward with the establishment of *Bitul Hikmah*. It is believed that the Muslim private library or public library was, for the first time, established in this period. In 909 B.C Ubaidullah-al-Mahdi established the Fatimid Khilafat in Tunisia of North-Africa to preach the Ismailia sect of Islam opposing the Abbasid Khilafat. But basically Fatimid library was flourished its key stone when they establish their center in Cairo. Afterwards, as a strong opponent of the Abbasids they practiced and patron vigorously of knowledge and sciences, and thus Fatimid knowledge and science was evolved. As a result, the Fatimid started the journey of their library. Regarding this, in this article we will discuss Fatimid library and its managerial functions and its influence on contemporary library and library administration.

## **OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY**

The main objective of the study is to explore the history of the Fatimid library, its various functions of library management such as, collection of books, preservation system, translation, cataloguing, inclusion and clarification of the books etc. The objective also includes finding out the influences of the Fatimid library and its library administration to the contemporary and modern library and their library administration of the globe.

## **SCOPE OF THE STUDY**

This study covers the history of the Fatimid library, its various functions such as, collection of books, preservation system, translation, cataloguing, inclusion and clarification of the books. Besides this, recruitment, promotion, management of archives and modern system of budgeting

of the Fatimid library administration and its related aspects will also be delineated. In this study, the author of this paper tried to find out the influences of the Fatimid library and its library management on contemporary and subsequent libraries and library administration systems of Muslim Asia, Africa and the Christian Europe.

## **LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY**

This study should not be considered as the comprehensive study of the Fatimid library and its library management. The author's only uses, for this study, the original sources which are available at the Dhaka University library and National Public Library of Bangladesh as well as internet. So many other original sources could not be considered in this regard. However, the author's tried to make it research worthy and valuable.

## **METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY**

At the inception of the study, a methodology for it was formulated. To ensure quality of the study and compiled documentation, the author followed the methodology of description and elucidation. This study concentrates on the Fatimid library and its various managerial activities. A good number of original books and sources have been consulted by the author for this study. Some secondary sources e.g. books, journal articles, encyclopedias have been used for the study.

## **FATIMID LIBRARY**

As an opponent of the Royal Abbasids of Baghdad Ubaidullah-al-Mahdi established Fatimid Khilafat in 909 A.C. in Tunisia. He tried to develop the Fatimid's by Ismaili doctrine. After him the descendants of the Fatimid rulers tried to establish Fatimid Empire with power, prestige and knowledge when they conquered Egypt the Fatimid get a new impetus in the field of learning. Now, as an opponent of Damascus and Baghdad they focused on modern learning besides economic development (Shamsuzzoha, 2010, pp.113-122). As a result between the period of 10<sup>th</sup> A.C and 12<sup>th</sup> A.C the Fatimid developed Cairo as an iconic centre of Muslim art and culture. This Cairo was a strong cultural counterpart of Abbasid of Baghdad and Roman Constantinople (Lane Poole, 1977, pp.117-157). S.K. Padover said, "North Africa, especially Egypt become the second largest centre of Islam and Cairo conduct the same activities like those of Baghdad in the East (Padover, 1965, p.355). In this period the Fatimid recognized the universality of knowledge and opened the door of knowledge to all people. The Fatimid Khalifas, aristocrats and patrons of education established libraries in different educational institutions of the Fatimid Empire. This trend of establishing library is evident from the time of Al-Mahadi. Quoting Ibnul Asir (1160-1232/33) Ahmad Shalaby said, actually from the reign of first Fatimid Khalifa their nurturing of knowledge and science started and later it was spread wider (Shalaby, 1954, p.105). The library adjacent to the building for the culture of science and knowledge of Fatimid Khalifa Al Aziz (975-96) is considered the first Fatimid library (Pinto, 1929, p.356). It is believed that besides this library some other small libraries were existent at that time. These libraries were full of books of Arab history, Islamic books, Greek science, Muslim Law, Written original books, Poetry, Grammar, Astronomy, Law, Biography, Chemistry and many other subjects. Most notably, these libraries were open for all. Discussing all the Fatimid library, we find them to be of three categories. i. Royal library, ii. Private library and iii. Public library.

