

THE RULE OF THE AFRIGHID DYNASTY AND ISSUES RELATED TO THE STUDY OF THIS PERIOD

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Abstract: This article explores the origins of the Afrighid dynasty, their reign period, state policies, and findings from numismatic and archaeological sources. Additionally, the relationships between the Afrighids and the Sassanids, Hephthalites, and the Arab Caliphate are discussed. The study highlights the importance of numismatic evidence in understanding the history of the Afrighid dynasty, as well as in determining their ruling period and state boundaries.

Keywords: Afrighid dynasty, Khwarezm, Vazamar, Afrigh, Sassanids, Hephthalites, numismatics, archaeology, state policy, coins, list of rulers.

Annotatsiya: Ushbu maqolada Afrig'iyalar sulolasining kelib chiqishi, ularning hukmronlik davri, davlat siyosati, numizmatik dalillar va arxeologik topilmalar asosida tadqiq etiladi. Shuningdek, Afrig'iyalar sulolasi va Sosoniylar, Xioniylar, Arab xalifaligi o'rtasidagi munosabatlar ham yoritiladi. Tadqiqot natijalariga ko'ra, Afrig'iyalar sulolasi tarixini tushunishda numizmatik manbalar muhim ahamiyatga ega bo'lib, ularning hukmronlik davri va davlat chegaralarini aniqlashda asosiy dalil bo'lib xizmat qiladi.

Kalit so'zlar. Afrig'iyalar sulolasi, Xorazm, Vazamar, Afrig', Sosoniylar, Xioniylar, numizmatika, arxeologiya, davlat siyosati, tangalar, shohlar ro'yxati.

Аннотация: В данной статье рассматриваются происхождение династии Афригидов, период их правления, государственная политика, а также данные нумизматики и археологических находок. Особое внимание уделяется отношениям Афригидов с Сасанидами, Хионитами и Арабским халифатом. Исследование показывает, что нумизматические источники имеют ключевое значение для понимания истории Афригидов, а также помогают определить их хронологию и границы государства.

Ключевые слова: Династия Афригидов, Хорезм, Вазамар, Африг, Сасаниды, Хиониты, нумизматика, археология, государственная политика, монеты, список царей.

Introduction. The Afrighid dynasty played an important role in the history of Khorezm, as this period was characterized by political stability, economic, and cultural development in Central Asia. Historical sources indicate that the Afrighid dynasty was formed as a result of a prolonged struggle for the throne in the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. Although the political history of early medieval Khorezm has been studied through written sources, numismatic findings, and archaeological evidence, various theories exist regarding the origin of the dynasty, its period of rule, and its state policy.

Literature Analysis. Research on the Afrighid dynasty and the early medieval history of Khorezm is based on written sources, numismatic analyses, and archaeological discoveries. In this regard, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni provided insights into the origins of the Khorezmshah dynasty

and its state policies, while scholars such as E. V. Rtveladze, S. P. Tolstov, and V. I. Vainberg analyzed the rule of the Afrighid dynasty, the succession of its rulers, and the processes of economic development through numismatic and archaeological studies.

Methodological Frameworks. One of the primary methods is the historical-comparative analysis, which involves comparing written sources with material evidence to determine their reliability. Numismatic research is used to analyze coins associated with the dynasty's rulers, assessing their political and economic significance. Archaeological studies, on the other hand, help to draw important conclusions about the rule of the dynasty based on monuments discovered in the Khorezm oasis.

Analysis. In the history of Central Asia, the decline of the Kushan Empire in the 3rd century AD and the invasion of nomadic tribes in the 4th century led to the collapse of the classical period and the emergence of distinct socio-economic conditions characteristic of the early medieval era. The establishment of the Sasanian dynasty in Iran and their eastern campaigns further weakened the Kushan Empire. Written sources also mention that the Sasanians attacked the Khorezm oasis. The Syrian work *Arbella Chronicle* describes the battles of Sasanian kings Ardashir (227–241 AD) and Shapur I (241–271 AD) against the Khorezmians [1, p. 91]. It is recorded that Ardashir conquered Balkh, Merv, and Khorezm, while Shapur I engaged in battles only with the Khorezmians.

V. B. Henning, who studied these written sources, suggested that the Tuproqqa monument was destroyed during the Sasanian invasion. However, this hypothesis has not been confirmed by archaeological research. According to Al-Tabari, Ardashir's rule in Khorezm did not last long. V. I. Vainberg substantiated this claim through an analysis of coins found in the Khorezm oasis. He suggests that in the late 3rd century AD, Khorezm might have been temporarily subordinate to the Sasanians [2, p. 97].

