
*Samarqand et le Sughd à l’époque ‘Abbâside* is an attempt to detail the history of the integration of the territories beyond the Amû Daryâ river (Mâwarâ’annahr) into the cultural sphere of Islam in the first part of the ‘Abbâsid period. Largely successful, Karev’s work sheds light on what happened to the local elites and social structures after the conquest of this region by Umayyad generals and on the processes that produced new Muslim elites in Central Asia. The usual historical sources of the ‘Abbâsid period focus on the center of the Muslim world at that time while devoting less attention to peripheral regions, giving, unfortunately, the impression that little happened in 8th-9th century Mâwarâ’annahr even though it was a period of great turmoil and importance for the eastern regions of the empire. The author refocuses the material of these sources to construct a history of that region, adding details taken especially from his work on the *Tarikh* of al-Bal’amî (d. late 10th c.) and the *Kitâb al-Qand fi dîkr ‘ulamā’ Samarqand* of al-Nasafi (d. 1142).

The book begins with the ‘Abbâsid revolution (750 A.D.) and its Central Asian contexts, focusing particularly on the politics of Abû Muslim, first ‘Abbâsid governor of Khorasan and a main facilitator of the revolt against the Umayyads, and his campaigns to bring the various parts of Sogdiana under ‘Abbâsid rule. Karev analyzes, for example, the strength of the Arab governorship of Khorasan and the rupture with earlier tradition by showing how Abû Muslim’s palace in Samarkand, as well as other types of public buildings, did not continue local Sogdian styles of architecture but rather were essentially ‘caliphal’ in character, part of a plan to transform Samarkand into a sort of eastern capital and administrative center of the region. This analysis is based on recent archaeological work and illustrated with maps, as well as digital reconstructions.
The second chapter sketches out the rule of Abū Muslim’s successors as governors of Khorasan and changes in the ‘Abbāsid hierarchy of government there, also discussing how Khorasan became the major provider of human resources for the ‘Abbāsid state. The chapter also focuses on ‘Abbāsid relations with China at a moment when the former was solidifying its power in Central Asia and the latter was experiencing the turmoil of An Lushan’s rebellion.

Chapter three traces, in great detail, the messianic movement (775-780) of al-Muqanna’, whose followers became known as the *mubayyida* (Ar.) or *sapīḏāmagān* (Pers.) and even came to control a fair amount of territory as a sort of pseudo-state in conflict with the ‘Abbāsids. Pointing out that Sogdiana was never, until then, the epicenter of a religious movement, Karev argues that the revolt marked a fundamental change in the history of the region. This lengthy and detailed account in which the author confronts all the sources mentioning al-Muqanna’, is the most up-to-date investigation into the activities of al-Muqanna’ and his supporters and the ‘Abbāsids’ attempts to suppress them. Karev links the *mubayyida* movement to transformations in the social structure of Māwarā’annahr, including the degree to which parts of the region had been Islamized, and after the aforementioned historical account, gives a sketch of the groups, especially the local *dihqāns*, which supported or opposed al-Muqanna’ in the various locales of Sogdiana.

Chapter four looks at the ‘Abbāsid governors of the region in the period between al-Muqanna’ and Rāfi’ b. Layth, looking especially at the relationships between the ‘Abbāsid state and local nobility. Karev also discusses the continuing use of Khorasanis as troops and officials in other, especially western, parts of the empire; military campaigns against the Qarluqs, who had come to occupy Farghana by the late 8th century; and efforts to continue to Islamize the farther reaches of Sogdiana, such as Shash and Farghana.

Chapter five covers the revolt of Rāfi’ b. Layth in the early 800s, again furnishing the most up-to-date account and attempting to trace the social groups who participated. Karev also discusses the constant struggle of the caliphate with Turkic nomads just beyond the borders of Māwarā’annahr. This takes into account the Qarabalgasun inscription, erected by the eighth Uighur khaghan (r. 808-821) in Chinese, Old Turkic, and Sogdian,