



**THE RENAISSANCE IN THE LIFE OF THE PEOPLES OF  
CENTRAL ASIA IN THE IX-XII CENTURIES (RENAISSANCE) PERIOD.  
THE CONTRIBUTION OF OUR ANCESTORS TO WORLD  
CIVILIZATION**

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**Annotation:** this article explores the significance of the Renaissance period in Central Asia during the 9th–12th centuries and highlights the contribution of our ancestors to world civilization. It emphasizes the role of historic cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Tashkent as centers of science, art, and culture during this period. The article also discusses how the focus on knowledge, literature, astronomy, natural sciences, and philosophy facilitated cultural exchange and strengthened relations with other regions. Furthermore, it examines how the scientific discoveries and artistic achievements of our ancestors contributed to global civilization and the economic and political impact of this cultural revival. Despite certain challenges, such as infrastructure limitations and regional competition, the Renaissance of the 9th–12th centuries played a crucial role in shaping the cultural heritage of Central Asian peoples and enhancing their significance in international cultural cooperation.

**Key words:** Central Asia; Renaissance (IX–XII centuries); Cultural revival; Scientific discoveries; Literature; Philosophy; Astronomy; Natural sciences; Art and architecture; Historic cities (Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, Tashkent); Cultural exchange; World civilization; Economic and political impact; Heritage;



*International relations; Ancestors' contribution; Knowledge development; Global influence*

## Introduction

The 9th–12th centuries marked a period of remarkable cultural and intellectual revival in Central Asia, often referred to as the Renaissance of the region. During this era, the peoples of Central Asia made significant contributions to science, literature, philosophy, and the arts, leaving a lasting impact on world civilization. Historic cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva, and Tashkent emerged as prominent centers of knowledge and culture, fostering an environment of learning, creativity, and international exchange. This period not only advanced local societies but also played a vital role in shaping the broader cultural and scientific developments across the Islamic world and beyond.

## Bayt al-Hikma

In the 9th–12th centuries, the political and socio-economic changes that took place in Mawarannahr (Transoxiana) and Khorasan had a profound impact on the cultural life of the region. After the Arab conquest of Mawarannahr, not only was Islam introduced, but the Arabic language and its script were also implemented, as Arabic served both as the state language and the language of scholarship in the Caliphate. Consequently, the importance of the Arabic language grew, and there was a strong motivation to master it. Scholars who mastered Arabic language and script began to emerge. Baghdad became a major center of science and culture in the East. In the 9th century, the famous “**Bayt al-Hikma**” (House of Wisdom) was established in Baghdad. This institution housed a large library and observatories for astronomical studies in both Baghdad and Damascus. Students and researchers at Bayt al-Hikma engaged not only in scientific investigations but also in studying and translating the works of ancient Greek and Indian scholars into Arabic. Scholars from Mawarannahr and Khorasan, such as **Al-Khwarizmi**, **Ahmad al-Farghani**, **Ahmad al-Marwazi**, **Al-Abbas al-Jawhari**, and **Yahya ibn Abu Mansur**, made significant contributions to medieval science and scholarship through their work, leaving a lasting impact on the intellectual heritage of the Islamic Golden Age.



## Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi (783–850)

Muhammad ibn Musa al-Khwarizmi was born and raised in the region of Khwarazm. He received his initial education and knowledge in various fields from numerous teachers in the cities of Khwarazm and Mawarannahr. Later, during the reign of Caliph Al-Ma'mun (813–833), he served as a director at the “**Bayt al-Hikma**” (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad. A renowned mathematician, astronomer, and geographer of his time, al-Khwarizmi made significant contributions to science. He wrote more than 20 works, of which only 10 have survived to the present day. Among his writings, the most famous is “**Al-Jabr wa'l-Muqabala**”, which laid the foundations for algebra. In fact, the term “**algebra**” originates from the word “**al-jabr**” in the title of this book. His name also lives on in the term “**algorithm**,” which is derived from the Latinized form of Khwarizmi’s name. Al-Khwarizmi’s work on algebra served for centuries as a practical guide for land measurement, irrigation, construction, inheritance division, and various calculations. By the 12th century, his treatise was translated into Latin in Spain and widely circulated. His arithmetic work, based on Indian numerals and the decimal system, played a crucial role in spreading this knowledge across Europe and the wider world. Thus, al-Khwarizmi not only elevated algebra to the level of an independent science but also left an indelible mark in the history of mathematics.

