FERGANA VALLEY POPULATION OF ANCIENT FAITH AND PRIVATE RELIGIOUS CONSIDERATIONS

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Abstract

In the traditional culture of the ancient Fergana people, religious beliefs and views occupied a great place. Religious beliefs, while illuminating various aspects of the life of the ancient society, covered behavioral norms, social relations, aesthetic views, and others.

In this article, as was the case in all nations in ancient times, in the Fergana Valley, the first forms of religion - fetishism, animism, sorcery (magic), totemism, worshiping the spirits of parents, shamanism and religious views related to Zoroastrianism were analyzed on the example of archeological finds.

The purpose of the research is to reveal the history of the origins of the cultures of ancient peasant groups and herders of Fergana, as well as the history of socio-economic, cultural and religious beliefs and attitudes. This study was carried out within the framework of scientific research on the topic “Fergana Valley during the Bronze and First Iron Ages”.

Keywords: Fergana Valley, religious beliefs and views, Sokh find, bronze cauldron, zoolatric religious belief, primitive ideas, totemism, animism, fetishism, burial custom, proto-zardushdism, archaeological findings.

1. INTRODUCTION

Fergana is one of the largest cultural regions that has made a great contribution to the historical heritage of Uzbekistan. Religious beliefs also played an important role in the traditional culture of the ancient Fergana people. Religious beliefs, while illuminating different aspects of the life of the ancient society, covered behavioral norms, social relations, aesthetic views, etc. [10:103].

There is no special research devoted to the scientific issues of the Bronze Age and Early Iron Age beliefs and religious views of the peoples of the Fergana Valley. This problem is only briefly reflected in some chapters of various monographs. In particular, in the works of researchers, emphasis is mainly placed on the analysis of funeral rites. But in recent decades, a large amount of factual material has been collected on this topic, which not only changes our views, but also significantly expands them[17:111].

Proximity to traditions of other regions of Central Asia, common roots, and intensity of cultural ties have influenced religious views in the Fergana Valley, but on the other hand, there are significant differences. This is partly the result of the invasion of settlers from the north and east, partly due to the complex and diverse composition of the population of Fergana, characterized by the fact that the most important fertility cults, water, astral cults, and zoomorphic cults and shamanism were the most important. Living together for a long time has led to the interdependence of religious beliefs, religious traditions, and the symbiosis of images [2:82]. But this process of merging cults, did not end with the transformation of each of them into a single, official state. At the same time, these religious ideas contributed to the spread of world religions - Buddhism, Monism, Christianity and Zoroastrianism.
2. Materials and methods

According to antiquarian G.A.Brikina, there was no single religion in the ancient peoples of Fergana. People believed in water, trees and heavenly bodies more than they worshiped inanimate objects - stones, rocks [11:6]. An ancient find named "Two-headed snake" or "Sokh stone" which is currently kept in the Museum of the History of the Peoples of Uzbekistan is a clear example of this. (picture # 1).

As a result of archaeological excavations conducted in 1893-1894, a find found at a depth of two meters near the village of Sokh was named "Two-headed snake" or "Sokh stone" [13:48-49]. At that time, this exhibit was transferred to the museum belonging to the Archeology Amateurs' Club in Turkestan. Although it has been more than a century since the discovery of the Sokh amulet, it remains one of the most mysterious finds in the history of the museum. Because it is completely different from other finds in the world. This is confirmed by the information that it was previously made from two-headed snakes found in the countries of Azerbaijan and Iran.

In 2003, in the Metropolitan Museum, which is considered as a historical and artistic museum in New York, the first exhibition of the history of the cities of the III millennium was held in the area from the Mediterranean Sea to the shores of the Indus. Uzbekistan participated in this exhibition with the exhibit "Sukh amulet" kept in its historical museum [37:6]. According to archaeologists, this find corresponds to III-II millennia. The height of Sokh amulet is 27 cm, width is 24 cm, thickness is 4.5 cm, weight is 4.806 kg. The image on this stone depicts two snakes attacking each other, such an image in the imagination of the people of the Ancient East and India, the image of the snake was imagined as a creature that connects this world with the next world[8:19]. But since this item itself is made of a large and heavy stone, a handle was also made for it, making it suitable for lifting. Concepts about what this item is used for are also different. Some scientists call it a "scale stone", while others suggest that this object is a stone that wrestlers carry during training. So far, such stones have only been found in Bronze Age settlements, temples or tombs. Therefore, the number of those who say that these items must be items related to prayer is increasing. The Sokh find is considered a unique work of art, embodying the cult of fertility and abundance [4:12].
3. Results

