



ON THE RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL LIFE OF THE ANCIENT POPULATION

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Abstract

In this article, the authors provide information about the religious and spiritual life of the ancient population. The authors emphasize that the ancient population was characterized by clan beliefs, totemic cults associated with natural phenomena, deification of nature, as well as shamanic beliefs mixed with animism and totemism. One of the most important aspects of these religious beliefs is that they have a unifying effect on communities.

Keywords: Fire, wild birds, sun worship, rock paintings, mountain goat, burial rite, Scythian-Siberian method, candles, shamanism, Gulba, wolf, shamanism. Suzmoilota.

Introduction

In ancient times, many of the elements of nature surrounding people were deified and worshiped as guardians of human destiny, health, fertility, and disasters. Among them, water sources, mountains, wild animals, fire, various objects, wild birds, and others were sanctified based on the belief that spirits lived in them. Such customs go back to the most ancient societies in human history.

One of the most common symbols found in rock paintings studied in Central Asia is the symbol of the sun. In the rock paintings, wild animals such as the primeval bull, primeval cow, mountain goat, argali, gazelle, saiga, red deer, wild horse, and kulan are skillfully depicted, which represent not only the sun itself but also its symbol [Kholmatov, Khojanazarov, 2020. P. 20]. Based on them, it can be said that the sun seems to be an object and worship of it in the mythology of the Ustrushona herders. The use of fire in the burial ceremony and the burning of the deceased in



the Ustrushona burial mounds studied so far were associated with the concepts of purifying the soul of the body and divine protection in transporting it to heaven. In other words, “the fire lit during the burial of the body served as an intermediary between the living and the ancestors living in the sky” [Avenesova, Toshpulatova, 2021. P. 83]. For the Ust-Ukrainians, fire was considered the first symbol of immortality, the world and eternity, even for the gods. Fire was considered a means of conveying the soul of the deceased to the fire of heaven - the great god - the sun. The mythology of nomadic communities, the mythical or magical content of their religious views, the “Scythian-Siberian” method of processing images of domestic and wild (predatory) animals in their visual art is well studied. In Scythian fine art, various motifs - horses, goats, sheep, oxen, deer, wolves, dragons, and wild birds - were widely used in wood and bone carvings [Ilyinskaya, 1965. P. 87-107]. According to I.V. Pyankov, the main deity among the Scythian tribes was the sun, represented by a horse and fire. The tops of burial structures were circular or most of them were surrounded by stones, the fires were surrounded by large stones, and sacrificial tables, cauldrons, and lamps represented the sun in the sky [Pyankov, 2013. P. 514]. According to S.I. Rudenko, the image of a horse played a special role in the formation of Scythian art and the formalization of all its motifs. This tradition is characterized by the formation of the horse among the early Scythians and its main role in the economy [Rudenko, 1949. P. 85]. In addition, from the time of the early Scythians until the Middle Ages, the ancient nomads continued to traditionally depict wild goats, argali, rams, camels, oxen, deer, wolves, dragons and wild birds, chariots, hunting scenes, and others in applied art. The sources also mention the worship of the nomads, the spirits of their ancestors, the blue spirit (god) belonging to the whole people - shamanism, the worship of mountains, water sources (rivers and lakes), and other totemistic religious rituals. It can be said that the animistic views of the Ustrushon herders regarding the afterlife were also a manifestation of the theistic views of the Turkic tribes. In the Shirinsay and Gulba graves, the custom of burying the deceased with his wife and child, along with household items and food, is observed. These customs are associated with animism and are based on views on the afterlife of a person and his soul. Over time, such ideas have been mixed with other religious views and manifested in various forms. From the analysis of the studied sources, it can be seen that signs of worship of the



spirits of ancestors were especially widespread in antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

