



CULTURE AND UPBRINGING RELATED TO WATER IN THE UZBEK FAMILY

Adhamjon ASHIROV

Professor, Doctor of Sciences in History Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan The Institute of History

ANNOTATION

The article describes the role and importance of water in the life of the peoples of Central Asia on the example of the Fergana Valley. The article also covers a wide range of water-related customs and rituals in the lives of the valley's residents.

KEY WORDS: *water, ritual, ceremony, valley, blessing, customs.*

INTRODUCTION

Water is considered a "great teacher" among the people of Central Asia. The population of the region reveres water as a great value, and not just as an "important mineral" or "resource of life".

For example, in the Fergana Valley, water is revered not only as a means of quenching the thirst of people, animals and plants but also as a means of life, life expectancy, purification and redemption of sin. A number of historical and artistic works dedicated to water have also been created.

Thus, water has taken a higher position than individualism and personal egoism in the relations of existing laws and society. It is through water that the moral norms and customs of the trinity in the form of "man-earth-water" are observed. These procedures often take the form of unwritten rules ("customs"), taboos and some ritual restrictions. All this is mainly taught to children from an early age by adults in the family circle, and if young people make mistakes, they are explained to them and, if necessary, reprimanded.

As noted in a number of ethnographic literatures, the peoples of the East, especially in the Fergana Valley, have always shown special respect, kindness and generosity to society, especially to the elderly, and they have always been appreciated. In particular, the owner of the house gets advice from district elders and other relatives before starting any work in the family. According to national food etiquette, hands are washed with water before and after meals, and after reading the Surah Fatiha. The eldest of those sitting at the table begins the meal,

after which the others, depending on their age, can start eating the food. However, in the case of drinking water, people at a young age will start drinking first, and then adults. There is a popular proverb about this custom: "A meal is started by the senior and water is by the junior"¹.

Here the question arises, why does drinking water start with the juniors, not by the seniors? Because thirst is an ordeal for a person. A person can live for a while without food, but he cannot endure thirst for a long time, because the main part of his body consists of water. In particular, a small child suffers greatly from thirst, and the longer this thirst lasts, the more damage can be done to his or her young body. In this regard, one can see the kindness to the youth and the attention paid to the continuity of the generation.

It should also be noted that the people of the Fergana valley also like other inhabitants of Central Asia always pray in the family or at a certain time, while sitting around the table, before and after meals. Usually, when people gather at the table, they first thank Allah. Also, after the meal, one of the elders sitting at the table prays. It is noteworthy that the blessings are various. For example: "Bismillahir rohmanir rohiym. May God give sugar, the prosperous destination, may God give the prophet many blessings. Our Lord, Give us generosity, permanent riches. Do not make us need a friend, do not make us degraded to an enemy. Protect us from

¹ Uzbek folk proverbs. – Tashkent: Sharq, 2005. – P.81



the scourge of fire, the scourge of water, and unjust slander. Ameen, Allahu Akbar!". So, it can be seen from this single prayer that people not only thought positively about water but also prayed Allah to protect them from the disasters it might cause.

So, water has played a dual role in the thinking of the local population, and there is no force in the universe more precious, pure, honourable than water, and at the same time more terrible and frightening than it.

It was taught to the grandchildren often by the grandfathers and grandmothers or to the children by the parents in the family from the age of 3 or 4 that the water was the duration of life, that is the basis of living and by various educative ways, children were taught that it was their duty of them to care for the cleanliness of the water, water reservoirs, streams, canals and rivers. In particular, it was taught not to waste water, not to dirty it, not to spit, piss and throw dirty things into the water. Furthermore, it was taught by the national and religious views that doing such things was a grand sin². It is also considered one of the most serious sins to throw manure and various waste into running water. Those who did such things were constantly denounced by the community. At the heart of the society is the family, where the elderly pray: "Be abundant like water", "If you want to know that your life is passing, look at the water", "May your life be as long as water," "May the Lord protect you from the calamities of fire and water. In addition, as water is a lifeline, so in every family, mutual devotion is the mainstay of the family in the relationship between the couple. Therefore, there is a proverb "There is no life without water, there is no family without devotion"³.

