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## THE HISTORY OF KHOREZMSHAHS' STATEHOOD: THE SYSTEM OF GOVERNANCE AND POLITICAL-STRATEGIC FACTORS

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### Abstract

This article analyzes the formation of the statehood of the Khorezmshahs, which operated in the 11th-13th centuries, their governance system, military-administrative structure, and foreign policy strategy. The study is based on medieval sources such as Juvayni, Rashid al-Din, and Ibn al-Athir, alongside modern historiography. The findings indicate that the Khwarazmshah state was a centralized monarchy with significant territorial expansion. However, internal political tensions and the Mongol invasion led to its decline. The article highlights the importance of Khwarazmshah statehood in Central Asian political history.

**Keywords:** Khwarazmshah state, Ala al-Din Muhammad, Jalal al-Din Manguberdi, centralized governance, Mongol invasion.

### Introduction

The origin of the Khorezmshahs dates back to the end of the 10th century. During this period, the Samanid state was losing its dominance in Central Asia, and local khokimiyats were gaining strength. The territory of Khorezm also became a battlefield. During this period, a Turkic general named Anushtegin Garchay, who took control of Khorezm, was given the title of Khorezmshah. Anushtegin's descendants later formed the Khorezmshah dynasty.

The 11th–13th centuries are characterized as a period of complex political transformations in the history of Central Asia. Although the struggle for dominance between several dynasties intensified in the region during this period, it was the state of the Khorezmshahs that became the leading political force in the region. Founded by the Anushtegin dynasty, this state initially operated as a



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viceroys within the Seljuk Empire. However, from the second half of the 12th century, especially during the reigns of Atsiz (1127–1156) and Takash (1172–1200), consistent efforts were made towards political independence, and the dynasty was formed as an independent state (Bosworth, 1996; Barthold, 1968).

The territorial expansion and political power of the Khorezm Shahs reached its peak during the reign of Alauddin Muhammad II (1200–1220). During his reign, the state's territory included most of Iran, Iraq, Transoxiana, Khorasan, and the main provinces of Afghanistan. This process was carried out through military campaigns, diplomatic agreements, and a policy of seizing the Seljuk legacy. The medieval historian Ibn al-Athir recognizes the Khorezm Shahs as "the largest Muslim state in the East" at that time (Ibn al-Athir, 1987). At the same time, Juvaini also emphasizes the power and territorial potential of the Khorezm Shahs' kingdom, describing it as one of the largest political centers of the Muslim East before the Mongol conquest (Juvaini, 1997).

In modern historiography, the state of the Khorezmshahs is considered a centralized monarchy. In it, the power of the sultan was highly consolidated, and territorial control was exercised through provincial administration. However, the weakness of the internal political balance and the conflicts between the central government and local emirs negatively affected the stability of the state (Bosworth, 1996; Barthold, 1968).

Thus, in the 11th–13th centuries, the state of the Khorezmshahs emerged as a major territorial and political entity in Central Asia, becoming one of the most powerful states in the Muslim East. However, this political rise could not maintain long-term stability in the face of internal structural problems and external threats, in particular the Mongol invasion.

### **Methods**

This research was carried out based on the methodology of source studies, historical-comparative and systematic analysis. At the first stage, primary written sources related to the period of the Khorezmshahs were studied in a comprehensive manner. In particular, Alauddin Juvaini's "Tarihi Jahongushoy" served as an important source for shedding light on the political processes on the eve of the Mongol invasion and the internal situation of the Khorezmshahs' state



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(Juvaini, 1997). Rashididdin's "Jome' ut-tavorikh" made it possible to analyze the history of the dynasty in the context of the wider Muslim East (Rashid al-Din, 1998). Ibn al-Asir's "Al-Kamil fi't-tarikh" provides important information about the political power and territorial expansion of the Khorezmshahs' state (Ibn al-Athir, 1987).

Modern historiographical works, including C.E. Bosworth's *The New Islamic Dynasties*, served as a theoretical basis for identifying the genealogical and political stages of the dynasty's development (Bosworth, 1996). V.V. Barthold's fundamental research on the period of the Mongol conquest of Central Asia provided an important methodological direction for analyzing the external factors of the crisis of the Khorezmshah state (Barthold, 1968). Also, the studies of D. Morgan (2007) and P. Jackson (2017) shed light on the issues of relations between the Mongol conquest and Muslim states in a comparative context, which also enriched the theoretical basis of this study.

