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SHEIKH AL-SILAFI (1085-1180) IN AZERBAIJAN

Öz

The article provides information about travel of Sheikh al-Silafi in Azerbaijan, his meetings with authoritative personalities, local scientists and teachers. It is pointed out that the study data of al-Silafi based on his own work "Mu'jam al-Safar" as the source is of particular importance for the study of scientific contacts of scientists who worked in the local scientific community. Thus, Al-Silafi who gave information about Azerbaijani intellectuals traveled to the cities of Azerbaijan and kept connection with outstanding scholars and exchanged their ideas. Information about education in Azerbaijan, the activity of teachers of Azerbaijan by al-Silafi is precious like the first source. Mainly, information about madrasa of Nizamiyya in Ganja, madrasa of Zanjan and the information about teachers here played important role in learning education of Azerbaijan in the Middle-Ages.

Keywords: caliphate, cities of Azerbaijan, scholars, scientific relations, library, madrasa.
SHEIKH AL-SILAFI (1085-1180) AZERBAYCAN’DA

Öz


Anahtar kelimeler: halifelik, Azerbaycan kentleri, akademisyenler, bilimsel ilişkiler, kütüphane, medrese.

There is a lot of information about visits of many scholars in XI-XIII centuries to Azerbaijan in historical literature. The information of scholars who noted the events they saw while traveling is very interesting for us. One of them is Abu Tahir Al-Silafi who traveled to the cities of Azerbaijan and provided information about their intellectual environment and native scholars’ scientific relations with other scholars’ of the Caliphate. As the most outstanding scholar of its time, the sheikh of Isfahan, Abu Tahir al-Silafi can be considered as the person related to Azerbaijan. Abu Tahir of Shafi’i madhhab learned fiqh from Ilkiya Abu Al-Hasan al-Harrasi, Arabic language from Khatib Tabrizi. He went to the different countries and arrived in Alexandria in 511/1117 A.H. He earned high respect there and many theologian scholars came there to benefit from him. He had great respect among scholars and hafizes in XI century. Al-Samani noted him as one of the most famous hafizes in his book called “Kitab al-Ansab”. Thanks to his great reputation, the vizier of the governor of Egypt, Fatimi Coliph al-Sahir al-Ubeydi, al-Adil al-Hasan ibn al-Sillar established madrasa for Al-Silafi in 546/1151 A.H. and gave the right of governing of it to al-Silafi. Today this madrasa is famous too. (3, p.144-145).

Among the countries he traveled such as Khorasan, Ghazvin, Hefaz, Haramein, Kufa, Basra, Hamadan, Zanjan, Rey, Dinavar, Damascus, Egypt, there was Azerbaijan too. Unlike the scholars such as Al-Samani and Yagut al-Hamawi, he was not only in historical cities of South Azerbaijan, he traveled to Arran and Shirvan, the northern part of Azerbaijan. His traveling lasted for many years, even for ten years. He died in Alexandria.

Late XI century -early XII century was the period of collecting of hadiths by theologian scholars and they examined if they were sahib (correct) or not. Al-Silafi traveled to Azerbaijan in this period. His work called “Mu’jam Al-Safar” provided information about the countries in the Caliphate and scholars of Azerbaijan. These scholars were Sufi’s he knew in his experiences of travelling. Likewise, other information was very notable because he used the information about whom he met and trusted. This work provided information about 117 scholars of Azerbaijan. Among them were Ahmad ibn Ali al-Bayhaqi who taught in the madrasa of Zanjan, Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Ahmad ibn Muhammad Zenceviyye al-Zancavi who gave
Fatwa for 29 years, Abu Mansur Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Yanal al-Isfahan who was famous for Turkish title, his living quarter and events happened here and this information is very reliable because he witnessed these events. He was Sufi sheikh, so there were many living quarters which Sufis lived in his work. He gave the main importance to Sufi sheikhs and living quarters. He met Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn Musa al-Ansari whom thousands of people obeyed in scholarly circles and he was one of the descendants of Burra ibn Asib.

