



SOME ISSUES OF ECONOMIC TRADITIONS RELATED TO WATER IN THE KHORAZM OASIS

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ANNOTATION

In this article, the researcher has researched on the basis of historical materials that the geographical and cultural-economic conditions of Central Asia have caused beliefs about water disasters in religious ceremonies since the earliest times, and that the people of Central Asia, including the Khorezm region, imagined water as a deity in the worship of fertility beliefs.

KEY WORDS: *Hubbi, Anbar mother, Sochli ata, Amudarya, Avesta, Anakhita, totem, fishing, farming.*

INTRODUCTIONS

In the agricultural regions of Central Asia, water sources and irrigation works were considered a guarantee of living. For this reason, the image of the deities associated with water is combined with fertility beliefs. In this way, the image of the great goddess Arvasura Anahita was gradually formalized in Central and Ancient Asia.

DISCUSSIONS

“Avesta” describes its image in the form of a violent flow of a river: “Wide-flowing, healing, bottomless, flowing from long and distant lands, flowing from the fierce Hukaryo mountains and flowing into the Vorakusha sea” [1, P. 46].

According to the image in “Avesta”, this water is a real geographical phenomenon, the “thousand tributary” Ardva consists of a system of many canals and supplied a large region with water. If we identify this source of water in Central and Ancient Asia described in “Avesta”, this river connected with the image of Ardisura Anahita turns out to be the ancient Ox-Amudarya. S.P. Tolstov writes about this: “Ox-Vakhsh, which has been kept for a long time in Khorezm since the Middle Ages, is connected with the great life-giving role of Amudarya in the economy of this country. Khorezm, like Bactria, occupies a central place in the worship of Amudarya, recognizing it as a deity” [1, P. 46]. These opinions expressed by S.P. Tolstov were fully confirmed by further ethnographic materials.

“Avesta” testifies that Ardisura Anahita has wide authority as the patron of fertility: she is the owner of all creatures; thanks to him, plants grow tall; animals multiply; the generation of mankind depends on it.

The worship of Anahita formed a complex and common circle of beliefs in ancient times. In the archeological excavations in various places of Central Asia, ceramic figurines and stone carvings of Anahita were found, which indicates that she was highly revered among the ancient peoples who lived in this region.

Since religious beliefs about Anahita, and water in general, have been developing since the earliest times, it is natural that all this left its traces in the rituals of the present inhabitants of Central Asia. This event is even more important for Khorezm, which cannot live without Amudarya water. Various examples collected from Khorezm confirm this. Beliefs related to water are exaggerated by the fact that they are very archaic in nature, raising the water god to the level of a state religion.

In the general analysis of the relationship to water, no clear expression about the sacred essence of water has been preserved. Such a vision can be understood only with the understanding that water in household rituals has a purifying quality.



In Khorezm, as well as in the whole of Central Asia, you can find holy springs, wells, and ponds at every step, almost all of them are located near cemeteries. Beliefs in canals that bring life to the fields of Khorezm have been around since ancient times. Here it is necessary to pay special attention to one thing.

Almost all the canals that play an important role in the economic life of the oasis are associated with the name of a holy person in Khorezm. Such a person is mentioned as either the sponsor or the founder of the channel. There are a lot of legends about the patron saint Polvon, who lived in Khiva. It is said that he drew the land from Amudarya to Khiva with his cane, and along that line a canal was formed. This is how Polvonyop was founded. A similar legend is woven about Khosin Baba, the founder of another channel that receives water from Polvonyop.

The system of canals in the south of Khanka is connected with the name of Sulayman Baba (near the village of Madir). When there is a shortage of water, a prayer is recited in that cemetery. The phrase "If you ask for water, ask from Suleiman" is from that time.

On the right bank of the Amudarya, they believe in Shabboz Baba as the giver of water. His grave is located in the ruins of the old Kat fortress (Beruni city).

According to one belief, the system of canals in Gurlan was implemented by local gods as a "miracle".

The establishment of Islam in the Muslim East led to the replacement of old patrons associated with certain professions, deities with various characters from Muslim mythology, figures of Sufism - historical figures. This process also affected the field of land works and irrigation. New patrons join the ranks of ancient water goddesses such as Ardivisura Anahita. This situation shows that the beliefs about water disasters have also passed into religious thinking.

The importance of the Amudarya in the life of the oasis, together with religious beliefs, led to the emergence of many legends and legends, which included almost all waterways in Central Asia. It is characteristic that in most of them images and plots related to ancient Iranian traditions are visible. Its main image is Faridun (Tretaona in "Avesta"), which goes back to the totemistic ox phratry (seed) associated with water beliefs [2, P. 292-303].

According to one of the legends (widely spread in Khorezm) that arose in the ancient times of Central Asia under the influence of strong irrigation works, Amudarya was created by order of Faridun. Therefore, its name is "Belkandi Peridun" (Persian - "bel" - in Khorezm a spade, "kandan" - to dig), which all informants define as the ancient name of the river.

