

The Religious and Cultural Environment of Khorasan And Transoxiana In Muslim Geographical Literature of the 3rd/4th (9th/10th) Centuries

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Abstract: This article explores the religious, cultural, and intellectual landscape of the Khorasan and Transoxiana regions during the 3rd and 4th centuries AH (9th and 10th centuries CE) through the lens of classical Muslim geographical literature. Focusing on the works of prominent geographers such as Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, and al-Maqdisi, the study investigates how these texts portray the natural, political, and spiritual boundaries of the region. Particular attention is given to the description of scientific institutions, religious pluralism, and sectarian diversity, shedding light on the vibrant scholarly and cultural atmosphere of the period. The article further evaluates the historiographical and analytical value of these sources for modern historical and geographical scholarship.

Keywords: Khorasan, Transoxiana, Muslim geographical literature, Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, al-Maqdisi, religious diversity, scientific centers, cultural history, sectarian landscape.

Introduction: In the 4th/10th century, the regions of Khorasan and Transoxiana were among the leading centers of the Central Islamic world, excelling in political, social, and cultural spheres, with notable developments in various fields, including science, jurisprudence (fiqh), theology (kalam), and logic. Prominent Muslim geographers of this period — including Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, and al-Maqdisi — left invaluable information concerning the natural boundaries, political-territorial divisions, and scholarly life of these regions. Notably, al-Maqdisi provides in-depth analyses of the scientific centers, sectarian diversity, and socio-cultural environment of Khorasan and Transoxiana in his works. The scientific and analytical aspects of the geographical depictions of these regions, as well as the religious movements present and their influence, are studied based on the writings of these geographers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Valuable insights into the political, social, and cultural life of Khorasan and Transoxiana in the 4th/10th century are extensively covered in the works of Muslim

geographers. For instance, Istakhri's work *Kitāb al-Masālik wa-l-Mamālik* offers detailed information on the road systems, cities, and natural geography of Khorasan and adjacent areas. He particularly emphasizes the economic and administrative centers of the region.

Ibn Hawqal, in his eponymous work, updates Istakhri's maps and provides supplementary information on the political-territorial divisions, the ethnic composition of the population, and religious conditions. His descriptions are distinguished by historical and geographical accuracy. Of special note are his observations regarding local governance structures and their impact on the development of Islamic sciences.

Al-Maqdisi's *Aḥsan al-taqāsīm fī ma'rifat al-aqālīm* offers a profound analysis of Khorasan and Transoxiana not only from a geographical standpoint but also through the lenses of cultural and religious distinctions. He describes the region's scientific centers, the sectarian diversity prevailing there, social strata, and the intellectual climate within Muslim society. His accounts particularly highlight the scholarly and

religious life of cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, and Nishapur.

Contemporary scholars such as C. E. Bosworth, André Miquelle, and Paul Lunde have analyzed these primary sources, demonstrating their significant historical-geographical value. Moreover, studies on the spread of Sunni and Shia schools in Transoxiana and their influence on regional intellectual developments have relied heavily on the re-examination of these texts, providing a methodological foundation for further research.

Thus, the existing literature creates not only a historical but also a scientific and philosophical framework for investigating the multifaceted life of these regions in the medieval period.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs historical-geographical analysis and source criticism methods. The primary sources consist of selected works by Muslim geographers — Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, and al-Maqdisi. Through a detailed content and contextual analysis, the political-territorial structure, scholarly and cultural conditions, and religious diversities of the region are examined. A comparative approach is applied by juxtaposing the descriptions of these geographers to assess their historical reliability and academic value. Furthermore, intertextual connections with modern scholarly literature are established to identify continuity and correspondence between historical sources and contemporary research.

DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

Geographers generally define Khurasan as a vast region bordered by Khwarezm, Transoxiana, Persia, Sijistan, and the Indian lands [13. 253 b, 8. 426 b]. Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal, however, considered Sijistan, Khurasan, and Transoxiana as separate entities. In al-'Ulam, Khurasan and Transoxiana are also depicted as two independent regions. Maqdisi was aware of the tripartite division of Khurasan, Sijistan, and Transoxiana but preferred to treat them as a single whole. Although Maqdisi emphasized the importance of the Jayhun River in defining boundaries, he also regarded areas such as Isbijab, Shash, Sughd, Khwarezm, Khuttal, Sijistan, and Transoxiana as part of Khurasan. Maqdisi divided Transoxiana (Haytal) into six provinces: Fergana, Isbijab, Shash, Ustrushana, Sughd, and Bukhara; whereas Khurasan was subdivided into nine provinces: Balkh, Ghazna, Bust, Sijistan, Herat, Juzjan, Marv, Nishapur, and Kuhistan. Around the Jayhun and its vicinity lay Khuttal, Guwaziyan, and Khwarezm [14. 261-69 b].

