



## The Army and Militarism in the Samanid Era

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**Abstract:** Following Arab invasions into Iran and their territorial expansion within the Sasanian realm, Iranian discontent with Arab rulers grew, particularly during the Umayyad and Abbasid periods. These grievances sparked uprisings and revolts, eroding Arab control over the eastern reaches of the Islamic Empire and gradually enabling local governments in the east to assert autonomy. Amidst conflicts on its western borders and engagements with the Byzantine Empire, the Abbasid Caliphate grew uneasy as local governments like the Tahirids, Saffarids, and Samanids declared independence, albeit with nominal allegiance to Baghdad. Among these emerging powers, the Samanids of Transoxiana, centered in Bukhara, rose to prominence. Originally prominent commanders within the Abbasid army, the Samanid rulers, with the backing of their people and forces, navigated toward independence. Initially part of the Abbasid army hierarchy and beneficiaries of military training under the Abbasid regime, the Samanid emirs seized the opportunity created by the weakened Caliphate and conflicting interests with Baghdad, establishing a semi-independent government in the east. In this historical context, military forces and militarism held significant importance for all the established systems in the eastern regions, including the Samanids. The military played a pivotal role in shaping and sustaining Iranian local governments like the Samanids.

**Keywords:** Army, Militarism, Samanids, Abbasids, Islamic Iran.

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## ***Introduction***

The importance of the subject: The subject of the army and militarism in semi-independent Iranian governments such as the Samanids is among the intriguing and Interesting themes in historical research. The present article aims to explore various aspects of this subject, including the organization and structure of the Samanid army, the role of the army in power dynamics and governance, as well as the influences and adaptations the Samanid army drew from other military forces of contemporary states.

main question: Given the significance of the army and militarism and their role in shaping semi-independent Iranian governments during the early Islamic centuries, the main question is how the structure and organization of the army and militarism within the semi-independent Samanid government were formulated. Additionally, what impact did they have on the transformation, advancement, and expansion of this government?

Hypothesis: The structure of the Samanid army and militarism was inherently influenced by the models and origins derived from the army structures of previous administrations like the Umayyads and Abbasids, who themselves inherited elements from the Sasanian state. However, it would be inappropriate to overlook the influence of eastern Iranian local governments, such as the Tahirids and Saffarids, in the development and organization of the Samanid army. Nonetheless, attributing the entire Samanid military system to direct emulation would be inaccurate, as the Samanids gradually introduced changes to their military institutions over time as their governmental institutions evolved, leading to the growth and evolution of the Samanid army.

## ***Research literature***

As mentioned, the structure of the Samanid army and militarism was influenced by previous governments models, including the Umayyads, Abbasids, and ultimately the Sasanians. However, the contributions of local governments such as the Tahirids and Saffarids cannot be disregarded in this process. Nevertheless, the Samanid military structure cannot be solely attributed to emulation of the military systems of these aforementioned states. The Samanids displayed innovation in this field, evolving certain structures, tools, and military strategies over the course of their existence. From a literature review perspective, the political history of the Samanids has been a subject of several studies, resulting in numerous works. However, the military history and militarism of the Samanids have not received substantial attention and have remained relatively understudied. While some historians have addressed the topic of military history in Islam and Iran, it is deserving of more focused and comprehensive research.

Research suggests that primary information about the military history of the Samanids can be found primarily within political histories. Thankfully, significant historical sources from that era are available. These sources can be categorized into general and specialized histories. The oldest historical source that references the military structure of the Samanids is Tabari's history (1983), which provides insights into their military system. Another notable source is Ibn Athir's "Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh," which discusses the Samanid military in the context of the broader history. Additional sources include "Siyasatnameh" by Nizam al-Mulk (1963), which touches upon the Samanid military, including the selection and utilization of slaves in the court. Alongside this book, there is another work titled "Nizam al-Tawarikh" by Bayzavi (2003), which addresses various events and narratives of the Samanid era, shedding light on certain military and militarism matters of that period. "Rozatoll al-Safa" by Mirkhand (2001) is another piece of literature that can be utilized to learn about the Samanids, their army's structure, and their militarism. In

this book, the author provides some albeit limited information regarding the structure of the Samanid government's army. The book "Jame' al-Tawarikh" (2008) by Rashid al-Din Fazlullah Hamadani is another valuable work in which the news and events of three important historical dynasties, namely the Samanids, Buyids, and Ghaznavids, have been depicted. It provides interesting insights into these dynasties. In the book "Tarikh Gozideh" (1985) by Hamdullah Mustoufi, the author has provided a general overview of the structure of all Iranian dynasties, including the Samanids. He meticulously examines and presents information about them. However, among contemporary studies conducted on the Samanids, the book "Ovza'e Edari-ye Samaniyan" (1996) is noteworthy. In this book, the author endeavors to depict the administrative structure of the Samanid government. "Amir Isma'il-e Samani" (1996) by Panahi-ye Semnani discusses the founder of the Samanid dynasty, the political structure, and the military system. "History of Iran from the Fall of the Sasanid Empire to the Rise of the Seljuks" (1996) by Richard Fraye briefly touches on the military structure of various dynasties in the Islamic world and Iran.