His name is often mentioned in the form of "Amin-daryo" in some information. It is also mentioned about the minister who led the excavation of the Amudarya, and his name is attributed to Faridun. Some legends also tell about the "stubborn character" of the river. Hazrat Umar (the second caliph) participates in this legend and subdues the river by hitting it with a whip.

Amudarya has a stubborn and untamed character, often overflows its banks, and floods leave many villages empty. According to another belief, the Amudarya will change its course 7 times before the end of the world.

Two different attitudes towards the Amudarya are also reflected in animistic imaginations. We will refer to the phenomenon that revives the water disasters of the oldest layer. In Khorezm there are beliefs related to invisible spirits-arangs (islands). Apparently, they controlled the flow of water in the Amudarya and canals without being seen themselves. The weight of the water depends on them, and they are said to cause floods and shipwrecks. According to some traditions, people who have some divine powers against the Arangas can stand against them and make them obey. One such person is Sultan Hubbi, a famous deity in Khorezm. He is the piri of the boatmen, and the boat drivers turn to him for help when disaster strikes.

The two different attitudes towards the Amudarya and its water are complex religious beliefs that date back to the ancient generations of mankind's knowledge of the world. Since this river has become the main factor of fertility beliefs in recent times, the attitude towards it has changed in a positive direction. This process took place in ancient Khorezm as part of the rapid development of a powerful irrigation system and the flourishing of farming culture in the oasis. It was at this stage that the animistic thoughts about water disasters became stronger and there were



tendencies to formalize her as a fertility believer and raise her to the level of a great goddess, Amudarya was recognized as the main source of fertility.

In the ethnographic materials of Khorezm, including folklore works, the deified bright mythological image of Amudarya has not been preserved. Muslimism has already passed its judgment in this area. Therefore, in order to find traces of these ancient beliefs, it is necessary to turn to the household rituals of Khorezm.

The worship of Amudarya water is also evident in the beliefs in offering sacrifices to it with various relationships. The life of various rituals and beliefs in this takhlit is especially manifested in the activities of professionals connected with Amudarya. Such professions include those who operate boats on rivers and canals. One of the complex and widespread rituals is offering sacrifices to the water of Amudarya. The boatmen organize this in order to “not make eye contact” before leaving for the next trip.

When they load the ships, they take a sheep or a small cattle on top of the cargo, slaughter it and drain its blood into the river. The ceremony of launching a new ship also draws attention. In this process, there is a tradition of throwing the mast of the ship into the water. This custom is performed even before the river water is drained into the canals, where mirab is thrown into the water. Determining the ancient roots of these rituals is extremely difficult. The practice of throwing mirab or dargah into water is of recent times and is a new form of sacrificial offering.

In the past, oxen and sheep were sacrificed in order to “pacify” Amudarya. These ceremonies were performed for various purposes: consecration of water disaster, glorification of the divine importance of Amudarya based on the ideas of fertility, fulfillment of totemistic visions by sacrificing an ox, etc. These ceremonies belong to different faiths and beliefs of different periods and are echoes of various religious ceremonies in historical processes. Many similar beliefs in Central Asia [3, P. 135, 136] shows that fertility beliefs related to water were central to the lives of many peoples in this region.

Although beliefs related to water occupy the main place in the field of agriculture and farming, we do not notice its participation in fertility beliefs related to the image of the goddess-mother.

Ardivisura Anahita, the ancient central image of the fertility cults, appears in Central Asian variants only as a water, partly Amudarya deity.

In order to justify that Mother Anbar is the successor of Ardivisura Anahita, it is necessary to take into account the fact that the ethnographic material does not indicate the aspect of Mother Anbar related to water. We have certain proofs of this in the ritual system of women. These beliefs have their place in the theological ideas related to infertility, the most pressing issue of women’s life.

The information received from different places of the oasis testifies that supernatural holy powers of Amudarya occupy an important place in rituals and beliefs among childless women. This is clearly proven by childless women agreeing with the boatmen, crossing the water to the other shore, throwing bread and salt into the water and praying to the patron saint Anbar. While riding on the boats, they make sure that the more the boat rocks, the more voluntary and impressive the ceremony will be. Such divine processions exist in different places of Amudarya. Kechuv in Pitnak is especially famous, and the grave of Grandfather Aranja is located on the islet here. Women go to this island, visit the grave and organize alms, distribute food, hang various cloths on the grave, and when a child is born, they come and sacrifice a sheep[4, P. 246].

In some cases, women come to the bank of the river and throw water and salt into the river and offer sacrifices.

A simpler version of these rituals also occurs, in which childless women sometimes jump over flowing streams. Especially, this ritual is performed more often in the early spring when the first water comes to the streams, and sacrifices are made to the water.