i. **Royal Library:** From the very beginning of the Fatimid rule in North Africa they have started there some centre's to spread knowledge and intellectual activities. For this reason the Fatimid rulers and aristocrats were patronized the Muslim intellectuals which help to spread the intellectuality of the Fatimid. With the help of the rulers and knowledge lover Egypt was growing the proper of. According to Ibnul Asir, The first Fatimid Khalifa Ubaidullah-al-Mahdi obtained a huge amount of documents and books from his forefathers lost on the way to Sijilmasa and later some of these books and documents were discovered during the time of his son Abul Qasim. When the Fatimid Empire was spread the Khalifas collect many valuable books and documents from different regions and preserved them in their private collection. In the time between 969 to 972 the army chief of the fourth Fatimid Khalifa Al Muiz (952-75) general Sikilli conquered Egypt and established world famous Al Azhar University (Mosque University) and a library near Kahirat (now Cairo). These events pacify the establishment of Fatimid Royal Library. After Muiz Fatimid Khalifa Al Aziz who was renowned for his wisdom and knowledge established a Madrasa and a library with the university. After that a huge amount of students from Turkey, India, Yemen, Zanzibar and Al-Magribi region got a chance to take study with the Shiite religious believe and secular knowledge for over two hundred years (International Encyclopedia, 2000, p.443). Later during the reign of al Aziz in 988 B.C established another big library named Khazain Al Kusur for the use of scholars and lovers of knowledge. In forty of its rooms there were about 1.6 million data, pamphlets and books. More than 6 million was only on theology, grammar, hadith, dictionary, history, geography, astronomy and the books of chemistry (Imamuddin, 1983, p.33). In this royal collection there were about 6 thousand books on Mathematics and astronomy, 30 copies of *Kitab al Ain* which includes a hand written copy made by the author Khalil bin Ahmed, 12 copies of *Tarikh-i-Tabari* and 200 copies of Holy Quran copied by the famous calligraphers of the contemporary times. According to Mehedi Nakostein, this Library had a collection of more than one hundred books and 2400 copies of Quran which were inscribed with gold and silver. All these books were kept in different rooms and there were book shelf to keep the books. These rooms had the system to lock them up inside for security (Nakosteen, 1964, p.70). According to P.K. Hitti, this royal library had more than 2 lakhs books which include 2400 books on the discussion of Quran. Besides this, the royal library also had manuscripts written by Ibn Muklah and a copy of Ali Tabari's famous history book which contains the author's signature (Hitti, 1960, p.629).

It is not certain how many books there were in the Fatimid Royal Library. According to Al Makrizi (*Kitab al Khitat Wal Asr*) in the Royal Library of Al Aziz there were 40 vast rooms and each of those rooms consisted at least 18,000 books of ancient sciences, 30 copies of Al Khalil's famous dictionary *Kitabul Ain*, 20 copies of history book of Ali Tabari, 100 copies of Al Durrai's al Zamhar and 2400 copies of Al Quran (Haq, 1978, p.130). This statistics shows that that royal library had a collection of books more than 8 lacs 22 thousand and the other collection was 160000. Another source says that, the library had one room and its collections were about 2 lacs. But to accommodate 2 lacs books in a room sounds impossible. Historian Al Kalokshindi describes that, the library had a collection of 1.12 million books. Modern researcher and prominent Historian P.K. Padover termed the library to be a school library and said that probably there were 0.1 million book which includes 2400 copies of gold and silver inscribed copy of Holy Quran preserved in a separate room. Besides this there were books of law, grammar, rhetoric, history, biography, astronomy and chemistry. All those books were kept in wooden shelves and each shelf had a book list with it (Padover, 1965, p.356). Though there is a controversy over the collection of Al Aziz's Library, it is sure that there were a huge collection of books and that