Al-Silaфи went to the cities such as Shirvan, Ganja, Nakhchivan, Derbend, Zanjan, Salmas, Sarakhs, Ahar and presented in the discussions with native scholars about libraries, mosques, madrasas and hadith schools and exchanged his ideas with them, gave information about native scholars to them, taught and learned hadith. In this period, the experts from different scientific fields considered the learning of hadith as their duty. It affirmed the importance of hadith for its time. One of the most famous faqih Abu al-Kasim Meymun ibn Umar Muhammad al-Babi was fiqh scholar but he was engaged in the science of hadith. Abu Hafz Umar ibn al-Hussein listened hadith from him. We learned from Abu Tahir al-Silaфи’s work that while traveling, Baba met Meymun ibn Umar and learned hadith by listening. Al-Silaфи appreciated him as notable fiqh scholar and he listened Meymun al-Babi and his students’ hadiths. Al-Silaфи wrote that he put the information he collected about him in Salmas in 503/1109 A.H. Al-Silaфи met Meymun ibn Umar in Bab al-Abvan and al-Silaфи considered him as famous faqih of Bab-al-Abvab.

Thanks to the work of al-Silaфи, we got information about other scholars of the Caliphate. One of them was Abu Amr al-Sadusi al-Basri. Among the countries which he traveled to meet sheikhs in pursuit of sect was Azerbaijan.

It’s noted that losing initial meaning of words was considered as a sin according to the sayings of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) who delivered the words revealed verbally by Allah as it existed. Every hadith consisted of the main text which covers actual plot and isnaads listed with the names of people who delivered the text to designer. The isnaads had important role in order to check if the hadith was sahih (correct) or not. The isnaad was used only during the period of Islam as being news in the field of passing hadiths. Al-Samani expressed it figuratively "Isnaad was a part of faith and weapon of the believer; if he had no weapon how could he fight?”(4,p.45). Therefore, Al-Silaфи used this method to define the respect of sheikhs for whom he collected information.

Al-Silaфи gave information about the intellectuals of Shirvan. It was known that Shirvan was one of the scientific and cultural centers in that time. The favorable condition of Shirvan gave rise to the development of mental activity. The archaeological materials, writing on handicraft wares, epigraphic patterns testified the literacy of city residents. (2,p.105). The abundance of information about intellectuals of Shirvan in Arabic biographical literature was a proof for it. Especially, in the period of reigning of Shirvanshah Fariburz I and vizier Baha al-Din al Kakui (in the middle of XI century), Shirvan became the prosperous town which "the heavens adore its land".(13, p.6-7) Shirvanshah and his vizier patronized the educated people. There were poets who write panegyrics in the palace of Fariburz I. (1, p.261; 13, p. 49-50)

