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THE TREASURY OF ANCIENT SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE

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“... If pens did not leave eternal memories, how would we know the wisdom of peoples?”
Abu Rayhan Biruni.

The generation, formation and development of artistic - aesthetic and philosophical thinking of every nation requires first of all determining the original sources and creating on their basis the true history of their culture, studying the rich heritage of the past, studying the social and political history of the people, identifying new sources for the study of spiritual culture and the relationships of cultures of adjacent regions. Today we live in the century of technics and high technologies. Science has accomplished incredible discoveries and achievements. At the same time, there are still many hidden pages of the history. Science proves that there are at the core of all discoveries and innovations a combination of truths proven for centuries and approved. And the basis of this combination is made up of ancient manuscripts that have reached our time by passing from century to century and from generation to generation. Each of these manuscripts is the fruit of individual eras, and our common history and culture.

At the Institute of Manuscripts named after Muhammad Fuzuli of Azerbaijan National Academy of Sciences, which is rightly considered one of the largest repositories of manuscripts in the world, there is the richest written heritage of our ancestors, testifying to the rich and ancient culture of the Azerbaijani people. Azerbaijani manuscript books are invaluable gifts of our people to the treasury of world culture. There is not any large museum of oriental culture in the world, or a collection of oriental manuscripts, where Azerbaijani manuscripts do not take their rightful place. The culture of manufacturing of them had already reached the highest level in the medieval period. Some books of that time distinguished by the brightness and freshness of colors, the magnificence of the artistic decoration, and were rich with illustrations.

Manuscript books were products of collective labor. In manufacturing of them, participated masters of paper works, copyists of texts - calligraphers, designers of the manuscripts, artists - bookbinders. There were special requirements for papers used for books. One class was made of silk towing without a cotton mass and was very elegant. That paper distinguished by its density, purity and smoothness of the surface, it was excellently lined, and
touching it created a sense of touching new paper banknotes. By its color, this paper was
mainly creamy. Another class - semi-silk – was made of half and half silk and hemp fibers.
As a result, a thick paper, perfectly suitable for glassing was made up. Turning over their
pages gave a feeling of warmth and solidity of everything written on it. To apply gloss, the
paper was covered with liquid starch and lined with a special sink or agate tooth. To achieve
the best result, the process was repeated several times. After that, it was possible to write on a
glossy paper like polished ivory. In case of errors, the text was gently washed with warm wa-
ter using a soft sponge. The dried place was again covered with liquid starch, dried, thor-
oughly polished, and then corrected. The finished paper of the desired format and class, was
sent to the calligrapher.

Good and durable ink - the first condition for achieving high quality in calligraphy.
Even nowadays, experts are amazed at the exclusively black and non-fading color of the an-
cient inks. The well-known orientalist A. Semenov recalled: ‘In 1913, I held in my hands a
volume of the Book of Healing by Avicenna, rewritten by order of Sultan-Hussein-Mirza. The
book was written on a shiny paper which was completely exceptional in its density and almost
looked like a mirror. The Arabic text on it was written in ink so black and glossy that all the
letters seemed freshly written and not yet dried.’ It is not only the ink quality that is surpris-
ing: even after many centuries they have not lost their delicate flavor. Gorgeous manuscripts
were created by order of the rulers and nobles - connoisseurs of the beautiful and elegant.
There were not many such formats.

Much more were just excellently executed copies of various works.

If in our time readers sometimes do not pay attention on the font of the book, evaluating
it from the point of view of clarity and beauty, but the taste of the Eastern reader, brought up
for centuries on the harmony of lines, was always sophisticated and exacting not so much,
perhaps, to the overall design of the manuscript, as to its most essential part - to the hand-
writing with which it was written. Hence the fascination of the East with famous calligra-
phers, the pride of the owners of manuscripts written by various luminaries of calligraphy and
often the same love for collecting samples of their handwritings and entire manuscripts, just
like in Europe they search for and collect works of famous artists of the brush and chisel.