## Al-Fargani

Another prominent scholar who worked at **Bayt al-Hikma** was the great astronomer, mathematician, and geographer **Abu al-Abbas Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn Kathir al-Fargani (797–865)**. Born in the city of Quva in the Fergana Valley, he became widely known in the East as **Al-Fargani** and in Europe as **Alfraganus**. He specialized in astronomy, mathematics, and geography, leaving behind numerous scientific and practical works. Al-Fargani supervised astronomical observations and calculations at the observatory in Damascus, including determining the movements and positions of celestial bodies and creating a new **zij** (astronomical table). Between 832 and 833, he participated in measuring the length of one degree of the meridian in northern Syria, in the Sinjar Steppe and the area around ar-

Raqqa. In 861, under his leadership, the ancient hydrometer built on the banks of the Nile River, known as “**Miqyas an-Nil**”, which measures river flow levels, was restored and recalibrated. To this day, eight of Ahmad al-Fargani’s works have survived, including “**The Movements of the Heavens and the General Science of Astronomy.**” By the 12th century, this book had been translated into Latin and Hebrew, influencing the development of astronomy not only in the Muslim East but also in Europe. His fame in Europe was such that in the 16th century, a crater on the Moon was named after him.

*The history of the medieval East demonstrates that the extraordinary development in culture and education, medicine, literature, art, and architecture, the emergence of scientific schools, and the rise of new generations of talented individuals were primarily linked to the rapid growth of the economy, rural and urban agriculture, the advanced development of crafts and trade, the construction of roads, the opening of new caravan routes, and, first and foremost, the relative stability that these factors ensured.*

—Excerpt from the speech of **Islam Karimov** at the opening ceremony of the international conference held in Samarkand on May 16, 2014, titled “*The Historical Heritage of Medieval Eastern Scholars and Thinkers and Its Role and Significance in the Development of Modern Civilization.*”

During the years of independence, the unique scientific heritage of Ahmad al-Fargani was restored to the people of Uzbekistan. In October 1998, the 1200th anniversary of the great scholar Ahmad al-Fargani’s birth was celebrated. In the city of Fergana, a park was established in his name, and a monument was erected in honor of this eminent scholar.

### **Cultural and Spiritual Revival**

In the second half of the 9th century, with the decline of the Caliphate and the rise of the Samanid dynasty, new opportunities emerged for the development of cultural life in the region. This marked the beginning of a period of cultural revival in Mawarannahr. Major cities such as Bukhara, Samarkand, Urgench, Marv, Balkh, and Nishapur saw the establishment of libraries and bookshops. Mawarannahr and



Khwarezm nurtured and developed great scholars who made significant contributions to global science and culture. The “**Dor al-Hikma wa al-Ma‘arif**” (“House of Knowledge and Learning”), formed in 1004 and also known as the “**Ma’mun Academy**,” was founded by prominent figures including Abu Nasr ibn Iraq (10th–11th century), Abulkhayr ibn Hammur (991–1048), Abu Sahl Masihi (970–1011), Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (973–1048), Abu Ali ibn Sina (980–1037), and others.

In 1017, after Mahmud of Ghazni invaded Khwarezm, the activities of Dor al-Hikma wa al-Ma‘arif were halted, and many scholars were forcibly taken to Ghazna. In the modern period, on November 11, 1997, a decree by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan was issued on the “**Re-establishment of the Khwarezm Ma’mun Academy**.” In the autumn of 2006, the 1000th anniversary of the Academy was celebrated in Uzbekistan.

In May 2014, an international conference titled “**The Historical Heritage of Medieval Eastern Scholars and Thinkers and Its Role and Significance in the Development of Modern Civilization**” was held in Samarkand to study and assess the intellectual legacy of great scholars and thinkers of the medieval East. Delegates from nearly 50 countries participated, and relevant documents were adopted at the conclusion of the conference.