In the 4th/10th century, both Khurasan and

Transoxiana were under the rule of the Samanids, while Sijistan was governed by the Saffarids, who were vassals to the Samanids. By the late century, the incursions and ascendancy of the Ghaznavids and the Karakhanids led to the complete dissolution of the Samanid state in 395/1005 [2. 267-341 b]. During the Samanid era, Khurasan experienced significant scientific and cultural progress, and some of its cities became important centers of Islamic scholarship. The leading scientific hubs in Khurasan included Marv, Balkh, and Nishapur, while Bukhara and Samarkand held similar prominence in Transoxiana.

Geographers praised the scientific and cultural state of the region. Istakhri highlighted the presence of many renowned scholars and jurists in Marv. Ibn Hawqal noted that Khurasan produced prominent figures in fiqh, theology, logic, and kalam, particularly from Balkh and Marv, with numerous scholars and literati emerging from these cities. Nishapur was also noted for its distinguished scholars and jurists. Similarly, Transoxiana was described as a land inhabited by learned and righteous people, especially Bukhara, whose inhabitants were considered superior in terms of knowledge, jurisprudence, and piety. The Samanid dynasty's patronage significantly contributed to this intellectual flourishing. Maqdisi mentions that rulers abstained from the practice of kissing the ground before scholars and instead organized scholarly gatherings in city centers, where debates and discussions contributed to the vibrant scientific life of the region.

Maqdisi repeatedly emphasizes the intellectual maturity of the region's population. He underscores the exaltation of Islam in this area and the emergence of many scholars and jurists [14. 339 b]. Maqdisi even argues that a single servant from this region could be considered equal to rulers of other lands. The city of Samarkand in Transoxiana was unparalleled in the science of jurisprudence (*usul al-fiqh*), while cities like Marv, Balkh, and Nishapur in Khurasan produced distinguished scholars excelling in their respective fields. Ibn al-Faqih and Maqdisi, citing Muhammad ibn Abdullah, highlighted Khurasan's superiority over other regions. According to them, the population of Kufa was mostly Shi'a and followers of Ali, Basra's inhabitants were predominantly Umayyad supporters favoring withdrawal, and the Jazira region was home to true Harurites, people resembling atheists, and Christians in morality. The people of Sham recognized only Mu'awiya and the Umayyads, while the populations of Mecca and Medina supported Abu Bakr and Umar. The inhabitants of Khurasan, however, were distinct in being less divided by sectarian affiliations and generally more advanced and successful in many matters [11. 315

b].

Khurasan's scientific development was substantial, transforming it into a key region in terms of intellectual and cultural significance. Maqdisi notes that, although Sunni views predominated in the 4th/10th century, sectarian diversity was present. This diversity fostered scholarly activity and growth. However, sectarian conflicts also emerged, making it inaccurate to fully accept reports suggesting the absence of sectarian divisions during this period.

The coexistence of various sects alongside scientific endeavors contributed to the evolution of religious schools and made Khurasan a crucial area in Islamic sectarian history. From the Umayyad period onward, numerous sects such as the Kharijites, Murji'a, Shi'a, Mu'tazila, and Karramiyya existed in different parts of the region.

In Maqdisi's account, aside from the Khawarij, other sects were proportionally present in Khorasan. The Khawarij, however, constituted the majority only in the regions of Sijistan, Herat, Karukh, and Astarabad. The inhabitants of Futah, Zambuk, Kuvayn, and Baranvoz—cities under Sijistan—were identified as Khawarij. Additionally, the city of Farah, also under Sijistan, had a mixed population consisting partly of Khawarij and partly of Sunni. Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal similarly report the presence of Khawarij in the cities of Karukh, Astarabad, and Hajistan within the Herat region. The *Hudud al-Alam* mentions the presence of Khawarij in the city of Isfizar in Herat. Both Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal note the existence of Sunni inhabitants in this city as well. Therefore, it can be concluded that both Khawarij and Sunnis were present in Isfizar [6. 104 b]. From these data, it is evident that during this period, the Khawarij were mainly concentrated in the regions of Sijistan and Herat, while being scarce in other areas.