This argument is supported by some artifacts from the reign of Vazamar (Afrigh), such as similarities in coin iconography and the discovery of Sasanian coins among the remains. Researchers believe that Shapur I may have been defeated in his battle against the Khorezmians. A text written in 262 AD on the *Ka'ba-ye Zardusht* inscription also mentions that the Sasanian borders extended to Kesh, Sogd, and Shash. During this period, Khorezm experienced a period of decline, which the Sasanians may have attempted to exploit. However, archaeological data do not confirm long-term Sasanian rule over Khorezm. The majority of coins found in archaeological sites from this period belong to the last Kushan rulers, Vasudeva and Kanishka III.

By the late 3rd and early 4th centuries, political stability prevailed in Khorezm. The state experienced social and economic growth, which is associated with King Afrigh. Numerous coins bearing the name of King Vazamar have been discovered from this period.

Vazamar is mentioned as Afrigh in Abu Rayhan al-Biruni's works, where he is described as a descendant of the Kay-Khosrow dynasty. It is also stated that he built the fortress of al-Fir in the year 616 of the Alexander era and that his descendants used this date for their calendar calculations [3, p. 94].

The information in al-Biruni's works was analyzed by academician E. V. Rtveladze, who drew the following conclusions:

1. The phrase "and finally Afrigh became the ruler" in al-Biruni's text indicates that the struggle for power in Khorezm lasted for a long time, and Afrigh, a descendant of the Kay-Khosrow lineage, emerged victorious in the battle for the throne.

2. Al-Biruni did not specify the exact year when Afrigh ascended to the throne but instead provided the date when the fortress of al-Fir was built. Given that the Alexander era

began in 312 BC, it can be concluded that Afrigh's palace was built in 304 AD. However, later studies suggest that the actual year was 305 AD. Based on this, we also adopt the same date.

After securing power, Afrigh began constructing his palace.

S.P. Tolstov identified the word "Afrigh" on one of the rare coins preserved in the State Hermitage Museum in Russia, reading it as "pryk" [5, p.191-192]. However, linguist V.A. Livshits interpreted the inscription differently, reading it as "Bisarvar" (bwrsr) [6, p.116]. The date when this coin was minted coincides with the time given by Abu Rayhan al-Biruni for the construction of Afrigh's palace. B.I. Vainberg also dated this coin to the late 3rd and early 4th centuries. Thus, by the late 20th century, research had concluded that the name Afrigh was not explicitly recorded on coins.

E.V. Rtveladze proposed the idea that "Vazamar" could have been the name adopted by Afrigh after he became ruler. It is possible that Afrigh was the ruler's original name and that after ascending to the throne, he was given the name "Vazamar." After the period of crisis in the Khorezmian state, the ruler who unified the kingdom is known as Afrigh in written sources and as Vazamar in archaeological records. For this reason, the early medieval ruling dynasty of Khorezm is referred to as either the Vazamarids or the Afrighid dynasty.

Afrigh waged a long struggle for the throne in the Khorezmian state. Archaeological research indicates that the region experienced nearly a century of decline. In the mid-2nd century, the Sasanian rulers may have attempted to seize control of the Khorezm oasis by exploiting this period of instability. In an effort to consolidate his rule, Afrigh issued coins in his own name. These coins bear similarities to those of Vasudeva and Kanishka III and feature the dynasty's emblem.

This emblem remained in use until the rule of the Artava dynasty when it changed in shape, though the titles inscribed on the coins remained unchanged. The title was rendered in Aramaic as WZM'R MLK'. According to E.V. Rtveladze, Afrigh may have adopted this emblem to emphasize his connection to the ancient Siyavushid dynasty [7, p.95].

Throughout the transition from antiquity to the early medieval period in Khorezm, continuity can be observed in the ruling dynasties. The emblem of the Yuezhi dynasty from the late 2nd century BCE was also present on the coins of Vazamar (Afrigh).

Findings. The rulers of the Afrighid dynasty were referred to with the title "shah." This conclusion was drawn by researchers through the study of numismatic sources. From the second half of the 5th century, the inscriptions on coins changed in sequence—first the title was written, followed by the ruler's name. The formulation of the royal title also evolved over time, appearing as MR'Y MLK' [8, p.82-85], which translates to "King of Kings" or "Lord King" (Gospodin Sar) [9, p.97]. This title continued to appear on coins until the second half of the 8th century.

In Arabic written sources, rulers were referred to with the title "Khorezmshah." E.V. Rtveladze associates the use of the title "shah" for Khorezmian rulers with the 3rd century, suggesting that it may have been influenced by the Sasanians while also having roots in Aramaic traditions.

The names of the rulers from the Afrighid dynasty have been identified based on Abu Rayhan al-Biruni's accounts and numismatic evidence. The names of rulers were inscribed clearly on the coins using ancient Khorezmian script, but the coins did not specify the duration of their reigns. Meanwhile, in al-Biruni's work, the names are written in Arabic script and order, adding complexity to the research process.

