

THE ROLE OF MOVAROUNNAHR IN ISLAMIC CIVILIZATION

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Annotation

This article comprehensively explores the unique role of Movarounnahr in the development of Islamic civilization. The study highlights the contributions of Imam al-Bukhari to the science of Hadith, the services of Burhan al-Din al-Marghinani to the development of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), and the place of Ahmad Yassawi in the formation of Sufi teachings. Additionally, the achievements of al-Khwarizmi in algebra, Ahmad al-Farghani in astronomy, and Ibn Sina in the field of medicine are examined in depth. The article substantiates that the scientific legacy of Movarounnahr scholars played a crucial role not only in the Muslim East but also in shaping the European Renaissance of the Middle Ages. According to the research findings, Movarounnahr served as one of the strategic religious, scientific, and cultural centers of the Islamic world, and its scientific traditions later spread widely across both the East and the West. The article is based on scientific analysis methods and provides a thorough insight into Movarounnahr's contribution to the development of world civilization through its scientific and educational heritage.

Keywords

Movarounnahr, Islamic civilization, Hadith studies, Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), Sufism, algebra, astronomy, medicine, scientific center, the Middle Ages, cultural heritage, science of the East and West.

Introduction. The concept of "civilization" has been defined in various ways by scholars across different academic disciplines. Nevertheless, among these numerous definitions, one stands out for its comprehensive scope and universal applicability. According to this definition, "Civilization is the culmination of human intellectual advancement, encompassing progress and ideological foundations, scientific thought, science, literature, ethics, and diverse fields of human activity, as well as the way of life and patterns of thinking that emerge as a result of these endeavors". The distinctive feature of this definition lies in its

recognition of civilization not only as the product of human activity but also as an outcome influenced by divinely bestowed natural laws and religious foundations. This holistic understanding frames civilization as a dynamic synthesis of human creativity, intellectual effort, and transcendental principles governing life.

Material and Methods. Movarounnahr, recognized as the inheritor of the ancient territories of Sogdiana and Bactria, emerged as one of the principal centers of Islamic civilization. Its strategic geographical position and rich historical legacy contributed to its transformation into a pivotal hub of religious, scientific, and cultural advancement within the Islamic world. Substantial historical information regarding Movarounnahr has been documented in numerous Arabic-language sources composed between the 9th and 15th centuries. These sources, authored by prominent historians and scholars of their time, provide comprehensive accounts of the region's political, social, and intellectual developments.

Among the most notable works are *al-Akhbar al-Khulafa* by Mada'ini, *Kitab al-Buldan* by Ya'qubi, *Kitab Futuh al-Buldan* by Baladhuri, *Tarikh al-Rusul wa al-Muluk* by Tabari, *Risala* by Ibn Fadlan, *Muruj al-Dhahab* by Mas'udi, *Tarikh-i Yamini* by Utbi, *Mafatih al-Ulum* by Abu Abdallah Khwarizmi, *al-Athar al-Baqiya an al-Qurun al-Khaliya* by Abu Rayhan Biruni, *Diwan Lughat al-Turk* by Mahmud Kashgari, *Kitab al-Ansab* by Sam'ani, *al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh* by Ibn Athir, *Mu'jam al-Buldan* by Yaqut Hamawi, *Sirat al-Sultan Jalal al-Din* by Muhammad Nasawi, and *Mulhaqat al-Surakh* by Jamal Qarshi. Collectively, these historical narratives offer invaluable perspectives on Movarounnahr's role in the broader context of Islamic civilization, illuminating its contributions to religious scholarship, scientific inquiry, cultural flourishing, and the transmission of knowledge across the Islamic world and beyond.

Historical information regarding the period from the 9th to the 15th centuries is also preserved in several Persian-language written sources. Among the most prominent of these are *Tarikh-i Bukhara* by Narshakhi, *Siyasatnama* by Nizam al-Mulk, *Tarikh-i Mas'udi* by Abu'l-Fazl Bayhaqi, *Jawami' al-Hikayat* by Awfi, *Tarikh-i Jahangushay* by Juvayni, *Ansab al-Salatin wa Tawarikh al-Khawaqin* by Mirza Olim Tashkandi, and *Kitab al-Qand fi Ma'rifat 'Ulama-i Samarqand* by Abu Hafs Nasafi. These works collectively provide significant insights into the political, cultural, and scholarly developments of Movarounnahr and surrounding regions during the Islamic Golden Age.

