

THE USE OF THE KHWARAZM SHAH TITLE IN THE POWER SYSTEM OF THE KHIVA KHANATE

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Abstract

"Khwarazmshah" was a title attributed to the dynasties that ruled the Khwarazm oasis and was widely used as a political symbol over the centuries. This article analyzes how the Khiva khans employed this title to legitimize their rule on traditional and legal grounds. It also examines the ideological and political significance of the title and its role and status in the system of state governance.

Keywords: Khwarazmshahs (Anushteginids) state, "Khwarazmshah" title, system of state administration, Khiva Khanate, yarliks.

Introduction

. In the history of the khanates located in the Turan region, titles associated with state governance are known to have played significant political and ideological roles. In this context, the title "Khwarazmshah" also carries deep-rooted ancient traditions and significance.

The word "shah," derived from old persian, signifies "king" or "ruler." Historically, the title "shah" was used as a supreme designation by dynasties ruling in certain Muslim countries of the Near and Middle East, as well as in regions such as India (the Delhi Sultanate). In ancient Iranian culture, it emerged as a symbol of authority (governance) and legitimacy. The title was initially employed during the Sasanian Empire. In Iran, it was preserved in the form of "shahanshah" [13, 210-b.]. In the Islamic world, the title "shah" was predominantly used in regions influenced by persian and turkic cultures. In the Arab Caliphate, titles such as "amir" and "caliph" were more widespread, with the title "shah" being less commonly employed. The use of this title was largely tied to local traditions and cultural influences.

In his work "Al-Asorul Boqiya" Abu Rayhan Biruni, while discussing titles used in the Muslim East and neighboring regions, notes that the Siyavushid dynasty was the first to adopt the title of "Khwarazmshah."

Regarding ancient Khwarazm, prior to the Achaemenids and the subsequent Afrighid dynasty founded by Afrigh (305 CE), Abu Rayhan Biruni writes about Khwarazm: "Historians have recorded that Siyavush, son of Kaykhusraw, came to Khwarazm, and that Kaykhusraw and his descendants ruled as kings in Khwarazm. At that time, Kaykhusraw migrated to Khwarazm and established dominion over the Turkic kings. "Between the era of Kaykhusraw and Afrigh, the kings deemed worthy of the title "Khwarazmshah" include the following, whose names are

known to us: Kaykhusraw (approx. 1200 – 1140 BCE.), Saksafar (approx. 519 – 517 BCE.), Farasman (approx. 329 – 320 BCE.), and Khusraw (approx. 320 BCE.) [2].

This title not only signified affiliation with the Khwarazmian dynasty but also established the legitimacy of authority. During the 12th–13th centuries, under the Khwarazmshah dynasty, the title reached its highest political prominence. Furthermore, the influence of this title was reflected in Khwarazm's subsequent political structures, retaining its role to some extent as a political symbol. In other words, the use of the title was not merely symbolic but also exerted a tangible impact on political events.

MAIN PART

The Political and Cultural Significance of "Khwarazmshah". The term "Khwarazmshah" refers to a representative of the dynasty ruling over the Khwarazm oasis, essentially meaning the "king" or "ruler" of Khwarazm. We know that over many centuries, several dynasties in this region operated under the title of "Khwarazmshah." [3, 134-b.]. In Khwarazm, prior to the reign of Muhammad Khwarazmshah (1200 – 1220), four dynasties ruled and referred to themselves as "Khwarazmshahs." These dynasties are as follows: the Afrighids (305 – 995), the Ma'munids (995 – 1017), the Altuntashids (1017 – 1134), and the Anushteginids (1077 – 1231), who governed as Khwarazmshahs. Among them, the Anushteginids hold a particularly significant place.

In 999 CE, Mahmud Ghaznavi conquered all the provinces of Khurasan and proclaimed himself sultan. Taking advantage of internal unrest in Khwarazm, he annexed the region to his empire in 1017 CE and appointed Altuntash as governor, bestowing upon him the title of "Khwarazmshah." [9, 20-b.]. During the period when Khwarazm was governed by Seljuk governors, the rulers of Khwarazm were granted the status of "wali" (governor) as an administrative position. Nevertheless, the title "Khwarazmshah" continued to be used as an internal title, reflecting the historical and collective spiritual worldview (mentality) inherent to the Khwarazmian people's way of thinking.

