



ḲOTTAL

ḲOTTAL (Ḳottalan), a province of medieval Islamic times on the right bank of the upper Oxus river in modern Tajikistan.

The province lay between the Vaḳšāb and Jaryāb rivers, which are the Vaḳš tributary of the Oxus (see [ĀMU DARYĀ](#)) and the upper course of the Oxus, now known as the Panj. To its west were the provinces of Vakš, Qobādiān and [Čagāniān](#), and to its east the northeasterly-running course of the uppermost Oxus, with the districts of [Darvāz](#) and Rāg beyond the river valley. In Arabic and Persian poetry, forms like [Ḳotlān](#), [Ḳatlān](#) are found in addition to [Ḳottal](#) and [Ḳottalan](#), and in Chinese sources, the name is Ku'-tut-lo (Markwart, pp. 299-300). It has been suggested that [Ḳottal](#) is etymologically related to [Hayṭal](#), which is the name of the Hephtalites in the sources of the early Islamic period (Le Strange, pp. 438-39).

[Ḳottal](#) was a region of lush pastures, famed for horse-breeding. Its inhabitants were also renowned for their skills in farriery, veterinary science, and in the production of saddlery and horse accoutrements. In Mongol and Timurid times, [Ḳottal](#) horses were exported as far as China (cf. Bosworth, p. 113). The [Ḳottal](#) valleys ran up to the [Bottamān](#) mountains, where gold and silver were mined, and which separated the upper Oxus basin from that of the [Zarafšān](#). In their fastnesses dwelt the fierce and predatory [Kumijis](#) and [Kanjina](#), and both were probably remnants of pre-Islamic Turkish Hephtalites, as expressly stated by [Ḳvārazmi](#) (fl. ca. 976-97) for the [Kanjina](#) (Bosworth and Clauson, pp. 6, 8-9). The chief town of the province and the residence of its ruler was [Holbok](#), near modern [Kulob](#), [Monk](#), [Halāvand](#), and [Nučāra](#) or



Andičārāg were also significant urban centres (for the geography of Kottal and the neighboring regions, see Le Strange, pp. 438-39 and the map at p. 433; Barthold, pp. 70-72; and *Hudūd*, pp. 115, 119, cf. commentary pp. 354, 359-60 and map ix on p. 339).

Until the Mongol invasions Kottal seems to have had, intermittently if not continuously, its own lines of local rulers. The pre-Islamic princes bore the titles *kottalān-šāh* or *kottalān-koḏāh*, and *šir-e kottalān* (Ebn Korradābeh, p. 40). The Arabs did not gain complete control of Kottal until almost the end of the Umayyad period. Ḥāreṭ b. Sorayj al-Tamimi (d. 746) who had rebelled against the governor of Khorasan Asad b. ‘Abdallāh al-Qasri (d. 738), gained the support of Kottal’s ruler. In 737, Asad led an expedition into Kottal and defeated the west Turkish forces of Sü-Lü (r. 717-37/38), the *kāqān* of the Tūrgeš (Ṭabari, II, p. 1593-1619; Ebn al-Aṭir, V, pp. 213-14; cf. Gibb, pp. 81-84). But only between 750 and 751 did the Arabs really secure control of the province, when Abu Moslem Korāsāni (d. 755) sent Abu Dāwud Kāled b. Ebrāhim al-Bakri, the governor of Balkh, to Kottal. The local prince took refuge first with the Turks, and then with the Tang emperor, whose dynasty (618-907) held a vague suzerainty over Central Asia (Ṭabari, III, p. 74; Ebn al-Aṭir, V, pp. 448-49; cf. Chavannes, pp. 168, 216; Gibb, p. 95).