What distinguishes this research from the aforementioned works is that it doesn't solely focus on the military structure and militarism of the Samanid period. Instead, it strives to investigate and study the evolution of the Samanid military from administrative and bureaucratic perspectives. It delves into battle tactics, weaponry, and military organization, aiming to provide a comprehensive understanding of the transformations within the Samanid military.

### ***Origin and Rise to Power of the Samanids***

According to historical records, the Samanid dynasty emerged in Transoxiana, the region beyond the river, in the early 3rd century AH (9th century CE). They established their rule with the consent of the Abbasid Caliphs and gradually expanded their power. Over a period of 200 years, the Samanid dynasty came to dominate the entire eastern territories of the Abbasid Caliphate, extending from the river Taraz to the Jebal (as depicted in Pic 1). Essentially, the Samanid dynasty can be considered one of the ancient Iranian dynasties in Transoxiana that managed to maintain their local rule after the Islamic conquest of Iran. They expanded their domain in the eastern borders in alignment with the Arab-Muslim conquests and even extended their territory into the central regions of Iran.

The emergence of the Samanid state marked the beginning of the spread of Iranian culture and literature, which historians often refer to as the golden age of Iranian history. The records of this era indicate that with the rise of the Samanid dynasty, significant transformations occurred in the political, cultural, and economic structures of Iran. These changes paved the way for the development and progress of political and social institutions. Undoubtedly, these transformations and institutions necessitated capable military forces to ensure security and authority under the rule of the Samanids and their court officials. This military strength was crucial in facilitating various advancements and progress in social, economic, and scientific domains, all under the umbrella of Samanid governance and the rule of their administrators.

There is limited information available about the origins of the Samanid dynasty. However, based on historical documents and evidence, it seems that the ruling dynasty of the Samanids originated from a village called "Samān" near the city of "Samarkand" in present-day Uzbekistan. Some historical sources mention their ancestry being traced back to "Balkh" or "Termez." Some local sources identify the origin of the Samanid dynasty as Khorasan. Nevertheless, it appears unlikely that Transoxiana was their primary place of origin. Regardless, considering their initial origin, it is plausible that the Samanids might have lived in cities like Balkh and Sa-

markand during different periods of history.

The Samanids traced their lineage back to a figure named "Bahrām Chūbīn," who was a commander during the reign of Khosrow Parviz (Christensen, 2006: 120-234). Ibn Athir writes about the Samanid lineage as follows: "Sāmān Khudāh bin Juthmān bin Tamghāt bin Nūshahr bin Bahrām Chūbīn bin Bahrām Khāshnāsh" (Ibn Athir, 1989: 4339).

Some historians argue for a Turkic origin of this dynasty, connecting them to the Oghuz tribe, but this perspective lacks substantial support among historians. According to historical evidence, the initial settlement of the Samanids was in Khorasan. The prominent figure Samān Khudāt was brought to power by As'ad ibn Abdullah al-Qushayri or al-Qasri (Spuler, 1988: 123-124), the governor of Khorasan during the Umayyad rule in Khorasan in the year 723 or 727 in honor of converting to Islam, his son was named "Asad" upon the recommendation of Sa'd ibn Abdullah al-Qushayri. (Frye, 1986:119) Based on historical sources, the Samanids were actually descendants of a person named "Samān Khodāt." Due to the fact that he had established a settlement in a region known as "Samān," he was recognized by this name. Consequently, he was referred to as "Samān Khodāt," meaning the owner of the village of Samān. For this reason, this dynasty is called the Samanid dynasty, and due to this affiliation, he wasn't referred to as "Asad." (Parviz, 1959: 844). As the sources indicate, Asad was, in fact, the ancestor of Ismail Samani. Hamdullah Mustofi mentions that before the advent of Islam, the forefathers of the Samanids ruled over Transoxiana. After their conversion to Islam, this dynasty became commanders of armies and military forces (Mustofi, 1985: 376).

Continuing on, Mustofi elaborates on how the Samanid family gained power within the Abbasid court, especially during the reign of Caliph al-Ma'mun. Since al-Ma'mun, an Abbasid caliph, initially resided in the city of Merv, a part of Khorasan, the governance of Khorasan and Transoxiana was entrusted to Ghassan ibn Ebad, a cousin of Fazl ibn Sahl. The orders from the sons of Asad ibn Saman, who was an attendant of the caliphate court, were directed towards him, emphasizing the elevated status of the Samanid dynasty and the need to respect their position.