According to historical sources, starting from the reigns of Anushtegin (1077 – 1097) and Qutbiddin Muhammad (1097 – 1127), Khwarazmian rulers, appointed as administrators by the Seljuks, were granted the title of "Khwarazmshah." Following Qutbuddin Muhammad, his successors Alaaddin Otsiz (1127 – 1156), Alaaddin Takesh (1172 – 1200), and Alaaddin Muhammad (1200 – 1220) succeeded in achieving independence for the Khwarazmshah state and transforming it into a vast empire. Consequently, the error Anushteginids and their descendants regarded the title "Khwarazmshah" not merely as an administrative designation but as a symbol of state independence and imperial authority [8, 46-b.].

In terms of its essence and significance, the title "Khwarazmshah" began to be recognized as a symbol of strong political authority and independence starting from the reign of Otsiz. Rulers would mint coins in their names to proclaim their authority. Otsiz was the first to mint coins in his name as the "Khwarazmshah Sultan," marking a significant assertion of his sovereignty [8, 84-b.]. Historical sources indicate that coins were minted in the name of the Khwarazmshahs

in approximately 30 different geographical regions, as identified through the inscriptions of "Khwarazmshah" on these coins [4, 144-b.].

Historical sources refer to Sultan Alaaddin Takesh as a "Khwarazmshah." Subsequently, Takesh began to be styled not merely as "Khwarazmshah" but as "Sultan ibn Khwarazmshah," reflecting an elevation in his title and status [9, 28-b.]. In his works, Davlatshah refers to Sultan Alaaddin Muhammad as "Sultan Khwarazmshah" [8, 70-b.]. This situation was not merely applied as a personal title but was also used to represent the entire dynasty.

Indeed, the Anushteginids and their descendants, in a distinctive manner, revived and actively promoted the title "Khwarazmshah" to demonstrate state independence and the legitimacy of their authority. Through this, they sought not only to strengthen their internal governance system but also to showcase the sanctity of their state and its continuity with ancient traditions of statehood in external political relations.

Historical sources indicate that nearly all Khwarazmian rulers were referred to as "Khwarazmshah," a reflection of the increasing power and influence of the state, which led to the elevation of titles and honorifics. Unlike governors and administrators in other regions of the state, who held standard titles, the rulers of Khwarazm, in accordance with dynastic tradition, were uniquely granted the title "Khwarazmshah." This tradition persisted even after the fall of the Khwarazmshah state.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Continuity of the "Khwarazmshah" title. Despite the historical decline of the Khwarazmshah state and the collapse of the dynasty due to the Mongol invasions at the beginning of the 13th century, the title "Khwarazmshah" endured. Far from being confined to a specific era, the title became an integral component of the region's political history and the ideology of rulership. In subsequent centuries, particularly during the period of the Khanate of Khiva, the title retained its significance as a historical and political symbol.

The question of the official status of the "Khwarazmshah" title in the Khanate of Khiva and its application in internal and external political documents requires confirmation through historical sources, as the topic is nuanced and depends on the specific historical context. Below is a detailed analysis based on available knowledge, addressing the use of the title in the Khanate of Khiva (1511 – 1920) and the need for primary sources to substantiate its application. In Abu al-Ghazi Bahadur Khan's *Shajara-yi Turk* [1], a significant historical work that extensively details the history of the Arabshahid period, the rulers of Khwarazm are referred to as "Sultan" or "Khan." Indeed, during the Arabshahid dynasty (1511 – 1804), the title "Khwarazmshah" was not used, a phenomenon closely tied to their political identity. The Arabshahids presented themselves not as successors to the ancient Anushteginid or Afrighid dynasties of Khwarazm but rather as a branch of the Shibanid Uzbeks.

In the section of his work dedicated to the history of the Shibanid descendants who ruled Khwarazm, the historian Muhammad Riza Mirab Agahi writes: "Elbarsxon ibn Berka Sulton musulmon va dindor podshoh erdi. Va sana to'qquz yuz o'n birda Xorazmni musaxxar qilib, xorazmshohliq tojin farqig'a qo'ydi" [7, 78-b.]. It means that Ilbars Khan in the year 911 [hijri,

corresponding to 1505–1506 CE] conquered Khwarazm and placed the crown of Khwarazmshah on his head. Here, the historian not only narrates a historical event but also emphasizes the "Khwarazmshah" title as a symbol of rulership.

The use of the "Khwarazmshah" title in the Khanate of Khiva is primarily associated with the period of the Qungrat dynasty (1804 – 1920). During this era, the need to strengthen centralized state governance and ensure legitimacy in both internal and external political affairs grew significantly.