One of the poets who traveled to Shirvan was Abunami Sadaqa ibn Ibrahim al Tanavukhi al-Maari. When he was in Shirvan, he said the elegy for Nizam al-Mulk. The concept of elegy was that: "Abu ali Hasan ibn Ali Tusi was the leader of the world and imam of the religion. The evening became the night when he was killed with violence. They didn't kill only this great sheikh, they killed all people and Islamic religion." (6, p.15) This elegy showed the great respect of him to Nizam al-Mulk and at the same time, it presented Shirvan as the centre in which poem's assembly, contests were organized.
The information given by Arabic poet Abu Ishaq Ibrahim al Qazi (1049-1130) and Al-Silafi about being of Abunami Sadaqa ibn Ibrahim al -Tanavukhi al -Maari here notified about the development of traditional genres of Arabic-language poetry, at the same time visiting of Al-Silafi here showed the spreading of fiqh, Sufism and science of hadith in Shirvan. (7, p.74). the science of hadith was considered the most worthy science in that time. The main purpose of Al-Silafi in coming here was to collect hadiths and met hafizes, religious scholars, muhaddiths, qares, vaizs and got information about their life and activity to define more precisely about information he knew. Ibn Al-Sabuni said about it: "Hafiz Abu Tabriz Al-Silafi (May God make his rest in peace) remembered Muvaffid Al Shirvani in his "Mu’jam Al-Safar" and said that he was the most famous Sheikh in Shirvan and other near regions. He was considered the best vaiz of its time. He had respect in Yazidiyya where was "dar-al-memlekah" of Shirvan. (8, p.317) According to Yagut Al-Hamavi, "Al-Yazidiyya" was the main city of the province of Shirvan and it was known as Shamakhi.” (12, p.463). He collected the news about Al-Hussein ibn Mansur Al-Hallaj. Al-Silafi was said about it by one person who listened to him in Baghdad. Then Al-Silaji learned from him about it (“News”) when he met him. According to Al-Silafi, he was remembered in some commentaries. It is notable to mention that during the period of Mansur Al-Hallaj, the ideas of Islamic religion were widespread in Busra and Kufa. (16, p.154) Medieval Arabic author Ibn Hajar al-Askalani gave information about Vaiz Huseyn ibn Mansur Al-Hallaj. Al-Silafi was said about it by one person who listened to him in Baghdad. Then Al-Silafi mentioned the names of other religious figures in Shirvan. One of them is "Abu al-Gasim al-Hasan ibn Mumshaz al-Isfahani" known as Al-Zarandi, magnanimous scholar. Vaiz Abu Al-Hasan Al-Muvaddid wrote about the things he heard introducing to Al-Silafi: "When Abu Al-Gasim al-Zarandi" was varid, qazi Abu Bakr Ahmad ibn Sahl ibn Sirri Al-Hamadani left his fatwa and said: "He was superior than me" . (8, p.316)

According to Al-Silafi, another intelligent person from Shirvan traveled to Egypt and taught there. Ibn Cabir Al Hamadani (585-1189 H.D. in Cairo) listened the lectures of Abu-Bakr Malakdadash-Shirvani. (8, p. 7)

Thus, Suleyman ibn Abdulla al-Shirvani and Abul Gasim al-Zarandi who lived and worked in Shirvan praised or criticized one another. Our author al-Silafi believed the things he saw to reveal the truth. Al-Silafi gave information about Abu al-Hasan ibn Aba Bakr al-Nishapuri who was known as Khosh Bush and his master Abu Osman Ismail Ibn Abdurrehman al-Nishapuri. Abu Osman talked about one hour with Sufi sheikh Abu Said Fazlullah ibn Abulkheir al-Meyhani. They remembered here the hadith said by Sheikh Abu Ali Zahir whom they met in Sarakhs. According to this hadith "love of world is the beginning of every Sin." Other hadiths the master said make them rich. Khos Bash was patient aged Sheikh. When Al-Silafi wrote these lines, he died.

Al-Silafi used the word "Azerbaijanian" in his article "Yusif al-Ardabili", he wrote that Yusif Ibn Muhammad was born and died in Egypt. He added that Al-Ardabili was Azarbi. Yusif al-Ardabili told hadith from Zakariyya al-Bukhari, faqih Al-Shuveyh Al-Urmani and muqri Nasr ibn Aziz al-Shirazi. According to the information of Al-Silafi his father was the qazi of Egypt. There were writings of poem (expressed in verse) between him and Al-Silafi. (6, p.253)
We noted that the notion "azerbi" was used Yagut Al-Hamavi in Mu’jam al-udaba” referring to al-Samani after al-Silafi: "Abusad-Al-Samani” wrote in his work called "Kitab al-Ansab” remembering Al-Maari: his pupil Abu Zakariyya al-Tabrizi said that one day I read my work for Abulala in the mosque of Maorra. When I stayed at him, I didn't see any of my countrymen. At this moment, I saw one of my neighbors praying. I knew him and I was glad to see him. Abulala said: What happened to you? I said him that I saw my neighbor. He told me to go and ask his situation. When I said that I should go after completing our ideas, he told me that he waited for me. I went and speak azerbiyye with my neighbor and I was interested in everything I wondered. When I returned, Abulala asked me: What language it is? I said: It is the language of Azerbaijan. He said: "I didn't know and understand this language, but I kept in memory. Then he repeated our words as they were. The neighbors said: “It is very surprising. How can you keep the words you don't know in your mind?” (11)

