
The Effects Recorded of the Samanid in History

Ezzatollah Khodadadi

Dep.of Humanities, Shoushtar Branch, Islamic Azad University, Shoushtar, Iran
+989163007327
ezz.at.khodadadi@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The Samanid Empire was the first native dynasty to arise in Iran after the Muslim Arab conquest. It was renowned for the impulse that it gave to Iranian national sentiment and learning. The four grandsons of the dynasty's founder, Saman-Khoda, had been rewarded with provinces for their faithful service to the Abbasid caliph al-Mamun: Nuh obtained Samarkand; Ahmad, Fergana; Yahya, Shash; and Elyas, Herat. Ahmad's son Nasr became governor of Transoxania in 875, but it was his brother and successor, Ismail I (892-907), who overthrew the Saffarids in Khorasan (900) and the Zaydites of Tabaristan, thus establishing a semiautonomous rule over Transoxania and Khorasan, with Bukhara as his capital.

Keywords: Samanid, History, Empires.

Corresponding Author: Khodadadi E.

INTRODUCTION

Isma'il ibn Ahmad (Abu Ibrahim Ismail ibn Ahmad, d. November 907) also referred to as, "Amir Adil" (the Just Commander) was the Persian Samanid amir of Transoxiana (892-907) and Khorasan (900-907). His reign saw the emergence of the Samanids as a powerful force. He was the son of Ahmad ibn Asad and a descendant of Saman Khuda, the founder of the Samanid dynasty who renounced Zoroastrianism and embraced Islam. Ismail is considered the father of the Tajik nation.



Ismail

Ismail I conquered many places, and a territory of his kingdom was wide spread all over today's Central Asia, Afghanistan, and eastern Iran, however in the time of his successors we can observe the autonomy of the regions. The image of Ismail came in the history of Central Asia not only as a strong and capable politician, but also as an equitable ruler, who changed the heavy tax weights, and confiscated the possessions of some landowners [3]. Due to the strong political regime of Ismail, Transoxiana, and his capital Bukhara was so safe, from the nomadic Turks that the walls around of some cities were neglected, although later on these walls were necessary. The successors of Ismail could not continue his policy, and they left under the influence of their Turkish guard, who became dominant in the court (Alp-Tegin and later established by him Ghaznawid dynasty), and alongside with the Qarakhanids ended the rule of the Samanids in 999. However, in some aspects the time of Ismail's successors was more important than his own. For instance the time of Nasr b. Ahmad (914 - 943) is described by many authors as the golden age of the Samanid rule, because of flowering of literature and culture. The main role in this process was played by the Samanid

vazirs, the primer ministers, who themselves were the danishmands (scholars) of their time. Here we should mention the names of two important primer ministers Abu Abd Allah al-Djayhani, and Abul Fadhl Muhammad al-Bal'ami. They gathered many intelligent people in their court and made Bukhara the cultural centre of Iranian civilisation. According to R. Frye the well-known process of Iranian renaissance began in Central Asia rather than in Iran, and he sees the reason for that in the difference of the social groups in these two parts of Muslim world. The mercantile, trade society of Central Asia was much more suitable for the development of an egalitarian Islamic society than a hierarchical caste society of Iran. Therefore the Samanids, who were the real rulers of Transoxiana could be seen as a pioneers of Iranian renaissance. Indeed the changes, which took place under that process, occupied every sphere of life: cultural, linguistic, social, art, economy, politics, and scientific.

REIGN AND MISSIONARY EFFORTS

Isma'il was active to the north and east, steadily spreading Samanid influence as well as solidifying his control over other areas including Kirman, Sijistan and Kabul [5]. Ismail was successful in establishing economic and commercial development and organized a powerful army [4]. It was said that he made his capital Bukhara into one of Islam's most glorious cities as Ismail attracted scholars, artists, and doctors of law into the region [2]. The first translation of the Qu'ran into Persian was completed during Samanid rule. Sunni theology greatly cultivated during Ismail's reign, as numerous mosques and madrassas were built. In 893, Ismail took the city of Talas, the capital of the Qarluq Turks. It was probably in that same year that he also brought an end to the Ustrushana dynasty. Ismail and other Samanid rulers propagated Islam amongst the inhabitants and as many as 30,000 tents of Turks came to profess Islam. During his reign he subjugated numerous regional states to the east, directly incorporating some within his boundaries and retaining the local rulers of others as vassals. Khwarazm to the north was partitioned; the southern part remained autonomous under its Afrigid rulers, while the northern part was governed by a Samanid official. Another campaign in 903 further secured the Samanid boundaries. These campaigns kept the heart of his state safe from Turkish raids, and allowed Muslim missionaries to expand their activities in the region.