In Muhammad Riza Mirab Agahi's work *Gulshan-i Dawlat*, the Qungrat ruler of Khiva, Sayyid Muhammad Khan (1856 – 1864), is acknowledged as "... sulton ibn as-sulton Abu-l-muzaffar va-l-mansur Sayyid Muhammad Bahodirxoni Xorazmshoh" [7, 11]. Here, the application of the "Khwarazmshah" title emerges as a significant marker expressing political independence and territorial sovereignty. Written sources and official documents, including yarliqs, clearly confirm the use of the title for this purpose.

Yarliqs – were official documents that, in terms of content, expressed state laws and served as a comprehensive set of legal regulations within the legal and judicial system of the country. These encompassed Sharia-based norms related to property and inheritance rights; civil law; administrative law; criminal and penal law; religious institutions and individual beliefs (including schools, madrasas, mosques, waqf properties, and legal relations with other religious communities); and legislation concerning the military organizational system.

The use of the "Khwarazmshah" title in yarliqs was aimed at emphasizing the khan's supreme and historical legal authority, providing a religious and political justification for obedience to his decrees and orders.

In this context, the yarliq text begins with the addition of the "Khwarazmshah" title to the khan's name. This emphasizes that the ruler is a successor to the Khwarazmshahs and that the state's territory is Khwarazm [5, 46-b.]. For example, in a yarliq issued by Khan Allaqli (1825 – 1842) concerning the sale of 10 tanabs of state-owned land to Sayyid Niyaz, son of Odina Murod, for 50 tillas to financially support the military [10], the "Khwarazmshah" title is used in the tanitma (introductory text) alongside the ruler's name in the phrase "Abu-l Muzaffar val Mansur Abulg'ozi Xorazmshoh so'zumiz".

This practice was also employed in a yarliq issued by Allaqli Khan for the appointment to an official position. For instance, in a yarliq dated 1249/1833 appointing Ohund domla Nurullah as qazi-rai (chief judge and administrator) of the city of Vazir [6], the "Khwarazmshah" title was specifically used.

A noteworthy aspect is that this practice continued as a hereditary tradition. For example, in yarliq issued in 1258/1843 by Rahimquli Khan (1842 – 1845) regarding the sale of 10 tanabs of state-owned land to Muhammad Karim, son of Muhammad Khan Divanbegi, for 360 tillas to allocate salaries for retainers (navkars) [12], the ruler refers to himself through the phrase "...Abulghozi Xorazmshoh so'zimiz..." (Our word, Abulghazi Khwarazmshah), thereby alluding to his lineage and origin. In the text of the seal belonging to Rahimquli Khan, the phrase "Ya Allah, Abulgozi Rahimquli Xorazmshoh ibn Alloqli podishoh" [11] is used to emphasize that the ruler is a successor to the Khwarazmshahs.

Another example is a yarliq issued in 1262/1846 by Rahimquli Khan, authorizing the sale of 50 tanabs of state-owned land in the Manghit region to Muhammad Yusuf Niyaz, son of Nazarbay, for 70 tillas to meet the needs of the military [14]. In this yarliq, the ruler applies the "Khwarazmshah" title to his name. This practice, on the one hand, demonstrates the khanate's respect for its historical legacy and genealogical foundations, as well as the symbolic significance of the title in state governance. On the other hand, it can be argued that the use of this practice also stemmed from the personal will and discretion of the reigning khan.

Indeed, the use of the "Khwarazmshah" title during the Qungrat dynasty in the Khanate of Khiva demonstrates the continuity of statehood traditions and the consolidation of power based on historical foundations. This title was not merely a symbolic designation but also served to ensure internal political stability and legitimacy within the khanate. For the khans of Khiva, the "Khwarazmshah" title was not only a means to enhance personal prestige but also a tool to strengthen their authority in the eyes of the populace and officials. The khans relied on the historical legacy of the Khwarazmshah dynasty to legitimize their rule. The consistent use of the title in legislative documents further confirms its practical and ideological significance.

CONCLUSION

The analysis reveals that the Qungrat dynasty in the Khanate of Khiva actively sought to present themselves as the spiritual heirs of the Khwarazmshah dynasty. The khans of Khiva employed the "Khwarazmshah" title in practice to strengthen their rule and anchor their authority in the region's historical legacy. The title was not merely an administrative or symbolic designation but held significant importance for political legitimacy and cultural identification. By linking their lineage to ancient empires, the Khwarazmian rulers justified their right to govern, thereby enhancing their political influence and the khanate's prestige in the region.

The re-adoption of the "Khwarazmshah" title by the khans of Khiva was not simply a matter of nomenclature or symbolism but formed part of a deliberate political strategy. This process is clearly reflected in legislative documents, particularly yarliqs, which served as critical instruments of governance and legitimacy.

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