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UZBEK PEOPLE'S PHYTOLATRIC VIEWS

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Abstract
This article analyzes the phytolatrical (plant world) views of the Uzbeks of the Fergana Valley from a historical, philological, and ethnographic perspective. In the article, the author focuses on the plants that play an important role in the daily life of the Uzbeks of the valley, their types and functions, the place names associated with them, and the religious and secular interpretations of these elements.

Keywords: Fergana Valley, Uzbeks, phytolatry, rituals, customs, traditions, tree, mulberry, pomegranate, willow, jiyda, agriculture, livestock, shamanism, attributes.

Introduction

It is known from history that plants are closely connected with the material history of mankind and have played an important role in people's daily life and economic activities. Naturally, plants were also considered a source of raw materials for humans and an abundant feed base for livestock. That is why people began to use various plant names as place names. Such names served as a kind of landmark in the farming and livestock life of tribes and peoples. In this way, toponyms of the oikonym type appeared.

In the process of collecting information on the topic, Yu. Ne'matova also studied and divided phytoeconomies in the Namangan region into plant and tree names, and gave examples of phytoeconomies such as Qarayantoq (Yangikurgan district), Qaratikan (Uychi district), Kanopli (Pop district) for plant names, Chinor (Pop district), Majnuntol (Turakurgan district), Beshtol (Chortoq district) for ornamental tree names, and Zhiydazor (Chust district), Zhiydakapa and Shaftoli (Uychi district), Buramatut (Turakurgan district) for fruit tree names [1. P. 60].

There are also phytoeconomies of various names in the Fergana Valley. Words denoting plant and tree species actively participate in the naming of this type of place names. For example, the word "jiyda": Chilgijiyda - the name of a neighborhood in Furqat district. Chilgijiyda - means a village built in a place where early-ripening varieties of jiyda grow in abundance. There is also a large village called Jiydakapa in the Uychi district of the Namangan region.

Oykonyms formed with the word "Mut". Yakkatut - settlements in the Uychi and Pop districts of the Namangan region, and the Uzbek and Beshariq districts of the Fergana region. It means a tree and its fruit, the leaves of which are the main food for silkworms.

Oyonyms formed with the word "tol". Qoratol - the name of a neighborhood in the village of Tumor, Dang'ara district. Yakkatol - means "a single willow". There is also a village with the

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same name in the Mingbulok district of the Namangan region. Beshtol - the name of a village in the Chortoq district of the Namangan region.

Oyonyms formed with the word "Terak". Terak - a village in the Mingbulok district. The word "terak" was also used as the basis for the name Beshterak in the Buvayda district.

Oyonyms formed with the word "Chinor". Mingchinor - the name of a village and railway station in the Pop district. A lot of plane trees were planted, so this place was called Mingchinor.

Phyto-oikonyms, which indicate the scarcity and number of plants, include appellative words such as “yakka”, “ikki”, “qo’sh”, “uch”, “to’rt”, “chor” (four). Village names such as Yakkatol (Mingbulaq district), Yakkatut (Uychi, Uzbekistan and Beshariq districts), Qoshqayrag’och (Turakurgan district) are among such oikonyms [2. Field notes. Settlements of the Fergana Valley. 2022–2025].

Thus, phyto-oikonyms in the Fergana Valley are distinguished by their diversity. It can be observed that phyto-oikonyms are mainly formed from the names of plants or trees, and at the same time, the main motif of these oikonyms is the type of plants, their scarcity and abundance.

Now let us analyze the phyto-olatric views of the Uzbek people from an ethnographic perspective. Like other ethnic groups of the world, the Uzbeks of the Fergana Valley considered trees sacred. In addition, the inhabitants of the valley imagined nature, its integral part, trees and plants, as a god or a fragment separated from the god. According to the Turkish historian Murat Oroz, the Altai shamans worshiped the birch tree, considered it more divine than other trees, and performed sacrificial rituals around it as a symbol of respect for it [3. P. 11].

Tree worship took various forms among different peoples [4. P. 9–31]. Philosopher E. Berezikov admits that Altai shamans, when trying to cure patients, always carried with them a piece of white birch bark and a piece of it (a leaf or a broken branch). Because they imagined that the white birch tree was sent from heaven to the lesser god Umay by the great god Ulgen, and therefore was used by their souls during religious ceremonies [5. P. 11]. It should be noted that in Scotland the birch tree was associated with the souls of the dead, while in the Baltic and Central Asian peoples it was revered as a symbol of purity [6. P. 68].

The theme of the “Tree of Life” occupies an important place in the folk crafts of Uzbekistan. The widespread use of self-supporting structures such as domes, domes, and arches in local traditional architecture was due to the scarcity of trees in Central Asia. Juniper and plane trees have long been considered sacred. For example, according to folk beliefs, the plane tree is a symbolic equivalent of the “tree of life” that preserves the souls of people. Therefore, in some regions of the Fergana Valley, planting a plane tree is considered one of the most meritorious deeds, and the person who planted it has been respected among the people for many years. Because the plane tree was valued among the local population for its richness in freshness and the ability to remove toxins from the soil [7. Field notes. Tumor village, Dangara district, Fergana region. 2022].

