

ANCIENT FUNERAL CEREMONIES IN THE ZOROASTRIAN RELIGION

Samandarbek Sobirjon ugli Ruziboev

Student of the Faculty of History of Andizhan State University, Republic of
Uzbekistan, e.mail: roziboyevsamandar00@gmail.com

Abstract: *This article describes in detail the funeral rites of the Zoroastrian (fire worship) religion, which is the basis of the first monotheistic doctrine. It also talks about different views on the burial of a deceased person and the first burial places “dakhma”. The main purpose of the article is to analyze the funeral rites in the doctrine from a historical point of view.*

Key words: *Fire worship, dakhma, monteistic, monotheistic doctrine, heathenism, Gomez, Nasusa, vendidad, cremation.*

INTRODUCTION

There are religious teachings and conferences within the society that have arisen in every region and continent. They have deep roots in history. Zoroastrianism is the oldest and first monotheistic religion. It is no exaggeration to say that it is the basis of monotheistic religions that have been formed on earth and are still active. Zoroastrianism is a pagan movement that arose in the 7-6th centuries BC [1] Zoroastrianism is a European scientific term derived from the Greek pronunciation of the name of the founder of the religion. Its other European name, Mazdaism, is derived from the Zoroastrian name of God, which is now considered obsolete. Zoroastrian is considered to be the founder or prophet of religion.

RESEARCH METHODS

God received a revelation from Ahuramazda to spread this teaching. Thus, Zoroastrianism emerged in the VII-VI centuries BC. The basis of the Zoroastrian doctrine is the free moral choice of good thoughts, good words and good deeds. In ancient times and the early Middle Ages, Zoroastrianism was widespread mainly in Greater Iran [2]. Zoroastrianism is an officially recognized religion in India, Iran, Iraq, Azerbaijan, USA and Uzbekistan [3]. According to various sources, the total number of Zoroastrians in the world is between 125,000 and 300,000 people. But in

ancient times, the wide spread of other religions in these regions and the dominance of Buddhism and Islam began to be gradually suppressed. The ancient funeral rites, which are the subject and basis of our article, are also decreasing today. As a result, cremation and concrete graves are replacing the traditional funeral ceremony.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Death is an inevitable event for every Zoroastrian. Especially for every religious person, even if he is an atheist. In Zoroastrianism, death was thought to be a temporary darkness and a temporary victory of the devil over all evil. Prophet Zarathustra asks God Ahuramazda how to bury the dead and Ahuramazda tells him to take the dead to the mountain heights and bury them, noting that there are dogs and hawks there. It was believed that animals in nature free the unclean body from the soul, and light wins over darkness. Such a view is consistent with the famous philosopher's theory of returning to nature. That is, in the process of the soul being freed from the body and returning to nature, natural animals play the main role. Man is also a part of nature, but he is also the possessor of high thinking and intelligence, with these qualities he is distinguished from the monsters of nature. Burial in Zoroastrianism is not unique to this religion. Because during the archeological excavations conducted in Turkey in the last century, archaeologists and specialists came across a funeral ceremony drawn on the wall. In the mural, a dead person was taken to a high altitude and left there, eaten by wild animals. It can be seen that when each new doctrine and religious movement appears, it takes a small amount of customs and traditions of the first religions before it and is formed among the people on this basis. For example, the altar in Islam was taken from the Zoroastrians. In particular, prayer was formed on the basis of Islamic teachings from Iranian Zoroastrians.

In the teachings of Zoroastrianism, death is considered a crisis and a product of the devil, black forces. In Zoroastrianism, it was seen as a product of evil committed by Ahriman, the destructive spirit that causes death. Accordingly, after the death of a person, there is no need to save the dead body, because it is now a lifeless and polluted thing. The decomposition process of the dead body has led to

mental pollution. Therefore, before the soul passes to the other world, it is necessary to clean the body. Zoroastrians strongly connected physical purity with spiritual purity. If the body is clean, the person will be physically healthy, and the soul will be spiritually elevated. Zoroastrians had a wonderful way of determining death. In order to keep the Jin in the body of the deceased and prevent it from infecting the living person, a practice called Sagdid was performed [4]. That is, the dog was brought to the deceased twice. At this time, a piece of bread was placed on the chest of the corpse. It was concluded that if a dog does not eat bread, a person dies. Then the person standing at the head of the deceased clapped twice. In this practice, it is difficult to determine whether a person has actually died. If he wakes up from a state of temporary unconsciousness, he is killed by the guards of the burial place. The reason for the dog's participation in the funeral ceremony is that the dog is considered to be a holy animal with the ability to see evil spirits and drive them away. In funerals, the dog is equated with a person.

