



SYMBOLS IN ISLAM: SOME QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SYMBOLIC MEANINGS OF THE CRESCENT MOON AND STARS

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ABSTRACT

This article summarizes information about the importance of religious symbols in human life, the fact that there are many religions in the world, and each religion includes several symbols, and the stages of their formation. In addition, in this article, the crescent moon and star, which are the symbols of the world religion of Islam, were analyzed with the help of source and historical literature.

KEY WORDS: religion, Islam, symbol, Abu Nasr Farabi, Mesopotamia, crescent, star, flag, mosque, V.V. Bartold.

INTRODUCTION

A person is born in such a way that he believes in something and someone throughout his life. This belief is based on the concept of faith. From the point of view of secular science, religion is one of the forms of social consciousness that appeared at a certain stage of the historical development of human society, and this worldview is formed based on the demands and needs of society in certain historical periods and conditions. The great thinker Abu Nasr Farabi considered religion as one of the two independent ways to reach the truth along with philosophy. According to Farabi, the proofs of the problems in philosophy were explained by the prophets in the form of symbols [1].

When it comes to symbols, scientists from different fields give different definitions that are not similar to each other. However, in general, the word symbol is used as a synonym for the word symbol, meaning a sign, symbol, symbol, etc. [2]. Symbols are one of the most mysterious phenomena of culture, such phenomena and things can appear only in the human mind. Symbols began to appear in the period when tribes and communities began to appear among people. In this, each tribe had its own symbol and thus differed from each other.

Humans are capable of creating abstract dimensions and things that don't exist. The human soul has its own natural characteristics and symbolizes the reality it embodies. Sometimes it turns symbols into reality. For this reason, man is described as a "symbolizing being".

Each religion has emerged and embodies a number of symbols. Every element in our life has its own symbolic meaning. The origin of religious symbols began to appear after the development of humans. They were invented in order to reflect the imaginary events that appeared in people's minds in something in real life. In "Encyclopedia of Religions and Religions", "symbol" is defined as a visible sign, a sign that informs some unknown things [3].

When it comes to religious symbols, the crescent moon and stars, which are currently accepted as symbols of Islam, have a unique history. Stars (or stars) and crescents were common in the ancient world, in the Eastern Mediterranean and Central Asia. In Mesopotamia, it is found on the stele of the Sumerian king of the XXII century BC [4], in Ancient Central Asia and India - on chestnut coins (I-II centuries AD) [5]. Also, Iranian Sasanians were used by the royal family in the Persian Empire, so they were adopted for similar use by Muslims after the Rashidun Caliphate conquered the region.[6] The crescent moon as a heraldic symbol can be traced back to the ancient beliefs of the Slavic peoples. In English and Canadian heraldry, the crescent also means a small line, second son [7].



DISCUSSIONS

The crescent moon and star symbol appeared several thousand years before Islam. It is known that these ancient astronomical signs were used by various peoples in the worship of the gods of the moon and the sky. The crescent moon and star were symbols of the Carthaginian goddess Tanit, as well as the Greek goddess Diana.

The first Muslim community did not have this sign. During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, Muslims and their caravans used simple single-colored flags (usually black, green, or white) for identification. In later times, they preferred to use a simple black, white or green flag without inscriptions, symbols or any symbols [8].

There are different interpretations of the symbolic meaning of the crescent moon and stars. Representatives of other religions consider the crescent moon to be an Islamic symbol similar to the Christian cross. However, Islam commands to worship nothing and no one but Allah. The crescent moon is a very conventional symbol of Islam. Shaykh Abdul-Hay al-Qatani writes in the chapter "Wafiyatul-aslyaf" of the book "Tarotibul-Idariya": "It is bid'ah to install a sign in the shape of a crescent moon on the minarets of mosques. This symbol came into use during the reign of the Ottoman dynasty, when its founder Osman I installed the crescent moon as the flag of the empire because he saw this symbol in a dream. The history of the appearance of this symbol goes back to one of the ancestors of Alexander the Great, who besieged the city of Byzantium (Constantinople) with his army. One night, its inhabitants managed to turn him back and drive him out of the city. Their victory happened at dawn. They considered this a good omen and adopted the crescent moon symbol to commemorate this important event. This event happened in 340 BC. At that time, the inhabitants of the city thanked Hecate, the patroness of Byzantium, the goddess of moonlight. In his honor, the symbols of the night - the crescent moon and the six-pointed star - began to be minted on coins. Thus, the crescent became the symbol of the city. It was the same in 330 AD. Constantinople became the capital of the Byzantium Roman Empire when the Ottoman Turks captured the city in 1453 [9], and later, the symbol appeared in the Russian city of Kazan (Tataristan) [1]. As a result of its use in the lands of the Ottomans, it became a symbol of the Islamic religion in general. The "crescent and star" was used in English literature as a metaphor for the rule of the Islamic empires (Ottoman and Persian) in the late 19th century, by a number of writers: A. Locher, *With Star and Crescent: A Complete and Authentic Account of a Recent Caravan Journey from Bombay to Constantinople*, Andrew Haggard's *"Under the Crescent and the Star"* (1895) is an example of this.