In 1936, archaeologist Yahya Ghulomov recorded a legend about the son of mother Anbar from a boatman in Amudarya. “Have you noticed the two molds on the heads of the Amudarya ships,” the informant asks the archaeologist scientist, and Anbar tells the story of the mother and her missing son: “They suspect that her son Hubbi was kidnapped by a wealthy girl who owns the sky sea. After that, his mother appeared in the river. He



cried for a long time in search of his son, built a boat, taught people to drive a boat, use it in water and in war. After that, Hubby's mother disappeared forever. Elderly people say that the same woman used to be depicted on the heads of boats. After the emergence of Islam, the head part of the boats was cut off and only two hulls remained" [5, P. 30].

Indeed, Noah is undoubtedly the head of the boat. This is the decline of religious imagination. In the Muslim era (Noah came to Central Asia with Islam), depicting Noah with a model at the head of the boat is inherently awkward.

The depiction of the head of Mother Anbar (ancient water goddess Anahita) on Amudarya boats also does not arouse suspicion. Because many other nations also have a tradition of honoring the image of water gods. It is not for nothing that childless women aspire to the boat. Because their god is located there, women took a string of kokil from the head of the boat, hung it on their head, sometimes burned it and enjoyed its smoke (Old Urganch).

The image of Ardisura in the "Avesta" is quite stable: she is the god of water, fertility, childbirth, a powerful goddess who is the helper-patron of various ancient heroes who sacrifice in her honor. The relationship between the characters of Anahita and Siovush requires a certain amount of speculation.

In turn, we find similarities in the myths of Mother Anbar with the myths of Anahita, the goddess of fertility and related events. We think that we have the right to analyze the Muslim legends in this regard, although there are huge periods between them. We also know that the belief in that Tammuz was preserved in its classical form even during the advanced period of the Arab caliphate.

In Khorezm and the surrounding area, irrigated agriculture and animal husbandry were established thousands of years ago. For this reason, domestic animals are more prominent in Khorezm beliefs. Among them, the first level animals with the most faith are ox, sheep, camel and dog. In terms of its importance, fish occupies a special place, which is explained by the fact that fishing was formed as a special occupation in the geographical conditions along the Amudarya.

In all the peoples of Central Asia we find the remains of fish worship [6, 1956]. In all places, this belief is the same - a certain body of water contains fish that are considered sacred and forbidden to eat.

In Lower Amudarya, the worship of the fish believer has different forms. It should not be surprising. Because fishing has been one of the independent sectors of economic activity in this country since ancient times.

Ethnography of the Lower Amudarya provides comprehensive material about the fish believer, first of all, it is described as an honest bite and is considered to have supernatural power that positively affects people. In Khorezm, there are many legends in the nature of the struggle of Gods created in many peoples of the East. It explains the sacred integrity of the fish. The central character of this myth is a pagan, who usually shoots a bow into the sky to kill God, but he hits a fish that voluntarily offers to protect God. Because of this, the fish's gills (muddy) always look red as if injured. For this service, the fish was declared halal by God at any time. The legend has a clear literary tradition, but its popularity in Khorezm is not accidental. Here, the sacred integrity of fish is to such an extent that it can be understood from the prohibitions surrounding fish. For example, there is a strict law that a woman cannot eat fish for 40 days after giving birth. The reason for the prohibition is clear: during this period, the woman is impure. Because of this, the fish can harm it.

As elsewhere in Central Asia, Khorezm also has ponds where sacred fish are kept. Among them, the sacred carp that live in the pond at the shrine of Sultan Baba are especially popular. Visitors feed these fish, caressing them as they come ashore.

Many legends are woven about the carp in the shrine of Sultanbaba. If a person betrays the integrity of these fish, he will get sick or die instantly. One such incident caught our attention. In the recent past, a large flood damaged the fish pond, and a rock that came with the flood crushed and killed one fish. The shaykh of the shrine wraps the fish in a shroud, recites the funeral, and buries it near Sultan Baba's grave [7, P. 326]. But in the legends about the carp of Sultan Baba's shrine, the sacred fish cited by D. E. Khaytun were considered to be the descendants of people [8, P. 91-92], we did not find information similar to his opinion. But the phenomenon of the burial of fish with human burials is so remarkable that it can be satisfied that the ancient totemistic ideas are viable. When



talking about the remaining beliefs related to the fish believer, it is necessary to talk about the fishing profession and its pir. This pir in Khorezm is fundamentally different from other professions, preserving its primitive form and clearly showing its pre-Muslim features. He is not a holy person, but a mythical creature who lives in the water and feeds a herd of fish. His name is also characteristic – Sochli ata or Chochli ata. He is embodied as a giant creature with long hair.

Ethnographer G. P. Snesev's monograph "Pre-Muslim ceremonies and customs of the people of Khorezm" contains very interesting information about the fisherman priest Sochli Ota. The researcher also made deep scientific statements about the issue of animal believers in the pictures on the objects found as a result of archeological excavations [10, 1969].

CONCLUSIONS

Fish has long been an independent sector of economic activity in Khorezm. This tradition is still relevant. Pisces is very much in the marriage of believers. For example, a fish palate is hung on a children's hat, and a fish bone is thrown into it when it is lit. Bakra fish is dried and given to women, this ritual is related to childbirth and their health.

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