In the Fergana Valley, while the girls are getting married and moving from their father's house to their new home, the father prays and recites a blessing to his daughter. In such prayers, the peculiarities of water are intended to be the companions of their daughters in their future lives. "My Daughter, always be like water! May your intentions and goals always be as pure as water. Always show yourself like water. Let your heart and mind be as deep and boundless as the sea, your tongue as sweet as spring water, and your movement as intense as a wave of water. Do not withhold your reward from the needy, as you give water in time to those who suffer from thirst. I wish you to be a necessary and important person always like water"⁴.

²Fieldnotes. Fergana region, Fergana district katakana village. 2016.

³Uzbek folk proverbs. – Tashkent: Sharq, 2005.– P.124

⁴These are the prayers of Nigora Korieva's father, who is a scientific staff of the Academy of Sciences

Thus, in the Fergana Valley, water has played an important role in the daily life and culture of the people, and the traditional views associated with it are related to the symbolic features of water; ecologically; can be generalized in the form of views on the purification and hygiene of water and on the medical properties of water.

LIVING AND DEAD WATER

Until the 80s of the XX century, in many parts of the valley, water from rivers, ditches, and canals, whose streams come from the mountains, was mainly used as drinking water. Such waters were commonly called "white water". The use of "white water" was widespread in cooking and making tea as drinking water. In particular, in the village of Rovot, Kosonsoy district, Namangan region, where I spent my childhood, the villagers used water from a large ditch, mainly as drinking water. The ditch flowed from the beginning to the end of the village and a little further from our house at the beginning of the street. Every morning it was customary to fill the water jars in the house with water from the ditch and cover it. Even when the water supply system came to our village in the 80s of the XX century, the elderly, especially my grandmother, used to drink tea made from the river water. I have heard my grandmother tell us many times, "Make a tea from boiled water, not from raw water, my child." Blackwater does not quench a person's thirst, make tea from this "white water". Later, I thought a lot about the questions, "Why specifically water from the ditch?", "What does it mean boiled water with raw water?", "What is the difference between these waters?", or "How or Can water be alive and dead?".

According to my grandmother, the water of the canal, which is considered to be "white water", tastes different and is considered freshwater. That is why tea made from running water differs from the taste of "black water", that is groundwater. In addition, during the tea-brewing process in the valley, the water was boiled only once, and no tea was brewed from the re-boiled water. Why was not the water boiled twice? Because boiled water was considered "dead water", the taste of tea made from it was not sweet. That's why at big weddings and celebrations there was a "bokchi" - a tea maker who made special tea. The term "bok" (in English "tank"), which in translation from Russian means "a large container with water", is called bok in our speech. He controlled the boiling of tea, which is served to the public, at a temperature of 100 C°. If he made tea from unboiled water, he heard a rebuke from the

of the Republic of Uzbekistan, we are grateful to her for giving this information.



chief of the wedding and was no longer appointed to the post. According to local residents, tea made from semi-boiled water causes stomach pains. Due to this, the boiling of water for tea was under constant control. In addition, at weddings, bokchi tried to serve tea as hot as possible without boiling it again. Because, as mentioned above, even if water is boiled more than once, it turns into "dead water". For this reason, the Uzbeks have a long tradition of brewing tea boiled in a kettle at home. It should also be noted that, according to experts, just once boiled the water is enough to keep it clean and free of various germs and viruses. When water is boiled again (or more), it turns out that the breakdown of available nutrients can turn into harmful and dangerous compounds. Boiled water contains substances such as arsenic, fluorides, nitrates, which are the most harmful to human health⁵.

