

FROM THE PAGE “ENEOLITHIC PERIOD FIRE ALTARS IN THE SOUTHERN ARAL SEA REGION”*N. Duschanova**Author: Researcher*

Abstract: The article analyzes the fire-related beliefs of the Eneolithic period population in the Lower Amu Darya region.

Key words: Baratov P., Kes A.S., Tolstov S.P., Bizhanov E.B., Ghulomov Ya.Gh., Islamov U.I., Askarov A., Vinogradov A.V., Mamedov E.D., Superzhitsky L.D., Kholmatov N.U., Turon, Sultan Uvays, Aral Sea region, Dovdon, Tuyamuyin, Qamishli 1, 2, Isatoy, Churuk, Kaskajal, Darbazakir 1, 2, Uchashchi-131, Chorbakti.

Introduction : The article considers the study of fire worship among the Eneolithic and Bronze Age populations of the Khorezm oasis. It examines the preservation of the sacred significance of fire, a tradition from the Neolithic tribal communities, during this historical period. Historical information recorded in the publications of the Khorezm archaeological expedition serves as the theoretical basis for the research.

Literature Review: The Khorezm oasis, located in the boundless plains of northwestern Turan, was formed as a result of underground tectonic movements. Its geographical expanse is bordered in the west by the Karakum desert and the Aral Sea, in the east by the Kyzylkum desert, in the south by the Karakum desert, and in the west by the Ustyurt plateau, with the Sultan Uvays mountains to the southeast. The total area of the oasis was about 46,000 sq. km, with its southern border stretching from the Tuyamuyin area to the southern shores of the Aral Sea, a distance of 400 km. The southern width measured 10–12 km, the Khorezm–Tashhavuz width 75–80 km, and the Sultan Uvays mountains–Aral Sea distance 140–150 km [1, pp. 154–155].

As a result of Amu Darya’s changing course, the Khorezm oasis and its southern extensions formed the Sarykamysh region, the right-bank Akchadarya, and the Aral Sea basin [2, p. 73]. According to publications of the Khorezm expedition, more than 250 villages and towns were photographed from the air over a 9000 km route, enabling archaeological research [3, pp. 177–181].

In the works of A.V. Vinogradov, Neolithic settlements were noted mainly in the Turtkul and Beruni districts, while on the left bank they were located near Tuyamuyin and in the Kuyisoy heights by the Dovdon river. Here, circular-shaped fire altars in dwellings indicated beliefs connected to fire.

Publications mention that around the Tuyamuyin and southeastern Akchadarya tributary, as well as near Yonboshqala heights, no direct evidence of ethnic interactions of the Janbos-4 tribal descendants was found. However, in the northern area of the Sultan Uvays mountains, the Qamishli 1 and 2 sites preserved traditions of fire altars [4, p. 42].

E.B. Bizhanov recorded that in the western Southern Aral region, the descendants of Neolithic tribes living in open settlements on the Ustyurt plateau (Isatoy, Churuk, Kaskajal, Oqtumsuq) revered sunlight as sacred and used fire altars during ethnic interactions [5, pp. 18–79].

On the right bank of the Amu Darya, in the geographical conditions of the Kyzylkum desert, the Lower Zarafshan valley's Neolithic settlements (Darbazakir 1 and 2) had fire altars in their centers, serving as tribal temples [6, pp. 15–25].

According to historical data, in the Darsoy tributary basin of the Zarafshan River, the central fire altar at the Uchashchi-131 site served the religious needs of the early Neolithic population (second half to end of the 6th millennium BC) [7, pp. 267–269].

N.U. Kholmatov recorded more than 60 Neolithic tribal settlements in the Chorbaqti basin near Gazli. Archaeological excavations at Chorbaqti revealed traces of fire hearths in dwellings [8, pp. 4–32]. In the

Lower Zarafshan valley, Neolithic settlements in the Akchadarya basin were included in the Kaltaminor cultural complex.

Research Methodology

- Scientific objectivity
- Historical-chronological analysis
- Theoretical-comparative interpretation
- Debate and discussion
- Evidence-based reasoning
- Generalization and logical conclusions

Analysis and Results:

Based on archaeological findings from the right and left banks of the Amu Darya by the Khorezm expedition, along with historical records in various scholarly works, the fire-worship traditions of the Eneolithic and Bronze Age populations were analyzed.

It was found that Neolithic traditions of fire worship persisted. The daily life of tribal communities was organized under the guidance of a “Mother” figure, with the fire altar functioning as a temple within the settlement.

Main results obtained:

- The population of the Qamishli settlements, located northwest of the Sultan Uvays mountains on the right bank of the Amu Darya, productively used water resources and continued the fire-worship traditions of the Janbos-4 people.
- In the southern-western Kuyisoy heights area by the Dovdon river in the Sarykamys region on the left bank of the Amu Darya, Eneolithic populations preserved the fire worship of earlier Neolithic tribes (Tumekkichidzhik).
- In Tuyamuyin, descendants of Neolithic inhabitants lived in Qushquloq, Qarriqizil, and Sultan Sanjar dwellings, continuing fire-worship traditions while engaging in ethnic relations.
- The economic and ethno-cultural relations of Eneolithic society developed on the basis of Neolithic tribal heritage.

Conclusion and Recommendations:

From the historical data presented in the article, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Due to population growth in the Janbos-4 settlement, migration to neighboring territories occurred. In the process of expanding geographic boundaries and maintaining ethnic interactions, these communities also established fire worship practices and agricultural traditions in the newly settled areas.
- Fire altars were located in the central part of dwellings and were under the control of the tribal leader.

Recommendations:

1. To study how the early Janbos-4 tribes regarded sunlight as sacred, the role of the fire altar within the settlement, and both the positive and negative aspects of its role in daily life.
2. To explore the historical significance of fire-related religious beliefs in human activity through authentic sources.
3. To analyze the historical importance of fire in human physiological development and formation.

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