Starting from the 19th century, a flag with a white star and a crescent moon on a red background ("Ay-Star" or "Ay-Yildiz") was used in the Ottoman Empire. This flag is still used today as the official flag of the Republic of Turkey. Other countries in the territory of the former Ottoman Empire (Libya (from 1951 to 1969 and after 2011), Tunisia (from 1956) and Algeria (from 1958), etc.) also used this symbol on their flags. In the 20th century, the star and crescent symbol was used in the state flags of Azerbaijan (since 1918), East Turkestan (since 1933), Pakistan (since 1947), Malaysia (since 1948), Mauritania (since 1959) and in the flag of Uzbekistan (since 1991). the image of a crescent moon and a star is displayed. Since the 1950s, the symbol of the star and crescent began to be interpreted as a symbol of Muslims in general. The star and crescent symbol of the flag of the Kingdom of Libya (1951–1969) is interpreted in the English-language booklet "Libyan Flag and National Anthem" published by the Ministry of Information of the Kingdom of Libya as follows: "The crescent moon marks the beginning of the lunar month according to the Muslim calendar. The crescent moon symbolizes the beginning of the lunar month according to the Muslim calendar. It reminds us of the story of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) emigrating from his home in order to spread Islam and teach the principles of righteousness and goodness. The star represents our smiling hope, the beauty of the goal and object, and the light of our faith in God, our country, the dignity and respect of the one who lights our way and puts an end to darkness [10]. But there is no interpretation of this sign in any Muslim book. It is known that the moon and the star are to Islam as the cross is to Christianity. With the passage of time and history, the crescent moon and star became a symbol of Islam. Some Muslims wear crescent necklaces. However, this necklace does not have any sacred meaning, it simply defines the religion of the wearer.

According to some given historical information, the crescent moon is also interpreted as an ancient Orthodox symbol associated with Jesus Christ. The crescent moon is also used to finish Orthodox churches. Crosses in the domes of Orthodox churches have a unique shape. The crescent at the bottom of the cross has nothing to do with Islam or victory over Muslims. Crescent crosses also decorated ancient temples: the Church of the Intercession in Nerl (1165), the Demetrius Cathedral in Vladimir (1197) are examples, and these buildings were built before the conflict with the Muslims [9].



The Byzantines of that time associated the tsata, i.e. the crescent, with the royal power. Perhaps this is due to its appearance as a symbol of the grand duke's dignity in the portrait of Prince Yaroslav Izyaslavych of Kiev in the "Royal Chronicle" of the 16th century.

According to V.V.Barthold, the crescent moon and star were not symbols of Islam until the 19th century, and the scholar explains: "In any case, as a religious symbol, it has the same meaning for mosques and the cross for Christian churches. The crescent was not for Islam in general, but was characteristic of Turkish-Ottoman Islam, and the crescent was not found in Turkestan mosques until the Russian occupation" [11]. Based on this information, it can be said that the crescent moon is a symbol associated with the religion of Islam, but we do not find this symbol on the flags of all Islamic countries, for example: this symbol is not on the flag of Iran, although 88% of the people living there follow the religion of Islam. believes. Why? The fact is that this symbol is Turkish, and this symbol is included in the flags of the countries that Turkey has influenced throughout history. The installation of this symbol on the flags of those nations is explained by the fact that it was a symbol of the invaders' loyalty and unity in faith.

At the same time, if we dwell on the crescent moon above the mosques, at first, the Ottoman state began to decorate its newly established mosques with crescent moons, the only purpose of which was to establish a visual difference from other temples and buildings. Also, the crescent moons in the mosques are not given any sacred meaning. Because the use of symbols that do not contradict the principles of Islam, without giving it sanctity and glory, is not condemned by Islam. Another custom in Islam does not give sanctity to the crescent moon: it is the custom of waiting for the new moon.

Before the start of the holy month of Ramadan and at the end of it, Muslims wait for the new moon every year. Waiting for the new moon before the beginning of Ramadan, as well as rejoicing when the new moon appears in the sky, is not respect for the moon, as it appears to an outside observer, but the beginning of the month. The holy month (according to the lunar calendar) is the month of Ramadan, in which they can cleanse their hearts from previous sins.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that the symbolism of the crescent moon and star has a long history, and it did not appear together with Islam. They have also become symbols in ancient countries. The current interpretation of the crescent moon and star as a symbol of Islam dates back to the Ottoman Empire. Currently, we can see the crescent moon and star on the flags of a number of countries: in particular, this crescent moon and star are also reflected in the flag of Uzbekistan. It can also be said that today, the crescent moon is also used to decorate the top of mosques. But the crescent moon does not acquire any sanctity in Islam.

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