It is noteworthy that the experience gained by the people over the centuries is reflected not only in everyday life and culture but also in literature and folklore. In particular, among the Uzbeks there are proverbs about that running water is living and freshwater, and that "black water" does not satisfy human thirst such as "there is no dirt of running water", "freshwater comes out of stone, good mind from the head" "Running water has its stream" or "Blackwater does not quench thirst, a happy person does not quench a guest⁶.

If we look at the masterpieces of folklore, if living water is a pure river, dead water is a puddle. In this regard, the views of the French anthropologist K. Levi-Strauss are interesting. He wrote that there were waters opposite each other. When comparing the concepts of running water (calm water, life water) and ordinary water, the previous always prevails. Flowing water is terrible because it is associated with spirits, while calm or stagnant water has a stable character.

Man has not seen a sign of life in the still water, on the contrary, the flowing water seems to be a symbol of vibrant life. That's why in fairy tales dead water is always depicted in a stagnant source – a pool or a pond⁷.

The fact that the still water standing in one place could turn bad was also mentioned in the literature of the East. Mavlono Jaloliddin Rumiyy wrote the man who drinks the puddle water can feel sick:

Suvkiturg'unersabas, ulaunigay. (If the water is stable, then it turns bad)

Bo'yilasuvniichsako'ngilaynigay. (If you drink this water, you will feel sick)

Haqsavobbahrigairg'itgay yana, (The God throws it into the merits again)

Lutfibirlansuvnisuvetgayana⁸. (It makes the water again with its grace and generosity)

In this respect, another important aspect is that Rumiyy noted that water has its own cleansing property and that it can be re-purified from water, in other words, that water circulates around the world.

According to scholar Z. Isamidinova the snow and rain falling from the sky, the dew and the frost caused by the cool air at night, the melting of the glaciers and flowing into the river and canals are living water whereas the hot, boiling, vaporizing water is dead water⁹. Therefore, the majority of the population of the valley drank the river, canal and stream waters mainly from high mountains. Usually, such water is called "White water". In turn, there is a "black water" alternative to the "white water" too. "Blackwater" refers primarily to stagnant water, which is a pond that rises or does not flow out of the ground.

Usually, the term "black water" is used in the Uzbek language as a geographical term with the following meanings:

1. "Blackwater" - water from streams and ravines, which are saturated with groundwater in the foothills and valleys.

2. Wastewater and drainage ditches.

Thus, the term "black water" was not taken from the word "black" meaning colour, but it was taken from the word "black" meaning the ground, that is, it means "groundwater"¹⁰. Also, water was divided into two genders. For example, "white water" was considered as male water, "black water" was as female water¹¹. According to the ethnologist I. Muhiddinov, water is divided into male and female water, and he argues that green streams flowing through the "male water" are thick and high, with dense green grass. The banks of the canals, through which the "female water" flows, are either without grass or with very sparse vegetation. Such a division

⁵Nuriddinov J. Why isn't it allowed to boil water twice // <http://muslim.uz/index.php/rukn/tabobat>

⁶Uzbek folk proverbs. – Tashkent: Sharq, 2005. – P. 21, 67, 86.

⁷Guzalov F. Life-giving secret of water // Yoshlik. 1990 №1. P.75.

⁸Jaloliddin Rumiyy. Wise sayings. Jamol Kamol's translation from Persian. Tashkent, "Fan", 2007. – P.87.

⁹Isamidinova Z. Water // "Hurriyat", 2008, March 26

¹⁰Ulukov N. Historical-linguistic study of hydronyms of the Uzbek language. – Tashkent: Fan, 2008. – P.64.

¹¹Basilov V.N. Shamanism of the people of Central Asia and Kazakhstan. – M.: Nauka, 1992. – P. 28.



was associated with the ancient agrarian cults, more precisely, with the symbol of fertility¹².

In Kyrgyzstan, some springs are also called "male" and "female" springs. Unpressurized water flowing at a depth of 100–200 feet creates flood-free springs in the mountains. They are often called "male springs". There is also strong pressured groundwater that creates flooded springs. Such springs are often called "female springs". Thus, the people recognized two different springs (flooded and non-flooded) based on their structure and appearance. Thanks to a good knowledge of the nature of the springs, it was possible to predict when and how much water they would give people.