It is known that among the peoples of Central Asia, the snake has been a symbol of earth and water since ancient times. In ancient times, it played an important role in the religious ceremonies and visual art of the local population. In the narratives, until the 20th century, the image of the snake, along with being a symbol of fertility, fulfilled one of the main functions of the god of water [19:62]. In the myths of many ancient peoples, from the Greeks and Romans in the West to India and China in the East, the serpent or dragon was considered the guardian of moisture [35:27]. The theme of the union of the ruler of the country with the moisture-preserving dragon through a mysterious marriage with the god of heavenly moisture in order to regulate rainfall and ensure the development of the country was considered the main theme in Sak-Sugd mythological series [39:108]. The well-known British religious scientist J. Frazer concluded the myths and legends about the first sin of mankind and said, "The Creator sent a message to man and woman through the serpent not to eat the fruit of the tree of death. But the serpent deceived them and bent the fruit of the tree of death. He himself was the fruit of the tree of life. That is why death has become characteristic of humans, and life has become characteristic of snakes," he concludes. Archaeologist S.P. Tolstov said that in ancient times in Central Asia, snake and ox were dominant totems [36:47].

It can be said that another assumption about the double-headed snake amulet is noteworthy. It is known that the Sokh river is a muddy river in the Fergana valley, which originates from the glacier at an altitude of up to 5550 meters from the northern slopes of the Aloy and Turkestan ridges. The length is 124 km, the area of the basin is 3510 km², the height of the water basin is 3480 m. Dalbek, Shudmon and Khojaockhan rivers merge near the village of Zardoli and form the Sokh river. It flows through a very deep and narrow (4-10 m wide) gorge in the upper part. As this river has been considered sacred for the people living around the Sokh River since ancient times, it is possible that they connected it with a snake and created a two-headed snake amulet. Because, in the system of mythological imaginations and religious beliefs of our ancestors, the mysterious plots related to the water cult occupy an important place. One such mythological character is Hubbi, and it is noted that legends related to this myth exist in different regions of our country. The legends about the saint Khoja Ubbon in Bukhara and the shrine of Sultan Hubbi in the village of Akshikh in Jondor district arose as a result of the mythological imagination of our ancestors who lived in ancient times about the god of water and the localization of the water cult [15:14].

Fergana region also has several shrines related to Hubbi. Er Hubbi spring near Aydinbuloq village of Kokan city, Hubbi tomb on the banks of Syrdarya in Pungan village, Yigit Pirim shrines in Toshloq and Rishton districts are among them. Researchers also connect Kolikhubban in Shahimardan with Hubbi. H. Hasanov expresses the following opinion about the origin of the name Kolikhubban: "Khubban lake. It is wrongly written in the forms Kurbankol, Kubonkol. The name of this lake in the mountains of Shahimardan is derived from the word "hubbi". This is due to a very old religious concept. Hubbi (in the pre-Islamic era) was said to be the god of water" [38:55].

The historical foundations of the plot of legends and narratives about the existing Er Hubbi shrines in Fergana region go back to the myths about Hubbi, which emerged as a mythological symbol of the ancient people's views, embodying the idea of water cult and fertility, wishing for blessings [1:63].

It should be noted that the totemistic zoolatric religious faith, which had an important place in the beliefs of the population in the Bronze Age, shows that the supreme god Ahuramazda and his goddesses in the Zoroastrian religion began to settle in the beliefs of the population. Zoroastrianism served as the basis for the emergence of Zoroastrianism during historical development. Because the animals that are glorified in the eyes of the population originated from the most necessary economic foundations in the society [20:333]. It should be noted that dying and regenerating plants, waters, and zoomorphic cults had a large place in the imagination of Fergana people. It was believed that the animals themselves or their images could protect the owner from misfortune, and should bring good luck, fertility and health to those with magical powers.