THE AGES PROBLEMS

However, it is difficult to say that Persian was the dominant language in all spheres of life in the Samanid Empire. Most of the theological and philosophical works were still written in Arabic, which was the academic language in the Islamic world. Even the Persian scholars, who were mentioned above mostly wrote in Arabic, and there also was developed Arabic literature in the Samanids period. A collection of the poems and prose composed in Arabic in eastern Iran was made by Abu Mansur al-Tha'alidi in *Yatimat al-dahr*. In addition to that, Arabic was the language of religious practice for the Muslims. Hence the use of both Arabic and Persian languages had made the Samanid bureaucracy bilingual. On the other hand there were many other local eastern Iranian languages like Soghdic, Bakhtari, Kharazmi, Saki, and Masageti in the provinces of the Samanid state. Perhaps the reason for choosing Persian as official language of state by the Samanid amirs was much more in their political interests rather than out of love of Persia. The local people of Central Asia must have been familiar with old Persian language since Akhemenids and Sasanids, and Arabs when first came to the area used Persian as a tool for communication with local people. Therefore in order to make administration of the empire easier and to control the people, the Samanids employed the new Persian. On the other hand, by doing so the Samanids may also have wanted to somehow

show their difference and independence from the Abbasid caliphs, to whom they did not pay taxes, although in generally the amirs were loyal to Baghdad. Samanid loyalty towards the Abbasid Sunni caliphs might be explained from the religious point of view as an understandable recognition because of their belonging to the same branch of Islam. The Samanids had good relations with the Abbasid caliphs, and even they always formally sought the sanction of the caliphate to govern their territories. It seems that for the Samanids their religious interest was more important than their ethnic connection to the Iranian race, although they claimed to be from the descendants of the royal Iranian family of Barami Chubina. Moreover the Samanids were far from feeling Iranian conciseness, which today is interpreted by some nationalistic movements, especially in Tajikistan. The most important contribution of the Samanid age to Islamic art is the pottery produced at Nishapur and Samarkand. The Samanids developed a technique known as slip painting: mixing semifluid clay (slip) with their colours to prevent the designs from running when fired with the thin fluid glazes used at that time. Bowls and simple plates were the most common forms made by Samanid potters. The potters employed stylized Sasanian motifs such as horsemen, birds, lions, and bulls' heads, as well as Arabic calligraphic design. Polychrome pieces usually had a buff or red body with designs of several colours, bright yellows, greens, black, purples, and reds being the most common. Many pottery pieces were produced at Nishapur, however, with only a single line on a white background. The art of bronze casting and other forms of metalwork also flourished at Nishapur throughout the Samanid period. Although few Samanid buildings have survived, a mausoleum of Ismail the Samanid (d. 907), still standing in Bukhara, shows the originality of the architecture of the era. The perfectly symmetrical mausoleum is constructed entirely of brick; brick is also used to form decorative patterns in relief, based on the position and direction of each architectural unit.

From the mid-10th century, Samanid power was gradually undermined, economically by the interruption of the northern trade and politically by a struggle with a confederation of disaffected nobles. Weakened, the Samanids became vulnerable to pressure from the rising Turkish powers in Central Asia and Afghanistan. Nuh II (976-997), to retain at least nominal control, confirmed Sebüktigin, a former Turkish slave, as semi-independent ruler of Ghazna (modern Ghazni, Afg.) and appointed his son Mahmud governor of Khorasan. But the Turkish Qarakhanids, who then occupied the greater part of Transoxania, allied with Mahmud and deposed the Samanid Mansur II, taking possession of Khorasan. Bukhara fell in 999, and the last Samanid, Ismail II, after a five-year struggle against the Ghaznavid Mahmud and the Qarakhanids, was assassinated in 1005 [6].

BIBLIOGRAPHY

819 - Caliph al-Mamun divides the rulership of Transoxania into four and assigns it to the four sons of Asad ibn Saman-Khuda as follows: Ilyas is given Herat; Yahya is assigned to Ushrusana and Chach; Ahmad is appointed to Ferghana; and Nuh is given the governorship of Samarqand.

849 May - Ismail Samani is born in Ferghana.

867 Aug. - Yaqub Lais defeats the Samanid ruler of Pushang and Herat and annexes those

regions to his domain centered on Sistan.

869 - Shiraz falls to Yaqub Lais

870 - Yaqub ibn Lais captures Kabul and converts the populace to Islam.

873 Jul. - The Tahirids are defeated by Yaqub Lais who enters Nishapur.

874 Jun. - The Caliph appoints Nasr ibn Ahmad the governor of Transoxania. In Bukhara, the Khutba is read in the name of Nasr ibn Ahmad Samani. At age 25, Ismail Samani enters Bukhara and takes over its rulership.

879 May - Yaqub Lais passes away.

880 - In the summer of 880, Al-Muvaffaq becomes Caliph in Baghdad.

883 - Nasr ibn Ahmad Samani replaces Amr Lais, Yaqub Lais's brother, as the ruler of Kerman and Fars.