After a group of Khawarij were defeated in the Battle of Nahrawan in 38/658, many fled to Kirman and Sijistan [1. 58 b]. Thus, the foundations of the Khawarij movement, which later became strongly manifest in these regions, were laid. Various Khawarij factions such as the Azariqa, Najadat, and Ajarida operated actively in this area. The Khawarij uprisings, which continued for many years in Sijistan, changed during the reign of Ya'qub ibn Layth al-Saffar (d. 265/879). The Khawarij leader Ammar ibn Yasir al-Khawariji was killed by Ya'qub in 251/865. From that time onwards, Ya'qub suppressed the uprisings and brought the Khawarij under his control. Consequently, Ya'qub broke the military power of the Khawarij and weakened their status in the region. After this, no significant Khawarij rebellions occurred in the area, although geographical sources indicate that the Khawarij continued their

activities there. Malati (d. 377/987), who lived during this era, also mentions the presence of Khawarij groups in Sijistan, Herat, and Khorasan. Furthermore, he notes that some Khawarij in Herat and Istakhr abandoned their sect and adopted Mu'tazilite doctrines. However, this region did not have an established Mu'tazilite movement, indicating their numbers were small. Nonetheless, it can be observed that in the 4th/10th century, the Khawarij movement was still strong in certain parts of Khorasan but gradually diminished as some members converted to other sects.

According to Maqdisi, apart from the regions of Shash, Ilaq, Tus, Nasa, Abivard, Taraz, and Sangach, the majority of Khorasan and Transoxiana were predominantly Hanafi. Due to the strong influence of the Murji'ite doctrine in the 2nd/8th century, Abu Hanifa's views began to spread rapidly in Khorasan. In particular, the city of Balkh became a center of Hanafi jurisprudence, and over time, the Hanafi madhhab also influenced other cities in Khorasan. By the 3rd/9th century, the regions of Tokharistan and Transoxiana predominantly accepted Hanafi jurisprudence. Supported by the state, Hanafi influence grew stronger in the region. Maqdisi notes that the Samanids favored the Hanafi madhhab, selecting the most learned faqih in Bukhara to issue fatwas, resolve disputes, and even appoint officials based on his rulings. Thus, from Maqdisi's descriptions, it is clear that by the 4th/10th century, the number of cities in the region where Hanafi jurisprudence was not widespread was very limited.

Starting from the late 3rd/9th century, the spread of the Shafi'i madhhab became noticeable in the region. Maqdisi emphasizes that during his time, Shafi'is were increasingly prevalent in Bukhara, Sinj, Dandanaqan, Isfara, and Juvayn, where they practiced according to their jurisprudential tradition. He also notes a significant presence of Shafi'is in the cities of Herat, Sijistan, Sarakhs, and Marvayn. In these places, both Hanafi and Shafi'i qazis (judges) operated. Shafi'i khatibs (preachers) were also found in Nishapur and other cities mentioned. Until the late 3rd/9th century, qazis in Khorasan were almost exclusively Hanafi; from that time, Shafi'i qazis began to be appointed as well, indicating the growing influence of the Shafi'i madhhab. The intensification of Shafi'i influence was linked to political developments following the Mihna (Inquisition) during Ma'mun's reign. Caliph Mutawakkil (232–246/847–861) promoted the revival of hadith studies and Sunnah, which favored the Shafi'i faction, known for its hadith-oriented jurisprudence.

The rise of Shafi'i influence in predominantly Hanafi regions led to conflicts between the two madhhabs. Maqdisi reports significant clashes between Hanafi and

Shafi'i adherents in regions such as Sijistan and Sarakhs, which forced the government to intervene periodically. The sectarian divisions were often aligned with large families adopting different madhhabs, and the rivalry between these families further exacerbated religious conflicts. For instance, in Sijistan, the conflict was between the Hanafi Samakiyya family and the Shafi'i Sadakiyya family, while in Sarakhs it was between the Hanafi Arusiyya and the Shafi'i Ahliyya families. Thus, in addition to religious fanaticism, social and economic competition among influential families striving to establish political control contributed to the intensification of sectarian disputes.

