



Culture of the People of Central Asia in the V-XII Centuries

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Abstract: *The article is topical, devoted to the analysis and development of the culture of the peoples of Central Asia since ancient times. One of the most important laws operating throughout the history of world culture is continuity. Each new stage in the process of the historical development of culture, negating the previous one, includes all its progressive content, all that has been acquired by mankind at the preceding stages. Humanity, climbing the ladder of historical progress, passing from one civilization to another, moving within each given civilization, does not create anew its material and spiritual culture each time, but relies on the results previously achieved.*

Keywords: *laws of culture; uneven development of culture; culture and civilization; style; sculpture; folklore.*

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In the early Middle Ages, due to the intensive development of trade along the Silk Road, the cultural and diplomatic ties of the peoples of Central Asia, China, India, Iran, and Byzantium expanded. The mutual influence of the cultures of the agricultural population and the nomadic tribes of the pastoral steppes increased. The peoples of Central Asia were drawn into the process of world history, when the multifaceted and unusually peculiar culture of the early Middle Ages was formed and developed. Culture is reflected in religion, material values and works of art. The construction ideas and plans of the architects of the early Middle Ages were creatively embodied in the engineering solutions, architectural styles and interior decoration of palaces, castles, temples, defensive structures of Sogda, Khorezm and Tokharistan.

By the middle of the 5th century, a new powerful state was formed on the territory of Central Asia – the Hephthalites. The Hephthalites are a semi-sedentary people with large fortified settlements with huge communal houses. As material monuments show, the economy of the Hephthalites was of a complex nature: it combined agriculture (barley, millet, and other crops were grown), with cattle breeding (large and small cattle, horses, and camels were bred) and fishing. In the cities, crafts and trade. This period refers to the heyday of the production of colored glass, which was exported from Central Asia to China. Trade was important, they traded with Iran, Byzantium, India, and China. Participating in world trade, they issued their own coin. This phenomenon can be seen as a manifestation of the process of decentralization that accompanied the formation of medieval relations. The army of the Hephthalites was very strong. They conquered a vast territory, and their ethnic composition was correspondingly diverse.

Owning the Great Silk Road and trade ports, the Hephthalites took an active part in international trade. In foreign and domestic trade, Sassanid silver coins were widely used. Small copper coinage

of the rulers of Bukhara, Samarkand and Khorezm was also circulated in domestic trade. Changes in social and political life were reflected in architecture, construction, and some types of fine arts.

During this period, the population of Sogda, Khorezm and Tokharistan had their own written language. Of these, Sogdian and Khorezmian originated on the basis of the ancient Aramaic script. The writing system of Tokharistan, in turn, was based on Sogdian and Khorezm. Despite the fact that in the early Middle Ages in Central Asia and in many countries of the East, including China, the production of paper was well established, it was very expensive. Letters, documents, and other inscriptions were often written on wood, bones, pottery, and only very rarely on paper. Inscriptions were made on the walls of palaces and temples.

The early medieval system of government, a developed economy, international trade, and diplomatic relations with countries required widespread literacy. In contrast to Sassanid Iran, where literacy was rare at that time and was the privilege mainly of the priests. In Central Asia Writing was more widespread. The population was fluent in Sogdian and Turkic languages. Bilingualism was particularly prevalent among the urban population. But even among the literate nobility of the Khaganate there were many people who were fluent in the Sogdian language.

The ancient Runic script (of the Asian Turks) was invented by experts in the Sogdian and Turkic languages. This script is based on Aramaic, it was a completely new system of signs that clearly convey the phonetic features of the Turkic language. This alphabet of the Turks, borrowed from two scripts, consisted of 38-40 letters.

Thus, in the early Middle Ages, the Turkic world, thanks to the Sogdians, joined the high cultural achievements of the peoples of Central Asia and the Middle East.

In the period of the Turkic Khaganate, an important occupation of the population was internal and foreign trade. During this period, trade routes shifted from south to north. In the period from 627 to 647, nine trade embassies were sent from Samarkand to China.

In the VI-VIII centuries, the population of Central Asia professed the Zoroastrian religion and Buddhism, Manichaeism and shamanism were encountered. Zoroastrians prevailed in Khorezm, Sogd and Chach, which is clearly evidenced by the numerous finds of ossuaries – vessels for storing the bones of the deceased among Zoroastrians.

According to the views of Zoroastrianism. There are two principles in the world – good and evil. Good is personified by the god Ahuramazda and his assistants, who idealized good, justice – immortality, etc. Evil – the god Ahriman and his helpers – the virgins. According to the teachings of the Zoroastrians, the universe consists of four elements: fire, earth, water and air, they were sacred. It was forbidden to defile them with dirty things. To the point that it was forbidden to bury the bodies of the deceased in earth, fire, water or leave them on the grass. In the house of the deceased, no fire was lit for several days, no food was cooked. The bodies of the deceased were left on rocky hills or on the roof of the dakhma, a mausoleum specially built outside the city. After the predators ate the soft tissues and the sun dried the bones, they were collected and placed in an ossuary, and the remains were transferred to a special tomb called a naus.

In the southern regions of Central Asia, in the cities of Takharistan, Fergana, Semirechye and East Turkestan, Buddhism became widespread. According to the Chinese traveler of the 7th century Xuan Jian, there were several hundred Buddhist temples in East Turkestan.

According to written sources, there were many people in Central Asia who professed Christianity. In the Urgut district of the Samarkand region, it was considered the center of Christianity. In all likelihood, Christianity came from Merv to Sogd in the 5th-6th centuries. Arab authors of the 8th-9th centuries also mention in their works the Christians who lived in Bukhara, Samarkand and Semirechye. The existence of Christian communities in these areas is also evidenced by

archaeological finds: a fragment of ceramics near Urgut depicts one of the main rites of Christians – baptism. A priest in a long cassock holds in his left hand book, and in the right cross stands in front of the believer, depicted without a headdress, kneeling.

