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THE REFLECTION OF ANCIENT RELIGIOUS VIEWS OF NORTHERN BACTRIA IN FINE ART

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ABSTRACT

This article is devoted to the religions and cults of the Kushan Kingdom. The study of the Kushan Supreme gods is complicated by the complex religious picture in the Kushan state, where there were different religions and cults. The article deals with artifacts found during archaeological excavations: architectural decoration, sculpture, including terracotta statuettes, and paintings. The article also notes the connection of Kushan art with religious cults.

KEYWORDS

Northern Bactria, Kushans, religion, cult, gods, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Buddha, Ahura Mazda, Farro, culture, art.

INTRODUCTION

As in all ancient countries, religious views played an important role in the social and spiritual life of the people of Northern Bactria. It is known that religious concepts have been formed in the thinking of the ancient inhabitants of Central Asia since time immemorial. During the period of the first statehood, the cult of the sun and fire as its reflection, that is, the belief in fire worship, was formed. The inhabitants of the Bronze Age of Northern Bactria believed in the religion of fire worship, and the temple related to it was studied at the Jarkutan monument [1]. Certain religious beliefs and elements reflected in the Avesta, the holy book of the Zoroastrian religion, fully formed

in the Early Iron Age, were fully reflected in the Jarqo'ton temple. The inhabitants of Northern Bactria, who lived in the early Iron and Ahmani periods, believed in Zoroastrianism, as in all the lands of Central Asia.

THE MAIN RESULTS AND FINDINGS

After the conquest by Alexander the Great, especially during the rule of the Greco-Bactrian state, there were no major changes in the religious beliefs of the local population. Numismatic, epigraphic and pictorial art samples testify that the habit of obeying the Greek religion was widespread among the Chalukians and

representatives of the ruling circle of the Greco-Bactrian state [2].

The Aykhaum settlement temple in Afghanistan is dedicated to two eastern deities - female and male deities. In the synagogue, the altar of fire was considered the main object of worship [3]. The Takhti-Sangin religious structure, located in Northern Bactria, near the confluence of the Vakhsh River with the Panj River, was built by B.A.Litvinsky believed that Vakhsh (Okhsho) is a temple of the goddess Amudarya [4]. I.I.Korovchinsky, on the other hand, noted that two goddesses, Nana and Vakhsh (Okhsho), were temples of Amudarya cults [5]. According to both researchers, the temple belonged to the water cult and reflected local religious views.

In the city on the site of Dalvarzintepa, two religious structures belonging to the cult of local goddesses were studied, and they were identified by G.A.Pugachenkova noted as the temple of the goddess Ordokhsha [6]. In the religious worldview of the inhabitants of Northern Bactria, belief in the nature cults of the Zoroastrian religion is widespread, which is fully reflected in the monuments of material culture.

Based on the images on the backs of coins and some statues, research scientists who partially studied the religious views of the ancient times expressed the opinion that some Greek deities lost their previous importance and merged with local gods during the Yuechi and Kushon period. In particular, the Greek goddess Helios was associated with the local Mithras, Nika with Vaninda, and Heracles with Okhsho[7].

After the collapse of the Greco-Bactrian state, it was natural that the socio-political and ethnocultural processes that took place in the country had an impact on the religious attitudes of the population. Nevertheless, the nomadic cattle-breeding tribes

(Saks, Yuechi, et.) who settled in the country kept their religious beliefs for a certain period of time.

Among the population of the Yuechi tribes who moved to Northern Bactria, the belief in the worship of the spirits of ancestors prevailed, and it was valued as a dynastic cult. The cult of ancestor spirit worship is reflected in the image of the equestrian ruler on the reverse of the coins of Geray and Soter Megas, who are considered to be the first Kushon rulers, and in the terracotta figurines.

The rulers of the Kushan state, which first arose in northern Bactria, expanded their territories to the south of Afghanistan, and later to the lands of India. During the reign of Kanishka, who turned the Kushan state into one of the largest empires of the ancient world, Buddhism was accepted as the state religion in the country, Buddhism spread in the Northern Bactrian lands, and its temples were widely built.

T.K.Mkrtychev expressed the opinion that Buddhism spread in the western and eastern directions [8]. It is spread in the western direction to the southern lands of Central Asia. Propagators of this doctrine called the doctrine "Dharma" ("Law, teaching") or "Buddhadharma" ("Buddha's teaching").

After the death of Siddhartha Gautama, there was a split between his followers, and two schools emerged [9]. The first direction it is the Hinayana (little wheel or narrow path of salvation), which strictly adheres to the traditional views of Buddhist teachings. The second direction is the Mahayana (the great wheel or the broad path of salvation), in which the teachings of the Buddha were widely reformed, the Buddha was given a divine character, and the rituals and prayers of the religion were introduced. In the Hinayana school, the Buddha is interpreted as a person who has taken many forms and attained enlightenment, while in the

Mahayana school, the figure of Bodhisattvas (beings striving for perfection) is put forward. It is based on the idea that bodhisattvas are celestial beings who have attained enlightenment and who help humans to attain enlightenment [10].