library obtained fame as a remarkable establishment in that contemporary Muslim world for its contribution in the development of Islamic knowledge and science. Al Hakim (996-1021 A.D) developed his father Al Aziz's library during his reign. In 25<sup>th</sup> March of 1004 A.D. he established the Darul Ilm or Darul Hikmah (House of knowledge) in *Zab Al-Tababin* and he transferred all the books of al Aziz's Royal library to the Library he established adjacent to his House of Knowledge. Possessing an anti view about Sunni Muslim, Christians and Jews Al Hakim established this house of knowledge to preach Shiite culture and education. He introduced cooperatively easier rules to pacify the study and practice of knowledge and science. He added a library and advisory body to this *Darul Hikmah* (International Encyclopedia, 2000, p.443). It was open for all and the people and students were able to collect data, read books, copy books and even allowed to borrow books from this library. For the comfort of the scholars and researchers, the authority decorated the library and arranged soft carpets. There was adequate stuff for running the library. Khalifa Hakim collected many basic books of science by sending collectors to different region of the world and enriched the library. According to the description by famous Egyptian historian Al Makrizi, the Royal Library of Al Hakim had a collection of 1.6 million which includes the book he got from his father and those he collected from around the world. This huge collection includes copies of Quran and books of law, tafsir, astrology, grammar, dictionary, medicine, science, literature and art. From the commentary of Asma bin-Murthid we came to know that Al Hakim collected many precious books with the help of his Qazi Abu Yousuf. The Khalifa appointed Librarians, administrative officers, book collectors, binders, Copiers and security guards in order to run the library. Besides this he distributed free books, paper and pen among the poor students to attract them to study (De Lacy, 1923, pp. 138-139). The activities of this Darul Hikmah was so widespread and distinguished that it was much more developed than any other Muslim institutions of contemporary time. It was famous for its vastness and quality and it obtained a unique place in the contemporary world and this type of collection was never seen in later time also (Bukhsh, 1929, p.308).

Like other famous Libraries of the world the Fatimid Royal Library was on the verge of its destruction in 1068 A.D. When Fatimid Wazir (minister) Abul Faraz sold a great amount of books (25 loaded camels) for 1 lac dinar to pay the war returned soldiers, the library faced a fatal destruction. Few months later, when the Turkey army defeated the Egyptian army, the assets of Fatimid royal library were destructed. It is known that, after the defeat of Fatimid's the Turkey generals used to burn the books of their libraries in order to light their house and the leather of the binding books were used to repair the shoes of the slaves of their house (Lane Poole, 1910, p.149). The Turkey soldiers were so cruel to books that they make a hip of the pages of books in Abayer. Later the historians termed this hip as "Hill of Books" (Hitti, 1960, p.629). After this fatal blow the successors of Al Muntasir tried to add life by collecting some new books. It is said that even in 1171 when Salauddin Ayyubi entered Cairo the Fatimid Library consisted 120000 books (Ali, 2002, pp.68-69). But Salauddin distributed those books among his followers and thus the symbol of Fatimid pride the royal library finally gets destroyed.

**ii. Private Library:** During the Fatimid rule North Africa especially Egypt and Fustat became the epicenter of education, science and culture. According to S.K. Padover, North Africa especially Egypt became the second largest Islamic centre and it performed the same activities like Baghdad (Padover, 1965, p.355). This highly developed education and culture in Fatimid Egypt some scholars came forward besides the rulers and aristocrats and some private libraries was established there. Besides the state Royal Libraries there were four famous private libraries