On this basis, Zoroastrians organized ablution as the highest stage of the funeral ceremony. After the death of a person who lived according to the teachings of Zoroastrianism, the body of the deceased was washed with Gomez bull's urine and water. The fire was always burning during ablution. The room where the deceased was washed was also cleaned before the funeral. The body's clothes were destroyed. After that, the body was laid on a clean white cloth and shrouded in a white cloth. Visitors close to the deceased are allowed to enter the room to say goodbye to the deceased. But it is forbidden to touch the corpse. Relatives of the deceased were standing 30 steps away, acquaintances and dear friends of the deceased were standing 60 steps away. After the body was prepared, it was handed over to special transporters to the pumps. Nasusas were mainly engaged in burying the body. From time immemorial, only they were allowed to bury the body and communicate with them. Despite the important place of the noses in funeral ceremonies, they are hated by the society and it is forbidden to touch them. Because, they were in contact with the unclean body. During the funeral, relatives of the

deceased were gathered and the holy fire was lit. Priests read verses from the Vendidad. During the funeral, fragrant flowers were placed around.

After the body was wrapped in a white shroud, they carried 2 or 4 cases on a special stretcher and placed it in a shallow hole in the ground. If there were few pumps for transporting the body, dogs or donkeys were used. The reason is that they are considered holy in this doctrine and can participate in the funeral ceremony. Zoroastrians are usually buried in rock formations at high altitudes. Later, the burial ceremony was improved and high towers “dahkhmas” were built. Dakhma is called “tower of silence” in the vernacular. The hut is built in a round shape on a high mountain. The length of the side of the hut was about 6 meters. There was a deep well in the middle of it. The number of dead places inside the hut was 365. When the Nasusas brought the body and placed it in the pits, the priests recited a prayer and then bowed respectfully to the body. In the shack, the shroud and clothes wrapped around the body were removed and destroyed with the help of special tools. After they left the shack, they washed with Gomez and water, and when they returned home, they bathed regularly for 3 days. The body should have been decomposed in the hut as soon as possible. The reason is that the environment and society will not be harmed by the body of the deceased. But from the first Zoroastrian funerals to the present day, the smell of the dead has not harmed the environment. The surrounding hawks and predatory birds and animals ate the body and cleaned it. Feeding the body to birds during the funeral ceremony was the last manifestation of the deceased's selflessness and humanity. In addition, burying the deceased in the ground is given as a punishment for sinners. If the deceased was buried in the ground, his soul could not ascend to the sky and was condemned to eternity under the dark earth. According to the teachings, it is strictly forbidden to bury the dead body or burn it in the fire (cremation) because it is considered unclean. Fire was a symbol of God, and earth was his creation. Therefore, it was not possible to pollute the 2 elements (except for sinners). After the deceased was eaten by birds of prey, the nurses threw the cleaned bones into the well in the middle of the hut. Limestone was often poured to prevent the bones from multiplying. When the body is cleansed,

the soul is freed from the unclean body. As a result, light won over darkness. The tradition of holding funerals in old huts can be explained with this. The use of ancient huts began for the first time at the beginning of the 9th century BC. All parts of the funeral ceremony, from leaving the body in the hut, until it disappeared, lasted from 6 months to 1 year.

Prayers and prayers for the dead are read within 3 days after the funeral, it depends on how long the soul stays on earth. On the fourth day, the spirit and its guardian, Fravashi, will bring the good and bad deeds of the deceased to the court bridge Chinvat. Depending on the good deeds, it is decided whether the soul will cross the bridge or be thrown into hell. Chinvat Bridge (Cinvatô Peretûm, Judgment Bridge, Separation Bridge, Bridge of Unseeing God) world of the living and the world of the dead [5] Chinvat Bridge is built from rays of light over a huge abyss or an insurmountable water barrier and at one end stood the highest peak of Hara Berezaiti [6]. All the souls of the dead had to pass through it after death. The Chinvat Bridge is often compared to a rainbow or the Milky Way galaxy [7, 177].

After the burial of the deceased, during the period of mourning, family members did not eat meat for 3 days and did not cook food or burn incense in the house where the body was lying. With the spread of Islam in Iran, burial in the Minarets of Silence was prohibited. Zoroastrians left Islamic countries for this and other reasons. Here we can see that the ancient Zoroastrian burial rites have been preserved in a classical state until now. This tradition continues in India. Today, Mumbai is the center of Zoroastrian funerals.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it can be said that all rituals and traditions in Zoroastrianism have a unique harmony, like in other religions. It also has similarities with Islam in the example of funeral ablution and Chinvat Bridge. But the eating of the body by birds of prey in the ancient funeral ceremony is completely different from the funeral rites of other religions. In short, Zoroastrianism is the origin of all monotheistic religions.

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