

TRADITIONS AND RELIGIOUS BELIEFS OF ANCIENT MESOPOTAMIA

Hadicha Azamova

Student of the Faculty of History of Andizhan State University, Republic of Uzbekistan

e-mail: hadichaazamova4@gmail.com

Samandarbek Ruziboev

Student of the Faculty of History of Andizhan State University, Republic of Uzbekistan

e-mail: samandarroziboyev00@gmail.com

ABSTRACT: *In this article, the traditions of the people of Mesopotamia, funeral rites and the results of archaeological research are considered from a theoretical and analytical point of view and a scientific basis is given to the reader. Ancient Mesopotamia, as one of the first civilizations, had its own state apparatus, writing, medicine, literature, architecture, painting, but all these areas appeared and began to develop due to religion, an important component in the life of every resident, as revealed in the article.*

KEY WORDS: *Tigris, Phrotus, Enki, Enlil, Nergal, An, Maklu, Shaklu, Irkallu, King of Gods, Adapa, Pantheon*

INTRODUCTION

Ancient Mesopotamia is an ancient country located in the valley of the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Western Asia, the place of origin and development of ancient civilization. Mesopotamia (from the ancient Greek - "Mesopotamia") is the region between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in Western Asia. Mesopotamia is bordered by the mountains of the Armenian mountains in the north, the coast of the Persian Gulf in the south, the Syrian-Mesopotamian desert in the west, and the mountains of Iran in the east. Ancient Mesopotamia, as one of the first civilizations, had its own state apparatus, writing, medicine, literature, architecture, painting, but all these areas appeared and began to develop due to an important component in the life of

each population – religion [1]. Initially, among the tribes of Sumer and Akkad, the basis of religion was primitive fetishism (religious worship of inanimate material objects) [2]. Later, with the development of the state, the Sumerian and Akkadian religion became a vision of nature. All natural disasters: heat, storms, floods reflected the power of the gods and their anger towards people. Every inhabitant of Mesopotamia believed that the gods protected them, helped them to follow the path of truth, and protected them from the creatures of danger and destruction. For a long time, people never compared themselves with the heavenly rulers depicted for them in nature and cosmic objects. However, with the development of the state, the religious ideas of the people began to change. Thus, the gods began to be perceived more like heavenly kings. There was even an idea that the gods actually lived on earth as ordinary people, but got tired of work and moved to heaven, leaving clay creatures to work for them. Each city in ancient Mesopotamia elevated its god to the position of "king of the gods."

The first place in size was occupied by the god of the sky, the "father of kings and gods", but according to the Sumerians and Akkadians, he had too much power to monitor the lives of people, so his son Enlil was the god of air, wind, breath and life. He was followed by another son of the "king of the gods" (people believed that even the gods looked to him for help and advice), Enki, "the lord of fresh waters, the keeper of the highest wisdom." These three figures were followed by Utu, the god of the sun and justice, Nanna the moon, Marduk of order and tranquility (he fought chaos), Inanna of fertility, and Nergal of death.

RESEARCH METHODS

The relevance of the topic is that in this article, by discussing the religious views and ethnography of the peoples of the Middle East region, the reader will be able to reexamine the essence, substance and etymology of the existing divine views, as well as funeral rites, and through a theoretical-comparative historical approach, necessary for the life of today's humanity. is to convey information through ethnographic and archeological sources.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The very principle of the political structure of Mesopotamia had a significant impact on the formation and development of religion. Unlike early united Egypt, many independent city-states existed for a long time between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers. These independent political centers were also centers of worship of local patron deities. The entire social life of such a city-state is centered around the temple. The temple was a storehouse of material wealth, a place for storing and transmitting all knowledge, as well as a seat of political power. Initially, the ruler of each city-state simultaneously served as the high priest of the local cult [3]. With the emergence of large state structures, a single pantheon of gods was formed, but it did not last long. At the beginning of each royal pantheon, as a rule, there was a patron deity of the capital - a city that subjugated the surrounding city-states. However, with the decline of one center and the rise of another, the main deity of the pantheon changed. In the complex genealogy of the gods, traces of the struggle for power between the political centers of Mesopotamia can be seen.

Belief in the afterlife was not as widespread in Mesopotamia as it was in Egypt. In Babylonian literature, we repeatedly come across myths, legends and even epics, in which the main idea is the search for immortality, eternal life (for example, the epic of Gilgamesh). In Egyptian literature, on the contrary, there is not a single work devoted to this topic, which is explained by the specific ideas of the Egyptians about the immortality of the soul. Like other ancient peoples, the Sumerians, Akkadians, and Assyrians used to express their grief for the dead with tumult.