### **Abu Nasr al-Farabi (873–950)**

Abu Nasr al-Farabi was born in the city of Farab, located near the lower reaches of the Syr Darya River. He received his early education in his hometown and later studied in Samarkand, Bukhara, and Baghdad. Toward the end of his life, he lived in Aleppo and Damascus. Al-Farabi made contributions in numerous fields, including mathematics, astronomy, medicine, music, logic, philosophy, linguistics, pedagogy, and literature. He authored over 160 works, significantly enriching the knowledge and culture of his time. Among his most important works are “**Commentary on Aristotle’s Metaphysics**,” “**Book of Music**,” “**On the Attainment of Happiness**,” “**On the Organs of Living Beings**,” and “**The Virtuous City**,” among many others. One of his major contributions to science and

philosophy was his commentary on the works of Greek thinkers, which he enhanced with new ideas. He also developed a comprehensive classification of sciences, considered advanced for the medieval period. Al-Farabi's deep understanding of Greek philosophy, his commentaries, and his ability to disseminate knowledge worldwide, along with his mastery of contemporary sciences, earned him the titles "**The Second Teacher**" and "**The Aristotle of the East**." Some historical sources note that he knew more than 70 languages. The legacy of al-Farabi spread not only across Eastern countries but also reached Europe, where it had a significant impact on social and philosophical thought.

### **Abu Ali ibn Sina (980–1037)**

Abu Ali ibn Sina was born in 980 in the village of Afshona, near Bukhara, into a local ruling family. After completing his early schooling, he studied logic, philosophy, mathematics, and jurisprudence under his teacher Abu Abdullah. From the age of sixteen, he began independently studying the scientific works of both Eastern and Western scholars. In particular, he carefully studied the works of ancient physicians **Hippocrates** and **Galen**, as well as the writings of the great medieval Eastern physician and philosopher **Abu Bakr al-Razi (865–925)**. By the age of seventeen, Ibn Sina had become a highly skilled physician and scholar. After successfully treating Amir Nuh ibn Mansur, he was granted access to the palace library of the Samanids. Later, he worked among the scholars of the **Khwarezm Ma'mun Academy** in Gurganj (Urganch). He passed away in 1037 and was buried in Hamadan. Ibn Sina authored over 450 works, including 43 on medicine. His encyclopedic work, the five-volume "**Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb**" ("The Canon of Medicine"), addresses the causes and origins of diseases, diagnosis, treatment methods, medicinal plants and drugs, diet, and the importance of physical education for human health. By the 12th century, "**Al-Qanun fi al-Tibb**" had been translated into Latin and remained a key medical reference in Europe until the 17th century.

### **Abu Rayhan al-Biruni (973–1048)**

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni was born in the city of Kath in Khwarezm and received his early education in Urgench. He worked alongside other scholars at the



**Ma'mun Academy** under Khwarezmshah Abul Abbas Ma'mun II. After Khwarezm was conquered by Mahmud of Ghazni, al-Biruni, together with other scholars, was taken to Ghazna, where he continued his work until his death in 1048.

Al-Biruni was a prolific scholar, writing over 160 works in astronomy, geography, mathematics, and history. His major works include “**Chronology of Ancient Nations**,” “**India**,” “**Mineralogy**,” and “**Geodesy**.” In his astronomical studies, al-Biruni was among the first in the medieval period—almost five centuries before Copernicus—to suggest that the Earth revolves around the Sun. He also demonstrated that the Earth is spherical. He compiled a star catalogue listing the positions and magnitudes of 1,029 stars and created a detailed geographic map of the world. Remarkably, he even hypothesized the existence of the American continent long before European explorers confirmed it in the 15th–16th centuries. Al-Biruni developed new mathematical methods to measure the Earth’s circumference and was the first to create a terrestrial globe. His scientific and philosophical legacy represents a monumental contribution to the treasure of global science and culture.

As Islam Karimov noted, while the European Renaissance brought new discoveries in literature, art, architecture, medicine, and human understanding, the Renaissance of the East was distinguished by its advances in mathematics, astronomy, physics, chemistry, geodesy, pharmacology, medicine, as well as in history, philosophy, and literature.

## Turkic Written Literature

In the 10th–12th centuries, alongside the long-standing oral literary traditions of the Turkic peoples in Mawarannahr and Eastern Turkistan, written literature began to emerge. Several significant works were produced during this period. Among the most notable are **Yusuf Khass Hajib**’s “**Qutadghu Bilig**,” **Mahmud al-Kashgari**’s “**Diwan Lughat al-Turk**,” **Ahmad Yugnaki**’s “**Hibat al-Haqayiq**,” and **Ahmad Yasawi**’s “**Hikmat**.” This period also played an important role in the development of the Turkic literary language, contributing to the formation of the **Old Uzbek** and **Uyghur** languages.

