

THE CULT OF WATER IN THE ANCIENT BELIEFS OF THE UZBEKS OF THE FERGANA VALLEY

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<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10471818>

Abstract. *This article explores the historical role of water in the development and beliefs of primitive ancient people. The focus is given to the valley of Fergana in the territory of Uzbekistan. The paper analyzes how cult of water originated and developed over the civiliaziation of people.*

Keywords: *cult, yir – suv, sib – ir, umay, sky water, Vedas, Hindu texts.*

According to the imagination of primitive people, certain properties of water led to its deification. For example, water is always in motion, it changes its color under the light of the stars, can take different forms, turns into steam under the influence of heat, freezes under the influence of cold, gives life to all creatures in nature. Ancient historical sources also prove that such divine views of water exist in many peoples of the world. In particular, according to the imagination of the ancient Egyptians, water has a life-giving quality - the waters of the sky water the earth and make it possible for life to develop[1]. Water is compared to life-giving fluids in the body (blood and sweat); according to these ideas, water was poured into the embalmed body in order to replace the "waters of life" that had run out in ancient Egypt. In general, the ancient Egyptians understood water as the basis of nature and sanctified water. The custom of worshiping holy water was expressed in the rituals of cleansing from sins and offering drinks to water gods by all the priests under the leadership of the pharaohs[2]. In India, water is valued all over the world as the keeper of life circulating in the form of rain, sap of plants, and blood[3]. We can see this in the example of the ancient Hindu texts of the Vedas, in which Indra, the rain-giving and life-giving god, is highly revered. Even in ancient Mesopotamia, water was interpreted as a symbol of life and water worship was widespread. In the Mesopotamian pantheon, water gods were among the highest deities. The great flood, which is considered one of the oldest legends in the history of the world (the "twelfth clay tablet" from the oldest surviving examples of the Gilgamesh epic contains information about the great flood) and the water gods Apsu and the legends about Tiamat also originated in ancient Mesopotamia[4]. The ancient Chinese considered water to be the source of all life[5]. In general, many peoples of the world believed that everything in the world was created on the basis of water[6]. For example, according to the mythological views of the ancient Turks, in the early times when life appeared on the earth, there was no land on the earth and it was completely covered with water. According to one of such ancient Turkish legends, in the beginning, the whole existence was boundless water, in which the White Maiden floated with her son Ulgan on her shoulders. Ulgan created land with the help of his mother-in-law. In order to strengthen the earth, i.e. the land, he placed three large fish along the ground[7].

The ancient Turks strongly believed in the presence of hidden power and spirit in the forces of nature. Earth and water were believed to have particularly powerful spirits. They have different names among Turkic peoples "Yer-Su", "Yer-Sub", "Yer-Suv", "Suv-Yer", "Yir-Sub", "Sub-

Yer”)said. There are hypotheses that the name of the Siberian (Sib-ir) valley, where Turkic peoples lived in ancient times, was derived from these sacred concepts[8]. Even “Sub-Yer” with the passage of time in the belief of the ancient Turks, “Tangri” va “Umay” was raised to the level of patron of the Turks. The proof of this is in the inscriptions of Kultegin “Sub-Yer” we can see when his name is mentioned separately and it is mentioned that he is the protector of the "holy water and land" of the Turks[9].

It is worth noting that among the nations of the world today, it is very difficult to find a nation that did not deify water and did not have water gods and goddesses in their ancient beliefs. For example, the gods Abzu, Enki, Sirsir, Enbilulu of the ancient Mesopotamian peoples, Poseidon, Triton, Amphitrite and Hydros of the ancient Greeks, Hapi, Anuket, Sebek, Neit, Nephthys, Tefnut and Isis of the ancient Egyptians, the god Baal of the Assyrians, Atl and Atlas of the Aztecs, Chak of the Mayans, Voron, Nii, Pereplut and Dana of the ancient Slavs, Suidzin, Mizuchi, Susanu of the Japanese, Imugi of the Koreans, Sekwana of the ancient Gauls, Arnemetsia of the ancient Britons, Netuns of the Etruscans, Yarun, Apam Napat, Ganga and the ancient Indians Saraswati, Ingana and Wirnpas of the ancient Australian aborigines, Akionna, Belizama, and Panli of the ancient Celts, Gonggong, Mazu, Hebo and Longmusi of the ancient Chinese, Vedenemo and Vellamos of the ancient Finnish people, Devi Danu and Devi Lanjar of the ancient Indonesian people, Nord of the ancient Scandinavian people Among them are water gods and goddesses such as Nyx, Freyr[1].

Uzbeks, like many peoples in the world, have a unique faith and belief in water since the earliest times. Archaeological materials and historical sources testify that before the arrival of Islam in Central Asia, religions such as Zoroastrianism, Shamanism, Buddhism, Monism, and Christianity were widespread along with local cults such as the belief of ancestors, the cult of nature and agrarian cults. . Belief in different religions, faiths and cults is undoubtedly one of the characteristics of the people of Ferghana Valley[10].

Shamanism was widely spread in Central Asia in ancient times and played an important role in the history of the Turkic peoples. According to historical sources, shamanism appeared at a certain stage of animistic beliefs.

In ancient times, the Turkic peoples who believed in shamanism considered water to be sacred and strongly believed in its liberating and divine power. They imagined that water protects a person from any disaster, misfortune, even death. According to their belief, water is a symbol of soul, spirit, immortality, eternal life. One of the main elements of shamanism can be seen in divination. Shamans mostly used water in the process of divination. Fortune-telling was performed by looking at water in a special container or by throwing a certain object (cotton, dry tea) and rolling it in water. In general, the cult of water is of special importance in shamanism, and its magical properties are strongly believed. One of the main professions of shamans in the Fergana Valley was the treatment of the sick. After the patients were treated, what they wore during the treatment "treatment" was flushed into the running water. The main purpose of this is that the evil spirits that came out of the patient's body will get into the clothes he wears during the treatment, and it is believed that only running water can repel this evil. These customs can still be found in the Fergana Valley[10].

In general, the appearance of water on Earth and its interpretation as a sacred element can be found in many places of the religious views of the ancient Turkic peoples. Ethnologist L.Potapov says that Altai shamans consider water to be one of the fundamental elements in the

creation of the universe. L.Potapov's opinion is confirmed by Turkic scholar Murat Oroz. According to him, water is the most ancient and sacred element in the imagination of the Turks. According to Altai legends, before anything was created on Earth, Kara Khan first appeared with the great water "Toloy". According to Murat Oroz, the Turks considered water to be a source of strength and blessing, as well as a means of ensuring longevity.

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