Qazi Abu Nasr Ahmad al-Maymazi read his poem which praised al-Silafi in Ahar, the city of Azerbaijan. Abu Nasr was one of the virtuous men of its time. He had reputation and respect. Al-Silafi wrote that he took benefits from him and voted that he lived the city of Varavi in Ahar. (6, p. 19).

Sheikh Abu Tahir al-Silafi who traveled to many cities of Azerbaijan had connection with Abu al-Gasim Al-Meyhani, grandson of Abu Said al-Meyhani. There was fellowship between them. They gathered together and went on pilgrimage to Mecca. Al silafi noted that Abu Al-Gasim listened to his readings in Mecca, Kiy, Baghdad, Ganja, Debil and other cities of Azerbaijan. (6, p.89) It showed that in several cities of Azerbaijan like the spiritual centers of Caliphate there were scientific meetings and Sheikhs of other regions went Azerbaijan and exchanged their ideas. Abu Said Abu al-Kheir al-Meyhani (d. 440/1048-1049) led Sufi's school established in Nishapur in XI century. (14, p.54). Almost all Sufis of this time were related to this school. The work of this sheikh about tasavvuf played leading role for Sufis of Azerbaijan.

In this time, Abu tahir al-Silafi made journey to Ganja, where was distinguished by the level of cultural development among the cities of Azerbaijan and Arran. When he was in Ganja, he met several scholars who came to Ganja, listened the hadith they narrated and collected information about these scholars and their isnaads. Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad al-Tabazi who was famous for his intelligence read poet devoted to al-Silafi. (5, p. 70). Al-Silafi gave information not only about Ganja, but also its madrasas in his work called "Mujam al-Safar". Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ali ibn Muhammad Al-Tabazi worked as architectural teacher in this madrasa. He was "intelligent" teacher of science of fiqh and good manners as well as he led the education. “In Ganja he worked in the madrasa which was built for his father by Nizam Al-Mulk. Abu Abdullah al-Tarabi worked well and increased his capacity of management when he was the head of the madrasa.” Al-Nizam gave the right to teach to the father of Abdullah Muhammad Al-Tabari for the first time in the madrasa built by him. Who was the father of Abu Abdullah Muhammad Al-Tabari? To whom was the authority given to teach for the first time in the madrasa built by Nizam al-Mulk? Two people called Al-Tabari were likely to be the first founder of the madrasa. The name of both of them was similar. Shams al-Islam Imadeddin Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad Al-Tabari who was known as Al-Kiya al-Harrasi (450/1058-504/1110) taught the lessons of fiqh in the madrasa built by Nizam al-Mulk. The name of al-Kiya was frequently mentioned in the manuscript of Masoud ibn Namdar's work. On the other hand, imams, qazis presented in scientific competitions organized in Ganja. According to Ibn Namdar, Djamal al-Guda Abu al-Hasan Ali ibn Muhammad IBN Muhammad al-Tabari also took part in these competitions. It was possible that he also taught the lesson.
The names of several teachers (mudarris) were mentioned in the work called "Mu’jam al-Safar”. One of them was Abu al-Vafa (430 A.H.) who had thorough knowledge. He was the qazi of Zanjan as well as he taught the lesson in madrasa of Zanjan.(6, p.19)

Abu-r-ruh Faraj ibn Ubeydullah ibn Khalaf al-Khoi from one of the elders of Azerbaijan and friends of Al-Shafi (أَل شَافِي) was the imam of Shafi’s apostles. He returned to Baghdad and established madrasa here after he got education from Abu Ishaq al-Shirazi. Al-Silafi wrote that most of the virtuous people from apostles promoted getting education in the madrasa. (6, p.183)