According to historical sources, in the year 204 AH, Ghassan appointed Nuh ibn Asad as the governor (wali) of the city of Samarkand based on the recommendation of Caliph al-Ma'mun. Following this, Asad was placed in charge of the governance of Farghana, and regions like Shash (also known as Chach) and Ashrusānā were assigned to Yahya ibn Asad. Furthermore, all matters pertaining to Herat were entrusted to Ilyas ibn Asad (Mirkhand, 2001:1813).

After Ghassan's death, the rule continued within the Samanid dynasty through inheritance.

According to historical sources, the rulers of the Samanid dynasty governed the regions Transoxiana for a span of 200 years, and in most cases, their power extended to Central Iran (Beyzavi, 2003: 88). What provided the foundation for the consolidation of their newly established rule were their political -military interventions in the Tabaristan region. These interventions began after the defeat of Amro Layth Saffari in Iran. Initially, the Samanid rule was that of border guardians, gradually gaining an active role in power dynamics. The significance of border guardianship in ancient Iran was paramount, and it was often entrusted to local ruling families. Historical narratives mention that Bahram Chubin, a renowned Sasanian commander, was one of the border guardians in the region of Bizhakhsh or Bakhsh.

During the Sasanian period, the border guards possessed varying degrees of power, sometimes wielding considerable authority with relatively extensive privileges, and at other times,

they held a more nominal presence in the region. Their primary duty was in the military domain; border guardians were tasked with making swift decisions and intervening militarily when necessary. These border guardians were also defenders of the borders and held the position of military commanders in their respective regions. With the advent of Islam in Iran and the acceptance of Islam by border guardians, along with their alignment with the Arab conquerors, they were able to solidify their position within the governance of Muslim Arabs in Iran. The main reasons for the survival and establishment of the positions of border guardians and local landowners (dehqans) were the constant insecurity along the Turkistan borders. These lands were frequently attacked and assaulted by invading Turks, and the border guardians and landowners emerged as the best defenders of the borders. One such family of border guardians was the dynasty that ruled over Choghaniyan or the Al-Muhtāj family. During Isma'il Samani's rule, they became subjects of the Samanid government (Fraye, 1986: 130).

The Samanids essentially represented the Abbasid caliphs in the eastern borders. Some historians elevated their status to the level of caliphs and continuously considered them within the ranks of the caliphs. Jihānī in his book writes about the position and status of the Samanids as the eastern border guardians of the Abbasid caliphate. He states that they are the "Hāshiyat Khalaf," which can be translated as the rulers of the borderlands. Essentially, they were referred to as the "Muluk-alTawayef," or rulers of the Arab tribal confederations (Jihānī, 1989: 180). Before becoming successors and governors of the Abbasid caliphs in the eastern borders, the Samanids were considered dehqans of the Sasanian region of Khorasan and also Transoxiana. This position was held by them before the arrival of the Arabs and Muslims, and they maintained it during that era (Fraye, 1986: 670). As Fraye writes about this: "With the advent of Islam and the Muslim Arabs in Iran and the complete elimination of the Sasanian government, the dehqans or representatives of the Sasanian king gradually rose, with the support of the people of the region, to resist the invasion of the Arab military commanders and the agents of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs. They constructed castles and garrisons to encourage the people of these regions to prefer their indigenous and local rulers over the foreign governors or their representatives, who were essentially agents of the Umayyad and Abbasid caliphs, and to obey them" (ibid: 670).

Over time, the Sasanian's Dehqans of the Khorasan and Transoxiana regions gained larger territories and greater financial resources compared to other Dehqans and representatives of the Abbasid Caliphate. With the rise of the Saffarid dynasty in the east and their multiple conflicts with other local rulers in Khorasan, Transoxiana, and the Abbasid Caliphate, they aimed to maintain their positions against similar attacks by uniting and cooperating with each other. Among them, the Samanid dynasty proved to be more determined than other local Dehqans in the Khorasan and Transoxiana regions to assert their influence (Fraye, 1986: 76-77).

Tabari makes reference to the wars between the Saffarids and Samanids in his book. In one of the conflicts between 'Amro Layth Saffari and Amir Isma'il Samani in the eastern borders, Tabari writes: "Amir Isma'il Samani, when he went to the borders of Sistan to confront Amir Saffari, wrote a letter to him, saying, 'You possess a vast realm, while I only have Transoxiana under my control. We share a common border, and whatever you possess, which is likely extensive, be content with it. Let me and the people of this region pursue our work, and allow me to reside in this border area'" (Tabari, 1983: 6071).

