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The Role of Amir Ismail Samani in the Development and Flourishing of the City of Bukhara

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ABSTRACT

Bukhara was regarded as one of the most prominent cities of Transoxiana before the advent of Islam. The city gained significant prominence during the Samanid era, particularly under Amir Ismail Samani. Under his leadership, Bukhara achieved political independence and was established as the center of the Samanid government. Amir Ismail Samani played a pivotal role in the city's development, driving its growth and prosperity across political, economic, social, cultural, and infrastructural dimensions. The aim of this research is to explore Amir Ismail Samani's role in the development and flourishing of Bukhara. The findings of the study indicate that Amir Ismail Samani made a significant and irreplaceable contribution to the advancement of the city, especially in the political, social, cultural, and infrastructural domains. Key contributions included ensuring social security, gaining the people's satisfaction, establishing a hub for commercial transactions, attracting scholars and scientists, and promoting Islamic architecture. These efforts were instrumental in the city's growth and prosperity. This article draws on credible sources and employs a library-based research method (descriptive-analytical) to provide an in-depth analysis of the subject.

KEYWORDS

Amir Ismail Samani; Bukhara; development and prosperity; Transoxiana.

INTRODUCTION

The vast land of Central Asia has a rich and ancient history. Over the centuries, various peoples, through local governments and tribal systems, shaped the political structure of this region. The political organization and administrative framework were deeply influenced by the governments of the neighboring and surrounding territories. The Aryans, Turks, and Arabs were among the key players who significantly impacted the political structure of Transoxiana.

Bukhara, one of the ancient cities of Central Asia and present-day Uzbekistan, gained prominence as the center of the Islamic world after the arrival of Muslims in Transoxiana. During the Samanid rule in the 3rd and 4th centuries Hijri, Bukhara was chosen as the capital of the Samanid state. Under the leadership of Amir Ismail Samani, the city flourished and made significant progress politically, economically, socially, culturally, and in terms of infrastructure.

After a series of protracted wars, Amir Ismail Samani defeated the Saffarids, the Turks, and the local governments around Transoxiana, thereby laying the foundation for the Samanid Empire. Through considerable effort, he succeeded in restoring political stability in the region, unifying Transoxiana into a cohesive territory and establishing the foundations of political unity grounded in the principles of Islam. In addition to ensuring

stability and reinforcing security, he also positioned the city of Bukhara as the cradle of Islamic culture and civilization.

The central research question of this study is the role of Amir Ismail Samani in the development and flourishing of Bukhara. This article aims to examine his contributions to the city's growth and prosperity. The research method employed in this article is a library-based, analytical-descriptive approach.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a library-based, descriptive-analytical research method. It examines the role of Amir Ismail Samani in the development and flourishing of Bukhara by reviewing and analyzing relevant historical and scholarly sources. The descriptive component presents the political, economic, social, cultural, and infrastructural developments discussed in the sources, while the analytical component interprets their significance for the city's growth during the Samanid era.

Data Collection Method

Data were collected through library research and documentary review. Relevant information was gathered from published books and other scholarly sources concerning the history of Bukhara and the Samanid period. The collected material was organized thematically according to the political, economic, social, cultural, and infrastructural aspects addressed in this article. No questionnaire, interview, or field survey is reported in the original manuscript.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Bukhara City

Bukhara is located in western Uzbekistan today along the Zarafshan Sea. This city has a long and cold winter, a hot and dry summer and a pleasant autumn. It is now divided into two parts: New Bukhara and Old Bukhara. New Bukhara is set with new urban standards and systems that have hotels, large roads and modern stores, but in ancient Bukhara, old buildings, Caravanserais, schools and historical places with its important identity have been preserved. Bukhara is one of the most famous cities in Uzbekistan with a significant historical background. The city of Bukhara on the Silk Road has added to the importance of the city in different historical periods.

The ancient Bukhara consists of three parts: Arg, Qasr and Kohne Shahr (ancient city) and had seven gates, everywhere called "(kuhendazh) Old Fortress". In the past, Bukhara was one of the major city of Transoxiana, which was part of Soghdian province in geographical division. After the arrival of the Islamic Army, Bukhara gained significant importance. During the Samanid era, the city shone a lot in the fields of culture and civilization, as in Baghdad, Ray and Damascus, and was recognized as one of the most important cultural, political and economic centers of the Islamic world (Ahmadian Shalchi, 2008, p. 159).

