

**CRAFT DEVELOPMENT DURING THE KHWAREZMSHAH PERIOD AND THE
ROLE OF GURGANJ AS AN ECONOMIC CENTER**

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Annotation:In this article, the development of handicrafts during the Khwarezmshah period and the role of the city of Gurganj as an economic center are analyzed.

Key words: Khorezm, Gurganj, Anushteginids, Sultan Shah, Khorasan, Takash, Jayhun, defense, trade, center, invasion, Mongols, fortress, Juzjani, palace, city, military, army, cultural life, Alauddin Muhammad, fort, handicrafts, Transoxiana, applied arts, construction, architecture,.

Introduction.

Khorezm has long been regarded as one of the ancient cradles of civilization, possessing immense historical and cultural values rooted in deep antiquity. Its origins extend back many centuries, reflecting a rich and continuous historical development. History represents the philosophy of life of a nation and its people. Since ancient times, Khorezm, located along the Great Silk Road, played an important role in the development of trade and cultural relations between East and West, connecting the peoples of Greece, Rome, Byzantium, China, India, and Iran. Unfortunately, due to social conflicts, internal wars, and various natural disasters, many material and cultural treasures created through centuries of human creativity and intellectual effort — including scientific discoveries and priceless works of art — were repeatedly destroyed and only partially restored. However, the losses were often greater, leading to periods of genuine civilizational decline. Historical sources demonstrate that the Khwarezmshah state enjoyed great prestige and influence in the international arena. On the eve of the Mongol invasion, the famous Arab traveler and geographer Yaqut al-Hamawi visited Khorezm. In his multi-volume work “Geographical Dictionary”, he recorded valuable observations about the Khorezm state and its people, providing important historical evidence about the region’s prosperity and development.

Analysis of the Literature on the Subject.

“I believe that there is no place in the world as vast and as densely populated as the lands of Khwarazm. Moreover, its inhabitants are accustomed to a life of hardship and are content with little. Most settled areas of Khwarazm are cities with markets, warehouses, and shops. Among the inhabited places, it is rare to find one without a marketplace. At the same time, general security and peace prevail in these lands.”[2] The visit of the Arab traveler to Khwarazm and his description above demonstrate that by the beginning of the 12th century the Khwarazm state had become one of the prominent states of the world. Its cities were prosperous, its people hardworking, and trade was highly developed. The Khwarazmshahs’ state covered a vast territory. According to historical sources, at the beginning of the 13th century more than 400 cities existed within its borders. Yaqut al-Hamawi, describing the cities of Khwarazm, wrote: “In terms of the abundance of wealth, the greatness of the capital, the size of its population, its inclination toward goodness, and the observance of religious principles, there is probably no city in the world comparable to the chief city of Khwarazm.” The capital of the Khwarazmshahs, Gurganj, was an exceptionally beautiful and large city for its time. Located on the banks of the Amu Darya (Jayhun), it was densely populated. As the power of the Khwarazm state increased,

Gurganj developed and flourished. The Khwarazmshahs paid great attention to the future and development of their capital. They supported the growth of handicrafts and the expansion of trade. Al-Kazwini noted that all fifty major types of crafts known in the world at that time existed in Gurganj, and that its craftsmen were unrivaled in skill. The Khwarazmshahs understood the important role of trade in strengthening state power. Therefore, both internal and external trade developed widely, and trade routes were carefully protected. Merchants from Gurganj sold their goods in many countries, while foreign traders also brought merchandise to the city. Gurganj was especially famous for its markets. At the beginning of the 13th century, dozens of markets operated in the city, astonishing visitors and travelers with their abundance of goods and crowded activity.[3] Regarding the capital Urganch, Yaqut al-Hamawi wrote: "Khwarazm is not the name of a city but of the entire region. As for the capital, it is called Jurjaniya, while the local population refers to it as Kurkanj (55, II, 480)." The name Kurkanj originated from an unusual reading of the Arabic spelling of "Gurganj." Speaking about the history of the city's establishment, he noted that the inhabitants built residences and palaces, multiplied in number, and gradually spread across the land. They founded towns and villages, and people from nearby and distant cities of Khorasan began to reckon with them, with many migrating there. Thus, the population of Khwarazm increased, gained fame, and the region became a flourishing and beautiful land.

Agriculture in Khwarazm had reached a high level of development from ancient times, based on artificial irrigation, similar to Egypt, Mesopotamia, and other countries of the East.[4] "When I visited the region in the year 616 (1219–1220), I had never seen such a crowded and prosperous land anywhere else. Fields were carefully cultivated, villages were closely situated, and numerous estates and gardens existed; even in the steppe there were many fortresses." [5] At the beginning of the 11th century, during the reign of Ma'mun ibn Ma'mun (995–997) and his successors, the "House of Wisdom" was established in Khwarazm in 1004. This institution, founded in Urganch, became known as the Ma'mun Academy (Khwarazm Academy). Like the Houses of Wisdom in Baghdad and Urganch, it educated many scholars and thinkers whose names became world famous, including Ahmad al-Fargani, al-Khwarizmi, al-Biruni, Ibn Sina, Ibn al-Hammar, Abu Sahl Masihi, and Ibn Iraq.[6] When discussing the socio-economic and cultural development of Transoxiana and Khwarazm in the 9th–12th centuries, it is essential to recognize that the main factor behind these achievements was the emergence of centralized independent states. The Khwarazmshah state, which held significant prestige and influence in the international arena, reached comprehensive development and achieved remarkable cultural progress during the reigns of rulers such as Atsiz, Tekish, and Ala al-Din Muhammad. During their rule, state authority was strengthened, leading to the growth of material production, the development of crafts and trade, and the flourishing of culture.[7]

Analysis

Based on theoretical and comparative analysis, written sources, and the works of previous researchers, the development of crafts during the Khwarezmshah period and the role of Gurganj as an economic center have been studied and synthesized into coherent conclusions.

Results

Using new perspectives and approaches, the study documents the various branches of crafts during the Khwarezmshah period and the role of Gurganj in the economic life, including its significance as a center of trade and production.

Conclusion

Since ancient times, Khwarezm has been one of the major centers of Eastern civilization, with its development closely linked to natural conditions, artificial irrigation systems, a sophisticated urban culture, and international trade routes. During the Khwarezmshah period, the

consolidation of state power served as an important factor for economic and cultural advancement. In particular, the capital city of Gurganj became a center of craftsmanship, trade, and scholarship, elevating Khwarezm to a state of significant international influence.

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