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Turkic Hajibs In The Administrative Hierarchy Of The Samanid State: An Analysis Of Foreign Historiographical Views

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ABSTRACT

This article examines the administrative system of the Samanid state, which ruled Transoxiana and Khorasan in the 9th–10th centuries, with a particular focus on the role of the Turkic hajib institution based on foreign historiographical data. The author analyzes the scholarly works of European, American, and Asian historians to highlight the degree of influence the Turkic military elite exerted on the court administration. The study determines the extent to which this topic has been explored in foreign literature and synthesizes conclusions regarding the significance of Turkic hajibs' activities in ensuring state stability.

Keywords:

Samanid state, Turkic hajibs, Transoxiana, Khorasan, military elite, state administration, court system, foreign historiography.

The Samanid State (9th–10th centuries) occupies a special place in the history of Central Asian statehood not only because of its cultural renaissance but also due to its well-developed administrative and governance system. One of the most important components of this system was the institution of the **hajib**, which gradually evolved from a simple court service into a significant political and military force. In particular, the hajibs representing the Turkic military elite played a decisive role in the domestic and foreign policies of the Samanid Emirate.

Although numerous studies have been devoted to the history of the Samanid period, the activities of the Turkic hajibs have often remained overshadowed by broader historical processes. Valuable information on this issue can be found in the works of foreign scholars such as Sylvestre de Sacy, C. E. Bosworth, R. N. Frye, and Luke Treadwell. Nevertheless, the subject remains an important scholarly problem that requires systematic analysis. The purpose of this article is to contribute to a deeper understanding of the Samanid administrative mechanism by examining the extent to which

the institution of the Turkic hajibs has been studied by foreign researchers.

The history of the Samanid dynasty and its statehood has attracted the attention of numerous European and American scholars. Among them are Sylvestre de Sacy, Charles Defrémery, C. E. Bosworth, R. N. Frye, Luke Treadwell, N. Lowick, Mitchiner, G. Hennequin, Y. Daniel, P. Crone, J. Paul, and E. Merçil, all of whom have conducted significant research on the Samanid period.

Studies concerning the Samanid era and the activities of the Turkic hajibs first became known to European scholarship through source-critical research. In particular, in 1826 Sylvestre de Sacy published the collection *Chrestomathie Arabe*, which, based on the work of Fakhr al-Din al-Razi al-Tabaristani, provided information on the political situation during the Abbasid period, as well as on the Samanids and the hajib elite [14:58–105].

The French Arabist Charles Defrémery, a scholar of the Collège de France, translated the sections of Mirkhwand's *Rawzat al-Safa* related to the history of the Samanid state into French. In the introduction to his translation, he briefly

discussed the activities of the Turkic hajibs during the Samanid period [4:I-IX].

The research of the British orientalist C. E. Bosworth (1928–2015) focused primarily on the history of the Muslim East. As a specialist in Arabic sources, he devoted much of his work to the Ghaznavids, but he also produced several important studies on the Samanid dynasty and its era. Notably, he authored the article “Samanids” for the multi-volume international Encyclopaedia of Islam. This four-page article was published in Volume VIII of the encyclopedia in 1995 [2:1025–1029]. It provides a concise but scholarly overview of the Samanid dynasty, including an analysis of the activities of the Turkic hajibs and their role in state administration.

Another scholar who conducted specialized research on the Samanid dynasty was the American orientalist Richard N. Frye (1920–2014). His research primarily focused on the history of Iran and Central Asia in antiquity and the medieval period, based mainly on Persian-language sources. In particular, he authored an extensive chapter entitled “The Samanids” for Volume VII of *The Cambridge History of Iran*, published in 1993 [5:136–161]. This study is considerably more comprehensive than Bosworth’s article and incorporates a number of previously unknown sources subjected to detailed analysis. Furthermore, Frye provides important information concerning the Turkic elite of the Samanid period [5:136–161].

In another of his studies, Frye examines the political history of the Samanids in greater detail. The history of Turkic military commanders, hajibs, and the political elite is analyzed on the basis of written sources [6:30]. The study discusses the activities of many prominent Turkic commanders, including Faiq, Bektuzun, Alptegin, and others [6:138–139; 146].

Another European orientalist who carried out specialized research on Samanid history was Luke Treadwell, whose work focused mainly on numismatics and Arabic sources. In 1991, he defended his PhD dissertation at the University of Oxford [15:365]. One of the significant contributions of this study is the information it provides on the hajib elite within the military

establishment based on historical sources. For example, Treadwell notes that the hajib of the Saffarids was killed during the battle between Amr ibn al-Layth and Ismail Samani [15:93]. He also provides information about the hajib Baris, who served as governor of Jurjan during the reign of Ismail Samani [15:119–120], and points out that hajibs occupied one of the highest positions within the hierarchy of court officials [15:129–130].

In addition, L. Treadwell authored a number of articles on the Samanids. In particular, his article entitled “The Samanids: The First Islamic Dynasty of Central Asia” provides information on the conversion of the Turks to Islam and the condition of the local elite [16:3–15]. From a source-critical perspective, in another article devoted to Samanid history, he analyzes important information concerning Turkic hajibs found in the work of Ibn Zafir al-Azdi [17:397–419].

