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RESEARCH ARTICLE

RELIGIOUS PROCESSES IN SOCIAL LIFE OF EARLY MEDIEVAL SUGHD

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Abstract

This article presents the problem of religious processes, one of the most significant aspects of early medieval Sogdian society. The article discusses facts about the development of Zoroastrianism and Buddhism. The influence of Turkish-Sogdian relations on religious processes is also shown. The archival documents of the Sogdian inscription found on Mount Mugh describe the processes related to religious processes.

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Introduction:-

Religion played a significant role as part of the spiritual life of peoples, as well as in the development of ethnocultural processes and tolerance in ancient and medieval times. This aspect is also characteristic of the early medieval Sogd. We know that the religious beliefs of the Sogdians have a long history. Research conducted in the historical Sughd region has revealed materials on Zoroastrianism, Qam-shaman (Koktangri), Christianity (Nestorian direction), Buddhism and Monism, which reflect interethnic relations and religious tolerance. In addition, the factors that reveal the synthesis of Turkish-Sughd religious teachings and cultures have been studied.

Main Part:

Among the Sogdian and Turkic ethnic groups of Central Asia, Zoroastrianism has a long history (I millennium BC - VIII-IX centuries BC) and spread to the region thanks to the colonial activities of the Sogdians. The nomadic Sogdians, who settled in northeastern Central Asia, for centuries practiced Zoroastrianism together, propagating Zoroastrianism to the local Turks. In East Turkestan, as in Sughd, a temple – “vagn” was built, and priests – “vagnpats” performed religious rites. Since the Turks are sincere and tolerant, there is no information in any source that the Turks of the divine faith opposed this process. These factors serve to express religious tolerance in the social life of Sughd.

Through the Sogdians, Zoroastrianism even penetrated into China. Its elements are reflected in the Chinese visual arts. Document R 3929 found in Dunhuang states that the Sogdians worshiped fire and that they had temples. In addition, migrant Sogdian merchants in Loyang, the capital of the North Wei dynasty, built a Zoroastrian temple for themselves. The Chinese and their administration also did not interfere with the religious beliefs of the Sogdians.

It should be noted that Central Asian Zoroastrianism was different from the Sassanian Iranian Zoroastrianism. In Iran, Zoroastrianism has developed as the official state religion, based on strict requirements. In Central Asia, it was practiced on the basis of religious tolerance. Sogdian Zoroastrianism is called “Mazdaism” or Mazdayasna religion. Belief in such deities as Ahuramazda, Mitra, and Nana has a special place in this system of religious views, which is the basis of the beliefs of the peoples of Central Asia [7.5-6].

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As a result of the colonial policy of the Sogdians, Zoroastrianism spread to the non-Sogdian regions. Xuanzang, a Chinese traveler and Buddhist monk (VII century): “The Turks believed in fire. Therefore, they did not use a wooden throne”, he said, most likely referring to the Turks’ belief in Zoroastrianism. [1.259].

Based on this idea, we can learn that in the Turkish Khanate, in addition to the religion of Kam Shaman, he also believed in Zoroastrianism. This is also supported by the information provided by the Byzantine ambassador Zemarkh, who was received by Istami Hakan in Ettiuv in 568, that he could enter the Hakan’s residence after bowing to a flag depicting a wolf’s head and a blazing fire. Zemarkh’s description of this purification ceremony suggests that there was a mixture of Zoroastrianism and Ham-shaman religions.

In the Turkish Khanate, there are not only Zoroastrian religions and other religions, but also the fact that the khanate encompasses all aspects of the life of the religious khanate. Only a part of the Turks remained under the strong influence of Zoroastrianism.

Researcher K.I. Tashbaeva commented on the development of Buddhism in the Turkish Khanate: “The main reason why Buddhism did not develop in the Kaganate and their views on similar issues are similar to those of the Qam-shaman religion” [6.56].

Zoroastrianism and Shamanism were the indigenous religions of Central Asia, and their essence was monotheistic religions. Research L.V. According to Fyodorova, Tengriism in Turkic-Mongolia has close historical and genetic ties with the religions of the ancient Iranians, Aryans, Saks, Sogdians, Tibetans and Chinese. [8.67].

As a result of the centuries-old propaganda of Zoroastrianism by Sogdian merchants among the Turks of East Turkestan, Zoroastrian holy houses were built here, where Sogdians and local Turks held joint ceremonies. There is no information in the written sources about any resistance of the Turks to the Sogd Zoroastrians. This aspect shows that Turkish-Sughd religious relations are based on religious tolerance.

