The International Journal of Social Sciences World
TIJOSSW is Available Online at:
https://www.growingscholar.org/journal/index.php/TIJOSSW
Vol. 2 No. 2, September 2020, pages: 63~68
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4040795
ISSN **2690-5167**
Growingscholar Publisher

"*History of Yamini*" As a Source of History of Central Asia: An Introduction

Boratova Ziyoda [1]

Article history:
Received July, 10th 2020, Accepted: August 31st 2020 , Displayed Online: September, 22nd 2020, Published: December, 30th 2020

Keywords

Abu Nasr al-Utbi;

Mahmud Ghaznavi ;

Amir Abu al-Qasim Nuh;

Abu al-Hasan Simjur;

Mavaraunnahr;

Abstract

A work of Abu Nasr al-Utbi *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"* (History of Yamini) is an important source in the study of the history of Central Asia during the *Ghaznavid* period, in particular, *Khorezm, Bukhara, Samarkand, Termez, Nasaf, Shash* and the foundations of statehood in our country in the X-XI centuries. The work *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"* has not been sufficiently studied and has not translated into Uzbek yet. Through this information, the researcher gets acquainted with the social processes that took place in *Transoxiana, Khorasan, Kashmir* in the first quarter of the X and XI centuries, the culture of the peoples, international relations in these countries. The work continues the events that took place after the *"Tarikh-i al-Tabari"* (History of Tabari). The work complements the information of the scholars like as *Narshahi, Abu Rayhan Beruni, Saalibi* about these periods. *"History of Yamini"* covers in detail the political events that took place in *Transoxiana* and *Khorasan* during the last *Samanid* period. It tells the story of the end of the X century and the first quarter of the XI century in connection with the history of *Transoxiana* and *Khorasan*. There is a certain kindness to the rulers as in all historical works of that period. The work of al-Utbi also reflects the battles for the thrones, wealth, power struggles, conflicts, bloodshed and various conflicts between the ruling powers.

1. Introduction

A work of Abu Nasr al-Utbi *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"* ("Tarikh-i al-Yamini ad-Dawla"), written in 1021, is dedicated to the time of Mahmud Ghaznavi (988-1030) [4, p. 271]. The author's full name is

[1] *Secondary school of Chilanzar district of Tashkent city. Email: boratova.z@gmail.com*

Abu Nasr Muhammad ibn Abdujabbor al-Utbi and he was born in 961 in Ray (Iran), in a noble family. Abu Ali Simjuri served in the palace of *Qaboos ibn Vushmagir*. He was influential officials in the highest echelons of the Ghaznavids like Sebuktegin, Mahmud and Mas'ud. According to some historical sources, he died in 1036 in the Ghazna [15, p. 547-548].

In the sources and historical literature state that Abu Nasr al-Utbi was the author of a number of works as a mature poet, writer and historian of his time. However, Abu Nasr al-Utbi's book in Arabic, *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"*, dedicated to Mahmud Ghaznavi, is his most important work.

In the past, this work was known among scholars as *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"*, *"Al-Kitab al-Yamini", "Tarikh-i al-Utbiy"* [25, p. 71]. The reason why the work was called *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"* is that after the Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavid independently ascended the throne of the Ghaznavids, in 999 Qadir Billah the caliph of Abbasids gave him the right to rule Khurasan and he was given the honorary title of *"Yamin ad-davla amin ul-milla"* ("Supporter of the state and patron of religion"). Al-Utbi dedicated his work to Mahmud Ghaznavi, referring to it as *"Yamin"* and calling it *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"* for short [4, p. 271-291].

2. Main Part

The work *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"* is one of the main sources on the history of Central Asia and *Khorasan* for almost half a century. Many copies are found in libraries around the world due to their valuable and interesting historical information. It has been translated into several languages of the world and has been published several times in Delhi, Lahore, Tehran, London and elsewhere. The Manuscripts Fund of the Institute of Oriental Studies named after Abu Rayhan Beruni contains №3252-IV (177 pages) of this work in Arabic and 143144 (72 pages, no end), 5828 (85 pages) translated into Persian. The №3252 copy here was copied in *naskh-suls* letter on local coarse thick paper.