It seems that Amir Saffari did not accept Amir Samani's proposal, and the forces of the Saffarids and Samanids lined up against each other. Before long, a battle ensued between the two, and the Samanid forces managed to defeat the Saffarid forces in the city of Balkh. With this vic-



tory, Amir Isma'il was able to extend his rule over all of Greater Khorasan. He then wrote a letter to the Abbasid caliph, informing him of his victory and pledging allegiance and loyalty. Upon receiving Amir Samani's letter and learning about his triumph, the Abbasid caliph was elated. In appreciation of Amir Samani's efforts and in an attempt to oust Amir Saffari from the territories of the Islamic empire, the caliph granted Amir Isma'il control over the northern regions of Iran and Transoxiana (Tārīkh Sistan, 2005: 255).

### ***Samanid Army and Training of Turkish ghulams***

One of the continuous and significant activities of the Samanids in the eastern borders of Iran, namely Transoxiana and beyond the Oxus River, was their engagement in expanding Islam into non-Muslim Turkic regions. Through their efforts and endeavors, the Samanids managed to disrupt the power dynamics in the region after establishing their rule. According to some researchers in the field of political history, the best evidence for this claim lies in the expansion of the Samanid dynasty's territories in the eastern and northeastern regions, as well as the spread of Islam in these areas (Frye, 1986: 131).

The Turkish-origin slaves (ghulams) were highly valued by the Samanids due to their discipline, obedience, and military prowess. Initially, these individuals were employed as slaves by the Samanid rulers, but gradually, they gained positions in the ranks of the Abbasid caliphate's army in Baghdad. As they entered the ranks of the Abbasid military, conflicts between them and other military forces such as the Daylamis arose.

The Samanids capitalized on the significant capabilities of the Turkish ghulams by enlisting them into their service and establishing educational and training centers for them. The training of these ghulams under the Samanid court led to their elevated positions, to the extent that the process is detailed in Khājeḥ Naẓam al-Mulk's "Siyāsatnāmeḥ." According to the Siyāsatnāmeḥ, during the Samanid era, the status and responsibilities of Turkish ghulams gradually increased (Khājeḥ Naẓam al-Mulk, 1963: 141-142).

For instance, when a ghulam was purchased, he would serve on foot for one year. After a year of service, he would be assigned as a foot messenger or a messenger on horseback. In the second year of service, an ordinary horse with a bridle and saddle would be given to him. In the third year of service, he would be given a horse and a sword, and in the fourth year, he would be granted a coat and a helmet for sitting. In the fifth year, he would receive a spear and a bridle. In the sixth year, he would be designated as a cupbearer. In the seventh year, he would achieve the rank of jadār (a high-ranking official). In the eighth year, he would be provided with a tent and three young ghulams as assistants. At this point, he would be granted the title of "vathāq bāshī" (trustworthy commander). Following these stages, he would progress to the rank of hajib (chamberlain) (Khājeḥ Naẓam al-Mulk, 1963: 141-142).

As these individuals reached maturity at the age of 35, they were promoted to the rank of amir (governor). Among these ghulams, notable figures include the founders of the Ghaznavid dynasty and Mahmud of Ghazni's father, who were nurtured in the Samanid court and later rose to the position of commander of Khorasan (ibid:143). According to Fraye's perspective, the Samanids captured numerous nobles and engaged them in trade. To the extent that during this era, the Samanid state became one of the main centers for trading educated slaves in Baghdad. Through this trade, the Samanid rulers gained substantial revenues (Fraye, 1986: 132-131).

### ***Formation of the Diwan 'Arz (Bureau of Military Affairs)***

When the Samanids gained power, they aimed to establish an organized and structured sys-

tem modeled after the military institutions of the Abbasids in Bokhara (Pic.2). By examining historical texts from the Samanid era, it can be inferred that the Samanid government structure consisted of a central administrative along with local administrative units and armed forces, akin to the administrative structure of the Abbasids. The Samanid military, like that of other states, often comprised trained Turkish-origin slaves (ghulams).

Amir Isma'il Samani, the first ruler of the Samanid dynasty, emphasized centralized power and established a robust system that combined the Diwan (administrative apparatus) and the military. Over time, this organized system yielded positive outcomes for the newly established Samanid government. During the early Samanid period, from the time of Isma'il to the era of Nuh ibn Ahmad, "Mosavadeh" was a term used for the Samanid soldiers to signify their loyalty and allegiance to the Abbasid caliphs. Mosavadeh wore black attire and raised a black flag. In contrast, the opponents of the Samanids and the Abbasid caliphate used white clothing and flags. Among the Alawids, a rival to the Samanids, the use of white clothing and flags was a tradition, as seen with the Alawids of Tabaristan who were referred to as "Mobyzeh" for their use of white attire and flags.