There are different views among research scientists on the issue of the introduction of Buddhist religious teachings to the lands of Northern Bactria. In particular B.A.Litvinsky believes that Buddhism came to Northern Bactria on the eve of or during the formation of the Kushan state [11]. V.Stavisky, based on the results of the study of Buddhist religious structures in Old Termiz, put forward the opinion that this religious doctrine entered the country during the time of Kanishka [12]. T.K.Mkrtychev expressed the opinion that the emergence of the Buddhist religion and the construction of religious buildings began in the second half of the 1st century AD. Sh.R.Pidaev was the first to meet the Buddhist teachings of the Bactrian population. Dating back to the 1st century BC, he notes that during the formation of the Kushan kingdom, there were large propaganda centers of Buddhists [13]. E.V.Rtveladze of the Greco-Bactrian ruler Agafokles based on the coins minted with the image of a stupa on the back, the Central Asian peoples with the Buddhist teachings. He believes that it was known in the II century BC [14].

It is known that the Buddhist doctrine was originally kept in mind. At the beginning of AD, the book "Tipitaka" (or "Tripitaka", Sanskrit – "Three baskets of wisdom"), containing Buddhist rules and moral principles, appeared.

During the reign of Kanishka I (the first half of the 2nd century BC), Buddhism developed in the territory of Northern Bactria, and this region became one of the main ideological centers. During the rule of the later dynasties of the Kushans, the status of Buddhism was

strengthened and after it took deep roots, it spread to the regions of Margyana, Sughd, Eastern Turkestan, China, and Tibet.

Bactrian monks also made a great contribution to the spread and development of Buddhism among the population. Chinese and Tibetan sources mention the names of Dharmamitara from Tarmita and Ghoshaka from Takharistan among the propagators of Buddhism. Apart from the temples of Karatepa and Fayoztepa from the Kushon era, there are stupas such as Zurmala and Ayritom in Old Termiz. An inscription in Indian script on a stupa identified from the site of Ayritom mentions the name of a person named Shadiya. E.V.Rtveladze, was the deputy (satrap or canarang) of the administrative division in Northern Bactria, which was subordinate to the central authority and carried out construction works in Ayritom on the orders of Kushonshah Khuvishka.

The Mahayana branch of Buddhism spread during the Kushon period in Northern Bactria. Manifestations of this direction are the founder of the Buddhist religious doctrine, Prince Siddhartha Gautama, who established the custom of visiting stupas in the Buddhist religious faith and the youthful image of the Buddha.

A stupa is a temple in the burial place of the Buddha ("stupa" is Sanskrit for "the embodiment of the universe", a type of structure on the way up to the mound of tombs, a place where the corpse is kept). According to the teachings of Buddhism, Siddhartha Gautama created his religious teachings under a botchi tree. Later, he built stupas in his honor and placed a canopy over them.

The first stupa was built over the Buddha's tomb in India. Temples in northern Bactrian Kushan cities, particularly the stupas in the temple complexes of

Karatepa and Fayoztepa, and the Zurmala and Ayritom stupas may allude to a visit to the Buddha's tomb [15].

G.A.Pugachenkova according, the majestic Zurmala stupa symbolizes parinirvana. In Buddhist teachings, parinirvana is considered the final stage of nirvana, based on the concept that a person attains enlightenment after physically leaving the light world.

On the coins of the Kushanshah rulers Kanishka and Khuvishka, the sun god Mitra (the god of “covenant” in the Avesta and later in Sugd), the moon god Max, the wind god Vado, and the fire god Atsho are depicted more often. Among other deities mentioned in the Avesta, these coins also represent Pharro, the god of fame and nobility, while gods such as Ardohsho and Vakhshu, the goddess of victory depicted in winged female form, Hwaninda, are directly iconographically associated with or merged with Nika. Shahrevar, the god of royal power and metals, Lruvasp (Drvasp in the Avesta) was considered the guardian of livestock.

Research scholars believe that the Kushon era goddess Farro is closely related to the one-eyed figure of Kubera, the god of wealth known as “Kubera Vaishravana” in Buddhism. The name of Farro's deity appears in inscriptions found at the Fayoztepa Buddhist temple and Dalvarzintepa settlements. Farro was known among the local population even before the Kushan period, when the Kushan rulers Kanishka and Khuvishka depicted this deity on their coins [16]. Along with Farro, the goddess Ardoxha is depicted, and researchers speculate that she may have been Farro's wife [17].

The 2nd-century gold coins (weight 8.01 g) with the name of Khuvishka show the bust of the ruler facing left with a headdress, holding a spear and a scepter. On the reverse side is a spearman Farro holding fire in his hand. To the left of the deity is the seal of the ruler

Khuvishka, and to the right is the name of Farro written in Bactrian [18].

Aredvi-Sura-Anakhita (Nahit) is depicted as the goddess of water and fertility in the religious views of the ancient Eastern peoples, especially in the legends of the peoples of Central Asia. In Avesta, the holy book of Zoroastrianism, Ardisura is dedicated to Ardisur-Yasht or Abon-Yasht [19].

At first, Ardvi was understood as the source of the world's waters flowing from the peaks of Mount Khukaria in the divine kingdom of the world, and later the water itself, from which all the waters and rivers of the earth began, began to be called by this name. Ardisura is declared to be the daughter of Anahita Ahuramazda. He was asked to make a sacrifice, to bestow strength and power like the famous Iranian and Turanian bahadirs.

CONCLUSION

Anahita is described as an “angel” responsible for the waters before the creator god, and is also the name of one of the mythical rivers that descended from the stars to earth at the command of Ahura Mazda, as cited in the Abon Yasht.

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