in Cairo. One of those four was owned by an Arab Prince, one of an Egyptian Physician and the other two belong to two Jewish Businessmen. Among those the private library of Fatimid prince Mahmud Al-Dawlah Ibn Fatikh was the best one {Dey, 1396-97 (Bengali calendar), p.54}. He received education from the renowned scholars of his time to acquire higher knowledge in medicine, mathematics and philosophy. His thirst for knowledge and the inspiration from the scholars led him in establishing an enriched library. It is said that he had as much attraction for his books and the same indifference to his wife. But his wife's had her fame for her birth and beauty. Regarding this prominent Egyptian orator Sheikh Sadid-ad-Din said that after the death of prince Fatikh his wife went to his library to enquire the cause of his indifference. At that time she started to sing elegy and with the help of the slaves she threw the books into a huge water basin (Thompson, 1939, pp.358-359). This Library was attached to Fazilia Madrasa of Cairo and historians like Ibnul Athir and Al- Maqdisi praised this library as one of the richest libraries of Egypt. In the Fatimid reign the owner of another famous library was Egyptian Physician Al Muarrif. He was also a great scholar and in 1139 he earned a lots fame by writing foot-note and explanations on Aristotle. The shelves of his house were full of books. He spent most of his time reading books in his library. Ibn Usaibia said, I saw many books on Medicine and Science in his library which carry the name of Al-Muarrif (Mayerhof, 1965, p.356). But none of them looked pale without a glittering look and wise content. Mahmudia Library established by Jalaluddin Mahmud, an Advisor of the Mamluk Sultan Barkuk had another famous private library. This library had a collection of 4 thousand books which includes works of famous authors and engravers. The books from the library of Qazi Burhanuddin were added to this library and enriched the collection. This library lasted till the end of fifteenth century. After the conquered of Egypt by Ottoman Sultan Selim some books from this library was sent to Constantinople. At this time, many books were lost as it was looted by the intruders. Among those books 58 books are preserved in Khadiva library of Cairo, 6 in Bankipur Khuda Bukhsh library and one in Aligarh Muslim library (Imamuddin, 1983, p.37). Besides this, in 12<sup>th</sup> century there was a library in Syria which contains 4 thousand books and it was later destroyed by the Christian Crusaders.

In the Fatimid rule two Christian men were also established private library. With those, Yakub Ibn Killis (Wazir Khalifa Al Aziz) had a rich library. He was a renowned scholar who established an academy for learning. To attract the scholars, he gave them honorary payment. For this reason many great scholars came to his academy and enriched the knowledge of that time (Padover, 1965, p.358). Yakub kept his library open for all. But after his death his books were distributed among his family and thus came to an end. The other Christian Library was established by physician Ifraim.

**iii. Public Library:** North Africa especially Egypt became the epicenter of Muslim education and culture during the Fatimid period. When the Al-Azhar Mosque University was established, Egypt became the home of famous scholars and many students and scholars from different regions started to come Egypt. To meet the need of those students and scholars and to satisfy the thirst of knowledge of the local people some public libraries were established with the help of the rulers and aristocrats. Mainly the public libraries were attached to the mosque and schools and which were used as general people. During the Fatimid rule every important mosque had its own library where books of philosophy and science were also kept beside the religious books. The lover's of knowledge donated books in those libraries. That trend in those mosque libraries is still in some extent survived in the Muslim countries. Mosque Libraries were open to all the students, devotee Muslims and lovers of knowledge (Imamuddin, 1961, p.8). During the Arab

renaissance many mosque libraries were established with the help of the rulers and aristocrats and later in 9<sup>th</sup> century A.D. they got accumulated with the school colleges and other educational institutions (Wedgeworth, 1958, p.266). Fatimid Khalifa Al-Aziz established an academy in the Al Azhar mosque and later attached a library to enforce the activities of the academy. In that library there were a handsome collection of religious and philosophical books. According to S. K. Padover, there were one hundred thousand books which were used by the students and researchers (Padover, 1965, pp.354-358). After Al-Aziz his son Khalifa Al-Hakim also established a madrasah and a library in Cairo. This library contains books of Philosophy, Mathematics, Astronomy, Medicine, Grammar and Theology. People from all religion and sects had access to the library. The library was run from the profits of the donation of the rulers and aristocrats (Haque, 2008, p.121). All this Fatimid public libraries became the centre of preserving and distributing knowledge. In this regard Dr. Olga Pinto said, as some excellent libraries of the world were established in Cairo many people were not even interested in establishing their own library (Pinto, 1929, p.216).

## **Library Management**

When the Fatimid rulers established their centre in North Africa especially in Cairo, the intellectual activities was extended to a great extent. The patronizing and the contribution in education and culture by the Fatimid rulers played an important role behind this intellectual uprising. In that environment there was the emergence of many royal, public and private libraries and to run those libraries a certain library management system was also introduced there. We notice that at that time a new library management system grew which used the element taken from the Syrian and Persian library. Here we will discuss the library administrative system during the Fatimid reign in North Africa.