There were many precious details about the region of Arran in the work called "Mu’jam Al-Safar". Qazi Tahir- al Djanzi ( from Ganja- N.A) was specially mentioned among the scholars of Ganja. Al-Silafi stressed the virtue of Tahir al-Djanzi in the science of fiqh and science of food manner. Tahir al-Djanzi gave information about Abu Al-Gasim Ali Ibn Abdurrehman al-Nishapuri and his fellow countryman Abu al-Fazl Shaban ibn Ali ibn Muhammad al-Bardai. Abu al-Fazl al-Bardai was the teacher of him. In the X century famous scholars of the origin of Bardai made journey to the different religious centers to continue their scientific activity, others stayed in their homeland and taught the mystery of science to their countrymen. Abu al-Faz was belonged to the second group.

Al- Silafi emphasized that Tahir Al-Djanzi was one of the elders of his country and he was addressed on the field of fiqh and literature. Abu al-Gasim Ali ibn Abdurrehman ibn Ali Nishapuri and his master Abu al Fazl Shaban ibn Ali ibn Muhammad al Barzai and other told the stories that one day Qazi Tahir al Djanzi came to Isfahan. They heard from him: "I took part in the assembly of Nizam Abu Ali Hasan ibn Ali ibn Ishaaq and the person who read qira’at pronounced “ai ci’rana” in spite of "al-ci’rana”. I told him to correct it (read as "al-ci’rana")

This time Nizam looked at me. This expression corrected led me to be qazi. The story of Tahir al Djanzi about Ibn Makula was very interesting too: “Once when the sultan and his vizier Nizam arrived in Arraniyya, the hafiz of Baghdad, Abukasr ibn Makula entered the mosque for Salah performing two rakats and didn't face the qibla, in the direction of the Kaaba. The qibla was shown to him and he said: “Everything internal has its amazement and losing itself.” Then he performed Salah facing the qibla. Being of such outstanding Sheikh ibn Makula in Ganja, cultural centre of Azerbaijan and visits of Sultan and his vizier to “Arraniya” showed the importance and significance of this mosque in that time.

Ibn Makula exchanged ideas with Xodadad ibn Asim who protector of library of Ganja. Thus, the visits of scholars and sheikhs to Ganja indicates that there were native sufi scholars too in Azerbaijan.

Al-Silafi gave detailed information about education and madrasas in Ganja. The information about education in the madrasa of Ganja and teachers worked here have great importance in order to learn of the source of Azerbaijan. Masoud ibn Namdar who lived in the XI century "devoted his youth to the books.” Prof. V. Beylisi published the collection of Masoud ibn Namdar and wrote detailed introduction to it. He thought about where Masoud ibn Namdar got education or the existence of madrasas such Nizamiyya. But he didn't find any information about it.(14, p.14). The study of “Mujam al-Salar” by Al-Silafi gave the possibility to us to learn it. Al-Silafi wrote: "The father of Muhammad al-Tabari was the teacher of the madrasa of Nizamiyya in Ganja. He was head of education as well as the teacher of the science of fiqh and science of good manner. The activity of managment was strengthened by him in the madrasa of Ganja. (6, p. 358)
There are other precious information about cultural life of the cities of Azerbaijan in XI - XII centuries and its intelligent people in "Mu’jam al-Safar" by Abu Tahir al-Silafi, outstanding scholar. This information helps to define later example of literature more precisely. "Mu'jam Al-Buldan" by Yagut Al-Hamavi gave information about Xodadad Ibn Asim, the protector of library of Ganja who was from Ganja. This information enables to make exact that the period of activity of scholars here is related to XI century. On the other hand, the meeting and exchanging ideas of ibn Makula and Abu Tahir Al-Silafi with native scholars, define cultural situation of that time.