Most of the paintings performed by our ancient ancestors were organized by customs related to the burial of the deceased. We can learn information about such paintings from the analysis of materials obtained by studying ancient tombs. The structure of the old graves discovered and studied by archaeologists, the location of the body in them, showed that the customs and pictures related to the burial in the ancient Ferganas had a number of local characteristics. In many graves, people were buried on their sides, with their limbs folded, as if they were lying in the mother's womb. Academician A. Askarov writes, "This is actually a custom of burial typical of the Bronze Age, women are buried with the left side, and men are always buried with the right side" [5:67].

In the old graves in the eastern regions of the Fergana Valley, especially in the graves of Dalvarzintepa, the head of the corpse is placed facing east, while in Northern Fergana (Chust culture), the head of the skeleton is placed facing the west [6:179]. Also,
the bronze age antiques found in the ancient settlements of Fergana Valley, such as Ashkoltepa and Chimboy, have an incomparable scientific and historical significance in the study of ancient religious beliefs.

The ancient graves discovered in the Fergana Valley, Central Asia and many other regions, together with human bones, animal bones and several types of objects (household items, hunting, combat and labor tools, horse equipment) can be interpreted as evidence of the visions of our ancient ancestors about life after death. Therefore, the findings embodying religious beliefs are more common in ancient graves. An example of this is the "pillows" discovered during the archaeological excavations in the Pop necropolis (Munchogtepa). The antiquarian B.H. Matboboev writes the following about this: "For some, a plant stem was rounded and used as a "pillow", while for some, cotton fabric was used as a pillow [26:226-227]. This custom is widespread in the Fergana Valley and Central Asia and continues from the Bronze Age to the present day. Also, we can see that stones were used as pillows in Oktom's tomb, clay in Khargush's tomb, Kenkol's tomb in a bundle of plants, gravel in Gormiron's tomb, straw in Karabulok's tomb [7:18; 9:9; 14:6; 18:33; 33:160]. The oldest pillow-bed in the valley was found in a tomb belonging to the Chust culture: under the head of the corpse, a plant stem with spikes was rolled and laid [34:16].

So, we can be sure that this custom is very ancient. The custom of placing a pillow under the head of the deceased is one of the signs of belief that they live in the "other" world. According to the opinion of the well-known archaeologist B.A. Litvinsky, it is to make the deceased as comfortable as possible [24:106-107]. Of course, it is also possible that some concepts have been inculcated on the ground [26:256-257]. In fact, these "pillows" contain some unique elements of the ancient religious concepts of the ancient Fergana people related to the other world.

Antiquarian Yu.A. Zadneprovsky in his monograph "The Farming Culture of Ancient Fergana" describes the shape of the bronze cauldrons found in Tuyachi in 1939 during the excavation of the Big Fergana Canal, in Kara Kulja in 1953, and in Shorabashot in 1955, which are now kept in the Museum of the Osh Region of the Kyrgyz Republic and in the Museum of the History of the Peoples of Uzbekistan in Tashkent, and their shape. Although he provided information about the chemical composition, he did not comment on the views related to religious beliefs in these pots [16:163]. However, the ancient religious beliefs of the Fergana Valley are reflected in the bronze pots belonging to this period. One such find is a bronze cauldron among the copper vessels bought for the museum fund from S. Yoldosheva, a resident of Margilon, in 1995. S. Yoldosheva said that she bought this cauldron from Eski Nokat district of Osh region. The cauldron consists of embossed four ears, height 325 mm., diameter 570 mm. The shape and size of this boiler are similar to the Sak pot of the 5th century ( picture # 2 ) in terms of working techniques.
The bronze cauldron that came to the Fergana Local History Museum is the fourth cauldron found in the valley in the last half century. In terms of shape, the cauldron is similar to the bronze cauldrons found in the Fergana Valley, found in the vicinity of Issyk-Kol, which are now kept in the Almaty Museum. On the four sides around the mouth of the cauldron, the place where some shape was broken was preserved. We think it is the remains of a sculpture of a sheep or a mountain goat. The image of mountain goats on a bronze pot found during the excavation of the Great Fergana canal is a clear proof of our point. For example, it is known from history that settled land dwellers and nomadic herdsmen, Saks and Massagets, who have been engaged in agriculture since ancient times, worshiped the ram. B.A. Litvinsky said that among the Kangli tribes, they believed in Farn, one of the gods of the Zoroastrian religion, which is also confirmed by archeological findings [22:86]. The handles of vessels belonging to the Kangli period found in the middle reaches of the Syrdarya were zoomorphic (animal protection) - in the shape of a sheep. It is known that in Zoroastrian religion, the ram has a guarding, protective magical power (Farn, Farana or Khvarna). The ram was considered a symbol of prosperity and wealth for the owners of the house. At the same time, the symbol of the ram was considered a force that protects the health of the owners of the house and repels the influence of harmful evil spirits.