**1. Collection of Books:** Egypt was the centre of science and knowledge from the foot point of ancient civilization. For that reason Egyptian people were generally in favor of new knowledge. Following that trend, science and knowledge spread widely throughout the Fatimid Empire during the Fatimid reign. To keep the pace of this flow of learning the demand of books were very high. To meet this demand the Fatimid rulers, aristocrats and book lovers collected various types of books. Ahmed Shalaby said, the Fatimid rulers were very interested in collecting all types of books for their royal library (Shalaby, 1954, pp.106-107). Though their library had a huge collection they never hesitated to collect new books. Even they send book collectors to different region to collect original manuscripts. Khalifa Al-Hakam made book collection a fashion. It is known that he send his envoy to Syria, North Africa, Sicily and many other places to collect books for his library. Another description says that Khalifa Al-Aziz also collected many books on literature, Theology and Science from different places around the world. He also collected globe and maps for using in the library. He paid 15 thousand Dinars to buy a 2250 years antic globe made by Ptolemy and another globe made by Abul Hasan Sufi for the Buwayhaid Sultan Adud-Dawlah (Ahmad, 1956, pp.82-183). Besides this The Fatimid Khalifa's, Aristocrats' and owners of Private libraries collected copies of many authentic books and manuscripts by copying them. During 1053-54 Fatimid Khalifa Al-Muntasir send Fatimaid Emir Yamen Al-Sulayed (1036-1094) outside of Egypt to collect books. He collected many valuable books for Fatimid ruler Al-Muntasir and those books existed till the 5<sup>th</sup> predecessors of Al-Sulayed. Later in 1130-1131 this books was copied in recognition of Khalifa Al- Hafiz's reign to the Imamate. These books have been discovered in their clan's in Indian part (Cennedy, 1956,

p.5). It is known that destruction of Fatimid Library during the Turkey Invasion was later made good by the book collection effort of the predecessors of Al-Muntasir.

**2. Preservation of Books:** The Fatimid Library mainly takes the Syrian library management and book keeping system. Fatimids used to build large buildings to keep books they collected from various regions of the world. Those library buildings had long side rooms and arched rooms (Mez, 1973, p.173). According to Makrizi, Khalifa Al Aziz's Library had 40 rooms. Each room was full of a collection of 20 thousand and 550 books. Olga Pinto's descriptions tell us that the Fatimid rulers, princes and aristocrats were very interested in building libraries. During this time many large library buildings were built and those establishments had many rooms for preserving books. Each of the rooms was used separately. There were huge book-shelves adjacent to the walls of the rooms and books were kept there. These bookshelves were kept under locks. Whenever someone needed books the locks were opened at any time. Every room of the library was well facilitated for reading and everyone had an access to collect data from there. There were books of literature for people's entertainment and even some rooms had facility to listen music. Those rooms were comfortable gorgeously decorated with carpet and mats. The doors and windows of the libraries were well curtained and the main door was covered with costly heavy curtain so that cold air cannot enter there (Imamuddin, 1983, p.38). Like modern library management system, those libraries had directory of book keeping and binding. Here we can point a fact that, the ancient book binding example in the history of Islam was found in Egypt. Probably it was developing in the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> century but the engraving and binding technology was influenced by the Christians. In later time when these technologies developed in Egypt, during the Fatimid rule Egyptian Engravers expertise in using the machineries, print and engraving technologies (Hitti, 1960, p.631). In Fatimid libraries, there were some fixed rooms for printing, engraving and binding. The best copiers and binders worked there. At that time parchment and papyrus were used to copy and translate books for libraries. Many chemicals were used to preserve books. Valuable scarce manuscripts were bound with leathers and painted so beautifully that they look attractive and long lasting. According to the importance of those books the name, author's name and price were engraved with gold and silver. The torn books were collected and bound newly with leather. This book preservation system of the Fatimid gained fame in Europe (Bukhsh, 1902, p.130).

