



CHORASMIA II. IN ISLAMIC TIMES

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ii. In Islamic Times

The Islamic history of *Ḳvārazm*, as the name of the region appears in the Arabic and Persian sources, begins with the two invasions of Arab troops under the governor of Khorasan Qotayba b. Moslem Bāhelī in 93/712, who intervened in the region on the pretext of internecine strife among members of the native Afrighid dynasty of *ḳvārazmšāhs* (see [āl-e afrīg](#)). Nevertheless, Islamization cannot have begun there until the following century, when the shahs seem to have abandoned what was presumably Zoroastrianism for Islam; it was in the 3rd/9th century also that the shahs, with their capital at *Kāt*, must have become nominal vassals of the Samanids of Transoxania. The Afrighid line was extinguished in 385/995 by a rival family from the town of Gorgānj, the Ma'munids (see [āl-e ma'mūn](#)), but the triumph of the latter was short-lived: In 408/1017 they were overthrown by the vigorously expansionist empire of the Turk Maḥmūd of Ghazna. This event marked the end of rule in *Ḳvārazm* by ethnically Iranian shahs; subsequent holders of the ancient title *ḳvārazmšāh* were all Turks, either servile or free. At the same time the inevitable process of Turkization that followed establishment of Turkish political and military dominion began in *Ḳvārazm*, as in Transoxania, leading to the eventual submergence of the indigenous Iranian element within the



Turkish population and the disappearance of Chorasmian language in favor of Turkish (see iii, below).

Ghaznavid rule in this distant and peripheral province of their empire was also short; when the Ghaznavids lost Khorasan to the invading Saljuq Turks *Ḳvārazm* also became part of the Saljuq empire. At times the province functioned as a springboard for expeditions into the surrounding pagan Turkish steppes, from which mercenary troops were recruited. The governors were often Turkish slave commanders of the Saljuqs; one of them was Anūštigin Ġarča'ī, whose son Qoṭb-al-Dīn Moḥammad began in 490/1097 what became in effect a hereditary and largely independent line of *ḳj'vārazmšāhs*. The last of these shahs, Jalāl-al-Dīn Mingburnu (Mengbornī), came up against the Mongol invaders in the early decades of the 7th/13th century, and his defeats and death brought about the complete collapse of what had been an extensive though transient *Ḳvārazmian* empire built up north of the Oxus and in Persia proper by such shahs as Il-Arslan, Tekiš, and 'Alā'-al-Dīn Moḥammad.

The end of this dynasty signaled the cessation of official use of the title *ḳj'vārazmšāh* by local rulers and governors there; it persisted only in more informal parlance and usage. *Ḳvārazm* itself came within the Mongol dominions. The northern part, including Gorgānj (Orgeṇč, modern Urgench) and the lower Jaxartes region were included in the lands of the Golden Horde, who controlled southern Russia and the Oghuz-Qipchaq steppes for 140 years; the southern part, including Kāt (which declined to the status of a mere village) and Khiva (which rose to prominence) fell within the Chaghatayid dominions of Transoxania and Moḡolestān (see [chaghatayid dynasty](#)). In the later 8th/14th century there arose in *Ḳvārazm* an independent minor dynasty of Qongrat Turks, the Ṣūfīs, but Solaymān Ṣūfī was crushed by Tīmūr in 790/1388 and his capital, Urgeṇč, razed; *Ḳvārazm* thenceforth lost much of its economic, commercial, and cultural vitality and never recovered fully from the Timurid devastations.

The 9th/15th century was a confused one in the history of *Ḳvārazm*. Control of the region was disputed by the Timurids and the Golden Horde, but in 917/1511 it passed to a new, local Uzbek Turkish dynasty, the 'Arabshahids (see 'arabšāhī) ultimately descended, like their Shaybanid contemporaries in adjacent Transoxania (see [central asia vi. in the 10th-12th/16th-18th centuries](#)), from Čengīz Khan's son Joči. The 'Arabshahids were to rule until the end of the 11th/17th or the early 12th/18th century, at first from Vazīr and Orgeṇč and then from Khiva, controlling territory as far west as the Caspian Sea and



maintaining itself against the Shaybanids to the east and south.

After the end of the 'Arabshahids various khans were summoned from the steppes to Khiva, from which they ruled, usually as puppets, while the real power was in the hands of the *inaq*, or military leader, of the Qongrat tribe. At the beginning of the 12th/18th century relations between the khanate and the expanding power Russia began to assume greater importance; Peter the Great sent an abortive expedition against Khiva in 1129/1717. The Persian military conqueror Nāder Shah occupied Khiva briefly in 1153/1740, and the khanate suffered badly in the later years of the century from depredations by the Yomut Turkman tribes of the Qara Qum desert south of Khiva. In the 13th/19th century Russian imperialism became the dominant threat to the khanate, culminating in a Russian military invasion in 1290/1873, after which a truncated khanate survived as a Russian protectorate for nearly half a century; the last khan, Sayyed 'Abd-Allāh, lost his throne in Jomādā I/February 1920 in the Bolshevik invasion.

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