The Samanid government's structure resembled the administrative model of the Abbasid caliphate. An Amir was appointed for various regions, known as Walis. Local Walis were responsible for overseeing all administrative affairs in their regions. Their primary duties included collecting taxes and providing military forces when needed by the central Samanid government in Bukhara. The Samanids managed their state affairs through two key institutions: the court (darbar) and the administrative council (diwan). Within the Samanid court, there was an individual known as the "Hajib Salār-e Bozorg" who essentially held the position of chief of the Amir's court. This person was responsible for overseeing the court's operations (Fraye, 1986: 125-139). The owner of the diwan-e shurṭa (Bureau of Military Affairs) was considered one of the most important assistants to the Samanid Amir. It's possible that the diwan-e shurṭa aligns with the diwan of the Abbasid military and it's likely that among the state officials, the commander or the equivalent of a spahbod headed this diwan.

In the ruling dynasties of the Islamic lands, particularly the Samanids, there was a practice of emulating the Abbasids. The diwan system in these dynasties had an equivalent institution named the "jeysh" or "diwan al-sipah." The laws, regulations, and general functions of these diwans were influenced by the jeysh or diwan al-sipah. As the Samanids were among the most loyal local Iranian dynasties to the Abbasid caliphs, their military structure was modeled after the Abbasid system. This involved overseeing the payment and provisions of soldiers, monitoring their activities, and managing military equipment.

During times of warfare, the head of the diwan-e shurṭa or the chief of police was responsible for providing and managing the resources for the soldiers. This included arranging for their supplies, clothing, weapons, and other necessities. After victories in battles, the distribution of war spoils among the rulers and soldiers was overseen by the diwan-e shurṭa and its chief, according to their merits displayed on the battlefield. In the diwan of the military (diwan al-sipah), all administrative matters were recorded in a ledger known as the "jarideh suda." This ledger documented the number of soldiers under each commander, as well as their names and other relevant information. The jarideh served as both an accounting book for auditing the members of the military and a record of the names and details of Samanid troops, including cavalry and infantry. Changes in the allocation of the military resources, deaths, departures, or when the Samanid state no longer required an individual's services resulted in their removal from the jarideh suda. This ledger also documented information such as casualties, prisoners of war, de-

serters, as well as the rights and entitlements of individuals within the diwan.

From a structural perspective, the Samanid military was comprised of three main groups: cavalry (Savareh Nezam), infantry (Piyade Nezam), and special royal slaves (Gholaman-e Khaseh-ye Saltanati). All of these groups, especially the special royal slaves, were under the direct supervision and leadership of the Shah (king) himself (Bayat, 1975:16). These special royal slaves were able to attain the highest positions of power within the Samanid government, and over time, Turkish slaves gradually took control of the administration, even going so far as to appoint and dismiss military and administrative commanders. Weak rulers of the Samanids were often instruments in the hands of Diwansalars (leaders of the Diwan) and military commanders. Turkish-origin slaves held significant positions within the administration of cities, military offices, and the country, and these positions were often hereditary within their families.

The largest province in the Samanid territory was Khorasan, and its administration was initially assigned to a relative of the Amir Samanid and later to one of the trusted slaves of the dynasty. In Khorasan, the position of the Sahib-i-Jish (Commander-in-Chief or General) was typically held by the governor. (Fraye, 1986:125) The Commander-in-Chief of Iran had direct involvement in the appointment and removal of court ministers by the Shah. (Panahei Semnani, 1996:257) In cases of disagreements between the ministers and the Commander-in-Chief regarding the administration of the country, which included the critical task of provisioning the military, the ministers could be dismissed, and a replacement aligned with the Commander-in-Chief's preferences could be appointed.

