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O'ktam Bazarbayevich Palvanov

International Islamic Studies Academy of Uzbekistan

Ph.D. Dotsent, Lecturer,

davr0101@mail.ru

Khurshidabonu Abdujabbor qizi Lutfiddinova

International Islamic Studies Academy of Uzbekistan

4th-year student of Islamic Studies

THE SCIENTIFIC ACTIVITIES OF THE MUTAKALLIM SCHOLARS WHO LIVED IN MOVARUNNAHR IN THE 12TH CENTURY

Abstract: The development of a highly complex political situation, along with the social and economic changes that occurred in Transoxiana and Khorasan between the 9th and 12th centuries, had a profound impact on the country's cultural life. As a result of the Arab conquest of Transoxiana, Islam, along with the Arabic language, was elevated to a state policy. Arabic became not only the official state language but also the language of science. Due to the demand for and interest in the Arabic language, scholars who mastered Arabic and its script emerged in Transoxiana in a short period.

Key words: Theologians of Transoxiana, the science of Kalām, Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī, Najm al-Dīn ʿUmar al-Nasafī, Nūr al-Dīn al-Ṣabūnī, Ibrāhīm al-Ṣaffār al-Bukhārī.

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Introduction

During the 9th-12th centuries, Transoxiana and Khurāsān were major centers of culture, science, and the arts, and their contributions to Islamic civilization had a lasting global impact.

The complex political developments and the socio-economic transformations in Transoxiana and Khurāsān during this period significantly influenced the cultural life of the region. Following the Arab conquest of Transoxiana, not only was Islam established, but the Arabic language also rose to the status of official and scholarly discourse. Arabic became both the administrative and scientific language, and due to this necessity and aspiration, many scholars in Transoxiana soon became proficient in the Arabic language and script [1:166].

Transoxiana experienced notable scientific development in the 11th-12th centuries, a progression shaped by prevailing socio-economic and political conditions. From the 11th century onward, the region

was ruled by the Qarakhanids (389-609 AH / 999-1212 CE), the Ghaznavids (367-582 AH / 977-1186 CE), and the Khwārazmshāhs (477-629 AH / 1077-1231 CE) [4:6].

Many scholars contributed to the spread of the teaching of Māturīdiya beyond Transoxiana. One such prominent figure was Jamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad Ghaznawī, who lived and worked in Khurāsān. During this period, Khurāsān was governed successively by the Ghaznavids, Ghūrīds, Seljuks, and Khwārazmshāhs.

Following Seljuk rule, the Khwārazmshāhs gained control over Transoxiana and Khurāsān. During their reign, many cities within the state became centers of knowledge and culture. Cultural exchange between Transoxiana, Khurāsān, Persia, Azerbaijan, and ʿIrāq intensified [1:112].

The favorable socio-economic, intellectual, and cultural conditions created during the reigns of local dynasties after the Arab conquest (9th-12th centuries) gave rise to a remarkable intellectual atmosphere. This

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environment enabled the emergence of extraordinary scholars, intellectuals, and literary figures whose unique contributions enriched world civilization.

During this period, several theologians (*mutakallimūn*) emerged in Transoxiana. One of the most notable among them was Abū al-Muʿīn al-Nasafī (418-505 AH / 1027-1114 CE). A great scholar and leading figure of Ahl al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa, he was a prominent representative of the Abū Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī school. His full name was Abū al-Muʿīn Maṣṣūn ibn Muḥammad ibn Muḥammad ibn Muʿtamīd ibn Muḥammad ibn Makhūl ibn Faḍl al-Nasafī al-Makhūlī. Born in Nasaf in 1027, he was known by the nisba “al-Makhūlī” due to his grandfather, Makhūl al-Nasafī, who was a student of Imām al-Māturīdī. His grandfather Muʿtamīd ibn Makhūl al-Nasafī was a renowned Ḥanafī scholar. Abū al-Muʿīn was inspired to pursue knowledge by his father, Muḥammad ibn Muʿtamīd, a leading scholar in his town. Imām Nasafī would often mention his father's name in his chains of transmission. He initially studied under his grandfather and father, later continuing his education under Abū al-Yusr al-Pazdawī.

Imām al-Nasafī served as a bridge between the early and later generations in Islamic theology and made immense contributions to the development of Māturīdī thought. He lived and worked in Bukhārā and Samarqand during the ʿAbbāsīd era, a time marked by a flourishing of all branches of science. As rational inquiry spread and various theological sects emerged, Imām Nasafī responded with numerous works defending orthodox belief, such as: *Tabsirat al-Adillah fī Uṣūl al-Dīn*, *Baḥr al-Kalām fī ʿIlm al-Kalām*, *al-Tamhīd li-Qawāʿid al-Tawḥīd fī ʿIlm al-Kalām*, *al-ʿĀlim wa al-Mutaʿallim*, *al-ʿUmḍa fī Uṣūl al-Fiqh*.

