

THE MAMUNID DYNASTY: STATEHOOD OF KHWAREZM, DEVELOPMENT OF SCIENCE AND CULTURE

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Abstract. This article analyzes the political activities of the Mamunid dynasty, which ruled Khwarezm at the end of the 10th and beginning of the 11th centuries, its system of state administration, economic development, and its contribution to the advancement of science and culture. It highlights the role of the dynasty in politically unifying Khwarezm and the formation of the city of Gurganj as a major commercial, economic, and cultural center. Special attention is given to the establishment of the Mamun Academy, the scientific activities of scholars such as Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Abu Ali ibn Sina, and others, as well as the development of libraries, manuscript production, and educational life during the Mamunid period. The study concludes that the Mamunid dynasty played an important role in the formation of the Renaissance period in Central Asia.

Keywords. Mamunid dynasty, Khwarezm, Gurganj, Mamun Academy, science, culture, statehood, urban development, library science, Eastern Renaissance.

In the history of the peoples of Central Asia, the Khwarezm oasis has long been distinguished by its highly developed culture and traditions of statehood. Although the Mamunid dynasty, which ruled Khwarezm at the end of the 10th and beginning of the 11th centuries, existed for a relatively short period, it left a deep mark on the history of the region. In particular, its role in state governance, urban development, economic progress, science, and culture is significant.

During the rule of the Mamunids, Khwarezm was politically unified, and its capital Gurganj became a major economic and cultural center of the East. The Mamun Academy, established during this period, entered history as one of the

most important scientific centers of the Eastern Renaissance. The scholarly activity of great thinkers such as Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Abu Ali ibn Sina, Abu Nasr ibn Iraq, and Abu Sahl al-Masihi is closely connected to this period.

This article examines the formation of the Mamunid dynasty, its political activity, economic development, contributions to science and culture, and its historical significance.

By the end of the 10th century, Khwarezm was divided into two parts. In the northern part, centered in the city of Kat, the Afrighid dynasty ruled, while in the southern part there was an emirate centered in Gurganj. The ruler of Gurganj, Mamun ibn Muhammad, strengthened his position and succeeded in uniting all of Khwarezm into a single state.

In 995, Mamun ibn Muhammad defeated the Afrighid ruler Abu Abdullah Muhammad and brought Khwarezm under his control. Thus began the rule of the Mamunid dynasty. Gurganj was chosen as the capital. This event marked a new stage in the history of Khwarezmian statehood [1.112].

Mamun ibn Muhammad pursued a policy of centralizing the state. After his death, power passed to Ali ibn Mamun (997–1009). During his reign, Khwarezm's international status increased, economic relations expanded, and greater attention was paid to the development of science.

In 1009, Mamun II ibn Mamun ascended the throne. Under his rule, Khwarezm became one of the most powerful states in Central Asia. However, Mahmud of Ghazni, the ruler of Ghazna, concerned about Khwarezm's growing power, began to exert political pressure. As a result, in 1017, the armies of Mahmud of Ghazni conquered Khwarezm, bringing an end to the rule of the Mamunid dynasty [5.45].

The Mamunid period is considered a time of economic flourishing in Khwarezm. Due to the geographical location of the state along an important branch of the Great Silk Road, trade developed significantly.

According to the Arab geographer Istakhri, at the beginning of the 10th century there were 9–13 cities in Khwarezm, while by the beginning of the 11th

century their number had reached about 40 [2.154]. Cities such as Gurganj, Kat, Khiva, Hazorasp, Ardakhushmisan, and Kardaranxos became major economic and cultural centers.

Khwarezmian merchants established trade relations with Eastern Turkestan, Transoxiana, Khorasan, Iran, and even Spain. The development of trade led to urban improvement and the construction of new buildings. The capital Gurganj flourished especially. Palaces, caravanserais, mosques, madrasas, baths, and markets were built in the city. These developments laid a strong foundation for the later rise of the Khwarezmshahs in the 12th–13th centuries [12.287].