The Arabic text of manuscript was published in Delhi in 1874, Bulaq in 1874 and Lahore in 1883. The informations from *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"* partially were used representatives of the Russian school of oriental studies like W.Bartold [9, p. 64-65], A.Yakubovsky, V.Belinsky, V.Belyaev, P.Stroeva, P.Bulgakov in scientific researchs on the history of Central Asia, Iran, and Afghanistan [40, p. 66]. Western researches on this work cannot be said to be much, except for some overlapping encyclopedic data. Excerpts from it have been translated into French, German, and English by K.Schaefer, G.Elliot, N.Dawson, Reynold James, Theodore Noldeke [32, p. 15-102], Julie Scott Meisami [27, p. 47-66], Andrew Charles Spencer [2, p. 500-524], and Roberto Rubinacci [37, p. 463-467]. Noldeke and Meisami conducted separate research on the work. In 1858, in London, Reynold James (1805-1866) made a complete translation of the work from Persian into English [35; Also see: 33, p. 46]. However, the translation was not warmly received by Western scholars due to some confusion in it [40, p. 68]. There are also translations of the work into Turkish and Tajik [16]. However, the work *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"* has not been sufficiently studied and translated into Uzbek [16, p. 73].

This work of al-Utbi was studied by Uzbek orientalists B.Akhmedov, U.Uvatov [40, p. 93] and I.Abdullaev a little bit. Arab and Iranian researchers, in particular, Ihsan Zunun as-Samiri [29], Safir Shuor [3, p. 146], Ali Anooshahr [4, p. 271-291], played an important role in the study of the work. The most accurate Persian translation of the work among them was made by Abu Sharif Nasih al-Jarbazaqani, published in Iran in 1856, 1956 and 1966 [11].

Al-Utbi tried to cover in his work a wide range of events that took place in *Transoxiana* and *Khorasan* in 975-1021 [13, p. 171-172]. The author, who held various high positions in the presence of the governor for many years, was well aware of the events of that period, often participating directly and witnessing various events in person.

The author was also close to industry representatives such as personal secretary, deputy, postmaster and diplomat. Therefore, he was able to use various correspondence, written document materials [25, p. 72]. In work, Abu Nasr al-Utbi also provided valuable information about the social history of *Afghanistan, Khorasan, Khorezm and Transoxiana*, which were part of the Ghaznavid Empire during the reign of Sebuktegin and Sultan Mahmud Ghaznavi in 975-1021 and the process of conquest of *Transoxiana* by the Qarakhanids, as well as *Khorezm, Bukhara, Samarkand, Termez, Nasaf* [14, p. 9-10, 86, 279, 105].

The work begins with the traditional praise and after the introductory part, the events that took place in the Samanid state in 365/975 AH. At the same time, detailed information is given about the formation of the Ghaznavid state, the life and political activities of such famous rulers as Amir Nasir ad-Din, Sebuktegin, Yamin ad-Dawla Mahmud Ghaznavi, Sultan Mas'ud. Also, valuable information is given about many other famous rulers, such as Amir Ismail Samani, Amir Abu al-Qasim Nuh, Abu al-Hasan Simjur, Qarahani Bugrakhan, Abu al-Qasim Simjur, Sayf ad-Davla and others.

Through that information, the researchers get acquainted with the social processes that took place in the first quarter of the X and XI centuries in the regions of *Transoxiana, Khorasan, Kashmir,* the culture of the peoples, international relations in these countries. The work continues the events that took place after the *"Tarikh-i al-Tabari"*. It complements the information of Narshahi, Abu Rayhan Beruni, Saalibi about these periods [4, p. 285].

According to Ibn al-Athir, after the death of Abu Ishaq, the armies were initially hesitant about whom to appoint as commander. Finally, their mind goes to Sebuktegin, a clever, pious and courageous man [21, p. 148].

Al-Utbi describes the process of Amir Sebuktegin's coming to power as follows: *Amir Sebuktegin was a slave of Abu Ishaq Alp takin, the owner of the Khurasan army, who was his hajib and came to Bukhara with him in the time of Mansur Noah. His art of rule of the army was watched by Hazrat Mansur, a man of unique talent and guidance. When Abu Ishaq was sent to Ghazna, and the province was given to him, Amir Sebuktegin was ordered by officials of Mansur to rectify the affairs of the land and strengthen the borders. Other servants of Abu Ishaq and slaves were excluded from this rank. Abu Ishaq died some time later. He had not children in his family. The people of Ghazna found Nasir ad-Din Sebuktegin worthy of the governorship of Ghazna province and swore allegiance to him. He carried out this task with complete confidence. He introduced good rules and beautiful laws in that country. His sword conquered strong and powerful countries* [1, p. 2-4].