Results. Between the 8th and 12th centuries, the region of Mawarannahr played a pivotal role in the scientific and cultural life of the Islamic world, emerging as a central hub for knowledge, philosophy, religious studies, and the

arts. Mawarannahr, a historical-geographical area located between the Amu Darya and Syr Darya rivers, has long been recognized as a key political, economic, and cultural center of the Eurasian region. Ancient Greek historians referred to this region as Sogdiana, Bactria, and Margiana. Its strategic position along the Great Silk Road, coupled with its status as a crossroads of diverse peoples and civilizations, positioned Mawarannahr at the heart of Islamic civilization. The arrival of Islam in Mawarannahr occurred in the 8th century when the Arab forces, under the command of Qutayba ibn Muslim, conquered Bukhara and Samarkand in 712. This event, alongside the local population's natural inclination toward Islam, fostered a process of religious and cultural syncretism. The interaction of local traditions with Islamic principles gave rise to a distinctive Islamic cultural identity in the region of Mawarannahr.

The geographical region of Mawarannahr, predominantly situated within the modern boundaries of the Republic of Uzbekistan, has been referenced by the name "Mawarannahr" in historical texts since the 9th century. From the 11th century onwards, Western sources have commonly employed the terms "Transoxiana" or "Transoxania" to denote this region. While the territorial boundaries of Mawarannahr have varied over time, it has persistently been recognized as a crucial cultural, intellectual, and religious center in Central Asia. Prior to the arrival of Islam, Mawarannahr was inhabited by various ethnic groups, including the Sogdians, Turks, and Arabs, and served as a convergence zone for a multitude of religious and philosophical systems, such as Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Christianity, Judaism, Shamanism, Mazdaism, and Manichaeism.

Cities such as Termez, Nasaf, Tashkent, Fergana, Bukhara, and Samarkand functioned as significant crossroads for different religions and cultures, both in pre-Islamic and Islamic periods. Throughout the centuries, Mawarannahr has been revered as a "center of knowledge and enlightenment," with cities like Bukhara, often called the "strength of Islam," Samarkand, recognized as the "polish of the earth," and Kesh, esteemed as the "dome of Islam," playing prominent roles in shaping intellectual and spiritual life. Furthermore, the region has produced a wealth of renowned scholars, including figures such as Al-Khwarizmi, Al-Tirmidhi, Al-Shashi, Al-Fergani, and Al-Margilani, whose contributions to various fields of knowledge have earned global recognition.

Discussion. Islam began to penetrate the region of Mawarannahr during the mid-7th century. Initially, the dissemination of Islamic ideas occurred through Muslim merchants and proselytizers. Subsequently, the formal introduction of Islam to Mawarannahr was facilitated by the military campaigns of Arab forces under the command of Qutayba ibn Muslim. The indigenous population gradually

embraced Islam, a process that catalyzed substantial transformations across spiritual, political, and cultural domains. After the Muslim conquest of Mawarannahr, the region rapidly evolved into one of the preeminent intellectual hubs of Islamic thought, particularly in the areas of theology (kalam), jurisprudence (fiqh), and exegesis (tafsir) within a relatively short time span.

Mawarannahr experienced its most prosperous period during the rule of the Samanid dynasty, characterized by significant economic, cultural, and scientific advancements. This era witnessed the establishment of renowned academic institutions in cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Termez, Tashkent, and Fergana, which became pivotal centers for the development of Islamic intellectual traditions. Numerous scholarly works were produced in diverse fields, including medicine, linguistics, literature, philosophy, theology, exegesis, hadith, astronomy, and the natural sciences. These contributions not only played a central role in the intellectual development of the Islamic world but also left a lasting legacy that continues to resonate in contemporary scholarship. Through the synthesis of scientific and religious scholarship, Mawarannahr attained a distinguished place in the historical trajectory of science and culture within the Islamic civilization.