Medieval authors gave very high assessments of Gurganj. In the work “Description of the Cities of Khwarezm”, it is recorded that the city had more than 170 markets, about 5,000 mosques, around 700 madrasas, and nearly 1,000 bathhouses [10.125].

The famous geographer al-Muqaddasi wrote about the Khwarezmians: “Khwarezmians are people of intellect, knowledge, jurisprudence, and learning” [7.282]. The 13th-century geographer Yaqut al-Hamawi described Gurganj as one of the most beautiful and prosperous cities in the world: “I have never seen in the world a city as magnificent, rich, and beautiful as Gurganj” [8.398]. The traveler Ibn Battuta also emphasized the hospitality and love of knowledge among the Khwarezmians: “In the whole world, I have not encountered people more kind and hospitable to strangers than the Khwarezmians” [9.367]. These accounts clearly demonstrate the high level of economic and cultural development of Khwarezm at that time.

One of the greatest contributions of the Mamunid dynasty was its patronage of science. In 1004, by decree of Ali ibn Mamun, a scientific center called “Dar al-Hikma wa Ma’rif” was established in Gurganj. Later, this center became known as the Mamun Academy [10.126].

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni was appointed as the head of the academy. Research in astronomy, mathematics, geography, medicine, philosophy, and history was conducted at this institution.

Among the scholars who worked at the academy were Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Abu Nasr ibn Iraq, Abu Sahl al-Masihi, Ibn Sina, and other prominent scholars. Their scientific legacy had a profound impact not only on the East but also on world science. Al-Biruni emphasized that the development of science depends on the support of rulers. Thanks to the academy, Gurganj became a scientific center comparable to Baghdad's "House of Wisdom" [3.17].

During the Mamunid period, ancient Khwarezmian, Arabic, Persian, Indian, and Greek scientific traditions merged. As a result, astronomy, mathematics, medicine, chemistry, geography, historiography, and philosophy developed significantly. Religious sciences such as hadith studies, jurisprudence (fiqh), and kalam also developed, contributing to theological scholarship. Music and musicology developed in connection with mathematical theories.

The development of national culture was elevated to the level of state policy. Literature and scientific works in the native language were supported. A rich palace library was established, containing rare manuscripts brought from various regions of the East [10.126]. In the library, books in Arabic, Persian, and other languages were organized into separate sections, creating favorable conditions for research.

During the Mamunid era, the art of book production and manuscript copying reached a high level. Calligraphers, artists, and book decorators were active. The art of book decoration, miniature painting, and bookbinding developed. Special workshops for manuscript copying emerged. Book trade became widespread, and book stalls appeared in markets.

These scientific and cultural traditions of Khwarezm later influenced the development of libraries and scientific centers in Bukhara, Samarkand, Merv, Nishapur, Baghdad, and Damascus [12.453].

Although the Mamunid dynasty ruled for a relatively short time, it occupies an important place in the history of Central Asia. It ensured the political unity of Khwarezm, created favorable conditions for economic development, and opened wide opportunities for science.

The establishment of the Mamun Academy became one of the key events of the Eastern Renaissance. The scientific activity of scholars such as al-Biruni and Ibn Sina flourished further during this period.

The scientific and cultural environment of Khwarezm had a significant influence on the development of the entire Islamic East in later centuries. Therefore, the Mamunid dynasty is considered an important part not only of Khwarezm's history but also of world civilization.

The Mamunid dynasty represents one of the most important periods in the history of Khwarezm at the end of the 10th and beginning of the 11th centuries. The rulers of the dynasty carried out major efforts in centralizing the state, ensuring economic development, and promoting science and culture. The transformation of Gurganj into a major commercial and cultural center, the establishment of the Mamun Academy, and the activities of scholars such as al-Biruni and Ibn Sina are among the greatest achievements of this period. The legacy of the Mamunids is still regarded today as one of the brightest pages in the history of statehood and science of Uzbekistan.

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