Another significant sect widely spread in the Maqdisi and Khorasan region is the Karromiyya. The Karromiyya is a sect centered around Muhammad ibn Karrom al-Sijistani (d. 255/869), distinguished by its ascetic tendencies, which was established in Khorasan and Transoxiana. During Muhammad ibn Karrom's lifetime, his followers rapidly increased in number across Khorasan and Transoxiana. Notably, it gained widespread popularity among the rural population and the lower social strata, thereby forming a strong social base. The Karromiyya were not confined solely to Khorasan; as previously mentioned, they also exerted influence in Sham (Greater Syria) and Egypt. In the 4th/10th century, Nishapur is identified as the center of the Karromiyya. Maqdisi reports that half of Nishapur's population belonged to the Karromiyya. Moreover, the Karromiyya formed the majority in Herat and Gurj al-Shar (Georgia). In Fergana, Khuttal, Juzjan, Marv, and Samarkand, there were khanqahs affiliated with the Karromiyya. Maqdisi also provides information regarding sectarian conflicts involving the Karromiyya. He notes disputes between the Shia and the Karromiyya in Nishapur, and between the Karromiyya and the Amaliyya group in Herat. However, it is not entirely clear which group is specifically referred to by the term "Amaliyya" in this context.

Nevertheless, as Bosworth emphasizes, their designation as "Amaliyya" may stem from their opposition to the Karromiyya regarding practical matters. The Karromiyya defined faith (*īmān*) solely as verbal confession and affirmation, rejecting the acceptance of faith as a matter of the heart. Thus, it can be hypothesized that "Amaliyya" refers to those groups that rejected the Karromiyya's view and considered deeds as an integral part of faith. One of the sects that opposed the Karromiyya's rejection of including deeds within the definition of faith was the Ahl al-Hadith. Considering that Shafi'ite scholars belonging to the Ahl al-Hadith tradition were present in Herat, it is plausible to assume that these conflicts occurred between the Shafi'ites and the Karromiyya. However, opposition to

the Karromiyya's perspective should not be restricted to a single sect; rather, it is more accurate to assert that differences existed between the Karromiyya and various groups that considered their stance on faith erroneous.

According to Maqdisi, another sect present in Khorasan and Transoxiana was the Shia sect. Shi'ism entered the Jibal region through Arabs migrating from Kufa to Qom, and gradually spread towards Khorasan. The supporters of Ali, who escaped from the Umayyad dynasty and failed to gain a positive outcome under the Abbasid caliphate, thus being politically marginalized, shaped the presence of Shi'ism in this region. These groups did not participate in all rebellion movements and can be characterized as moderate Shi'a factions. Their activity had a significant influence on the region. Additionally, from the 3rd/9th century onwards, the Zaydiyyah sect also gained prominence in Khorasan. Alongside Zaydiyyah, Ismaili missionaries' activities began spreading from the late 3rd/9th century. Especially during the reign of Nasr ibn Ahmad (301–331/914–943), Ismailism's influence increased in Khorasan, with many amirs accepting the Ismaili da'wah. Alongside the growth of Ismaili influence at the court, the movement was also embraced by the populace, resulting in the widespread dissemination of Ismailism. However, during the rule of the Samanid ruler Nuh ibn Nasr (331–343/943–954), circumstances changed, and a campaign against the Ismailis began. Amirs who accepted Ismaili da'wah were punished, and many Ismailis in the region faced massacres. Following this, the Ismailis retained their presence only in secrecy.

In the 4th/10th century, Shi'ism was widely spread in Nishapur, where Maqdisi notes that half the population was Shia. Frequent clashes occurred in Nishapur between the Sunni Karromiyya and the Shi'a. Shi'a communities were also present in Raqqada, located in the Kuhistan region. Thus, it is evident that in the 4th/10th century, the regions of Khorasan and Transoxiana comprised various sects including Hanafi, Shafi'i, Karromiyya, Kharijiyya, and to some extent, Shi'ism. Furthermore, groups affiliated with the Mu'tazila and Jahmiyya sects also existed, though they formed a minority compared to the other sects.

Transoxiana is defined as a region located east of Tibet, south of the cities of Khorasan, west of Guz and Qarluq, and north of Qarluq, situated along the upper course of the Jayhun River. Its important centers include Fergana, Isbjab, Chach, Ustrushana, Sogd, and Bukhara. The territories of Huttal and Khwarezm were also considered part of Transoxiana. Among the major cities of the region, Samarkand is recognized as the central city of Sogd. Although Transoxiana is generally

regarded as part of the larger Khorasan territory, it was acknowledged as a distinct geographical entity. Historical sources describe Transoxiana as one of the most significant, fertile, pure, and blessed regions on earth. Scientifically, it was highly praised as a center where devout and steadfast believers resided, righteous scholars and jurists flourished, and the Islamic religion was particularly honored in this area.