Mawarannahr, derived from the phrase "the other side of the river," historically encompassed a vast region stretching from Bukhara to Samarkand, Fergana to Margiana, Sarakhs to Shash, and Tashkent to Ozkent and Osh. This region became a significant intellectual and religious center, where the Hanafi school of jurisprudence took deep root, and it was the birthplace of numerous scholars who made substantial contributions to Islamic sciences.

In the fields of hadith, jurisprudence (fiqh), and theology (kalam), prominent scholars such as Imam Bukhari, Imam Maturidi, Darimi, Kaffol Shoshi, Abu Lays Samarqandi, Abu Yusr Pazdavi, Abu Muin Nasafi, Najmuddin Nasafi, Alauddin Samarqandi, and Nuruddin Sobuni were active. These figures played a foundational role in shaping Islamic scholarly traditions in the region.

In the natural and mathematical sciences, Mawarannahr produced eminent scholars like Al-Farabi, Al-Khwarizmi, Ibn Sina (Avicenna), Al-Biruni, Ulugh Beg, and Ali Qushchi, who made significant contributions to fields such as astronomy, medicine, mathematics, and philosophy. In the realm of historiography, historians like Narshakhi, Shihabuddin Ibn Arabshah, and Abdurrazzak Samarqandi have been recognized for their notable contributions to the documentation and interpretation of the region's history.

Sufism also flourished in Mawarannahr, with influential Sufi figures such as Hakim al-Tirmidhi, Ahmad Yasawi, Abdukhalik Ghijduvani, Najmuddin Kubra, Bahauddin Naqshband, Khoja Muhammad Porso, Khoja Ahrar, Alisher Navoi, Sufi

Olloyor, and Yaqub Charkhi, who had a profound impact on the development of Islamic mysticism.

Mawarannahr, throughout its history, has been a vibrant center of intellectual, cultural, and religious thought. It played an essential role in the formation and development of Islamic civilization and continues to occupy a prominent position in the history of Islamic scholarship and culture.

Acknowledgement. In Mawarannahr, Islamic sciences attained a distinguished level of development, and the scholarly traditions that originated there subsequently spread throughout the broader Muslim world.

Mawarannahr emerged as one of the preeminent centers for the science of hadith. Among the most influential contributors to this field was Imam Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari (810–870), who compiled his renowned work *Sahih al-Bukhari*, selecting the most authentic 7,000 hadiths from a collection of approximately 600,000. This compilation has been revered in the Islamic world as the second most sacred text after the *Qur'an*. Imam Bukhari employed rigorous criteria in the selection of hadiths, and his work played a pivotal role in reinforcing the foundations of Shari'a law.

In the domain of Islamic jurisprudence (fiqh), Burhanuddin al-Margilani (12th century) was one of the most authoritative figures of the Hanafi school. He authored *Al-Hidaya*, a seminal work that became one of the central textbooks for teaching fiqh across the Muslim world for many centuries. Margilani's text provided not only a comprehensive theoretical framework but also an in-depth analysis of practical legal issues. *Al-Hidaya* became a primary source for legal practice, not only within Mawarannahr but also throughout the wider Islamic world.

Mawarannahr also played a pivotal role in the development of Sufism, the mystical and spiritual dimension of Islam. Ahmad Yasawi (1103–1166) was a key figure in the dissemination of Sufi thought, embedding Sufi principles deeply within the local population through his profound teachings. Yasawi's contributions were integral in enriching the religious and spiritual life of Muslims, and he significantly advanced the moral and ethical education of the Muslim community. His Yasawi order subsequently spread across Central Asia, the Volga region, and Anatolia, further cementing the region's influence on the spiritual and intellectual development of the wider Muslim world.

Mawarannahr was not solely confined to Islamic sciences but also made significant contributions to traditional disciplines such as mathematics, astronomy, and medicine, achieving notable advancements in these fields.

In mathematics, Mawarannahr produced the distinguished scholar Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi (9th century), whose work *Kitab al-Jabr wal-Muqabala* ("The Book of Algebra and Solving Equations") laid the foundational principles of modern algebra. Al-Khwarizmi's contributions were pivotal in shaping the future of mathematics, and the term "algorithm" is derived from his name. His mathematical methodologies later exerted a profound influence on the development of scientific thought in Europe.