A similar process is observed in China. The emergence of Zoroastrianism in China and its elements are reflected in the Chinese visual arts. Documents found in Dunhuang provide information about the fire worship of the Sogdians and their temples, noting that the Zoroastrian temple was built by Sogdian merchants in the capital of Northern Wei.

In the Bugut inscription, one of the first Turkic monuments, Taspar-khok’s tombstone is inscribed in Turkish, in Sogdian script. It is noteworthy that on the back of the stone is written the Sanskrit translation of the text. These inscriptions use Sogdian canonical terms, such as - Saošyant t - (rescuer), βγ, βγyst – (god and gods).

It seems that the phrase K’w bw s’r pwrsty - (he asked God) means Ahura Mazda, the main god of Zoroastrianism, not Turks or Buddhism). In support of Zoroastrian monotheism, the term βγ - refers to Ahura Mazda [2.133].

It should be noted that this article showed that the Sogdians and the Turks developed a relationship based on mutual respect. Because the writing was written by a man who believed in Zoroastrianism by order of a Turk in Buddhism. This situation plays an important role in clarifying the relationship between different religions and nationalities in Sughd.

In addition, the Sogdian documents A-17, B-15 and I.1, found on Mount Mug, contain inscriptions related to Zoroastrianism, prn’m by ddm’n’nk - In I.1 “in the name of the creator”, in the document ZKn by ZY ZKn myrenr nnn’nty – Nov.4 “I swear in the name of Ahura Mazda and Mitra” [3.46].

V.A. Livshits said that in the Sogdian documents, these sentences were used in the form of an oath, and Mithra’s duty as the god of the treaty was confirmed. Document I.1 contains the following entries: Nidjitak (nyzytk) and priest Kurchi (bynpt kwrcy) ... you know they are your best friends [4.108].

This letter is part of a letter sent to Devashtich by the representative of the Arab administration, Abdurrahman ibn Subham. The names mentioned in the letter are: Sogdian Nidjitak and the Turkic kokhin - vagnpat Kurchi (bunpt kwrcy) who were considered to be the propagandists of Zoroastrianism.

Of particular importance is the priest Kurchi, who rose to the rank of vagnpat (bynpt) as a Turk, who converted to Zoroastrianism, and it was thanks to this information that Zoroastrianism became the common religion of the Sogdians and Turks living here.

Sogdian society took the path of justice and harmony in interethnic relations. For this reason, there is no information about ethnic or religious conflict in the sources.

As we all know, Buddhism was widespread in Central Asia in ancient times, and many archaeological finds and written sources have been found to support this. Accordingly, both Buddhism and Sughd play an important role in demonstrating religious tolerance. Buddhist priests have been regularly sent to Central Asia by China, including Xuanzang, Zhang Chiang, Ban Chao, Zhu Sisheng, Fa Xiang, Sung Yun Hui Sheng, Xuanzang Zang Wu Kung.

Before the rise of the Turkish Khanate, Central Asia was a transit region for the spread of Buddhism in China. Sources say that most Central Asian missionaries were involved in the preaching work. The fact that the names Kang Menxiang from Sogdia and Kang Jixu from Kang appear in the sources confirms our opinion [5.442-443].

Conclusion:-

Chinese historian Wang Jilain said that in China, the Yuechejars were the first to meet Buddhism. Some of the Sogdians of East Turkestan were followers of Buddhism until the emergence of monism. Buddhism itself was not widespread in Sogdia, but its influence can be seen in the visual arts. For example, his paintings on the walls of Penjikent depict Maitreya and the Buddha sitting. These images are distinguished from Buddhist terracotta because of the synthesis of Sogdian and Buddhist traditions.

The Sogdians took an active part in the spread of Buddhism in the territory of the Turkish Khanate. Together with Indian missionaries, the Sogdians acted as interpreters. Among them was Chinogupta, an Indian missionary who was exiled in 574 by order of the Chinese ruler Wu di Northern Emperor Zhou (543-578) and took refuge in the territory of the khanate. The Sogdian language and script played an important role in the translation of Buddhist texts, and some texts were also translated into Turkish.

The above analysis shows that the Sogdians played an important role in the spread and development of Buddhism based on religious tolerance.

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