V.A. Livshits, who analyzed the inscriptions on the coins, found that they did not correspond precisely to the names of rulers recorded by Abu Rayhan al-Biruni. Furthermore, al-Biruni's work does not provide the years of reign for these rulers.

B.I. Vainberg conducted comparative research by analyzing numismatic findings from archaeological sites in Khorezm and correlating them with historical sources. He extensively studied the inscriptions and imagery on the coins, classifying them and establishing a chronological sequence [10].

In his work, Abu Rayhan al-Biruni described the ruling dynasty of Khorezm up until the 7th century AD. He wrote:

> "At the time of the arrival of the Prophet (peace be upon him), the ruler of Khorezm was Arsamuh, son of Buzgar, son of Khamgari, son of Shaush, son of Sakhr, son of Azkajawar, son of Askajamuk, son of Sakhsasak, son of Bag'ra, son of Afrigh" [11, p.69].

From this, we can conclude that until the Arab conquest, a representative of the Afrighid dynasty, Arsamuh, ruled Khorezm. After the Arab invasion, Askajamuk was appointed as the ruler.

The succession and chronology of the Afrighid dynasty's rulers have also been analyzed by E.V. Rtveladze [12, p.96-100].

E.V. Rtveladze notes that the name "Afrigh" does not appear on coins. S.P. Tolstov read the word "Afrigh" ('pryk) on a rare coin preserved in the Hermitage Museum. However, V.A. Livshits, B.I. Vainberg, and E.V. Rtveladze interpreted this inscription differently, reading it as "Bivasar" (bwrsr).

At the same time, scholars established that the reigns of Afrigh and Vazamar occurred during the same period. B.I. Vainberg specified that Afrigh ruled in the last quarter of the 3rd century and the early 4th century.

E.V. Rtveladze noted that the list of Afrighid rulers and their reigns had also been examined by M.N. Fedorov and A. Kuznetsov, but their research lacked sufficient evidence. Additionally, he argued that the names of the Afrighid dynasty's rulers, as proposed by V.A. Livshits and B.I. Vainberg, may have been altered [13, p.97-98].

Academician E.V. Rtveladze concluded that Afrigh was in fact the same ruler identified as Vazamar on the coins. He further suggested that Afrigh's successor, his son Bag'ra, could be the ruler referred to as Bivasar on these coins.

Based on this, he provided the following reconstructed list of the rulers of the Afrighid dynasty: Vazamar (Afrigh), (last quarter of the 3rd century – early 4th century), Bugra (Bivasar), Kavi (Ravi), Sanbar, Rasht, Vir or Vik, Tutuxas, Ramik, Bravis or Fravik, Shram, Azkasvar I, Khusraw, Kapik, Shavshafan, Azkasvar II (late 8th century).

V.I. Vainberg, based on the coins discovered in the Khorezm oasis from ancient and early medieval times, determined the territorial boundaries of the early medieval Khorezmian state. According to his findings, the regions of the Aral Sea basin and the lower reaches of the Syr Darya were not part of the Khorezmian state [14, p.94].

During the 2nd–1st centuries BCE, Khorezm was conquered by a new ethnic tribe, the "Yuezhi of the Chjaovu House," who minted coins resembling the tetradrachms of Eucratides. The Chjaovu Yuezhi migrated to the Zarafshan valley, settling in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khorezm. The representatives of this dynasty may have significantly contributed to the political and economic development of Khorezm starting from the 1st century CE. During this period, Khorezm experienced economic and urban growth. Many ancient cities were restored, and new

ones were built, accompanied by changes in urban architectural styles. However, to date, no local coins from the 1st–2nd centuries CE have been found in the Khorezm oasis.

S.P. Tolstov suggested that this absence could be related to the unification of the five Yuezhi clans. When the five Yuezhi tribes merged, only the ruling tribe had the right to mint coins, while the subordinate tribes were likely prohibited from doing so [15, p.128].

By the 3rd century CE, with the decline of the Kushan Empire, local rulers gained power, paving the way for the establishment of independent states. These rulers may have resumed minting their own coins. In this period, copper coins of Vazamar have been discovered in nearly all archaeological sites across the Khorezm oasis. This indicates a period of economic prosperity under Vazamar's rule [16, p.97]. Researchers analyzing the numismatic evidence from the 3rd century concluded that the entire Khorezmian oasis was unified under a single state during Vazamar's reign.

Material artifacts discovered in the eastern and western regions of Khorezm also display similarities, suggesting a shared cultural and economic system.

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni's statement, "finally, Afrigh from the Kay-Khosrow lineage ascended the throne," suggests that a long struggle for power took place between the Yuezhi dynasty and the Kay-Khosrow dynasty. Afrigh secured the throne after prolonged conflicts, successfully unifying both southeastern and northwestern Khorezm. Upon his death, his son Bugra (Bivasar) inherited the throne. However, during his reign, two independent states emerged within the Khorezmian oasis.