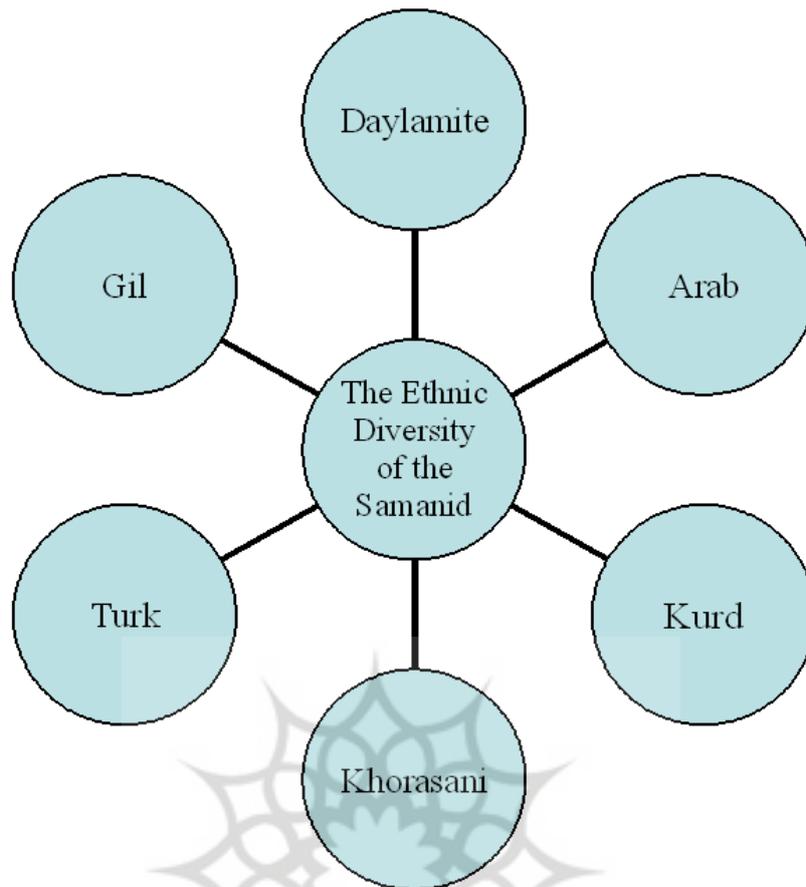
Through historical texts from this era, it can be inferred that the number of slaves in the Samanid court could reach several thousand. Consequently, a significant number of these slaves were considered the core of the Samanid military. The Diwan of the Khorasan military contained three types of payments or allowances: Mawajib (regular stipends), Aṭma' (special allowances), and Iṭmā' (extra allowances), each with its own specific accounting. Among these, "Oshr-e Boniyyeh" was a form of payment that was made once every four years. Ibn-e Hoqal's book "Ṣūrat al-Ard" states that during the reign of Mansur bin Nuh Samani, every six months, twenty million dirhams were collected from the taxes of Khorasan and Transoxiana. This amounted to an annual total of forty million dirhams. (Ibn Hawqal, 1987:43)

The position of the overall Commander-in-Chief of the military was always held by the Shah himself. However, the leadership of divisions within the military in different provinces and regions was entrusted to worthy and capable commanders. These commanders were referred to as "Arez-i-Lashkar" or "Sahib al-Jaysh" (Commander of the Army) and were responsible for the administration of their local forces and troops. (Pic .3) There was also a deputy for the Commander-in-Chief, referred to as "Na'ib-i-Arez" (Deputy of the Army), and another individual known as "Kadkhoda" who assisted in managing military affairs. (bayat, 1975:16)

### ***Structure of the Samanid Army***

The Samanid military consisted of various elements including people from Khorasan, Turks, Gil, Daylamid, Kurds, and Arabs. (Pic 4) Among these, individuals from ancient Iranian nobility and noble families such as Azadegan (the freeborn) and Dehqan (the landed gentry), as well as the mounted soldiers (Savareh Nezam), held special privileges compared to other ethnic groups.

In the midst of this, military slaves formed a distinct class of the Sepahis (soldiers) who were usually recognized both within and outside the military structure (Fraye, 1986: 170). From