In astronomy, scholars from Mawarannahr played a crucial role in bridging the scientific centers of Central Asia and the West. Ahmad al-Fargani (9th century) significantly advanced astronomical knowledge with his work *On the Movements of the Celestial Bodies and Stars*. Al-Fargani's treatise contributed substantially to both Islamic and Western astronomical traditions. His works were translated into Latin and became instrumental in shaping the astronomical inquiries of prominent European scientists, including Copernicus and Kepler.

In the domain of medicine, Abu Ali ibn Sina (980–1037) made foundational contributions as a physician and philosopher. His magnum opus, *Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb* ("The Canon of Medicine"), served as a primary medical textbook in European universities for several centuries. Ibn Sina's work extended beyond theoretical knowledge; his research encompassed medicinal plants, disease diagnosis, and surgical practices. His empirical contributions had a lasting impact on both the medical sciences in the Islamic world and the broader scientific community. Mawarannahr's intellectual and cultural legacy continues to be of immense value to contemporary global scholarship.

The renowned 14th-century Muslim historian Ibn Khaldun, in his seminal work *Muqaddimah*, discusses the rich history of Mawarannahr and Central Asia, highlighting the region's pre-Islamic advanced civilization. He emphasized that, with the advent of Islam, the region experienced an intellectual and cultural renaissance, ultimately becoming a center for profound philosophical, scientific, and religious advancements. Islamic civilization, thus, reached its zenith in this region, contributing significantly to the global heritage of human knowledge.

Conclusion. The ancient madrasas, mosques, mausoleums, and libraries within the region stand as exemplary manifestations of the Mawarannahr civilization. Mawarannahr occupied an unparalleled position in the formation and advancement of Islamic civilization, cultivating eminent scholars in diverse domains such as science, culture, mysticism, jurisprudence, and theology, thereby imparting invaluable intellectual and spiritual wealth to the Muslim world. The scholars and their scholarly works that emerged from Mawarannahr have not only had a profound impact on the intellectual development of the Islamic world but

also played a significant role during the European Renaissance. Even today, Mawarannahr continues to occupy a vital position in human history through its rich and enduring scientific and cultural legacy.

From the 3rd to the 12th centuries, Mawarannahr became the intellectual and cultural epicenter of the Islamic world, producing scholars whose contributions were integral to the progress of human civilization. These scholars were not only pivotal in their own era but also shaped the broader trajectory of intellectual history. During his visit to Uzbekistan in August 2017, the Director-General of the Islamic Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (ISESCO) specifically emphasized the vital role that Mawarannahr played in the development of Islamic civilization. He acknowledged that while Islam originated in Arabia, its maturation and intellectual flourishing occurred across various regions, notably in Mawarannahr. Furthermore, he underscored the monumental contributions of scholars such as Imam Bukhari, Imam Termizi, and Mahmud Zamakhshari, all of whom were instrumental in the intellectual legacy of this region.

In this context, it is noteworthy that the number of manuscripts recognized by UNESCO and included in the global cultural heritage register exceeds 100 000, with a significant portion of these priceless works being preserved in the Manuscript Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Additionally, the Manuscripts Collection of the Muslim Board of Uzbekistan and the Sources Treasury of the International Islamic Academy of Uzbekistan house these invaluable texts. A particularly significant aspect is the preservation of the Uthmanic Mushaf in Tashkent, regarded as the most ancient surviving manuscript of the Qur'an, which holds paramount importance as the sacred scripture for Muslims worldwide.

In independent Uzbekistan, over 300 scientific research institutions, research-production enterprises, and innovation centers are actively engaged in research and development activities. Currently, under the motto "Against Ignorance – For Knowledge", the establishment of the Center for Islamic Civilization is underway. The international research centers named after Imam Bukhari and Imam Termizi will significantly contribute to the advancement of scholarly activities within the country's academic community. Within the framework of the International Islamic Studies Academy of Uzbekistan, a specialized department dedicated to the study of Islamic Studies and Islamic Civilization operates under the auspices of ISESCO. In general, considerable efforts are being undertaken today to examine and further enrich the profound spiritual and intellectual heritage that has played a pivotal role in the development of Islamic civilization over the centuries.

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