The work also contains very valuable information about the coins of the rulers. For example, in 382-992, Bugrakhan struck not only a dinar, but also a dirham (silver coin) in connection with the conquest of the Samanids. The inscriptions on these coins were very different from the Samanid coins. If the names of the Abbasid caliphs are mentioned in the Samanid dinars and dirhams, in the coins of Bugrakhan the Abbasid caliph is called *"Amir al-mo' minoon"* ("Amir of the believers") and *"Na'ib-u allah"* ("Allah's vicegerent"), and Bugrakhan calls himself *"mavla amir al-mo'minoon"* ("the Mawla of the Amir of the believers"). The dinars of Bukhara that he struck had three Qur'anic (Koranic) verses (*ayats*) instead of two, as in the Samanid coins.

All this, as Ibn al-Athir wrote, was considered a manifestation of Bughrakhan. His nickname *"Zahir ad-Dawla"* ("Pillar of the State") on the coins testifies to this. The inscriptions on the coins, which reflected loyalty to the caliph, were considered an attempt to conform to the image of the Muslim ruler of Bugrakhan [23, p. 34]. In addition to Bukhara, Bughrakhan Harun minted coins in Fergana and Ilaq. While the Bukhara coins bear only the name of Bugrakhan, the coins minted in Fergana and *Ilaq* bear the names of his vassals, and perhaps they were given certain powers over

these lands [37, p. 465]. It goes without saying that this work also plays as one of the primary sources in the study of medieval numismatics.

According to the coins, Nasr ibn Ali conquered Fergana and Khojand in 384-994, and Ilaq in 385-995. He minted coins in 387-997 in Ustrshona and in 388-998 in Samarkand, and after the death of his father he received the title of *Arslan-ilek* or *ilekkhan* [4, p. 279].

"Tarikh-i al-Yamini" covers in detail the political events that took place in *Transoxiana* and *Khorasan* during the last Samanid period. It tells the story of the end of the X century and the first quarter of the XI century in connection with the history of *Transoxiana* and *Khorasan*. As in all historical works of that period, in *"Tarikh-i al-Yamini"* there is a certain kindness to the rulers. The work also reflects the coronation between the ruling powers, wealth, power struggles, conflicts, bloodshed and various conflicts [1, p. 78].

At the same time, the work contains much information about the plight of ordinary working people, their hard life, their hatred of oppression and tyranny, and their struggle against them. For example, the author reports that a plague broke out in Jurjan in 987, killing many nobles, secretaries, army chiefs, and the general public. He narrates openly that the people of Jurjan, who were in a difficult situation, suffering from various taxes and fees, revolted against their rulers, many of whom were killed.

"Tarikh-i al-Yamini" of al-Utbi also contains information about Ghazna, the capital of the Ghaznavid state, Turkestan, Seystan. It details the nature, history, and cities of Seystan in particular [1, p. 91].

Also, the work valuable geographical information about Iran and India during the Ghaznavid period increases its importance and to some extent, helps to fill the gaps in our national history.

In studying the history of this period, the work of al-Utbi plays the main source of compilation for Ibn al-Athir and his contemporaries. German orientalist A.Muller points out that despite the superfluity of rhetorical figures, which add considerable difficulty to the study of al-Utbi's work in the original, the author expresses his opinions on events with greater freedom than might have been expected from a court historian [30, p. 62]. In his autobiography, the author himself admits that he wrote the book with the object of "extolling" Mahmud, and thereby obtained the goodwill of the *wazir*. Nevertheless, he does not conceal the dark sides of this brilliant reign, and the misery of the people ruined by taxes which it was beyond their power to pay [1, p. 1].

At the same time, he does not hide the conspiracies in this magnificent palace and the dark side of domination and the suffering of the people due to various taxes. The fact that two members of his family served as ministers during the Samanid period, and his position in the treasury, may not have been so frightening in his taking such a risk. However, what is clear is that he was a man of a world of absolute bureaucratic ideas, and it was clear that he had a negative attitude towards all the factors that Muslim clerics were opposed to bureaucratic rule in general.

3. Conclusion

Muhammad Nazim protested frankly in his 1931 The Life and Times of Sultan Mahmud of Ghazna that al-Utbi's style was *"very ornate and verbose, and the author had concentrated on beauty of diction rather than historical precision"* [28, p. 4]. These words give the clearest expression of the underlying assumptions of W.Barthold and T.Noldeke. In conclusion, the fact that al-Utbi's work has long been left out of the eyes of researchers has been assessed as a failure to read and comprehend its meaning quickly, to convey information, and to have an unusual interpretation of its genre. Today, however, given the evolving science of source studies, it is necessary to revisit this work, which describes the history of Central Asia, and to study its position on each event in a serious, if necessary, new way.

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