885 - Consolidation of Samanid forces under Nasr ibn Ahmad against Ismail Samani.

888 25 Oct. - Victory of Ismail Samani over Nasr near the village of Vazbadin. 892 Ismail Samani (r. 892-907) sets himself the task of reviving the Tajiks' ancient Iranian culture. This means a revival of the exact sciences and fine arts as well as an overhaul of administrative practices. In this context, Rudaki revives Persian literature and Firdowsi promotes the Persian language and Iranian nationalism. Similar contributions are made by the Shubis, who use the Arabic language to defend Iranian culture against Arab domination. Samanid scholars contribute to our understanding of mathematics, physics, chemistry, astronomy, and medicine while Samanid artists enlighten us on the finer points of calligraphy, painting, and music.

892 21 Aug. - Nasr ibn Ahmad Samani passes away. Ismail Samani ascends the throne. 893 - The Samanids defeat the Karluk Turks whose empire begins its decline.

893 Mar. - Caliph al-Mutamad appoints Ismail Samani the ruler of Transoxania.

898 Nov. Ismail Samani defeats Amr Lais's army.

900 - Amr Lais passes away. The Samanids capture Jurjan and Tabaristan.

907 Nov. - Ismail Samani passes away at the age of 58. He is succeeded by his son Ahmad.

913 24 May - Sistan falls to the Samanids.

914 Jan. - Ahmad ibn Ismail is murdered in the hunting grounds by his slaves. His son, Nasr, succeeds him.

932 - Buyid ruler, Mu'izz al-Dawlah, assumes control of northern Iran.

943 Apr. - Ascension of Nuh-i Samani to the throne of Bukhara.

949 Jan. - A peace treaty is signed between Nuh-i Samani and the Dylamite Abu Ali in Hissar, in present-day Tajikistan.

952 - Nuh-i Samani appoints Abu Ali to the rulership of Khurasan.

954 Aug. - Nuh-i Samani passes away. He is succeeded by Abdul Malik Samani, his son.

955 Jun. - Isfahan is separated from the realm of the Samanids.

960 - Abu Ali Balami is appointed Prime Minister. 961 - Mansur ibn Nuh (r. 961-976) oversees the inevitable decline of the might of the Samanids. The Turks, who grow in prominence in the ranks of the Samanids, overthrow the latter and establish their own dynasty (999). The decline of Samanid power also bespeaks the decline of Tajik political power.

Tajiks become a constituent people, populating the empires of the Turks and the Mongols.

961 Feb. - Alptekin is appointed Commander-in-Chief of Khurasan.

961 20 Nov. - Abdul Malik Samani is killed. His brother Mansur succeeds him to the throne.

962 - The Ghaznavid dynasty, the members of which had been slave commanders of the Samanids of Bukhara, is established in Afghanistan.

962 - Alptekin rebels against Samanid rule and establishes himself at Ghazna, the center of the Ghaznavid dynasty in Afghanistan.

974 Mar. - Abu Ali Balami, capable Samanid Prime Minister, passes away.

975 - Alptekin passes away.
976 13 Jun. - Mansur Samani is succeeded by Nuh II Samani.
982 Mar. - The Samanid army is defeated in a battle in Jurjan.
985 - Seljuq Turks migrate to the areas around Bukhara.
992 May - Between May and June of
992, the Samanids are defeated at the hand of the Turkish commander Bughra Khan.
Samarqand and Bukhara are captured by the Turks. Amir Nuh II flees the capital of Bukhara.
992 Aug. - Nuh II returns to Bukhara and resumes his rulership of the realm. Samanids who
had supported Bughra Khan are punished.
994 Nuh II fights Abu Ali Simjur near Herat and defeats him.
995 - Manas, the national hero of the Kyrgyz, unites the Kyrgyz people and establishes an
exemplary elected government [1].
997 23 Jul. - Nuh II passes away. Mansur II ascends the throne.
997 Aug. - Sabuktekin passes away.
998 - Mahmud of Ghazna becomes sultan.
999 - The Qarakhanids seize the Ferghana Valley and later defeat the Samanids and capture
Bukhara.

REFERENCES

- [1] The book of government, or, Rules for kings: the Siyar al-Muluk, or, Siyasat-nama of Nizam al-Mulk, Niẓām al-Mulk, Hubert Darke, pg. 156.
[2] Nizam al-Mulk, Niẓām al-Mulk, Hubert Darke, pg.18-19.
[3] History of Islam (Vol 3) By Akbar Shah Najeebabadi, pg. 330.
[4] Ibn Khallikan's biographical dictionary By Ibn Khallikān, pg.329.
[5] Ibn Khallikan's biographical dictionary By Ibn Khallikān, pg.328.
[6] The modern Uzbeks: from the fourteenth century to the present : a cultural history, by Edward Allworth, pg. 19.