The religious practice of Mesopotamian religion was mainly focused on idol and temple maintenance. Priests regularly offered sacrifices to the god and praised him with hymns. In the temple of Uruk, the gods ate twice a day (morning and evening). Two routes are provided: "primary" and "secondary". The ceremony, the character and number of meals reflect the customs of the Babylonian court. Those who served God ate from His table, but did not sit at the same table with Him. The main moment in the sacrificial meal was the act of eating - the idol ate looking at it.

The "food-devouring" God is hidden from the people, including the priests, by veils. Mesopotamian religion in general was almost exclusively a social phenomenon. Only the king or high priest could receive certain messages from the gods, but the common people were not supposed to communicate with the god, even in dreams.

As a result, the demands of religion on the private person were extremely insignificant: prayer, fasting and various restrictions and taboos were imposed only on the king, as the high priest of the state. Public religious events such as rituals and festivals represented the only line of communication between man and God. The manifestation of the religious feelings of the common man was limited to official ceremonies, intense and impersonal. At the same time, magic and different types of divination were widespread in ancient Mesopotamian religion. From the library of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal, entire collections of Maklu and Shaklu (combustion) spells have come down to us.

The ancient Mesopotamians believed in an afterlife that was inferior to our world [4]. It is this land, known alternately as Arallu, Ganzir, or Irkallu, the latter meaning "Great Below," to which all go after death, regardless of social status or actions during life., it is believed. Unlike the Christian hell, the Mesopotamians saw the underworld as neither a punishment nor a reward. Nevertheless, the condition of the dead was not previously considered the same as life on earth: they were simply considered weak and powerless ghosts. According to the myth of Ishtar's descent into the underworld, "dust is their food, clay is their food, they do not see light, they live in darkness." Stories such as the Adapa myth state that due to a blunder, all humans must die, and that true eternal life is the sole property of the gods [5]. No Mesopotamian tales of the end of the world are known, although it is assumed that they believed it would happen eventually. This is mainly because Berossus wrote that the Mesopotamians believed the world to last "twelve times twelve sars," with a sars of 3,600 years, which suggests that at least some Mesopotamians believed the Earth to last only 518,400 years. However, Berossus reports what happens after this event.

Mesopotamian religion historically has the oldest literature of any religious tradition. What is known about Mesopotamian religion comes from archaeological evidence found in the region, particularly from the many literary sources written on clay tablets using cuneiform, usually in Sumerian, Akkadian (Assyro-Babylonian), or Aramaic, and describing mythology and religious practices. Other artifacts may also be useful in reconstructing Mesopotamian religion. As with many ancient civilizations, those made of the most durable and valuable materials, and therefore most likely to survive, were associated with religious beliefs and rituals. This has prompted one scholar to claim that the Mesopotamians' "entire existence was fueled by their religiosity, and almost everything they have handed down to us can be used as a source of knowledge about their religion." Although the Mesopotamian religion almost died out by about 400-500 AD when its local adherents became mostly Assyrian Christians, it still has an influence on the modern world, as many biblical stories found today in Judaism, Christianity, Islam, and Mandaeism, perhaps, may be based on earlier Mesopotamian myths, particularly the creation myth, the Garden of Eden, the flood myth, the Tower of Babel, figures such as Nimrod and Lilith, and the Book of Esther. It has also inspired various modern neopagan groups. Mesopotamian religion, culture, history, and mythology influenced some forms of music. Like traditional Syrian folk music, many heavy metal bands have named themselves after Mesopotamian gods and historical figures, including the partially Assyrian band Melechesh. In the 20th and 21st centuries, a variety of new religious movements arose that paid homage to some of the deities found in ancient Mesopotamian religion, including various strains of neopaganism that adopted the worship of historical Mesopotamian deities.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, in the history of the ancient world, there were many religious movements, cases of worshiping gods in the form of paganism or montheism. We witness this in the results and conclusions of large-scale archaeological research conducted in the 20th and 21st centuries in the ethnography and theology of the people of ancient Mesopotamia. For example, the most interesting and relevant

issues in today's society, hell and hell, were not recognized as rewards or punishments for the Mesopotamians. This analogy is somewhat consistent with the principles of secularism. As for the results of the archaeological excavations and the unanswered questions, it is the Aramaic cuneiform written on the clay tablets. However, the French scientist Jacques Champollion gave a solution to the reading of this text in the 19th century. We are currently re-examining the way of life and religious views and attributes of the peoples of the ancient world in an academic format.

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