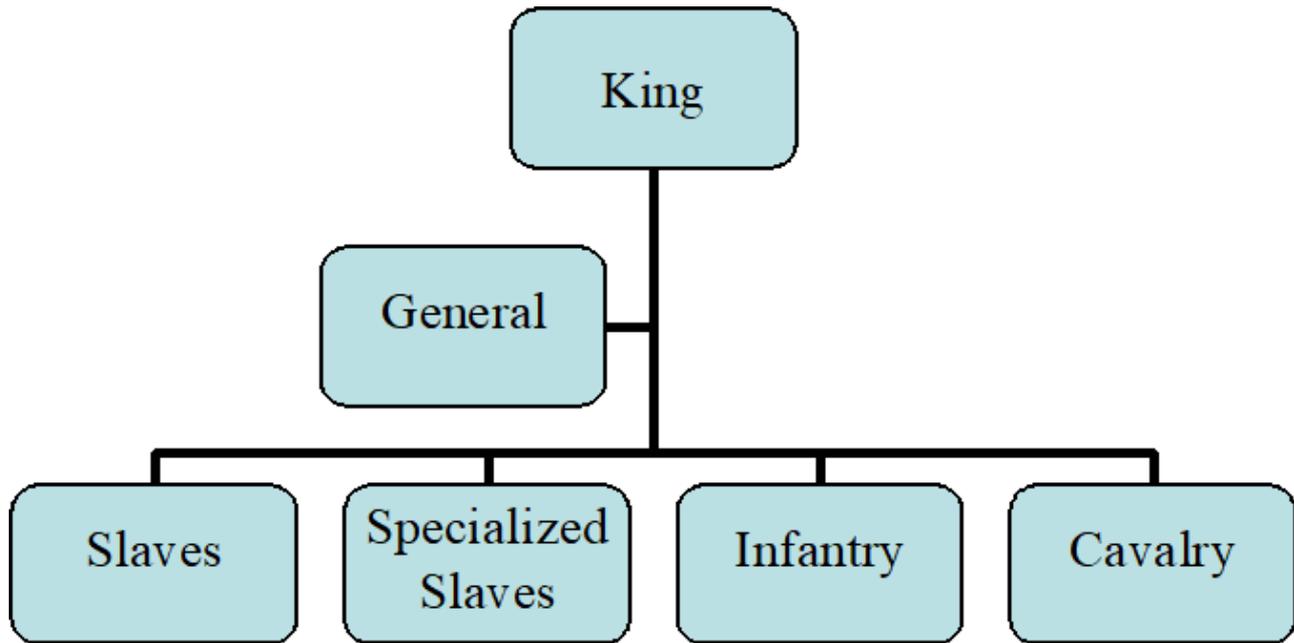
examining sources, it becomes apparent that besides the Turks, Kurds were a significant part of the Samanid Sepah (army). They carried considerable weight in battles. For example, in the event related to the year 943, the Kurds played an influential role. During this event, Amir Nooh Samani sent Abu Ali bin Muhtaj to Rey, as at that time Rokn al-Dawle Deylami was the ruler of Rey and the city was under his control. When Abu Ali reached near Rey, Rokn al-Dawle left the city and confronted him, forming the ranks against him.

In these ranks, a large number of Kurds under the command of Abu Ali Muhtaj carried out their duties. With the outbreak of the war between Abu Ali Muhtaj and Rokn al-Dawle Deylami, the Kurds separated from Abu Ali's ranks and joined the ranks of the soldiers of Amir Al-Buwayh. As a result, due to the decrease in the number of forces, the Samanid army suffered defeat in this battle, and Abu Ali Muhtaj and the remaining soldiers were forced to retreat towards Nishapur (Mirkhand, 2001: 2834).

### ***Samanid Military Strategy***

The Samanids employed two distinct military formations in their warfare: 1. "Kordays" and 2. The "Panch Rukn"(Five Pillars) formation. In the Kordays formation, which refers to the gathering of groups of cavalry and soldiers, the Samanid army, led by a commander, engaged the enemy in a face-to-face battle. This formation involved a direct confrontation between the Samanid forces and their adversaries (Pic.5)

The other military formation used by the Samanids was the Panch Rukn"(Five Pillars) formation, primarily related to the arrangement of the army. In this formation, the Samanid army had

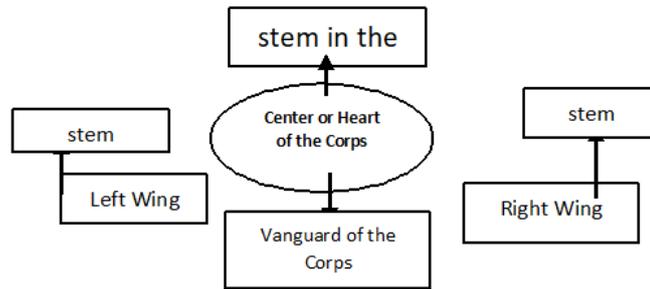


a front line, a rear line, and two wings on the sides. The front line, also known as the "Kham-sin," was essentially the heart of the formation and the location of the commander of the army. The wings on the sides were composed of two main pillars. Consequently, the Samanid army was structured around these seven fundamental elements. The soldiers making up this army structure were usually well-trained troops. These formations reveal the Samanids' strategic approaches in battles, reflecting their tactics for both direct confrontation and structured arrangements.

This army, comprised of seven main pillars, was commanded by the Amir, who held the position of the overall commander of all these individuals. He had ultimate authority and all responsibilities were under his supervision. Historical examples abound of successful or unsuccessful military formations led by commanders and military leaders, which resulted in victories or defeats. For instance, the confrontation between the Samanid army and the forces of Amir Lays Safari showcases this. Due to the utilization of non-professional individuals in Safari's army and their incorrect placement within the formation, his army suffered defeat against the Samanid forces. It's worth noting that despite this historical evidence, this defeat did not lead to the complete occupation of Sistan (Bokhner, 2008: 21). However, Sistan was later conquered by Hussein, the son of Ali, a Samanid commander. These instances underline the critical role of proper military formation and strategic deployment, often determining the outcome of battles and campaigns.