The sources emphasize that the tradition of belief in the spirits of ancestors was strong among nomads. This tradition is manifested in the cave sacrifice ceremony of the (Ashina tribe) during the Turkic Khaganate. In this regard, rituals such as the mountain cult and the wolf totem (the totemistic significance of the blue wolf) are also associated with animistic views and show signs of belief in the spirits of ancestors. Such customs as recognizing mountains and mountain peaks as sacred can still be found in many villages located on the slopes of the Ustrushona mountain [Tashboev, 2022. P. 183]. L.P. Potapov sees the belief in mountains and ridges in the strengthening of the production sector and the mixing of tribal traditions [Potapov, 1978. P. 59]. Each tribe has its own sacred pastures (and mountains) where it feeds its livestock. In the customs associated with it, we see the worship not of the spirits of mountains, rivers, lakes, but of the mountains, rivers, lakes themselves, not the embodiment of nature, but its animating. This is the most primitive form of the animistic worldview, called animatism.

It was studied in the Ustrushona region. Among them, images of people depicted with their headdresses were found in the Suzmoylota and Yuqorisay rock paintings. The headdresses of some people in them were made with pointed tips and earflaps. These headdresses resemble the pointed turbans or dubs worn by representatives of the ancient Saki tribes who lived in Central Asia and adjacent areas. Such images of people can also be found in the Sarmishsay, Karakiyasay, Tashkurgansay, Chorbagsay, Ilonbulaksay, Kudukchasay and other rock painting monuments on the Nurota Mountain [Kholmatov, Khojanazarov, 2020. P. 17]. Among the Yuqorisay (Soyibolo) rock paintings, people are skillfully depicted in the guise of a shaman or in a composite landscape depicting a religious ritual scene. In this image, the man depicted as a shaman is depicted by an ancient artist in full body, wearing a headdress, a mask over his mouth, broad shoulders and tapering towards the waist, wearing something around his waist, and holding something in his left hand. His legs are long, his knees are slightly bent, and his toes are slightly turned out. Also, in the lower right corner of this rock, two people are depicted facing each other, skillfully depicted in a dance sequence performed during some religious ritual.



In the applied art and rock paintings of ancient nomads in other regions of Central Asia, images of ibex, argali, and deer are often found. Scientists say that they were associated with the totemistic and divine-magical ideas of the ancient population. These images on the rocks are often depicted in circles, which represent the rituals of shamans. The long and curved horns of the mountain goat, argali and deer resemble the headdress of a shaman. The images of people seem to be performing some kind of ritual [Mannai-Ool, 1967. P. 141-46]. Thus, the rituals associated with the shamanic faith of ancient times have been well preserved in the rock paintings. Some of its manifestations have survived to this day, almost in their original form, in all the oases of Ustrushona, where the herders lived (even among the urban population), and this can be the subject of separate research.

Archaeological materials show that the ancient Ustrushona population worshiped the goddess Farn, one of the gods of the Zoroastrian religion, at the beginning of the Christian era (the Kang period). This goddess was considered the protector and protector of rulers, as well as the god of home, family, and health. This god was considered to be in the form of a sheep or ram [Litvinsky, 1968. P. 3-7]. As her symbol, the Kangui tribes, that is, the owners of the Mevunchi culture, often used ceramic vessels with zoomorphic handles. The ceramic vessels with zoomorphic handles on pottery vessels of the Kangui period studied in Ustrushona, sheep bones, jewelry, and other objects in the form of sheep also indicate that the cult of the Wohad sheep was quite strong.

Thus, before the introduction of Islam among the people of Ancient Ustrushona, along with ancestral beliefs and totemistic cults associated with natural phenomena, various religions were widespread, and they also had an impact on the spiritual and religious life of the population. Among them, the nomads' religious rituals include the worship of the sun, the spirits of ancestors, the sky spirit (god) belonging to the entire people, the worship of mountains, and water sources (rivers and lakes). Animistic and totemistic views associated with the worship of heroic ancestral spirits, the deification of nature, and shamanistic beliefs mixed with animism and totemism were popular.



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