In the first decades of the ‘Abbasid caliphate Kottal was ruled by a branch of the Banijurids, whose seat of power was in Ṭokārestān (Bosworth, 1996, p. 174), and these rulers issued their own coinages (Vasmer). Ḥāreṭ b. Asad, who controlled Kottal (Ebn Korradābeh, p. 180), was a cousin of Dāwud b. al-‘Abbās (r. 848-73) in Balkh. Toward the end of the 9th century, Moḥammad b. Aḥmad Abu Dāwud (d. after 898) ruled from Balkh over Ṭokārestān, Juzjān, Termed and Kottal (Ḥamza Eṣfahāni, p. 170). In 10th century, Kottal’s rulers were tributaries of the Samanids (819-1005) in Bukhara, but their status was such that they were sending presents, and not paying taxes (Moqaddasi, p. 337). In 930 Ja’far b. Abi Ja’far b. Abi Dāwud rebelled against the Samanid ruler Naṣr b. Aḥmad (r. 914-43). Between 947 and 949, when the governor of Khorasan Abu ‘Ali Čaġāni was at war with the Samanid Nuḥ b. Naṣr (r. 943-54), Abu ‘Ali stirred up in revolt all the vassal rulers (*moluk-e aṭrāf*) of the Oxus region, including the prince of Kottal Aḥmad b. Ja’far (Ebn al-Aṭir, VIII, p. 222; Gardizi, pp. 157-58; cf. Barthold, p. 248).

At the beginning of the 11th century, the Ghaznavids used the province as their strategically important base for expeditions against the Qara-khanids (see [ILAK-KHANIDS](#)) in Transoxania. In 1031 (Bayhaqi, p. 386; cf. Bosworth,



1963, p. 54) the 'Abbasid caliph al-Qā'em (r. 1031-1075) awarded Kottal, together with other territories, to the Ghaznavid ruler Mas'ud (r. 1031-1040), even though 'Alitigin (d. 1034), the ruler of Bukhara and Samarqand, laid claim to Kottal and thus instigated the Kumijis to raid the province (Bayhaqi, p. 519). But who ruled Kottal during the Ghaznavid and the early Saljuq periods is less clear. The Mohtājids (933-ca. 1000; see [ĀL-E MOHTĀJ](#)) controlled neighboring Čāgāniān, while the Ghaznavid ruler Maḥmud (r. 998-1030) exercised in his influence by appointing, towards the end of his reign, Kottal's supreme judge (*qāzi'l-qoḏāt*) from a Nishapur family of religious scholars ('*olamā*'), the Tabānis (Bayhaqi, p. 266; cf. Bosworth, 1963, p. 178). Yet it is unknown whether a sister of Maḥmud, known as Ḥorra-ye Kottali (Bayhaqi, see index p. 991) was married to the province's local ruler. During the earlier part of Mas'ud's reign, the Kottal mint issued coins in the name of Maḥmud's son and successor, but in the later 1030s this mint issued coins in the name of Abu'l-Asad, an otherwise unknown local prince. Before the Saljuq conquest, when Ghaznavid influence in the upper Oxus lands was already weakening, Abu'l-Asad acknowledged the Qara-khanid Bōritigin Ebrāhim b. Naṣr (r. ca. 1052-1068) as his suzerain (Fedorov).

Kottal was controlled by various local commanders, once the Saljuqs established their authority in the upper Oxus lands. In 1064, an *amir* withdrew tribute to rebel against the Saljuq sultan Alp Arslān (r. 1063-1073) and was killed (Ebn al-Aṭir, X, p. 34). With the decline of the Great Saljuqs (1040-1194), the Qara-khanids (992-1212) again gained influence in the province (Fedorov, p. 202). In the time of the Ghurids (ca. 1011-1215) and the Khwarazmshahs (ca. 1077-1231), no separate line of princes is mentioned for Kottal in the sources. In the 14th century the province was one of several small principalities that had emerged during the disintegration of the Chaghatayid khanate (1227-1363). Timur (1336-1405) is alleged to have killed Kottal's local ruler Kay Kosraw for treasonable collusion with the ruling power in Khwarazm (Yazdi, I, p. 243). In the 16th century, Kottal was controlled by the Shaybanids (1500-1599), an Uzbek dynasty. In this period, the name Kottal disappears from recorded usage and the name of the above mentioned modern town Kulob is first used instead. The [Manghits](#) (1747-1920) included the province into their khanate of Bukhara. In 1920, the province became part of Soviet Central Asia, and was given to Tajikistan when it gained independence in 1991.



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