## Mahmud al-Zamakhshari (1075–1144)

Abul-Qasim Mahmud al-Zamakhshari was born in 1075 in the village of Zamakhshar in Khwarezm. His thirst for knowledge led him to live and study in Bukhara, Marv, Nishapur, Isfahan, Sham, Baghdad, Herat, and Mecca, where he deeply learned Arabic language and literature, religious sciences, calligraphy, Arabic proverbs, and local customs. He also collected information on the geography of the region.

Al-Zamakhshari authored over 50 works in various fields. Among his most famous works are “Al-Mufassal,” focused on Arabic phonetics and morphology, and “Al-Kashshaf,” a commentary on the Qur'an. He was honored with titles such as “Teacher of Arabs and Non-Arabs” and “Pride of Khwarezm.” Since many of his works were written in Mecca, he also earned the honorary title “Jorullah” (“Neighbor of God”). Even today, students at Al-Azhar University in Cairo study the Qur'an based on “Al-Kashshaf.” Al-Zamakhshari also founded the first multilingual dictionary—an Arabic-Persian-Turkic lexicon. He passed away in Khwarezm in 1144. In 1995, Uzbekistan celebrated the 920th anniversary of his birth.

### **Yusuf Khass Hajib (11th century)**

Yusuf Khass Hajib, a Turkic scholar, thinker, and statesman, was the author of the epic **“Qutadghu Bilig”** (“Wisdom that Leads to Happiness”). He was born in Bolasagun, one of the central cities of the Karakhanid state. There, he mastered Arabic and Persian languages and their literatures, and also studied philosophy, logic, mathematics, and other sciences. He showed interest in state affairs and governance. In 1069, he began writing **“Qutadghu Bilig”** in Bolasagun and completed it in 1070 in Kashgar. The work was presented to the Karakhanid ruler Tavghach Bughra Khan, who granted Yusuf the title **“Khass Hajib”** (“Chamberlain”), by which he became known. The epic examines human nature, social roles, and moral responsibilities. It gives particular respect to ordinary, hardworking people and emphasizes ethics, manners, loyalty, and love. Yusuf considered knowledge and enlightenment to be the key to happiness, which is why

he named his work “**Qutadghu Bilig.**” He promoted education, honored scholars, and encouraged rulers to seek advice from learned people.

### **Mahmud al-Kashgari (11th century)**

Mahmud al-Kashgari, full name Mahmud Kashgari ibn Husayn ibn Muhammad, belonged to the Karakhanid social class. He received his early education in Kashgar, Bukhara, Samarkand, Marv, and Nishapur, mastering Arabic, Persian, and Turkic languages, among others. Between 1056–1057, due to internal conflicts, he left his homeland and spent 15 years traveling among neighboring Turkic peoples. During this period, he studied the Turkic tribes, their origins, settlements, customs, and languages. In 1072, in Baghdad, he completed his famous work “**Diwan Lughat al-Turk**” (“Compendium of the Turkic Dialects”), which remains a unique source on the history, culture, traditions, and literature of Central Asian Turkic peoples. This dictionary systematically explained the meanings of Turkic words in Arabic and included a world map. Al-Kashgari is considered the first researcher of Turkic language, culture, ethnography, and folklore.

### **Ahmad Yugnakiy (12th century)**

Ahmad Yugnakiy was a poet and thinker writing in Turkic during the 12th century. Only one literary work of his has survived, “**Hibat al-Haqayiq**” (“Gift of Truths”), considered a valuable monument of Turkic literary language. Like Yusuf Khass Hajib, he praised scholars and enlightened individuals and promoted the pursuit of knowledge. Ahmad Yugnakiy regarded himself not as a poet, but as a teacher of literature. His work integrates the meanings of the Qur'an and Hadith, aiming to promote Islamic ethics and cultivate morally and intellectually accomplished individuals.