**3. Cataloging and Foot-notes:** Like noted modern libraries the Fatimid libraries had cataloging and bibliography system. The Royal library of Khalifa Al Aziz and the other libraries in Cairo had a cataloging system quite similar to our modern system. Each and every bookshelves had books inside and there were a list of books and author by the bookshelves. Besides this there were notices briefly describing different categories of study. In those Fatimid libraries book lists were also produced about different sections of study available at that time (Haque, 2008, p.120). According to Ali-Ibn Usaibia, Khalifa Al Hakim himself copied many ancient manuscripts and added foot-notes to them. According to a description from Abul Kifti it is known that in 435 Hijri (Muslim Calendar) Fatimid Wazir Abul Kashim Ali Ibn Ahmed had taken the charges of Al-Hakim's library and made a catalogue for the collected books. He also repaired the torn books. At that time cataloguing was a routine work. Whenever any new book or data came to them they were enlisted it to the catalogue. These handwritten catalogues were kept very carefully like the other manuscripts. Fatimid catalogues were organized subject wise.



**4. Appointment of the Librarians:** Like Persian library management (Imamuddin, 1983, p.37) system there were officials like Wakil, Khazin (treasurer) and Mushrik (collector). But the rank and designation of Egyptian library management is not certainly known to us. It is estimated that there were a mixture of Persian and Syrian elements. However it is recognized that every Fatimid library, whether it was royal or private, there were librarians appointed by the respective authority. Highly educated and skilled person was appointed as librarians and they used to get high position in society (Shustery, 1938, p.166). In Fatimid libraries there were employees like, Book binder, collector, engraver, copier and translator. Besides this there were manager, porter, peon and guards to run the activities of library. The number of employees depends on the size of the library but a good library had 90-100 employees. Regarding the librarian and employees of Fatimid library Olga Pinto said that, Fatimid Khalifa Al aziz's library was a private one and it is known that Wazir Yakub Ibn Killis was appointed to collect and organize books in that library. But Abul Hasan Ali Ibn Muhammad Ash-Shabushti was the chief librarian of that library. Ibnul Baoab and Banu Muqllah (born approximately 835 A.D) were two best copiers of that library. From the description of Abul kifti it is also known that during the reign of Khalifa Al Hakim, Wazir Abu Kashim Ali Ibn Ahmed take the charge of the library of Darul Ilm (house of knowledge). According to another description in 965 A.D Khalifa Al- Hakim established Darul Ilm in Cairo. He appointed a librarian and 2 assistant librarian to help those who collected books from others library to submit articles for this library (Mez, 1973, p.177). Besides all the government libraries the other public and private libraries had a good number of well paid librarians and employees.

**5. Lending of Books:** The Fatimid libraries had a book lending system like modern libraries. Those libraries were open for all. Anyone can borrow and copy the books from there. Learned and knowledgeable persons used to study Al Quran, astronomy, grammar, linguistics, medicine and various types of books in those Royal and Public libraries. There were some special facilities in the library of Khalifa Al Hakim. To encourage people in study the library provided free paper, pen and ink to the teachers, students and readers who went to the library. People from all walks of life were allowed to enter the library. In Fatimid libraries there were regular arrangement of discussions, speech and debate. Many students went to libraries to attend those debate and speech. In Darul Ilm there were frequent debates and oftentimes those debates turned into *Bahas* (debate on controversial issue) which is very rare in modern libraries (Shalaby, 1954, p.101). Most of Fatimid Private libraries were also open for all. Fatimid Wazir Yakub Ibn Killis awarded donation to the wise educators who came to his library. He arranged *Mojlish* (meeting) every week. Here poets recite their poem, wise people discuss their own specialized knowledge and good orators compete there to show their skill in speech. Yakub's *Mojlish* also arranged regular debate and the winners were duly awarded.

**6. Translation:** In Fatimid Library translation was started as a valuable part of development of knowledge and library management. Inspired from the translation unit of Abbasid Khalifa Al-Mamun's *Baitul Hikmah* the Fatimid's also set their translation unit. Here many books on medicine, astronomy, philosophy, grammar and literature collected from round the world were translated into Arabic. Those translated books were bound with beautiful covers and preserved in the book shelves according to their value. S.M. Imamuddin said that, though there was no printing press, modern machineries and photocopier many important books and documents were translated and through that the art of calligraphy was developed to a great extent (Imamuddin, 1983, p.38). Famous educationist and calligrapher Ibn Nadim (writer of *Al-Fihrist*) and Great

biographer Yakut (died in 1128 A.D) worked as translator in the Fatimid library. In this library Yakut Ibn Adi Al Nasrani (died 974 A.D) copied 100 pages everyday and prepared 2 copies of Ali Tabari's famous book of history. Besides this he made another 8 copies of Holy Quran. It also confirmed that Abu Bakar Al Dakkak also worked in the Fatimid library as a translator and copier.

