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BUKHARA AS A CENTRE OF LEARNING IN THE SAMANID ERA AND ITS SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE KNOWLEDGE SOCIETY OF NEW UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This paper examines Bukhara in the 9th–10th centuries, when the city became the capital of the Samanid state and one of the leading intellectual centres of the Muslim East. On the basis of historical sources and modern research, it analyses the institutional foundations of Bukhara's scholarly life – state patronage, the court library, the culture of the written word and the coexistence of Arabic and New Persian learning. The paper argues that the Samanid experience of combining political stability, respect for scholars and open access to knowledge has practical significance for the education and science policy of New Uzbekistan and for the upbringing of young people in the spirit of historical memory.

Keywords: Bukhara, Samanids, Ismail Samani, intellectual heritage, Ibn Sina, library, Narshakhi, enlightenment, historical memory, knowledge society, New Uzbekistan.

Introduction. In the era of globalization and digital transformation, knowledge has become the main resource of social development, and the question of how a society creates, preserves and transmits knowledge is once again at the centre of attention. The Strategy "Uzbekistan – 2030" defines the development of human capital, education and science as one of the priority directions of state policy [1]. In this context, the study of historical models of intellectual life acquires not only academic, but also practical importance, since the idea of a "Third Renaissance" put forward in

New Uzbekistan directly appeals to the scholarly traditions of the past [2].

Bukhara occupies a special place among these traditions. In the 9th–10th centuries, as the capital of the Samanid state, the city became a meeting point of scholars, poets, physicians and jurists, and its libraries and scholarly gatherings were known far beyond Movarounnahr. The aim of this paper is to identify the main factors that turned Samanid Bukhara into a centre of learning and to show the relevance of this historical experience for the present day.

Literature review. The primary source on the early history of the city is "The History of Bukhara" by Abu Bakr Narshakhi, written in Arabic in 943–944 and known today through its abridged Persian translation of the 12th century; it contains valuable information on the city's topography, rulers, mosques and the activity of the Samanid court [3]. Among the classical studies, the fundamental work of V.V. Barthold remains indispensable for the political and cultural history of Movarounnahr before the Mongol invasion [4]. R.N. Frye considered Samanid Bukhara as a "medieval achievement" in which Iranian and Islamic cultural traditions were synthesized [5], while N.N. Negmatov analysed the state structure and administrative system of the Samanids [6].

The autobiography of Ibn Sina, preserved together with the biography written by his disciple al-Juzjani, is an important first-hand testimony about the Samanid court library [7]. In recent decades S.F. Starr placed Bukhara within the wider context of the "lost enlightenment" of Central Asia [8]. The later history of the city's educational institutions is reflected in the works of O.A. Sukhareva [9], S. Becker [10] and A. Khalid [11]. At the same time, the significance of the Samanid scholarly model for contemporary educational policy has not yet been sufficiently studied, which determines the relevance of this paper.

Results and discussion. The analysis shows that the rise of Bukhara as a centre of learning was based on several interrelated factors. The first of them was political stability and state patronage. After Ismail Samani (r. 892–907) established Bukhara as

the capital, the city became the administrative centre of a vast state, and the rulers regarded the support of scholars and poets as a matter of prestige and legitimacy. The court of Nasr II (r. 914–943) was associated with the poet Rudaki, whose work laid the foundations of classical New Persian poetry, and the Samanid Mausoleum built in the early 10th century testifies to the high level of architectural and engineering thought of that time.

The second factor was the institution of the library. Ibn Sina recalls that, after treating the emir Nuh ibn Mansur (r. 976–997), he was allowed to use the palace library, which consisted of many rooms, each containing chests of books devoted to a separate field of knowledge, and that he found there works unknown to most people [7]. This testimony shows that knowledge in Samanid Bukhara was systematized and that access to it was granted to talented young people regardless of their age.

The third factor was the culture of translation and the written word. Under the Samanids, Arabic remained the language of religious and scientific scholarship, while New Persian developed as a language of literature, history and administration. The Persian adaptation of al-Tabari's history prepared by the vizier Bal'ami in the reign of Mansur I is one of the clearest examples of this policy of making knowledge accessible to a broader audience [5; 8]. Narshakhi's own work, written for the Samanid ruler, shows that historical writing was regarded as a means of strengthening the identity of the city and the state [3].

The fourth factor was the continuity of the scholarly environment. The intellectual climate of Bukhara did not appear suddenly: it was prepared by the tradition of hadith scholarship represented by Imam al-Bukhari (810–870) and was continued in later centuries by the madrasa system. O.A. Sukhareva showed that in the 19th and early 20th centuries Bukhara still remained one of the largest centres of madrasa education in Central Asia [9], while the Jadid enlighteners of the late 19th –

early 20th centuries sought to renew this tradition through new-method schools, printing and periodicals [11].

The study also shows that the Samanid model had its limits. The scholarly life of the capital depended to a great extent on the personal patronage of the ruler and on the stability of the state; when the Samanid dynasty fell at the end of the 10th century, the court institutions lost their former role and many scholars, including Ibn Sina, were forced to leave Bukhara [4; 7]. This historical lesson indicates that the sustainable development of science requires not only the support of the state, but also stable institutions that do not depend on political circumstances.

From the point of view of the present day, the Samanid experience offers several important lessons. Firstly, investment in libraries and open access to knowledge is a long-term factor of intellectual growth; today this role is played by digital libraries, open scientific databases and electronic educational platforms. Secondly, the support of talented young people at an early age, as in the case of Ibn Sina, is consistent with the modern policy of identifying and supporting gifted youth. Thirdly, multilingualism and translation activity remain an important condition for integration into world science. Finally, the inclusion of the Historic Centre of Bukhara in the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1993 [12] and the city's status as the Capital of Islamic Culture in 2020 make its heritage an effective resource for education in the spirit of historical memory, cultural tourism and intercultural dialogue.

Conclusion. The study demonstrates that Bukhara became a centre of learning in the Samanid era owing to a combination of political stability, state patronage of scholars, a systematically organized library, the culture of translation and a continuous scholarly environment. The testimonies of Narshakhi and Ibn Sina confirm that knowledge was regarded as a value of the state and the society.

In the context of the reforms aimed at building a knowledge society in New Uzbekistan, the historical experience of Bukhara can serve not as an object of

admiration alone, but as a source of practical guidelines: the development of library and digital resources, the support of gifted young people, the encouragement of translation and multilingual scholarship, and the creation of institutions that ensure the sustainability of science. The study of this heritage in higher education institutions, including technical universities, strengthens students' historical consciousness and their sense of responsibility for the intellectual future of the country.

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