Calligraphers - artists enjoyed no less fame than famous singers, musicians, poets. In
order to achieve excellence in this profession, not only talent, but also exceptional diligence
was necessary. From the manuscripts about calligraphic art one can find out how the training
was conducted under the supervision of a trainer. Recopying of manuscripts performed with
artistic mastery was a time consuming process. It often took the same amount of time spent on
drawing a picture or writing a large literary work. All work was done in one artistic style. It is
not surprising that such books were loved and admired as much as the paintings of famous
masters.

The work of bookbinders was also highly valued. They also preferred to do everything
themselves and in the most careful manner. Cardboard covers were made to glue over leather.
This was the first-class production of morocco leather. On the book, not letting it dry, patterns
were applied with cold embossing.

Thanks to the cult of the book that reigned over the centuries in the ancient East, our
people became the owner of unique treasures that were discussed. Thus, the Institute of
Manuscripts named after M. Fuzuli of ANAS at the same time became an invaluable treasury
- a museum of the history of book art.

Unique manuscripts, printed old books, collections and personal archives of scientists of
the 19th-20th centuries, old periodicals constitute the golden fund of the vault of our institute.

Here are stored unique manuscripts, rewritten in the 9-11th centuries, as well as the
works of many classics of Azerbaijani literature, works of medieval scholars and poets.
Among them, there are many works in Arabic. As is known, the works of Azerbaijani schol-

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ars, poets and writers who wrote in Arabic constitute one of the brilliant pages of the golden fund of Muslim science and culture.

It also stores in great numbers beautiful Persian-language written monuments belonging to the spiritual heritage of many peoples of the medieval East, who, due to historical circumstances and traditions, created their works in Persian.

Invaluable written literature for studying the history of the Azerbaijani language, literature, science and culture are Turkic manuscripts, which cover all branches of knowledge.

453 manuscripts relate to the field of medicine. Among them are manuscripts written in Arabic, Persian and Turkish, which were compiled both in the territory of modern Azerbaijan and brought there from other areas in different historical periods. 320 manuscripts were written in Persian, 60 in Turkish and 73 in Arabic. The Baku Institute of Manuscripts also contains a number of copies of various manuscripts in medicine. It contains 30 complete and incomplete copies of such famous works as ‘Tukhfat al-Muminin’, 10 copies of the work of Persian scientist Muhammad Mehdi bin Ali Nahi Sharif ‘Zad almusafirin’, 9 copies of the pharmacology work of Muizaffar bin Mohammed Shafai ‘Garabadin’, 2 copies of the manuscript of Mohammed Shirvani ‘Tibbnemah’, 5 copies of the manuscript of Mansour ibn Mohammad ibn Ilias ‘Kifayeyi-Mansuriya’, copies of the translation into Persian of the works of the famous Austrian scholar Schlimer, 3 copies of the manuscript by Yusif bin Mohammed Haravi ‘Jamul Favayid’, 3 copies of ‘Ihtiyarat b. Badi’, as well as such famous works as ‘Zahirei – Harezmshahi’ by Zeinaddin ibn Abu Ibrahim Jurjani, ‘Mualijati-Munfaride’ by Abulhasan Maragi, ‘Arvahul-asjad’ by Shamsaddin Kashani, ‘Zahirei-Nizamshahi’ by Rustam Jurjani, ‘Kitab al-Mudawat’ by Abdullah Majid Hakim, ‘Siraj at-Tibb’ by Hasan bin Riza Shirvani, ‘Favayid al-Hikmat’ by Hadji Suleiman Gajar Irevani, ‘Hirga’ by Murtuz Gulu Khan Shamlu and many others.

It should be noted that in the fall of 2005, the collection of medieval medical manuscripts stored at the Institute of Manuscripts was included in the UNESCO World Memory Program, which contains the most unique written monuments of humanity. These works are of great value not only for individual nations, but also for all of humanity as a whole. Among these works there are ‘The Canon of Medicine’ by Abu Ali ibn Sina (Avicenna), ‘Zahirei – Nizamshahi’ by Rustam Jurjani, and ‘On Surgery and Instruments’ by Abulkasim Zahravi.

A copy of the ‘Canon of Medicine’ by Avicenna was rewritten in 1143. This book is one of the most reliable copies of this encyclopedic work, which gained fame both in the East and West. Scientists of various epochs explained by the fact that the author summarized the entire experience of the ancient and early Middle Ages and, using his numerous observations, gave an exhaustive presentation of medical theory and practice that was original for his time, which made it the most studied work in the history of mankind.