His work *Baḥr al-Kalām fī ʿIlm al-Kalām* is one of the foundational texts of the Māturīdī theological tradition. Another key text, *Tabsirat al-Adillah fī Uṣūl al-Dīn ʿalā Ṭarīqat Imām Abī Maṣṣūr al-Māturīdī*, offers rational evidences in support of Māturīdī theology [3].

Another prominent theologian of the time was Najm al-Dīn ʿUmar al-Nasafī (459-533 AH / 1068-1142 CE), a polymath who contributed to various Islamic sciences. His full name was Najm al-Dīn Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn Muḥammad ibn Aḥmad ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Muḥammad ibn ʿAlī ibn Luqmān al-Nasafī al-Samarqandī. He was titled “Najm al-Dīn” (“Star of the Religion”) in recognition of his scholarly contributions. Imām al-Nasafī was a master of Qurʾānic sciences, ḥadīth, theology (ʿaqīda), and jurisprudence (fiqh), and was also active in poetry. He studied in major centers like Samarqand, Bukhārā, Nasaf, Baghdād, and Merv, and produced many distinguished students.

Known as “al-Ḥāfīz” for his mastery of ḥadīth, “al-Faqīh” for his juristic expertise, and “al-Zāhid” for

his asceticism, al-Nasafī also bore the epithet “al-Ḥanafī” due to his contributions to the Ḥanafī school. His native city of Nasaf was a significant scholarly hub in Transoxiana. The educational institution Dār al-Juzjāniyya in Samarqand played a crucial role in his intellectual development, where he later served as a teacher. His masterpiece, *Kitāb al-Qand fī Dhikr ʿUlamāʾ Samarqand*, provides biographical accounts of more than a thousand scholars from Transoxiana [4].

Nūr al-Dīn Aḥmad ibn Abī Bakr al-Ṣābūnī al-Bukhārī was another renowned scholar of this period. Although his exact birth year is unknown, he was known by the nisba “al-Ṣābūnī” due to his association with soap-making. His major theological works include: *Bidāya fī Uṣūl al-Dīn* (Introduction to the Foundations of Religion), *Hidāya fī ʿIlm al-Kalām* (Guidance in Theology), *Kifāya fī al-Hidāya* (Sufficiency in the Guidance). He passed away in Bukhārā in 580 AH / 1184 CE [5].

Ibrāhīm al-Ṣaffār al-Bukhārī (460-534 AH / 1065-1139 CE), known as Abū Ishāq, was a prominent jurist and theologian. His full name was Ibrāhīm ibn Ismāʿīl ibn Aḥmad ibn Ishāq ibn Shīs ibn Ḥakam, and he was honored with the title *Rukn al-Islām* (“Pillar of Islam”). The term “al-Ṣaffār” refers to his family's occupation as copper vessel sellers. Renowned for his ascetic lifestyle, he was courageous in addressing rulers and was brought to Merv by Sulṭān Sanjar ibn Malikshāh [6].

His father, grandfather, and great-grandfather were all notable Ḥanafī scholars. He received his initial education from his father and furthered it under scholars like Abū Ḥafṣ ʿUmar ibn Maṣṣūr al-Bazzāz. He eventually became one of the leading imams of Bukhārā. His famous students included Ḥasan ibn Maṣṣūr al-ʿUzghandī al-Farghānī, author of *Fatāwā Qāḍī Khān* [7:9].

His significant works include: *Talkhīṣ al-Adillah li-Qawāʿid al-Tawḥīd*, *Risāla fī al-Kalām*, *Kitāb al-Fuṣūl*, *al-Ibāna ʿan Ithbāt al-Risāla*, *Kitāb al-Sunna wa al-Jamāʿa*, *Bayān al-Tawḥīd*, *Uṣūl al-Ṣaffār: Asʿila fī al-ʿItiqād*, *Ajwiba Imām Ṣaffār al-Bukhārī*.

Al-Ṣaffār al-Bukhārī was a great jurist and ḥadīth scholar who defended Transoxiana and its people against deviant ideas and strongly supported the Ḥanafī school and the Māturīdī teachings.

These scholars were among the most influential figures in the development and spread of Māturīdī theology in Transoxiana [6].

Jamāl al-Dīn Aḥmad Ghaznawī was also a proponent of the Māturīdī school, as evidenced by the views expressed in his works.

In the 12th century, Transoxiana was a vibrant center of science, culture, and religious life. This socio-cultural environment had a profound influence on Islamic theology (ʿilm al-kalām). The intellectual and social changes occurring in Transoxiana during this period significantly shaped the development of

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theology. Major scholarly centers such as Bukhārā and Samarqand played a pivotal role in promoting knowledge. During this time, growing intellectual curiosity among different social groups, as well as increasing religious and sectarian debates, created a fertile ground for theological inquiry. Greek philosophy and sciences also had an impact on the region. This dynamic context led to the emergence of numerous theological works.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the socio-political and scientific-cultural life of Transoxiana in the 12th century had a profound impact on the development of Islamic theology. The scholars of this era played a crucial role in analyzing theological matters through a rational and scholarly lens and worked diligently to safeguard orthodox belief using rigorous academic methods.

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