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VISIT TO THE GAZI HUSREV BEG LIBRARY IN SARAJEVO, JUNE 7-18, 2004*

Introduction

The Gazi Husrev Bey Library in Sarajevo was founded in 1537, together with a Islamic school (*madrasah*). Gazi Husrev Bey, the Ottoman Governor of Bosnia, had established the oldest higher education institution in Sarajevo for the teaching of Sufi philosophy (*hanikah*) some six years earlier. In his endowment charter (*vakufnama*) concerning the construction of the madrasah, the benefactor requested that "... whatever was left from the funds for construction should be used for the purchase of good books, which would be utilized in the aforementioned madrasah, for those who would read them and for those who are involved in science to copy from those books". For this reason, this library is considered to be the first and oldest cultural institution of the Bosniaks.

The Library remained within the Kurshumljia Madrasah until 1863 when, due to the lack of space, it was reallocated to a larger room built next to the Gazi Husrev Bey's Mosque. It remained there until 1935 when it was moved again because of the large quantity of books in its collections. Its new location was in the building in front of the Imperial (Careva) Mosque. The library and its collections were housed there until the beginning of the War in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 1992 when safety concerns forced the transfer and distribution of the collections to several other more secure locations within the city.

* Mr. David G. Hirsch visited the Gazi Husrev-bey Library with the aim of improving the work of the Library. The visit was organised by US Embassy in Sarajevo. We would like to thank Mr. Hirsch for his suggestions as well as to express our gratitude to US Embassy in Sarajevo which made this visit possible.

The basic collections of the Library consist of manuscripts in Arabic, Turkish and Persian. They number approximately 10,000 codices, which makes this Library one of the largest of its kind in Europe. The manuscripts came from various parts of the Islamic world, mainly from the largest centers of Islamic culture and science such as Istanbul, Mecca, Medina, Cairo and Baghdad. A considerable number of these manuscripts originated in Bosnian towns and villages where many Bosniaks-Muslims wrote original works or copied the books by other authors from all, then known scientific disciplines.

The complete book collections became larger because many individuals endowed or donated books to the Library. Sometimes the whole private libraries were given as a gift. A number of manuscripts and other valuable books, as well as several private collections, were purchased by the Islamic Community of Bosnia and Herzegovina for this Library.

The library's holdings today number some 80,000 volumes. Apart from the manuscript collections, there are other holdings of printed books, periodicals and historical documents in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, in addition to Bosnian and other European languages. While all subject areas are represented in the manuscripts collections, many of the Arabic manuscripts deal with Islamic Studies whereas the Turkish manuscripts are mainly literary and the Persian manuscripts deal mainly with classical Persian literature. The periodicals' holdings include the oldest newspapers and magazines printed in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Nineteenth century Bosnian periodicals, as well as Turkish language and Bosnian language in Arabic script, known as *Arebica* are represented. The archival collections consist of documents related to the history of Bosnia and Herzegovina during the period of Ottoman rule. The library also has an important collection of 1,400 *vakufnamas*, and 86 *sijills* (court records and protocols) from the Sharia Court in Sarajevo. It should be mentioned that the entire Library collections in the Library were protected during the last war. Bearing in mind the level of devastation and destruction of the Bosniak cultural heritage, the Library's holdings represent today almost the only source for research of the history and cultural heritage of the Bosniaks and Islamic studies.

The basic functions of the Library are acquisition, cataloguing, processing, preserving and providing access to the collections for scientific and research purposes to all individuals involved in research of these disciplines.

Cataloging

The library has done a remarkable job of cataloging its manuscript collections. Fourteen volumes of a printed catalog have been produced and online records have been entered into a Filemaker database.

Vernacular Arabic, Persian, and Ottoman Turkish books, as well as Latin-script books and serials are each cataloged into a separate Filemaker database. These databases have recently become available for browsing through the Internet at the library's website: <http://www.ghbibl.com.ba/en/index.html>” <http://www.ghbibl.com.ba/en/index.html>

The librarians catalog at a high level and only minor modifications would be needed to conform to international standards and contribute to the major bibliographic databases such as OCLC and the RLG Union Catalog. During my visit we discussed the issues concerning online cataloging of Arabic, the challenges of establishing Arabic authority records (selecting the appropriate form of a name and appropriate references), and the benefits of cooperation with international partners.

During the site visit the Gazi Husrev Begova Library staff had an opportunity to view cataloging of manuscripts, books and serials by libraries in the United States and in the Arab World. Some of the catalogs searched were Library of Congress, Ohio State University, Harvard University, University of Michigan, UCLA and United Arab Emirates University. Ohio State University and United Arab Emirates University both employ bilingual Arabic-English software. University of Michigan provides full cataloging of its manuscripts in its online catalog. Librarians also had an opportunity to view cataloging records in the OCLC and RLG databases and Authority records in the Library of Congress and RLG Union Catalog databases. We also discussed cooperative projects such as the Middle East Microforms Program and the OACIS database of Middle Eastern serials hosted by Yale University. Contact information for the different software companies and bibliographic databases was provided to the library staff.

Recommendations

While the catalogers have mastered the intellectual process of cataloging, some modifications need to be made and some important decisions need to be taken.