History researchers have described worthwhile the role of Amir Ismail Samani, the founder of the Samanid government, in the growth, prosperity and development of Bukhara city. The development of the city is not only summarized in one aspect, but also includes different aspects of development, including:

The Political Aspect

Bukhara, from its geopolitical position, was located along the great Silk Road. This fact had attracted the attention of emperors and governor throughout history. "For the first time

during the reign of Amir Muawiyah, the armies of Islam, under the command of Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad, launched a campaign against Bukhara in the year 674 CE. In this year, Ubaidullah Ebn Ziyad after pssing the Jaihon river with 24,000 troops, after battling and defeating the Turkic armies that had come to aid the governer of Bukhara, besieged the city. After some time, the governor of that time, Khatun, sought peace. Ubaidullah ibn Ziyad negotiated peace for one million Dirhams, four thousand slaves, gold and silver vessels, and precious silk fabrics. During the governing of Qutaybah, Islam religion was established in the land of Bukhara and Transoxiana" (Daniel, 1988, p. 28).

After the Umayyads, the Abbasids also had power in determining the political system and governors of Transoxiana, particularly Bukhara. During the caliphate of Ma'mun (813–818 CE), the administration of the affairs of the governments of Khorasan and Transoxiana was entrusted to the Tahirid and Samanid families, whose ancestors were among the trusted and loyal individuals of the Abbasid family, especially Ma'mun. The Tahirids, as the first family of Khorasan after the advent of Islam (820–873 CE), held control and governance over significant parts of Greater Khorasan, Sistan, Transoxiana, and Tabaristan. Among them, the Samanids, due to the active and effective role played by Asad ibn Saman and his sons in suppressing the descendants of Nasr ibn Sayyar and Rafi' ibn Layth, gained favor and attention from Ma'mun. After Ma'mun moved to Baghdad in the year 204 AH, he instructed Ghassan ibn Abbad, the governor of Khorasan, to entrust the governance of various cities in Transoxiana such as Fergana, Chach, Samarkand, Bukhara, Ashrusana, Herat, and Khorasan to the children of Asad ibn Saman. Following the establishment of Tahir ibn Husayn and subsequently the Tahirid dynasty in Khorasan, the Samanid family operated under the Tahirids. Ibrahim ibn Elias, a descendant of Asad who was the commander of the Khorasan forces, went to war against Ya'qub Layth al-Saffar (867–878 CE) at the behest of Amir Muhammad ibn Tahir ibn Abdullah (862–873 CE) in Pushtan on the outskirts of Herat, but was defeated and fled to Nishapur. The weakness of the political-military power of the Abbasid Caliphate, the serious enmity and rivalry between the Saffarid dynasty (867–903 CE) and Yaqub Layth with the Abbasids, the emergence of the Alawites in Tabaristan (864–929 CE), and the necessity for the presence of a government that defends and supports the beliefs of Ahl al-Sunnah and the Abbasid Caliphate led to the Abbasid Caliph Al-Mu'tamid (870–892 CE) issuing a decree in 875 CE for the governance of Transoxiana in the name of Nasr ibn Ahmad Samanid (882–892 CE) in Samarkand. Nasr, as the head of the Samanid family, took control of affairs (Christian Ṣan, 1985, p. 65).

The Abbasid Caliph, in opposition to Yaqoob Laith, sent the command for all of Transoxiana's governance to Nasr ibn Ahmad, and from this time onwards, the Samanids gained political and religious legitimacy in the minds of the Muslims of Transoxiana. Amir Ismail well understood the extent of the religious legitimacy of the Abbasid Caliph's decree among the people of Transoxiana. After Nasr's death in 892 CE, Ismail was officially recognized in practice. Abbasid Caliph Al-Mu'tazid (892–902 CE) sent him a governmental decree. This action by the caliph led to the outbreak of a war between Amir Ismail and 'Omar Laith Saffar, who also claimed authority over Transoxiana; however, he was defeated in 900 CE and, after being captured, was sent to Baghdad He passed away in the prison of the Bani Abbas. Amir Ismail, after this victory which solidified his power and state, established the city of Bukhara as the capital of his government. He formed a government that was politically reminiscent of the ancient governments of Khorasan with the nature of Hanafi religion. This powerful, committed, and stable government was able to make the city of Bukhara the center of political affairs in Transoxiana. During the time of Amir Ismail, Bukhara was considered the second cultural and civilizational capital of the Islamic world after Baghdad. He assigned numerous military personnel to protect and