Bukhara is one of the most important centers within Transoxiana. Ibn Hawqal emphasized that he had never seen a more beautiful city than Bukhara in the Islamic world and noted that the people of Bukhara excelled other Khorasan inhabitants in manners, knowledge, jurisprudence, piety, trustworthiness, good conduct, sincerity, and purity of heart. Similar to the Khorasan and Transoxiana regions, Hanafi jurisprudence was widely practiced in Bukhara. Maqdisi recorded that in the villages and towns of Bukhara, the ideas of Abu Hanifa were followed. It is known that most jurists in Bukhara adhered to the Hanafi school. Scholars who studied under Abu Hanifa and his disciples were instrumental in the widespread dissemination of Hanafi thought in Bukhara. Maqdisi also noted the beginning of Shafi'i jurisprudence's spread in the region alongside Hanafi beliefs. Each individual followed their respective madhhab (legal school). Maqdisi cited the population of Saganian, a town under Bukhara, as Sunni, illustrating the Sunni demographic in the region. While Maqdisi provided detailed descriptions of madhhab conflicts in Khorasan cities, he did not explicitly elaborate on the situation in Transoxiana beyond a few mentions. However, given his indication of sectarian tensions in nearly all Khorasan cities, it can be inferred that similar madhhab conflicts existed in Transoxiana. Maqdisi's accounts of disorder and strong sectarian sentiment in Nasaf, which is part of Bukhara's territory, support this inference.

Samarkand, like Bukhara, was among the principal centers of Transoxiana. Due to its status as a scholarly hub, geographical scholars praised Samarkand highly. Maqdisi described Samarkand as a city unparalleled in the science of *usul* (principles of Islamic jurisprudence). The region hosted various scholarly assemblies and vibrant intellectual activities. According to Maqdisi, Sunni doctrines dominated in Samarkand as well. Although geographical texts do not offer extensive information on the madhhab situation in Samarkand, it is known that the Hanafi school formed the majority during this period, similar to the broader Transoxiana context. The influence of Shafi'i jurisprudence is also evident through the presence of Shafi'i scholars in the area. Maqdisi noted the existence of a *khanqah* (Sufi lodge) affiliated with the *Karromiyah* sect in Samarkand, indicating that *Karromiyah* followers

represented a minority. Like many Khorasan cities, Maqdisi reported sectarian tensions in Samarkand. The Hanafi majority is understood to have developed sectarian sensitivities to preserve their status against the influx of other madhhabs.

A particularly notable issue related to Samarkand is the fact that Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (d. 333 AH / 944 CE), the founder of the Maturidiyya school, was born and raised in the village of Maturid, affiliated with Samarkand. Both Ibn Hawqal and Maqdisi visited the region after his death, but did not provide information about him. Although al-Maturidi was a prominent scholar of his time who produced profound theological works surpassing his contemporaries, his ideas were insufficiently represented or further developed by subsequent generations. His theological views remained underdeveloped until the second half of the 5th/11th century, and similarly, little information about his life and scholarly persona has been preserved in sources. The absence of al-Maturidi's mention in geographical texts can be regarded as a reflection of this neglect. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized that the widespread Hanafi tradition in Transoxiana and the *Ahl al-Ra'y* school played a significant role both in the formation of al-Maturidi's ideas and in the rapid spread of his doctrines in the region from the 5th/11th century onwards.

Apart from Bukhara and Samarkand, according to Maqdisi's information, the population of Shash was Sunni. The residents of the Shash center were contentious and strict in their madhhab, and sectarian tensions were present. In the city of Qadar in *Isbijab*, followers of the *Ashab al-Hadith* sect were found. Like in Samarkand, *khanqahs* affiliated with the *Karromiyah* sect existed in Fergana and *Huttal* as well.