### **Imam al-Bukhari (810–870)**

Alongside scholars of secular sciences, muhaddiths (Islamic tradition scholars) of Transoxiana made significant contributions to the development of Islamic education in the 9th century. Among them, Muhammad ibn Ismail al-Bukhari stands out, along with his contemporary Abu Isa Muhammad al-Termizi (824–894). Imam al-Bukhari authored over twenty works on Islamic teachings. His



most famous work, “**Al-Jami’ al-Sahih**,” contains 7,275 hadiths. In October 1998, the 1,225th anniversary of al-Bukhari’s birth was celebrated. Near Samarkand, in the village of Khartang, a “**Monument Complex of Imam al-Bukhari**” was built, and his four-volume book “**Al-Jami’ al-Sahih**” was published in Uzbek for the first time.

### **Abu Mansur al-Maturidi (870–944)**

A prominent scholar who greatly contributed to the development of kalam (Islamic theology), Abu Mansur al-Maturidi was born in the village of Maturid near Samarkand. He wrote works intended to teach Islamic ethics and morality, including “**Kitab at-Tawhid**” (“The Book of the Oneness of God”) and “**Ta’wilat Ahl as-Sunna**” (“Commentary on the Traditions of the Sunnah”). These texts explore religious teachings, Islamic customs, and the development of human worldview through faith. Al-Maturidi passed away in Samarkand in 944. In November 2000, Uzbekistan celebrated the 1,130th anniversary of al-Maturidi’s birth, establishing a **monument complex in his honor** and publishing his works in Uzbek. He is revered in the Islamic world as “**The Reformer of Muslim Beliefs.**”

### **Burhanuddin al-Marginani (1123–1197)**

Born in 1123 in Rishton (Fergana Valley), Burhanuddin al-Marginani was a renowned jurist (fiqh scholar). His most notable work is the four-volume “**Al-Hidaya**,” a comprehensive guide to Islamic jurisprudence that has served both as a theoretical and practical manual for centuries. It has been translated into multiple languages and continues to be an important reference today. Al-Marginani earned the honorary title “**Leader of the Path of Guidance**” and was also called “**Burhanuddin**” (“Proof of Islam”). In 2000, the 910th anniversary of his birth was celebrated, and a **memorial complex** was established in Margilan, including a symbolic mausoleum.

### **Islam and Education in Central Asia (9th–13th centuries)**

During this period, Islam became a major force in the spiritual life of the people. Transoxianans embraced the religion, observed sharia, and studied Arabic language and script. Numerous mosques and madrasas were built in major cities. By



the 12th century, Bukhara had developed specialized madrasas, such as the **“Madrasah of Faqihs”** for jurists. These institutions emphasized Qur'an, Hadith, and Arabic studies. Tafsir (Qur'anic commentary) and fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence) became rich sources of knowledge. Bukhara became a major center of Islamic learning and earned the title **“Qubbat al-Islam”** – “Dome of Islam.”

### Sufism in Transoxiana

Sufism spread widely in medieval Muslim Central Asia. Originating in 8th-century Iraq, it focused on human spiritual development. Different regions of Transoxiana saw the emergence of various Sufi orders:

- **Yassaviya (12th century, Turkistan)** – Founded by Ahmad Yassavi, emphasizing **asceticism, devotion, and self-denial**. His famous work, **“Hikmat,”** lays out the order's principles. According to Yassavi, Sharia, tariqat (Sufi path), and ma'rifat (spiritual knowledge) complement each other, leading to perfection.

- **Kubroviya (12th–13th centuries, Khwarezm)** – Founded by Najmuddin Kubro (1145–1221). Unlike Yassaviya, Kubroviya rejects extreme asceticism and allows enjoying worldly blessings while pursuing spiritual perfection. It emphasizes love for the people and the homeland, encouraging participation in society and defending independence.

- **Naqshbandiya (14th century, Bukhara)** – Founded by Bahouddin Naqshband (1318–1389). Born in a craftsman family, he combined practical skills with religious knowledge. His works **“Hayotnama”** and **“Dalil al-Oshiqin”** established the Naqshbandi path, advocating **honesty, hard work, helping the needy, humility, and knowledge**. Its central maxim is **“Dil ba Yoru, Dast ba Kor”** – “Heart with God, hands with work.” Naqshbandi teachings later influenced prominent scholars like Alisher Navoi, Abdurahman Jami, and Khoja Ahror.

During Uzbekistan's independence, the names of Ahmad Yassavi, Bahouddin Naqshband, and Najmuddin Kubro were revived, memorials restored, and their priceless spiritual heritage made accessible to modern generations.

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