strengthen the political and security affairs of this city. "In his days (Amir Ismail), Bukhara became the seat of the capital. Before him, during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods, Bukhara was part of the vast territory of Greater Khorasan. Even after the transfer of the center of Khorasan from Marv to Nishapur, the administration of Bukhara's affairs was separated from other regions of Transoxiana. In fact, Amir Ismail Samani's action in centralizing Bukhara created an independent political and geographical identity for Transoxiana and placed Bukhara within the geographical domain of Transoxiana" (Ranjbar, 1989, P. 67).

The Economic Aspect

The geographical location of Bukhara was such that it lay on the Silk Road, and goods and commodities from various regions and cities of Transoxiana passed through it. As a result, numerous markets were established in this city, attracting a large population attentions. The economic prosperity and population growth, which date back to the ancient periods during the rule of the Kushanians over the vast region of Transoxiana, led to the famous "Mah Roz" market, which was held annually in Bukhara. Before the arrival of Islam, this market was a place for the trade and sale of statues and idols of deities. Additionally, a market named "Tawawis" was held within the great walls of the cities of Bukhara and Samarkand. After the arrival of Islam in Bukhara, other markets such as Afshena, Barked, Ramshan, and Rukhsha were established, which carried the reputation of modern exhibitions, and various historical and geographical books refer to them as places for the exchange and trade of commercial goods, which added to the economic significance of this city. This matter attracted the attention of prominent traders from China, Arabia, and India to the city of Bukhara, turning it into a center for the trade of commercial goods and a meeting point for the cultures and civilizations of the East and West. The presence of traders from various regions of the world elevated the economic reputation of this city. The provision of security by the Samanid government was another reason that contributed to the economic growth of this city. Security ensured that countless investors could engage in buying, selling, and transferring goods in a safe and calm environment (Herawi, 2003, p. 121).

The Social Aspect

Samanians, due to their dependence on the old and influential khorasanians family, were aware of the customs of the original Khorasani culture and, in order to communicate closely with Muslim rulers, they were familiar with the values of Islam from the beginning of Islam's entry into the super-creek. Therefore, their associates and management in balancing national demands and desires and Islamic rulings created conditions that had no history in the history of Khorasan and Transoxiana. The very important point that led to the success of the Samanids in the field of social relations was the recognition of their position and the caliphate system. Despite strong religious and popular support, the Samanids did not oppose the caliphate system. They were independent in practice because of their loyalty to Bani Abbas and took advantage of the religious capabilities and status of the caliphate to establish their state. This led to the achievement of his great goal, which was to strengthen the social stability of the super-creek and the city of Bukhara (Narshekhi, 2008, p. 123).

Amir Ismail Samani, obeying the caliphate, accepted Sunni religion as the formal religion of the Samanians state. Due to, established religious integrity in the wide lands of The Transoxiana (Narshekhi, 2008, p. 56).

Amir Samani, due to his insight, created harmony among the religious scholars and the general populace of Transoxiana and Khorasan. During this period, they facilitated

religious freedom for Muslims as well as for many non-Muslim groups. This issue strengthened the social foundations of the Samanid government. Furthermore, he utilized the teachings of Islam to bring various sectors of society, which had profound ethnic and linguistic differences, closer together. Amir Ismail paid special attention to establishing social justice to gain the satisfaction of the people. He had established a "Home of Justice" to ensure the rights of the people, where "special judges" were assigned. To resolve the grievances and issues of the people based on religious laws, he was accompanied by a group of judges during his travels. The Amir had the habit of riding his horse to the center of the city of Bukhara every day. When asked about the reason for this practice, he replied: This method is the best way for the subjects to directly access me for petitioning and seeking redress, without any fear or apprehension. In fact, these actions, initiated by Amir Ismail Samanians, continued as a political-religious method of the Samanid state in the history of this state (Naji, 1988, p. 54).