Numismatic evidence supports this division: while post-Vazamar coins have been found on the right bank of the Amu Darya (southeastern Khorezm), no such coins have been discovered on the left bank (northwestern Khorezm). Some researchers hypothesize that this absence indicates that the left bank of Khorezm had formed an independent state.

An alternative explanation is that the left bank was home to nomadic pastoralists who conducted trade without using coinage, instead relying on barter. However, this theory is unlikely, as sedentary agricultural and craft-producing communities also resided in the area, making a coinless economy implausible. Considering this, the more probable explanation is that the region had indeed formed an independent polity.

Numismatic analysis has been used to determine the chronology of Afrighid rule based on coin inscriptions and emblems. (See Table 1.) V.I. Vainberg categorized and classified coins found in various regions, comparing them with those from other areas. However, in some cases, coin dating remains approximate.

Through the study of coin imagery and symbols, he reconstructed the succession of the Afrighid rulers [17, p.280]. His research provided a thorough analysis of Khorezmian coinage. Since further in-depth studies on the region's coinage have not been conducted, we relied extensively on his work for our own research.

V.I. Vainberg identified 14 types of coins, noting that their external design was largely consistent. He concluded that variations in design indicated different rulers from the same dynasty [18, p.282].

Coins bearing the name "Vazamar" depict the ruler wearing a crown resembling an eagle's head. Additionally, certain copper coins feature a two-humped camel in a seated position, with slight modifications in its emblem. V.I. Vainberg classified these coins as "T7." These coins also display a cross-like emblem with three curved ends.

Since these copper coins were widely circulated, their relatively short period of use suggests that after Vazamar's rule, another noble house may have temporarily seized power [19, p.35]. The estimated chronological period for these coins is the late 3rd to early 4th century.

Interestingly, the coin designs do not resemble those of other known Khorezmian dynasties, supporting the idea that after Afrigh's son took the throne, the Khorezmian state was divided into two separate regions.

Changes in coin design may also indicate the incursion of external invaders who temporarily gained control over parts of Khorezm. Supporting this hypothesis, archaeological evidence reveals that a cross-like emblem with three curved ends was discovered in the Gavur-Qala ossuary. The ceramic artifacts found at this site resemble those of the Xiongnu.

Furthermore, Yu.A. Rapoport's study of the Chashtepa site in Ustyurt identified a cross-shaped tomb, whose design closely resembles the material culture of the lower Syr Darya region. This suggests a possible link between these coins and the Xiongnu presence in the region.

After a period of Xiongnu rule in the region, the Afrighid dynasty likely regained control and re-established its dominance in the state. When analyzing the coins, B.I. Vainberg identified various types of Vazamar coins and classified them into B, V, and G groups, noting that the consistency of the emblem across these groups suggests that the dynasty ruled for an extended period [20, p.35].

Copper coins associated with Vazamar were discovered at Kunya-Uaz fortress in the same layer as coins of Shapur I, allowing for a more precise chronological determination. Researchers proposed that Vazamar ruled around the same time as Shapur I. The coins from the period following Vazamar's reign, known as the Bivasar coins, depict a king wearing a crown resembling that of Shapur II. The Greek inscriptions on these coins are damaged and incomplete.

In the 5th–6th centuries, Hephthalite coins commonly depicted rulers without beards, with an emblem positioned behind the ruler's left side. Similar coinage patterns are observed among the Hephthalites, Kushans, and in Khorezm.

Conclusion. A coin found at Dingilji, along with other anonymous royal coins, features a unique depiction of the king, showing either hair or part of a crown extending from the ear down along the cheek to the shoulder [21, p.15]. This depiction has not been found on any other known coins.

Numismatics does not provide direct information about the political history of the Turkic Khaganate, but according to V.I. Vainberg, the emergence of a new ideogram MR`Y MLK in Khorezmian coinage suggests that new political processes were taking place. By the 7th century, a monetary reform may have been introduced, as smaller copper coins were replaced by larger, silver-like copper coins.

During the 8th century, three independent states existed in Khorezm: Southern Khorezm, Kerder, and Gurganj. After the Arab conquest, Gurganj became the main Arab administrative center, increasing its political significance. In 995, the Khwarezmshah dynasty was overthrown, and Gurganj became the capital.

After Khorezm was incorporated into the Arab Caliphate, the quality of silver coins declined, and their weight decreased, likely aligning them more closely with the Arab dirham. This trend was observed throughout Central Asia.

In studying the history of the Afrighid dynasty, researchers have primarily relied on archaeological data and numismatic sources. These sources have provided greater clarity regarding the dynasty's rule, the names of its kings, and the political processes of that era. The

history of the Afrighid dynasty remains one of the most debated and complex periods in Khorezm's past, making its further study a pressing issue in historical research.

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