Arabic - language authors such as Ibn Makula, al-Samanı, Yagut al-Hamavi, Imaddadin al-Hanbalı, Ibn Al-Fuvati, Ibn al-Sabuni and others used the works of Abu Tahir al-Silafi. Ibn Makula said that Yahya ibn Ahmad ibn Al-Hussein al-Babi-Muhammad ibn Tahir said hadith from al-Tarsusi. (10, p.575)

Not only cultural life of that time, but also the intelligent people of Azerbaijan in IX-XI centuries were given information in "Mu'jam al-Safar" by Al-Silafi. There is unparalleled importance of this work to study the intelligent people of Azerbaijan. In this source, which provided information about intelligent people in different fields of science, main importance is given to scholars who were engaged in science of hadith. The author tried to make exact the information, noted the year they were born or they died and mostly wrote about their characters. Al-Silafi paid attention to the exactness of information and classified the scholars whom he knew or listened to their hadith. He mostly gave information about the scholars of its time and it increased reliability of work. The author paid attention to pass the hadith correctly as well as the chain of isnaad.

"Mu'jam al-Safar" such as source of arabic-language biography in IX-XI centuries had importance of learning of intelligent people. Subsequently, there was information about intelligent people in different articles. Sometimes, their names were mentioned in the articles. There were people who didn't include in articles too. People who got education on Islamic religion were given great importance in this work and there were the biographies of philologists of Azerbaijan. The names of scholars who were engaged in exact science were not mentioned here.

The author noted only exact information: birth of date or death of date.

The interesting fact of this work that the expressions indicated the character of scholars were given here. First of all, virtue and reliability of scholars were given as a good characteristic features existed in scholars, they were included as the criterion to the work he wrote. Likewise, siqa (the person who is known for his authority and reliability), is taken as recognition in fiqh and telling hadith, because it means that the intellectuals gained a higher status. People who learned the science of hadith had to keep in memory their learning from muhaddiths, tell the hadith correctly and be faithful in the asceticism to gain higher status.

Sheikh al Silafi said his considerations about Arabic language and the names of person. The author lived in the Seljuq period informed about people showed different attitude to Arabic language he gave information about Nasser al- Saravi who was qazi in Abhar and Al-Silafi called the simplicity of his name as the local feature. He noted that the name of the father, grandfather of Nasser al-Saravi wasn't said in Azerbaijan, Arminiyya and Shirvan, only his name was mentioned.

On the other hand, al-Silafi didn't want to learn the “lessons of nahw (Arabic grammar) by showing the poet of qazi Abu Said Badr ibn Khidr al-Saravi, he want to learn arithmetic and Persian language. He added that it was essential for everyone because today Arabic state lost its importance.”
The information about intellectuals had the character of compilation and we consider the information about their contemporaries worthy than them when we analyze them. For example, al-Samani and other authors of the biographies informed about Abu-Bakr al-Zancavi. But Abu Bakr was the contemporary of al-Silafi, the information provided by al-Silafi is more important than others. Al-Silafi wrote: "Everyone came by al-Zancavi to learn science". There was no any man wiser than him in the field of fiqh and fatwa. Al-Silafi heard from him in 500 (A. H): "I gave fatwa to people for 29 years". Al-Silafi work not only his sayings, as well as others. "I was said about him that he never gave fatwa incorrectly. He generally gave fatwa for 70 years. When I asked him about his date of birth, he said he was born in 403 A.H. (6, p.25)

"Mu'jam al-Safar" by Al-Silafi plays significant role in revealing of the names of famous intellectuals and personalities as well as in learning of scientific life of Azerbaijan and its scientific relations with the countries of Muslim World.

Al-Silafi wrote the events he witnessed. Each information began with poems dedicated to him by intellectuals he met.

The work is full of aphorisms intellectuals said. These aphorisms related to science, wisdom, have the character of admonition. It has importance for manner of youth generation. For example, Secretary of Urmia, Mansur ibn Mumkan al-Marandi wrote the poet about himself: I was said that gathering pearls made the heart powerful, but it was impossible, as I could increase the pearls and recovered my disease. (6, №35)

KAYNAKLAR

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