Comparing water to a woman is common in other nations of the world. For example, the ancient Chinese compared a woman to water and the mother's womb to a well¹³. According to another source, the Chinese believed that in (women) period (water and darkness) started from 21st September whereas summer was associated with the Jan (men) period.

According to inhabitants of the valley not only drinking water was divided into two types, but the water used in agriculture was also divided into two types. Farmers with many years of life and professional experience used water saturated with useful elements, mainly from the mountains, flowing along rivers, canals and ditches to irrigate their crops. Due to the flow of turbid water from the Syr Darya, a mixture of natural fertilizers, extremely beneficial for the soil, also flowed. Such a chemical composition of water for fertilizers has a positive effect on increasing soil fertility. Chemicals beneficial to plants in the mud, such as lime, magnesium, potassium, sodium and phosphorus, prevent soil salinization. They call such water "boiled water." In its turn, the groundwater is called "damp water". Murotali ota Sheraliev, a farmer with many years of experience from Chust, says that the "boiled water" is rich in minerals. Therefore, if the crops are mainly irrigated with running water, their yield will be higher¹⁴.

People have not seen the sign of life in stagnant water, on the contrary, running water has always been a symbol of lively life. For this reason, pools or ponds are mentioned as sources of stagnant water. Puddle water is considered disliked and even it is forbidden to give it to pets and wash them with this water. Since the pond is the seat of evil spirits, it

harms pets.¹⁵ Doctors say that living water is good not only for drinking but also for bathing. For example, in the hot summer, a person who gets weak and unwell due to varicose veins will be refreshed only if he swims in running water¹⁶.

The informants say that even if a person is in a difficult situation, he or she can relieve his or her grief by looking at the flowing water¹⁷. The local people believe that a person who has a bad dream should go to the water or take three grains of wheat and scatter them in the field, telling about his dream. That is why the Uzbeks have a saying, "Tell your dream to the water." It is customary to keep buckets, jugs, and mugs filled with water and to keep their mouths shut so that every house will always be blessed.

In the Fergana Valley, people see that water is treated as light during the day. Why do people tell dreams to the water? What is the nature and symbolism of telling a dream to water? Folklorist A. Musakulov notes that historically dreams were associated with animistic images, so it was considered natural to tell the dream to water. One of the most widespread beliefs in the world is to look at water and bewitch it. For example, if Chinese women intentionally throw flowers into the water in pairs, they sincerely believe that in the future they will marry the man they like. The reason why the dream is told specifically to water is that all the negative energy of a person sitting next to water (especially flowing water) flows with it.

As in other parts of Central Asia, in the Fergana valley, men from every family take part in community service and activities in the surrounding area and in the countryside. Therefore, in early spring, one man from each household had to take part in cleaning ditches, canals. Digging new canals and ditches with water basins is one of the most rewarding activities among the locals. Also, in all districts of Uzbekistan, when the first water comes to the ditch during the spring, people soak each other into the water. The custom of soaking into water is also widely used in the "Sust Khotin" ceremony during the drought. According to the folklorist A. Musakulov, these are transformed forms of sacrificing to water, or exactly to its goddess, aimed at making the whole nation as abundant as water this year, and for this they believed in the magical power of water¹⁸.

¹²Muhiddinov I. Farming of Pamir Tajiks and Ishkishim.... – P. 101.

¹³Mingboeva D. Secrets of Symbols.... – P. 43.

¹⁴Field notes. Damobod village of Chust district of the Namangan region. 2018.

¹⁵ Field notes. Tumor village of Dangara district of the Fergana region. 2018.

¹⁶ Isomiddinov Z. Water is not only a source of life but also a great miracle of life // Hurriyat. 2018.