**7. Archives:** While researching Arab history some modern historians and researchers opined that there were no archives in the medieval Muslim countries. But it is to be noted that the libraries of Fatimid period were used as archives as well (Goitein, 1967, pp.1-133). Khalifa Al Aziz preserved many documents in his library which his ancestors carried from North Africa. Besides this he also preserved many original books of science and knowledge there. In a description it is said that in Al Aziz's library there were 2400 copies of Holy Quran copied by calligrapher Ibnul Bawbab and Banu Muqllah, Khalil Bin Boshir's handwritten Kitabal Ain and many other original copies of contemporary writers and researchers. Besides this a 2250 years old globe prepared by Ptolemy proves that this library was used as an archive. At that time Fatimid libraries in Egypt kept one kind of maps which were used by the readers of those libraries. Those costly maps made with a kind of cloth named *Dabiki* and fabrics were very popular. This *Dabiki* was so costly that it required silver as its weight. After the death of Al Aziz, his library was accumulated with the *Darul Ilm* established by his son Khalifa Al Hakim. This made the archive management much more developed. According to a description of Abul Kifti the works of archive get broadened when Khalifa Al Hakim added the documents of his father's library to the library of *Darul Ilm*. For that in 435 Hijri (Arabic calendar) his Wazir Abu Quasim Ali Ibn Ahmed was appointed to run the management of the archives. Abu Quasim Ali Ibn Ahmed made catalogue of many valuable documents and preserved them in the library (Haq, 1978, pp.126-135).

**8. Budget:** Like modern days the Fatimid libraries had an annual budget for the proper management system of payments of employees and other cost of library. The big libraries had a budget of approximately 275 Dinar (Arabian Currency) (Mez, 1973, p.177). Al Makrizi (Quoted from Pinto, 1929, pp.227-228) provided the following annual cost list:

|                           |          |
|---------------------------|----------|
| Salary of librarians      | 48 Dinar |
| Salary of other employees | 15 Dinar |
| Payment for the copier    | 90 Dinar |
| Paper, pen and ink buying | 12 Dinar |
| Prize of Abadani mat      | 10 Dinar |
| Water bill                | 12 Dinar |
| Repairing curtains        | 01 Dinar |
| Repairing torn books      | 12 Dinar |
| Felt curtain for winter   | 05 Dinar |
| Carpet for winter         | 04 Dinar |

This description says that, Al Hakim's *Darul Ilm* had a cost of 209 Dinar per year and this amount varied in accordance with the necessity. Besides this a special budget was allotted to collect new books. There were also distinct budget for the public and private libraries supervised by the owners themselves. The Cairo library got monthly 1000 Dinar from its donors. The

private and public libraries used to bear their cost from the fare of the property they obtain from donations (Shustery, 1938, p.167).

Finally from the discussion above, we can state that the library was one of the most prominent sectors where the Fatimid rulers played very significant role. For the development of Islamic learning the Fatimid rulers first set their centre in North Africa and later in Egypt. As a strong competitor of the Abbasids of Baghdad they furnished their intellectuality in the field of education which paved the way of the development of science, knowledge and culture in that region. And with these the Fatimid libraries played an important role behind that development. The Fatimid libraries with a highly developed system of collection of books, preservation of books, translation, cataloguing, and inclusion and clarification system of the books, adding of foot-notes, employee management and archival system had also become the most glorious example for the development of the library management system of Muslim Spain. Following that trend and model of the Fatimid library a good number of rich libraries were flourished in Cecily, Corsica, Syria, Sardinia, Algeria, Libya and all the Mediterranean areas. Thus those libraries carried the fame of the Fatimid flora and prestige throughout Asia, Africa and Europe as well.

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