Fir and plane trees have long been revered as objects of sacred power among other ethnic groups of the world. These trees became the tombs of saints during the Islamic era. Girls told them their secrets, tied flowers to the branches of the tree, hoping that their dreams would come true.

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In southern Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, the plane tree is especially revered. Turkmens are afraid to waste dried plane branches by burning them as firewood [8. P. 35].

The symbol of the pomegranate tree represents blessing and fertility. In ancient pottery, the goddess Anahita is often depicted as a pomegranate. This tree is often depicted in Afrosiab patterns created in the 6th–8th centuries. In some villages in the southern part of Central Asia, the inhabitants believe that pomegranates help in the birth of a child. In the process of weaving the image of a pomegranate tree on fabric, the women weavers try to express its symbol of blessing and abundant harvest. As for the mulberry tree, its sanctification began in China due to its great importance in silk production [9. P. 81].

Along with other trees, the mulberry tree is also highly valued among the inhabitants of the mountainous regions of the Fergana Valley. For example, in some mountainous parts of the valley, on New Year's Eve, the owner of the house hangs a bunch of mulberries from the ceiling. They believe that this will help them get a bountiful harvest of grain crops next year [10. Field notes. Chorkesar town, Pop district, Namangan region. 2024]. In pre-Islamic times, childless women in Khorezm soaked their bodies with tree water in the hope of having children [11. C. 204].

Views related to the cult of trees are also found in the traditional way of life of the Uzbek people. In particular, the Uzbeks of the Fergana Valley believe that trees such as apricot, walnut, mulberry, willow, fig, and quince have their own “spirits”. For example, such a custom exists among the residents of the village of Qoshtepa, Pop district, Namangan region. A house where a newborn baby is lying is considered a “chillali uy” (a house with a veil), and no one is allowed to enter it after dusk. This is because, according to popular belief, after dusk all evil spirits go out and can attach themselves to a person walking on the street at this time. Therefore, a person who comes home after dusk can hug a fruit tree three times and then enter his house. Then the tree can take all the people who have attached themselves to that person into its embrace [12. Field notes. Qoshtepa village, Pop district, Namangan region. 2024].

The ritual of tying a piece of cloth with intention to the sacred mulberry tree in the grave, common to most villagers in the Fergana Valley, and the circumambulation of the flower of the armugon tree by female pilgrims, according to ethnologist A. Ashirov, is a symbolic indication of the establishment of a magical dialogue between the worshiper and the object of faith or between man and nature [13. P. 85]. Also, during the ceremony, the grave of the god Do'sti was visited, and prayers were offered from the verses of the Quran to the departed ancestors and the spirit of the god Do'sti. This is evidence of the intermingling of animistic concepts with Islamic concepts.

As in all religious beliefs, shamanism has a positive attitude towards trees and their components. This can be seen in the example of ritual attributes used during shamanic rituals. For example, Uzbek, Tajik and Uyghur shamans also use a khivchin made from tree branches in healing processes. V. Basilov notes that strong and famous shamans used khivchin, while new or weak shamans used ordinary sticks [14. C. 80].

According to G. P. Snesarev, the method of healing with a bundle of sticks made of tree branches goes back to Zoroastrianism. In Zoroastrianism, a khivchin made of willow was

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considered the main means of driving away evil spirits [15. C. 55–57]. Herodotus reports that Scythian shamans used willow branches to tell fortunes and performed shamanic rituals under the trees [16. C. 93].

The shamans of the Fergana Valley prepare the khivchin in early spring, use it all year round, and renew it every year at the same time. The khivchin are tied in a bundle and hung in the corner of the house where the ritual is performed. The number of branches in the khivchin is forty-one. The bakhshi grabs the lower part of the khivchin and, first, turns it over the patient from right to left and turns it three times. Then he begins to hit the patient's head and back. This action is performed in order to drive away evil spirits that have harmed the patient [17. Field notes. Tuzlikmozor village, Balikchi district, Andijan region. 2024]. A similar custom existed in other regions of Uzbekistan, and in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Samarkand healers used willow branches to spray liquids on patients. In addition, in Khorezm and Samarkand, fortune-tellers used seven willow branches with leaves rolled up to drive away giants and demons [18. P. 45].

K. Shoniyozov noted that among the Kipchaks, the shaman's khichin was made from jiyda and willow branches and was mainly used to drive away evil spirits that had entered the patient's body during the "ko'chirma" ceremony [19. C. 329], and another researcher L. Troitskaya wrote about shamans working in Tashkent and Samarkand at the beginning of the 20th century who used a whip to strike the patient's head and shoulders forty-one times to relieve pain [20. C. 153].

From the above information, it can be concluded that, like all elements, the tree has always been sacred among the Uzbeks of the Fergana Valley, as well as among the peoples of the world. The tree has been valued not only as a means of cooling, but also as a means of driving away evil spirits. Archaic views on the tree are common elements in the mythology and ethnography of the peoples of the world, and it was considered a symbol of fertility and strength. The fact that the tree is a symbol of life contributes to a more positive change in the attitude towards it and the formation of an ecological culture in the minds of young people.

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