According to myths, a sheep (horned ram) is a symbol of wealth, glory, and power. Therefore, there are a lot of figurines of horned rams, pottery vessels, their handles, stamps and urns, especially examples of the material culture of herding Turks [30:40].

Although this bronze pot is similar in shape to the bronze pot found in Issyk-Kul, it is unique in terms of the vertical and embossed handles and the style of making the pot.

It is known that the horse was considered a sacred animal in the peoples of Central Asia, including the peoples of the Fergana Valley [3;12;21;23;32]. In the graves of the Bronze Age, there was a custom of burying the deceased in the position of a horse or a horse-spur or a rider. According to Yu.A.Zadneprovsky, during the Bronze Age, Fergana peoples paid great attention to harvesting [16:88]. The information provided by E.D.Saltovskaya, an antiquarian scientist who conducted archaeological excavations in Dashki Asht region, is very important for us. He said that during the excavations, human bones buried in the
"rider position" method were found in ancient settlements. From the pottery in the grave, it was revealed that the grave belongs to the 5th century BC [31:343]. So, it is possible that nomadic peoples who lived in the regions near the Syrdarya during this period had the habit of burial in the "rider's position". According to the researchers, it was the Sak tribes who lived in Asht and nearby regions in BC [29:318]. The finds in Asht ancient settlements proved it once again. Concepts of horse sanctification lie at the heart of the belief that horses protect the dead in the afterlife. To this day, in the peoples of Central Asia, if a person dreams of an unsaddled horse, it means that he saw a giant in his dream [25:100]. It is known that giants are often depicted in the form of horses in fairy tales. The ancient belief that horses, especially vultures, are born from a water horse (devi) is common among all Turkic peoples. For this reason, they have wings, fire spews from their mouths, and rivers freeze in their wind. In the heroic epic, the war horse understands human speech, warns the horse of danger, advises him, and takes him out of the battlefield when he is wounded. Such a horse is able to carry the hero through waterless deserts, impassable mountains and forests, and to reach any destination in a short period of time [27:103].

According to primitive ideas about the horse, the origin of mankind was considered to be connected with horses. For example, according to S.P. Tolstov, among the massagets' totems, the worship of horses occupied one of the leading places [36:212]. As can be seen from the given information, the totemistic concepts of the horse of our ancient peoples are at the root of their views on the appearance of saints in the form of horses.

The Simtepa monument of the IV-II - I-II centuries AD is a remnant of the oldest farming culture in South Fergana, in particular, the Margilonsoy oasis. Simtepa is located 15 km south of Margilan, in the territory of the present city of Fergana, on the left bank of Margilansoy. During the archaeological excavations carried out here, more than 1,500 pieces of pottery, glassware, blankets and stone mills were found. N.G. Gorbunova said that the Simtepa monument is the only one in Fergana region in terms of the number of stamps on raw bricks. In our opinion, the image of a horse and a dog on clay vessels found in the Simtepa settlement may indicate that the local population believed in Zoroastrianism in ancient times. Therefore, it is known that the horse was also venerated as a sacred animal in Zard [28:164].

4. Conclusion

Later, among the ancient religions of Fergana peoples (fetishism, totemism, animism, shamanism, fire worship), Buddhism, Christianity and Monism began to join. At the beginning of AD, each of the above religions found their supporters in Fergana and each of them operated independently. It is noteworthy that there was no strong struggle for hegemony between these religions. That is why, It is possible to observe the variety of products and clothes that were created under the influence of each of them. The religious views of the peoples of Fergana were closely related to the spiritual beliefs of their parents' spirits, shamanism and Zoroastrianism - were active in this region, as in all nations.

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