¹⁷Field notes. Namangan region, Turakurgan district, Shahand village. 2018.

¹⁸ Musakulov A. Uzbek folk lyrics... –P.197.



When Uzbeks pray with good intentions, the elders say, "Be as abundant as water." Here, first of all, it can be seen that water was considered an inexhaustible thing in the imagination of people, and also it was revered as a symbol of fertility.

WATER-RELATED UPBRINGING

Children have always been taught that water is an invaluable part of our daily life and thirst-quenching, a precious gift as a source of life and that every drop of it should be appreciated. Especially, it has been constantly emphasized that water should be respected in daily life and it should not be wasted. Also, children have always been advised that it is a sin to spit on water and pollute it.

Traditionally, girls were taught kitchen work in the family by their mothers and older sisters from the age of 10. They were taught to wash and clean household utensils before learning to cook. Previously, there was no tap water, so the water was taken from a special place in the kitchen of the house and the dishes were washed. After the dishes have been washed, as usual, the water from which the rice water, milk, and yoghurt have been washed is poured under the fruit trees. Girls are also taught from an early age to greet a visitor with a smile and to deftly pour water into their hands immediately. In the Fergana Valley, grandmothers and mothers say girls get up in the morning and open the gates because getting up early is very virtuous. For this reason, the gates of houses are opened early in the morning, and the girls sprinkle water and sweep the streets.

In turn, the boys were taught the tradition of hospitality from an early age, as well as household chores and physical labour. Children are brought up in the spirit of standing up while greeting adults, pouring water into their hands (to wash), serving food to adults first, and in general, respecting adults.

It is customary to pour water into the hands (to wash) of those sitting around the table, especially, when guests visit. In most cases, young children pour water into their hands to get the blessing of those people sitting around. People who wash their hands expressed their wishes for the child who was pouring the water to them. For example, they say "May your life be as long as water," "May you be happy," "May your life be blessed," "May your intentions come true," and "May Allah makes your life as abundant and long as water." The water before the meal should be warm, and the post-meal water should be warm enough to remove the oil of the meal on the hand left after the meal. The water is poured into the guest's hand little by little enough to wash. First, water is poured to wash the hands from the guests sitting on the right, and after the meal, it

begins from the left¹⁹. In the present-day in the valley, in most cases when guests visit, they wash their hands in the yard of the house and then enter the house, where they are invited to have a meal.

According to the tradition, the person pouring the water has to cut it three times and then gives a towel to wipe. In turn, a person who has washed his hands should wipe his hands with a towel without shaking them. It is said that if you shake your hands and sprinkle water when you wash your hands, the blessing will go away. If the hand is shaken and the remaining water is dropped, the devils will multiply.

Water is sprinkled from the back of a person who travels to distant places to make his journey safer. The man on the trip always carries bread and water with him. In Sokh Tajiks, water is sprinkled under the feet of a person who is going on a journey to have a good step and make his work successful. Because, according to popular belief, water is a symbol of light life. Close relatives who were late for the wedding were also sprinkled with water to be as much more abundant as water as is possible.

Some people used to put a bowl of water all night on the ground where the house was built. If the water is good, the place is considered to be suitable for building a house, and if the water is bad, the place is considered to be unsuitable and another place is chosen to build a house.

Overall, it can be concluded that water, as some elements of nature, is also considered sacred. Water not only quenched people's thirst but in turn served as a means of purifying and healing them.

Various mythological views related to water have also been passed down from ancestor to generation in the form of traditions. Also, since water is a source of purification, mankind has always paid great attention to cleanliness. However, the religious mythological views related to the preservation of water and its divine significance have almost been forgotten. Therefore, the scientific study of regional cultures in various disciplines (history, cultural studies, ethnology, ecology, folklore), which involve the knowledge and views related to water, is the basis for the formation of ecological culture among the population, especially among the young people.

¹⁹A similar custom exists among other Turkic nations, especially in the Kyrgyz. See more about this: The Question of water....- P. 7.