At the same time, al-Maqdisi draws attention to the presence of various groups within the region. He notes the existence of groups in rural areas known as the "*Bayz as-Siyab*," whose views were close to heresy. These were supporters of al-Muqanna (d. 161/778). The term "*Mubayyiza*" was also used to describe al-Muqanna's movement. While the Abbasids wore black garments, the insurgents wore white robes, hence the origin of this designation. Al-Muqanna initially claimed prophethood and later asserted divinity, inviting people to adopt his creed. He achieved partial success and garnered numerous followers, especially in rural areas, where his ideas spread widely. According to *Narshakhi's* account, *Bunyat ibn Tugshod*, a ruler of Bukhara, was inclined toward al-Muqanna and was consequently executed in 166/783. This fact indicates that the movement influenced not only the rural populace but also certain rulers. After the Muqanna followers initiated a rebellion, the authorities

intervened and suppressed the uprising around 166/783 with al-Muqanna's death. Nevertheless, his adherents continued their activities in the countryside. Al-Maqdisi openly acknowledges their continued presence in the region and describes their views as close to heresy, expressing a negative assessment of them. Similarly, al-Baghdadi (d. 429/1037) reports that in his time, Muqanna's followers still existed near the Ablak Mountains close to Shash and were considered among the most despised groups by the local population.

Another group residing in the rural areas of Transoxiana accepted the doctrines of Abdullah al-Sarakhsi. Al-Maqdisi describes them as ascetics (zuhhad). Additionally, the presence of Jahmiyya supporters in Termez and Qadariyya followers in Kundur city is attested. The Jahmiyya sect, founded by Jahm ibn Safwan (d. 128/745), who lived in Khorasan, propagated his ideas primarily in this region. Followers of his teachings continued to exist in the area even in the 4th/10th century.

The analysis of medieval Muslim geographers' works — notably those of al-Istakhri, Ibn Hawqal, and al-Maqdisi — provides rich information about the political-territorial organization, religious-ideological environment, and intellectual life of Khorasan and Transoxiana in the 4th/10th century. These sources portray these regions not only as large geopolitical entities of strategic importance but also as leading scientific centers where Islamic sciences flourished.

Descriptions by these geographers indicate that cities such as Nishapur, Marv, Bukhara, Samarqand, among others, were not only political-administrative centers but also important hubs of jurisprudential and theological schools. Al-Maqdisi especially draws attention to religious diversity, noting the presence of Hanafi and Shafi'i madhhabs in Khorasan, while Hanafi jurisprudence prevailed as the dominant school in Transoxiana.

Discussions reveal that geographical texts reflect not only the spatial-strategic status of the region but also its internal social and religious dynamics. Through the information provided by the geographers, the diversity of the scientific and cultural milieu that developed in Khorasan and Transoxiana during the 4th/10th century and their role in the history of the Islamic world are clearly illustrated.

In conclusion, the following points can be emphasized:

1. Works of Muslim geographers serve as historical-geographical sources that are crucial for studying the scientific, doctrinal, and political conditions of the region.

2. Khorasan and Transoxiana in the 4th/10th century had emerged as centers of science and religious thought, a fact thoroughly illuminated by the geographers.

3. These texts provide an opportunity to examine religious diversity, social structure, and regional identity issues in their historical context.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, it can be stated that in the 4th/10th century, Hanafi Sunni Islam was predominant in Transoxiana, alongside minority groups belonging to other madhhabs. Although Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal devoted extensive attention to the Khorasan and Transoxiana regions in their works, it is noteworthy that they did not provide sufficient information about the madhhabs and inter-madhab relations in the region. In this regard, it is primarily Maqdisi's accounts that shed light on the madhab situation in the region. Similar to other regions, the focus in Khorasan and Transoxiana was mainly on the fiqh madhhabs of Hanafi and Shafi'i. However, it is not accurate to evaluate Hanafi and Shafi'i only as fiqh madhhabs during this period. In this region, Hanafi represented the Ahl al-Ra'y orientation and was closely related to the Murji'a, whereas Shafi'i spread mainly within the Ashab al-Hadith milieu and was also connected doctrinally to this group. Therefore, the existence of Hanafi and Shafi'i madhhabs in the region must be understood not only as legal schools but also as currents reflecting theological aspects.

Although 4th/10th-century Muslim geographers described Khorasan and Transoxiana as distinct political and cultural units, the close scientific, cultural, and religious interconnectedness of these regions is manifested. In particular, Maqdisi's data not only clarifies the geographic and political map of these areas but also precisely outlines their religious-madhab composition. The scientific flourishing during the Samanid era, the inter-city scholarly connections, and the inter-madhab relations created a foundation for intellectual and cultural development in the region. Simultaneously, the presence of movements such as the Khawarij and their military-political activities constituted an important factor in shaping the history of these regions. This study demonstrates the place of the region in historical-geographical thought and reveals the significance of Khorasan and Transoxiana in the Islamic scholarly heritage.

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