‘Zahirei-Nizamshahi’ by Rustam Dzhurdzhani, written in the 13th century is unique in that it is the only manuscript of this work in the world. Here are given tips aimed at preserving human health, it tells about the treatment of various diseases, gives prescriptions for medicines, describes all kinds of treatments. The pages of the manuscript are richly decorated with colorful ornaments.

The book of the famous Arabib doctor of the 12th century Abulkasim Zahravi ‘On surgery and instruments’ for many centuries was considered the most authoritative textbook on surgery both in the East and West. This is the only work in which descriptions and drawings of about 200 surgical instruments are given, methods of their use during specific operations are shown. Zahravi is considered the founder of dental surgery.

We hope that the inclusion of these three manuscripts in the list of World Memory is the first step aimed at the recognition of Azerbaijani manuscripts in the world, and in the future our other valuable manuscripts will also take a place in this list.
Regarding the content of manuscripts stored in the Institute of Manuscripts, it should be noted that there are works on magic and healing, the magical properties of stones, astrology and the impact on human health, character and other qualities of people born under different signs of the zodiac, their predisposition to one or another disease.

There are manuscripts dedicated to pharmacology, where recipes are given for simple and complex drugs. The term complex (murakkabat) drugs by medieval authors meant multi-component mixtures, which included dozens of different components. Some drugs are characterized according to their composition, consistency (Majuns, Juvarishi, powders, pills), others according to their therapeutic effect (Tyrac, tonic, iyaraji, vomiting and antiemetic, etc.)

We should specifically note the manuscripts consisting of Hadith (legends about the life, deeds and statements of the Prophet) - “Tikki-Nebevi”. Here are collected many different statements of the Prophet Mohammed and his associates regarding medicine, treatment, human health, healing properties of various products and dishes.

Speaking about the numerous manuscripts devoted to the treatment of various diseases, the most informative of them primarily give advice related to the correct, healthy lifestyle, aimed at preserving human health. To be healthy you need to live in a healthy environment, breathe healthy air, drink healthy water and eat healthy food. In addition, you need to build a house in the right place and with the right layout. It is necessary to observe the mode of work and rest. Physical and mental exhaustion, lack of sleep, or, conversely, a passive lifestyle and too long sleep is one of the main causes of health problems. One of the necessary conditions for preserving health was control of emotions, a balanced diet, timely procedures for cleansing the intestines, stomach and gall bladder, preventive bleeding, steam bath.

Then they talked about the methods and techniques of treating various diseases: drinking medications from medicinal plants, baths from decoctions of medicinal herbs, preventive and therapeutic massage using healing aromatic oils, rubbing ointments, using powders and compresses, healing bloodletting, treating smells, music, color, diet, inhalation and surgery. Ancient scholars were supporters of complex treatment. In the treatment of various diseases, physicians of the medieval East paid great attention to communicating with nature, walking in the garden, inhaling the fragrance of flowers, enjoying the singing of birds, and the murmur of brooks and fountains.

Currently, about 12,000 manuscripts are kept at the Institute of Manuscripts named after Mohammed Fizuli of the National Academy of Sciences of Azerbaijan. These manuscripts, which we consider to be the national treasure of our people, are an integral part of the world history. The study of this centuries-old heritage of antiquity and its return to the use of modern science is one of the important tasks of our scientists.

References:

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Qədim biliklər xəzinəsi

XÜLASƏ

Açar sözər: tibb, əlyazmalar, farmakologiya


Земфира Мамедова

Сокровищница древних научных знаний

РЕЗЮМЕ

Ключевые слова: медицина, рукописи, фармакология

В статье даются сведения о том, что Институт Рукописей НАН Азербайджана является сокровищницей, где бережно хранится многовековое культурное наследие нашего народа. Институт обладает одной из богатейших в мире коллекций средневековых рукописей, среди которых медицинские рукописи занимают особое место. Эти трактаты написаны на арабском, персидском, турецком языках и охватывают период с IX по XX век.