The Cultural Aspect

Since the Samanids belonged culturally and racially to the Persian-Dari language, they tried hard to enrich the language. Along with Arabic, they designated Persian-Dari as the official language of their government. The Holy Quran was first translated into Persian during the reign of Amir Ismail Samani. The Persian translation of the Quran led to the expansion of cultural activities in Bukhara. Amir Samani's attention in the cultural arena led Bukhara to be recognized as a cultural and scientific center in the ultra-nahr century, so that artists, poets, historians, writers, and great scholars would gather in Bukhara. In addition to scientific researches, famous scholars such as Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, Keykhesraw, Farahi conducted their researches in various scientific fields such as mathematics, philosophy, and Islamic sciences. Rudaki, the famous poet of the Samanid covenant, along with his other works, translated The Book of Kalileh and Demneh from Arabic into Persian. Following Amir Ismail Samani's cultural policy, other Samanid emirs also encouraged writers to translate their works. The history of al-Rasal and al-Muluk by Muhammad ibn Jarir al-Tabari and The Shahnameh of Abu Mansour Daqiqi is one of the famous books translated during the Samanid dynasty (Farai, 136, p. 23).

The presence of prominent scientific and religious figures in the city of Bukhara was one of the most important reasons for the cultural and scientific prosperity of this city. The role of learned ministers such as the Bal'ami, Jihani, and Atabi families in the Samanid state, on one hand, and the support for scholars and men of letters on the other, contributed to the blossoming of Bukhara’s culture. One of the factors that increased the fame of Bukhara was the gathering of a considerable number of scholars and scientists in the ruling court of the Samanid princes. Under the actions of Amir Ismail Samanians, Bukhara gained recognition as the center of the Renaissance of Transoxiana and Khorasan. The cultural significance of Bukhara was such that it was referred to by titles such as "Cradle of Islam," "City of Peace," and "Dome of Islam" (Ahmadian, 2008, p. 65).

Heravi, in the book "History of the Samanids," writes: "The most important consequence that emerged from the Samanid state for Islamic culture and civilization was the creation of ethnic unity among various tribes of Transoxiana, centered in Bukhara and revolving around the Islamic faith" (Kolayee, 1989, p. 78).

The Infrastructural aspect

During the reign of Amir Esmaeil Samani, changes were also made in the infrastructure section of Bukhara. According to the urban system, it was organized and arranged. Amir Ismail Samani not only attempted to preserve ancient monuments and historical sites in Bukhara, but also to build palaces, numerous buildings and public places of interest.

Mosques and religious schools were considered symbols of political power and stability at the time. The Samanid government prioritized the establishment of mosques and religious schools in its territory. Amir's special attention in establishing large caravanserais, hospitals, bathrooms and educational centers caused Bukhara city to have a special place among Islamic cities in terms of beauty and safaei. In terms of its historical and ancient monuments, the city is still considered as one of the most important historical and old cities in Uzbekistan. The tomb of Amir Ismail Samani, the Kalan Mosque, the Minarklan and the Mir Arab School in Bukhara are among the historical sites and shahkaris of Islamic architecture of the Samanid era. During the time of Amir Ismail Samani, the city of Bukhara was a gathering place for renowned architects, craftsmen, and painters who significantly contributed to the embellishment of the city and the expansion of Islamic architecture (Gorkovar and Franklin, 1997, p. 140).

CONCLUSION

The findings of this study show that Bukhara was the center of exchange of culture and civilization of East and West in the Samanid era. Although Bukhara was also one of the famous cities of the Ultra-Nahr during pre-Islamic periods, the connecting point of east and west culture and civilization and the great silk trade route, but in the Samanid era, the city gained a high reputation. Amir Ismail Samani tried hard to grow bukhara until it was located next to the famous cities of that time such as Balkh, Maru, Baghdad and Neyshapur. In fact, Amir Ismail Samani's action in bukhara's selection center gave an independent political and geographical identity to the super-creek and bukhara. The city became known as the renaissance center of eastern Islam under the actions of Amir Ismail Samani. Bukhara's cultural importance was so important that it was referred to as the Cradle of Islam, Medina al-Salam and Quba al-Islam. Bukhara's reputation under Amir Ismail Samani was not only summarized in the cultural field, but also in the political, economic, social and civil dimensions of the city was one of the most famous cities of the time.

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