P. Crone wrote an article on the Ismailis during the Samanid period [3:37–67]. Along with illuminating the religious and political atmosphere of the Samanid court, the article provides important information regarding court offices, particularly the activities of the hajibs. Among other matters, it discusses Hajib Aytash and Abu Ali Chaghani, who were involved in the struggle against the Ismaili movement [3:45].

The German scholar J. Paul analyzed the military and administrative structure of Muslim states using the Samanid state as a case study [12:1–40]. Based on historical sources, he examined the role of the Turks within the Samanid military system and the participation of both nomadic Turkic and settled dehqan elites in military campaigns [12:12–15]. In particular, he notes that the Samanid army consisted of Turkish slave-soldiers (mamluks), free men, and dehqans (landed aristocracy), and he also provides information on the activities of hajibs such as Bars al-Kabir and Abu Ali Simjuri [12:26].

The history of the Samanids has also been widely studied in Asian countries, including Turkey, Iran, Afghanistan, and the Arab world. The Iranian scholar Sayyid Abu al-Qasim Faruzani authored a book entitled “Samaniyan – az aghaz-i ta farjam” (“The Samanids: From

Beginning to End”) [13:335]. The study discusses relations with the Abbasid Caliphate, the military and administrative system, and the influence of the Turkic military elite on state governance [13:119–151].

The history of the Samanids also occupies a prominent place in the research of Javad Hiravi. In the fifth chapter of his work, the author discusses the political activities of Amir Ismail, the existence of the institution of the *hajib* during this period, and issues related to coinage. The sixth chapter is devoted to the reign of Ahmad ibn Ismail, the conquest of Sistan, the strengthening of central authority, and the place of the Samanid family in Iranian history [8:199–255].

Another important study is Muhammad Reza Naji's dissertation “Farhang va Tamaddun-i Islami dar Qalamraw-i Samaniyan” (“Islamic Culture and Civilization in the Realm of the Samanids”) [10]. In the second section of the dissertation, historical sources are used to describe the duties of various officials, including ministers, supervisors (*mutawallis*), cupbearers, and *hajibs*. The work also provides information about more than thirty ministers who served the Samanid amirs and local rulers [10:58–86].

The historian Aydin Usta defended a PhD dissertation on the history of the Samanid dynasty at Ankara University in 2003. The second chapter examines, on the basis of historical sources, the appointment of figures such as Hajib Bektuzun and Husam al-Dawla Abu al-Abbas Tash as governors of Khurasan and discusses their activities as deputies [1:134–203]. The third chapter is devoted to the military organization of the Samanids. It analyzes the careers of Hajib Alp-Tegin, Husam al-Dawla Abu al-Abbas Tash, Faiq al-Khassa, Inaq Hajib, Hajib Bektuzun, and Abu Ali Simjuri, as well as the circumstances surrounding their rise to the rank of *hajib* [1:283–286].

In the dissertation of I. Kh. Ghulomrizo, one of the greatest problems faced by the Samanid amirs is identified as the struggle among military commanders for control of Khurasan and the growing power of the Turks. The author further notes that during the conflict between Amir Nuh ibn Nasr and Abu Ali Chaghani, Abu

Malik ibn Nuh (954–961) sought to strengthen his authority with the assistance of Bakr ibn Malik, the governor of Fergana, and succeeded in taking control of many territories in Khurasan. However, in 956 Bakr ibn Malik was accused of maintaining relations with the Qarmatians and was subsequently killed by Alptegin. In an effort to weaken the rule of Mansur ibn Nuh, a faction of the Turkic elite, including military commanders and senior officials, invited the ruler of Turkestan, Ilaq Khan, to come to Bukhara [7:226].

Regarding Alptegin, the author concludes that Mansur ibn Nuh ascended the throne with Alptegin's support, although many preferred the amir's brother. Dissatisfied with the situation, Alptegin departed for Ghazna, where he laid the foundations of the Ghaznavid state. However, according to Nizam al-Mulk's *Siyasatnama*, after the death of Nuh ibn Nasr, whom Alptegin had served loyally, palace officials attempted to create hostility between Alptegin and the future ruler. They asked Alptegin, who was then in Khurasan, whether the deceased amir's brother or son should inherit the throne. When he indicated the brother, the prince developed animosity toward him. In his old age, rather than wage war against the dynasty he had faithfully served throughout his life, Alptegin chose to leave for India to participate in jihad campaigns. Following his death there, the Ghaznavid dynasty was founded by Sebuktegin, who had been trained and patronized by Alptegin [11:103–113].

In a study conducted by the Turkish scholar E. Merçil, special attention is given to the role of the Turks in the Samanid state [9:253–266]. The author argues that one of the reasons for the increasing presence of Turks within the Samanid state apparatus was the military campaigns conducted against non-Muslim Turks and the subsequent capture of prisoners of war, many of whom entered state service [9:255].

In conclusion, it should be emphasized that this topic has received attention not only from scholars in Uzbekistan but also from numerous foreign researchers specializing in the history of Central Asia. However, in the majority of these studies, the issue of the Turkic *hajibs* has not

been treated as an independent and central object of research; rather, it has been mentioned only briefly within the broader context of political and military developments. Therefore, the position and role of the hajibs within the administrative system of the Samanid state remain among the most relevant topics requiring specialized, in-depth, and systematic investigation.

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