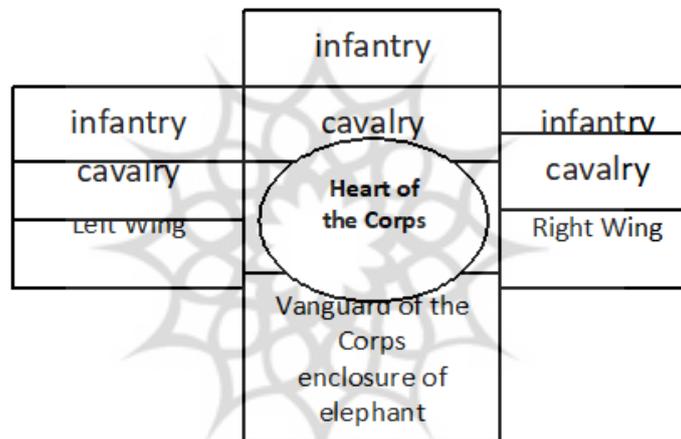
### ***Samanid Army Formation***

The Samanid dynasty expanded its territorial gains in the western and southern parts of Khorasan by conquering regions such as Sistan, Kerman, Rey, and Tabaristan. These successes were attributed to the efficient military and administrative structure of the Samanid and the competence of their commanders. The voluntary soldiers who participated in battles were referred to as "mataw'aa." (Tabari, 1983/10:116) These mataw'aa, also known as ghazis, were usually accompanied by preachers who aimed to encourage and motivate the Samanid army in their struggles against the infidels of other lands. In addition to infantry and cavalry, the Samanid army, similar to the army of Amr Lays Safari, utilized elephants as part of its formation. (Pic.6)



The reason for using these animals in the Samanid army was the proximity of their rule to the borders of India. Elephants, being massive and intimidating creatures, had historically been a significant component of the eastern Iranian Sassanian border army.

Khajeh Rashid al-Din Fazlullah described a battle between Naser al-Din Sabuktigin and Abu



Ali Simjuri, providing an insight into the Samanid military formation. In this account, elephants played a prominent and effective role in the battle, highlighting their importance as a formidable tool. (Hamedani, 2004: 47) (Pic.7)

### Conclusion

The Samanids emerged as a semi-autonomous local power in the region of Bukhara around the year 200 AH (815 CE), becoming one of the prominent Iranian dynasties. The Samanid dynasty had a historical background in military roles, with their loyalty and military expertise leading them to be recognized by the Abbasid Caliphs as the eastern frontier guardians of the Abbasid Empire. In comparison to the Tahirids and Saffarids, the Samanids exhibited greater loyalty to the Abbasid dynasty, as they played a role in suppressing opposing factions like the Saffarids and Alawids. The Samanid state required a well-structured military and organizational foundation, which they adopted from their predecessors, the Tahirids, Saffarids, and Abbasids. This structure was localized and adapted to serve their goals.

Within this hierarchical structure, ultimate authority rested with the Amir of the Samanid dynasty, overseeing all affairs. Following this, a hierarchy of court officials and commanders managed administrative matters. Among these officials, the Diwan-e-Arz (Bureau of Military Af-

fairs) held a critical position, making its head one of the most important figures in the Samanid military and governmental structure.

In their military organization, the Samanids incorporated two groups known as "Gholaman-e Khassa" (special slaves) and "Bardagans" (servants), each assigned specific duties. The Samanid army was ethnically diverse, with various groups such as Khurasanis, Turks, Gilaks, Daylamis, Kurds, and Arabs contributing. However, the core of the army was composed of cavalry, primarily consisting of local landowners and nobles.

The Samanids typically employed two types of military formations on the battlefield. The first was the "Kardais" formation, in which a group of cavalry and soldiers under the command of an Amir engaged in battle one after another. The second was the "Panj Rokn" (Five Pillars) formation, which divided the army into five main units as follows: the vanguard of the army at the front, the central heart of the army accompanied by a group of organized cavalry where the Shah (king) and the commander-in-chief were stationed, and the two wings including the "Mimneh" and "Maysarah." These sections were defined by their distinctive arrangements and formations that the Samanid army adopted based on them.

The "Panj Rokn" formation was specific to the Samanid cavalry system and formed the foundation of the Samanid military and their state apparatus. Additionally, in the Samanid army, similar to the Saffarid and Ghaznavid empires, elephants were used as massive and fearsome creatures to disrupt the enemy's formations. However, unlike the prominent role elephants played in the Saffarid and especially the Ghaznavid armies, elephants did not hold a significant place in the Samanid army, and there isn't much mention in sources about their widespread use in the ranks of the Samanid army.

**Conflict of Interest:** The authors declare that they agreed to participate in the present paper and there is no competing interests.

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