The librarians currently use accepted reference sources to the extent available when establishing Arabic author names.

The library catalogs each copy of each book individually. While old and rare books may vary from copy to copy, most 19th and 20th century books do not vary from one copy to another. Normally a single bibliographic record should be sufficient for each title of the same edition. If more than one copy of a book is held, an additional item should be added to the holdings, or item record.

Archives Collections

The archives collection consists of approximately 500 meters of documents. These include many important documents from 1880-the period following World War II. Subject matter includes relations between the Reis and the religious authorities and the government. These documents are extremely important to historians and can reveal a great deal about the daily life of Muslims in 19th and 20th century Bosnia. Some of the co

In addition to document archives, the Library also houses collections of old Bosnian postcards, over 8000 photographs, negatives and slides, both old and current and death announcements. In the library's museum collection, there is also a collection of historical maps. Current storage practices for these items are also inadequate. These items should also be store in acid-free paper and containers.

Recommendations

The storage currently provided for these materials is inadequate. These unique documents should be separated with acid-free paper and stored in acid-free boxes. The boxes currently being used may actually be acid-free but the paper being used to separate the individual documents is not of archival quality. Many of the documents are already yellowed and brittle and need to be scanned if their intellectual content is to be preserved. Current description level for the individual manuscripts is minimal.

During my visit I demonstrated the Image Databases of the Online Archive of California <http://www.oac.cdlib.org/> as a model for cataloging and archiving images.

I would also recommend that archive staff examine the Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Online Catalog which may be examined at: <http://www.loc.gov/rr/print/catalog.html> They have recently included the Abdul Hamid II collection. This online catalog has become available since my visit to Sarajevo.

Reprographic Services

The Gazi Husrev Beg Library has surpassed many US libraries in its microfilming and scanning capabilities. They have successfully filmed all 10,000 manuscripts and scanned near 3,000 which are available at reasonable cost to requesting researchers and librarians.

Some general observations

With the impending more and requisite changes that will result in service, it is important that the Gazi Husrev Beg library think about what it's mission is, who its audience will be, what types of materials it will collect, and what services it will provide. It would be impossible for the library to collect materials in all subjects and in all languages and clear guidelines need to be established. Many sample mission statements and collection development policies can be found on the web. I will be happy to do some research in this area on request.

The staff in general felt that cataloging and exchange were done well at their institution. There was concern expressed at the lack of a clear collection development policy and the absence of an annual budget for the purchase of books and journal subscriptions. At present there are no paid acquisitions and no paid journal subscriptions. All items are received as gift. Some staff felt the need for an organizational chart as well as job descriptions for each position. There are currently no criteria for advancement or promotion within the system; hence there is little incentive for employees to perform at peak efficiency. Despite this fact, employees displayed a high level of professionalism.

Many of the staff are involved in publication and research projects as part of their regular duties.

Public service

The library staff have had little experience in Public Service. As the staff prepare to move to a more public setting, training sessions should be provided on dealing with the larger community and to school groups who may not have much background in the field of Near Eastern or Islamic Studies. The needs of the average community visitor are necessarily different from those of specialized researchers.

The Library needs to enhance its interaction with the College of Islamic Studies. There is much that could be done in terms of cooperation

between the two institutions. Librarians at Gazi Husrev Beg should take a leadership role in training librarians at the College and students at the College should be encouraged to take advantage of the rich resources at the Gazi Husrev Beg Library. There is much primary source material which could be used for advanced research relating to the History of Islam in Bosnia. I had the opportunity to visit the College of Islamic Studies and its small library with Dr. Mustafa Jahic, Ms. Julie O'Reagan and Mr. Douglas Ebner. We were warmly received by the Dean of the College, Dr. Enes Karic. In addition to discussing the academic programs offered by the College, we also discussed the possibilities of future collaboration between the College and the Gazi Husrev Beg Library.

There are other institutions with extensive holdings relating to Islam and cooperation with them would also be extremely desirable. These include, among others, the Bosniak Institute and the National Library of Bosnia. I was fortunate enough to visit this center during my visit to Sarajevo. The Bosniak Institute's collections include substantial holdings of modern Arabic and Persian monographs and serials which largely complement the holdings of the Gazi Husrev Beg library, while the National Library's holdings include a substantial number of manuscripts in vernacular Middle Eastern languages. A publicly available online catalog including the holdings of all these institutions would be a worthwhile goal.

The Gazi Husrev Beg library would be ideally suited to the establishment of a group of "Friends". Such a group might be asked to help in fundraising for specific needs of the Library.

The Reis completed his PhD at the University of Chicago and has had the opportunity to observe how US libraries function. Thus, he takes a strong interest in the activities of the Gazi Husrev Beg Library and is anxious to see it assume an important role in Sarajevo's educational and cultural worlds.

The Gazi Husrev Beg Library has the potential to be a major center in the region for advanced Islamic Studies in addition to being an important cultural center which will help educate the local population. I wish them every success in their future endeavors.

My sincere thanks to Ms. Julie O'Reagan and Douglas Ebner of the US Embassy for organizing and facilitating this visit and to Dr. Mustafa Jahic, Director of the Gazi Husrev Beg Library for his kind assistance and hospitality during my visits to his library.