



# IS THE KHOREZMSHAH MAMUNIDS FROM TURKISH TRIBE OR ARAB?

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## ANNOTATION

Very few historical sources and archaeological findings of Khorezm from the 10th century have reached our days. The Khorezmshah Mamunids dynasty, which reigned in the Khorezm region during this period, is not only an oasis but one of the dynasties that left an indelible mark in the history of Central Asia. Because, during the period of this dynasty, which ruled for a little time, more than 20 years, the center of knowledge known as "Dar al Hikma wal-Maarif" was founded. However, no unanimous conclusions have yet been drawn regarding the entry of Khorezmshah Mamunids into the political arena. In addition, there is no clear information about the ethnic group of the Mamunids. In this article, the political events that took place in Khorezm during this period are analyzed with the help of numismatic materials and manuscript sources.

**KEYWORDS:** Afrighids, Mamunids, Ghaznavids, Samanids, Jurjania, coin, Khorezmshah, emir, viceroy.

## INTRODUCTION

Today, the history of the Mamunids dynasty is one of the dynasties that ruled the state with the title of Khorezmshah, which occupies one of the important places in the history of Khorezm and has not been well studied. Information about the history of this period has arrived only in short form in some sources. In most of the sources that have arrived, it can be seen that the economic and political processes that took place in Khorezm in the 10th century are covered only from one side view. For this reason, the unexplored pages of the political life of this dynasty, and the dark sides of the issue of ethnicity are found enough. Information about the take of the dynasty to the Khorezm throne has been clarified in recent years as a result of research conducted based on numismatic sources. However, today there are many hypotheses about the ethnic origin of the Mamunids, the second dynasty that won the title of Khorezmshah, but none of them have been scientifically proven. In this regard, a group of scholars argues that when the Arabs conquered Khorezm at the beginning of the 8th century, they divided Khorezm administratively into two regions and allowed rulers belonging to the local Afrighids dynasty to rule in northern Khorezm. In South Khorezm, the caliph appointed Arab viceroys who kept the Afrighids under his control, and some historians believed that the Mamunids came to the throne of Khorezm as the descendants of these viceroys.

According to another hypothesis, the founder of the Mamunids dynasty, Mamun ibn Muhammad, is the son of the ruler of the Afrighids, Ahmad ibn Muhammad, and their origin is considered to be the ancient Khorezm dynasty. A group of scientists consider it a dynasty belonging to the Turkic tribes that migrated from the Aral region during the Turkification of Khorezm in those times. It should be noted that each of the above assumptions is close to the truth in some sense.

## THE POLITICAL SITUATION IN KHOREZM IN THE 10<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY

In the territory of Khorezm, there were two independent states at the end of the 10th century: the Afrighids, whose capital was Kath, on the right bank of the Amu Darya, and the state ruled by the Mamunids dynasty, whose capital was Gurganch (from the Arab period, Jurjaniah), located on the left side of the river [V.V.Barthold, 1963. 232]. In 386 A.H. (995 AD), representatives of these two dynasties, Abu Abdullah Muhammad ibn Ahmad and Abul Abbas Mamun ibn Muhammad (386/996-387/997) clashed on the battlefield. After this battle, the entire rule in Khorezm passed into the hands of the Mamunids dynasty. However, until now, historical sources have not revealed complete information about when this dynasty came to the throne of Jurjaniah or about its ethnic origin.