Primary sources were studied using textual and content analysis methods, in which the chronology of events, political terminology, and the subjective position of the authors were separately analyzed. Modern scientific developments were considered based on a comparative approach, identifying similarities and differences between the statehood of the Khorezmshahs and other medieval Muslim states. Using the method of systematic analysis, state administration, military structure, and economic mechanisms were interpreted as a complex, interconnected system.

### **Results**

The Khorezmshahs' state was formed as a centralized monarchy in terms of political structure, with supreme power concentrated in the hands of the sultan. The sultan acted as the holder of the supreme military, administrative, and judicial power of the state. The administrative system was implemented through the cabinet, and in the provinces, emirs and governors exercised power on behalf of the sultan. This system was aimed at maintaining central control in the context of the expansion of the state's territory (Bosworth, 1996). The tax system, in particular, taxes and customs duties, was the main source of income for the state



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treasury. Military service also served as one of the important factors in ensuring the economic and political stability of the state (Barthold, 1968).

The military structure consisted mainly of warriors and mercenaries from Turkic tribes. The army was the main support of the sultan's power, serving to consolidate territorial expansion and political power. In particular, during the reign of Alauddin Muhammad II, the sharp expansion of the state's territory was associated precisely with military campaigns and a centralized command system (Bosworth, 1996). However, the insufficiently strong internal political unity, the desire for independence of regional governors, and conflicts between the central government and the local elite negatively affected the effectiveness of the military structure (Barthold, 1968).

During the reign of Alauddin Muhammad II (1200–1220), the Khorezmshah state became one of the most powerful political entities in the Muslim East. However, the invasion of the Mongol army led by Genghis Khan in 1219 led to the collapse of the state. In his work, Juvaini attributes this invasion to the internal weaknesses and incorrect strategic decisions of the Khorezmshah state (Juvaini, 1997). Modern researchers also point to internal political conflicts, conflicts between the center and the provinces, insufficiently coordinated military strategy in response to external threats, and diplomatic mistakes as the main factors in the collapse of the state (Morgan, 2007; Jackson, 2017).

Thus, the crisis of the Khorezmshahs' statehood is explained not only by external invasion, but by a set of factors:

- internal political conflicts and intra-dynastic contradictions;
- a disruption of the balance between the central government and the provincial administration;
- a strong external military threat, such as the Mongol invasion;
- strategic and diplomatic mistakes.

These factors, in combination, undermined the political stability of the state, and as a result, the Khorezmshahs' state disappeared from the stage of history at the beginning of the 13th century.



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## Discussion

The Khorezmshah state was significantly strengthened during the heyday of its development through territorial expansion and centralized governance mechanisms. The strengthening of the sultan's power and the expansion of control over the provinces turned the state into one of the largest political entities in the Muslim East in a short period of time (Bosworth, 1996). However, the fact that territorial expansion was not fully combined with the strengthening of internal political balance had a negative impact on the stability of the state. Conflicts between the central government and local emirs, intra-dynastic rivalry, and insufficient institutionalization of the administrative system weakened the state internally (Barthold, 1968).

These internal weaknesses were further exposed during the Mongol invasion. Although Jalaluddin Manguberdi (1220–1231) demonstrated great courage and military prowess in his fight against the Mongols, his actions remained largely confined to military resistance and did not create sufficient conditions for the restoration of a centralized political system. Juvaini, while specifically acknowledging Jalaluddin's struggle, argues that his military achievements lacked a sufficient institutional basis to restore the state's previous political structure (Juvaini, 1997). Modern scholars also note that Jalaluddin's activities were an example of individual military courage, but lacked the political and economic resources necessary to restore centralized rule (Morgan, 2007; Jackson, 2017).

The state of the Khorezmshahs occupies a unique place in the history of medieval Central Asia. It played an important role in the political, economic and cultural life of the region. During its short reign, the state of the Khorezmshahs managed to strengthen the statehood of Central Asia and unite the region under one flag for several decades. Khorezm culture is an important part of the culture of Central Asia. Also, the decline of the state of the Khorezmshahs was an important lesson for its time, showing that the rulers of states should not go their own way, but should pursue rational policies and work for the benefit of the people.



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## Conclusion

The Khorezmshahs were a powerful state in Central Asia in the 11th-13th centuries. Its origin, formation, rise, political, economic and cultural life occupy a special place. Although the Khorezmshahs reached great heights during their short reign, they quickly declined due to political and military shortcomings, the activation of internal and external enemies of the state, and the priority given to personal ambitions in governing the state. It is important to study the history of this state, learn from it, and use it in building a state today.

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