In the early Middle Ages, Manichaeism took deep root in the religious ideas of the peoples of Central Asia. This religion appeared on the basis of Zoroastrianism, Christianity and Buddhism in the sermons of a certain Mani (216-274), who lived in the city of Byblos (Syria). According to tradition, he began to preach in Iran. But his teaching was strongly rebuffed by the Zoroastrian priests. Later, Mani's supporters established themselves in the southern regions of Central Asia and East Turkestan.

The cattle-breeding population of the Turkic Khaganate has long had shamanism. This early form of religion was based on the animistic notion that every thing had a spirit, a soul. The ancient Turks called their religion kam. In the 6th-8th centuries, Buddhist and Christian communities appeared among the pastoral population, and even Turkic rulers patronized these religions.

Thus, in the VI-VIII centuries, Central Asia was distinguished by religious tolerance. Its population professed Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Christianity, Manichaeism and shamanism. On the basis of the fusion of different religious beliefs, the material and spiritual culture of Central Asia was formed and developed.

In the VI-VIII centuries in the cities of Central Asia, along with crafts, construction and architecture, various directions of fine arts, in particular painting and sculpture, also developed. This is reflected in the wall paintings and ganch carvings in the palaces of the early Middle Ages, in the sculptures of Buddhist temples, ceramic figurines, as well as images and inscriptions on coins.

Samples of original art monuments of the early Middle Ages were studied from archaeological finds at the ancient settlement of Varakhsha (in the Bukhara oasis). Among them there are various geometric figures, fruit trees, hunting scenes, animals (horses, deer, argali, wild boars).

In the VII-VIII centuries the art of music was also developed in Central Asia. During this period, Bukhara was famous for its musicians and singers, Samarkand for its flute masters, Tashkent for its dancers, Khotan for its sunay masters, and Kucha for its composers.

The most vivid representation of the art of the pre-Islamic period in the culture of Central Asia is given by monumental painting in the palace of the Samarkand rulers on Afrasiab. The palace is badly damaged. The preserved paintings on the walls of the palace make it possible to restore the general appearance of the interior and the throne room. The paintings on the four walls depicted the ceremony of receiving foreign ambassadors with gifts by the Sogdian king Varhuman.

Thus, on the eve of the disappearance of figurativeness and the establishment of a new religion – Islam, the Afrosiab paintings were preserved as unique works of monumental painting of the early Middle Ages.

At the end of the VII - the beginning of the VIII centuries. Central Asia was conquered by the Arab Caliphate. Islam was a turning point in the development of the culture of the peoples of Central Asia. In a short period of time, Islam turned into a state religion, deeply penetrating into all spheres of human life and society. It was at this time that the formation and development of a new style took place, which laid the foundation for the so-called Muslim culture.

The Arab conquest brought to the peoples of Central Asia the devastation of cities, the intensification of exploitation, the destruction of religions, the destruction of cultural and scientific monuments, the implantation of a new religion, and the introduction of the Arabic language, which began to be used not only in Muslim theology.

The process of revival of local artistic traditions is associated with the change in the political situation in Central Asia with the coming to power of the Samanid dynasty. Many ancient buildings are covered with world fame, such as the mausoleum of the Samanids in Bukhara (IX-X centuries), a square building covered with kupala, rich and diverse patterns on the walls, made of figured bricks resembling patterned weaving, of the later period of Tyurabek-khanym in Urgench, Gur-Emir, the Shakhi-Zinda ensemble in Samarkand, etc. Initially, the composition of the buildings under construction continued to preserve the old traditions. Such is the mausoleum of Ismail Samani in Bukhara – a simple domed structure. The mausoleum is considered one of the most perfect works of world culture.

In the X-XII centuries. The construction of minarets, which gave the city grandeur and beauty, became widespread. The Kalyan Minaret, or the Great Bukhara Minaret, built in 1102-1130, consists of a huge round pillar tapering upwards. Inside it is a spiral staircase with a height of more than 46 meters. The minaret ended with a rotunda (lantern) with 16 arched windows. The minaret served as a place for Muslims to gather for prayer, and at the same time it was used to monitor the movement of the enemy during the war. According to legend, criminals condemned to death were thrown from the minaret, hence its later name "Tower of Death"

In the history of human civilization, peoples all over the world have contributed to the development of both science and culture. The Central Asian region has also made a significant contribution to the development of human civilization.

In medieval times, there were many scientists and scientific schools in Central Asia, and the Mamun Academy in Khorezm can serve as a vivid example of this. The Mamun Academy functioned until 1017, there was a lot of scientific research in the field of astronomy, mathematics, medicine, chemistry, physics, geography, mineralogy, history, philosophy, literature, linguistics, jurisprudence and other sciences.

The resolution of the 32nd session of the General Conference of UNESCO in 2003 and the order of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan of November 9, 2004 on the celebration of the anniversaries: the 1000th anniversary of the Mamun Academy in Khorezm, and the anniversaries of scientists who made a huge contribution to the development of science and culture.

The Great Silk Road was not only a road of trade caravans, but also a route of ethnic migrations, as well as cultural, spiritual, political and economic ties connecting various countries and historical and cultural regions of the Near and Middle East. Large-scale trade operations were carried out along the Great Silk Road, diplomatic treaties and military alliances were concluded. The peoples of Central Asia played an outstanding role in the spread of alphabetic writing and world religions (Buddhism, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, Islam), as well as many cultural and technical achievements to the countries of Inner Asia and the Far East.

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