The reign of the Afrighids dynasty in the region is determined by archaeological data and manuscript sources as 305 AD. However, 995 is defined as the period when the Mamunids dynasty came to rule in Gurganch, the period when the Afrighids were overthrown and the Mamunids began to rule over the entire Khorezm. However, it is extremely difficult to dethrone a dynasty that has ruled the region for hundreds of years without having a certain political and economic power. Some sources contain information about the campaigns of Khorezm emirs against the city of Itil, which was considered the capital of the Khazar Khanate in 977-982 [Q. Masharipov, 2016. 97]. Another researcher, A.Uzbayraktar, noted that this dynasty was founded by the Samanids between 348-372 years (959-982 AD) [A. Uzbayraktar, 2021. 48]. In recent years, during the research conducted based on numismatic sources, it has been proven that the dynasty came to power in 356 (967 AD) based on the coin of Muhammad ibn Ali minted in Jurjaniah [Sh. Ismailov, 2022. 22-24]. Researchers believe that this person was the father of Mamun ibn Muhammad, the founder of the Mamunids dynasty [R. Reva, V.Kalinin, etc., 2011. 58]. That is, it can be said that Jurjaniah was separated from the state of the Afrighids dynasty by the Samanids between the year 959, when the silver coin of Ahmad ibn Muhammad was minted, and the year 967 when the coin of Muhammad ibn Ali was minted and was turned into a separate emirate. Because the rule of the Tahirids was completely abolished in Central Asia, and the influence of the Arab caliph was almost imperceptible. Moreover, it was impossible to form a new political power in the economically developed region without the permission of the Samanids, who were the absolute leaders in the region. The attitude of the Mamunids towards the Samanids can also be seen on the coins. That is, on the silver coin of Mamun ibn Muhammad minted in 997, the name of Nuh ibn Mansur is recorded, and on the coin of Ali ibn Mamun minted in 999 in Jurjaniah, we can see the name of Abdumalik.

### ARE MAMUNIDS TURKS OR ARABS?

To this day, no reliable evidence has been found that Mamunids belonged to Iranian, Arab, or Turkish nationality. However, some information can be found in manuscripts and research papers that may shed light on this issue.

Similar information is given in the work of historian Javad Heravi: When Khorezm was occupied by Muslims, the political office was practically divided into east and west of Amu Darya. In addition to the Khorezmshahs, whose ancestors went back to Afrigh, a new dynasty emerged under the influence of Arab Muslims. This dynasty rose to such an extent that it later came to power in Gurgench under the name of the Mamunids dynasty [J.Heravi, 1967. 155-186].

Another piece of information related to the coming to power of the Mamunids dynasty is given by Bosworth. He says about this in his work: "The reason for the rise of the Mamunids is the economic development of the city of Jurjaniah in the northwest of Khorezm and the competition with the city of Kath, the capital of the Iraqids (Afrighids) on the left bank of the Amu Darya. With the abdication of the Mamunids, the Iranian ethnic group in the family of the Khorezmshahs completely disappeared" [C.E. Bosworth, 1984. 762-764]. It can be seen from this sentence that the researcher indicates the Mamunids dynasty as an ancient Iranian layer.

Zaki Walidy Togon says about the rise of the Mamunids to power: "As the economic power of the Samanids state increased, they handed over the administration of Jurjaniah to governors from the local people who were subordinate to them. The first of such governors was Abul Abbas Ma'mun ibn Muhammad, whose dynasty was named after him. The Mamunids are most likely from the Baranli clan of the Turks" [Z.W.Togon, 1987. 243]. We can see that, unlike Z. W. Togon, C.E. Bosworth noted that Mamunids are not Iranian, but Turkic.

As we say today, no reliable evidence has been found that Mamunids belonged to Iranian, Arab, or Turkish nationality. But the historian Bayhaki has mentioned such interesting information in his work. According to him, Khorezm ambassadors who came to Ghazna during Mamun ibn Mamun communicated with Khorezm with letters written in the ancient Khorezm language [Bayhaki, 1964. 144].

### CONCLUSION

As for the ethnic origin of the Mamunids dynasty, it is very difficult to give a final opinion about it. But in our opinion, the Mamunids are neither Turkic nor Arab, they are a dynasty that, after the introduction of Islam, incorporated elements of Islam and Turkism, and whose origins go back to the ancient Khorezmians. Because it is somewhat difficult for people of Arab origin to learn the ancient Khorezm language to communicate with his ambassadors in other countries. As proof of this opinion can be shown, the definition of the Arab historian Al-Maimuni is "Mamunids are local emirs who want to run the state in an independent form". It can be seen that Heravi called them "the dynasty that came to power under the influence of Arab Muslims". In addition, it is known since ancient times that the administration of the occupied territories was usually given to the nobles who came from the local people. Because such representatives know the customs and traditions of the people well,



and the local people did not feel any dissatisfaction with their reign. Taking this into account, it is not surprising that the Samanids handed over the administration of the region that had just separated from the Afrighids to local emirs.

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