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THE EMERGENCE AND HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF FOLK ECOLOGICAL VIEWS

Jurakulova Munisa Navruz kizi

Abstract

This article covers the emergence and historical development of people's ecological views in the territory of Uzbekistan based on retrospective analysis. The author interprets ecological culture not only as a modern scientific category, but also as a socio-cultural phenomenon inextricably linked with centuries-old irrigation experience, religious and moral norms, traditional institutions of governance, and folk pedagogy. It is shown that the ancient systems of irrigated agriculture, in particular, the practice of collective water management, formed in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins, created the initial institutional foundations of ecological culture. It is also analyzed that the views on the purity of the elements of nature in the teachings of the Avesta constitute an ancient layer of ecological morality.

Keywords

Ecological culture, people's ecological views, irrigation civilization, collective management, water turn, hashar, Zoroastrianism, Avesta, Aral Sea, sustainable development, ecological transformation, national values, environmental policy.

Since ancient times, the territory of Uzbekistan has been a place where various natural-climatic zones of desert and semi-desert zones, river valleys, foothill and mountain landscapes intersect, and this situation has led to a complex, multi-layered formation of the population's methods of economic management, norms of resource use, and attitude towards nature during the historical process. In this sense, the concept of "ecological culture" in the conditions of Uzbekistan manifests itself not only as a category of modern ecological science, but also as a combination of long-term historical experience, traditions, moral and regulatory views, religious and spiritual ideas, legal orders, and practical economic skills. Analysis of the genesis of the formation and historical retrospective development of the ecological culture of the Uzbek people shows, on the one hand, periodic changes in the nature-society relations, and on the other hand, the transformation of the value system regulating these relations.

When explaining the genesis of the ecological culture of the Uzbek people, it is necessary, first of all, to refer to the experience of the ancient irrigation civilization. Archaeological and historical sources indicate the formation of early forms of agriculture in the Amu Darya and Syr Darya basins, the emergence of the institution of collective labor for water distribution and canal preservation. The construction of irrigation networks and their regular repair was not only a technical issue, but also created important elements of ecological culture through social cooperation, responsible attitude to resources, regulatory procedures such as "water fee" and "turn." In ancient agricultural cultures, water was considered the source of life, and its waste was considered a betrayal of the community. This value continued in various forms in subsequent periods, reinforced by the veneration of water as a symbol of "purity" and "blessing."

The spread of Zoroastrianism in Central Asia in pre-Islamic times also had a significant impact on ecological perceptions. The Avesta's views on the purity of earth, water, air, and fire, as well as the interpretation of pollution as a sin, reveal ancient layers of ecological morality. [1]

Of course, religious mythological views differ from modern ecological scientific concepts, but their normative essence created a system of certain restrictions and incentives in the behavior of society, protecting the elements of nature, avoiding pollution, and not disrupting the balance. Thus, it can be said that the genesis of ecological culture was formed on the basis of the synthesis of irrigation and economic needs and religious and moral ideas.

During the Middle Ages, the rise of cities, the revival of trade routes, and the development of crafts expanded the scope of natural resource use. In such centers as Bukhara, Samarkand, and

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Khiva, a system of water supply, landscaping, gardens, canals, and ponds created urban planning experience in managing the ecological environment. The ecological connection between urban and rural landscapes has become even more complex: food, fuel, building materials, and irrigated lands. Historical and geographical studies of these processes show that in the Middle Ages, irrigation systems and land and water relations were the basis not only for economic stability, but also for the legitimacy of political power. [2]

The practice of controlling water facilities, mobilizing people to dig and repair canals, and resolving water disputes has organically linked ecological culture with management culture.

In the Islamic period, the moral and legal foundations of ecological culture were also strengthened. In Fiqh, there are such norms as the use of water, the right of neighbors, the right not to block roads and canals, and the pursuit of public interests, which are intertwined with local customs. Additionally, practices such as digging wells, building pools and reservoirs for travelers, and planting trees were encouraged through charity, endowment, and charitable institutions. Such institutions supported ecological culture not only with "prohibitions" but also with the ideas of "good deeds" and "public welfare." In the scientific heritage of medieval Eastern scholars, observations of nature, climate and geography, water circulation, agriculture and horticulture are also found; this heritage enriched the intellectual layer of ecological thinking. [3]

One of the important manifestations of local traditional ecological culture is the transmission from generation to generation of a careful attitude towards nature through ethnopedagogical norms and ritual practices. In Uzbek folklore, proverbs and sayings, such as "The value of water is known only by drinking water," "One tree planting a thousand rewards," the principles of understanding the value of resources, restoration, and non-waste are strengthened. Ethnographic observations indicate that canal-building hashars in rural communities served not only as an economic function but also as an institution ensuring social cohesion. Hashar is a traditional mechanism for collective labor, water distribution, and infrastructure maintenance that links environmental culture to social capital. In addition, in agricultural practice, such skills as crop rotation, land "rest," seasonal movement of livestock (pasture-winter) can be interpreted as an experiment taking into account the restorative potential of the landscape.

At the end of the 19th - beginning of the 20th centuries, the region's incorporation into the Russian Empire marked a new stage in the transformation of ecological culture. Changes in administrative management, agricultural policy aimed at producing raw materials for the market, and the expansion of transport and trade infrastructure have increased the intensity of resource utilization. In particular, the expansion of cotton growing increased water consumption and increased the pressure on irrigation systems. The subsequent intensification of these processes during the Soviet period is especially clearly observed in the history of the Aral Sea basin. Historical studies show that Soviet modernization, combined with the idea of "subjugating nature," sharply regulated river flows through large-scale irrigation projects; as a result, the ecological balance was disrupted. (Weiner, 1988). At the same time, scientific and practical work in the fields of sanitation, epidemiology, water supply, and land reclamation also intensified at that time; therefore, the transformation was not only destructive, but also accompanied by the formation of institutional knowledge.

During the Soviet period, traditional forms of ecological culture were recoded, on the one hand, through the collective economic system, state planning, and ideological education, and on the other hand, neighborhood, customs, and religious beliefs continued in a hidden or semi-official form. Although the use of large irrigation facilities, canal and collector drainage networks, chemical fertilizers and pesticides served the purpose of increasing yields, such problems as soil degradation, secondary water salinization, and biodiversity reduction were exacerbated. The drying up of the Aral Sea was reflected in the consciousness of society not only as an ecological, but also as a socio-cultural trauma; ecological culture was no longer considered as a "resource," but also as a category of "risk" and "loss." [9] Under these circumstances, the

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traditional "don't waste water" norms of the people were practically powerless in the face of state-wide irrigation policies, as decision-making was centralized, and local knowledge and experience were often viewed as secondary.

During the period of independence, the transformation of ecological culture in Uzbekistan continued on a new socio-political and legal basis. Along with the restoration of national statehood, the return to historical heritage, traditional values, and the mahalla institution intensified; this process also served to rediscover ecological culture as an integral part of "national identity." At the same time, factors such as a market economy, demographic growth, urbanization, a new consumer culture, and global climate change have put environmental behavior in the face of new challenges. In addressing environmental problems, legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms have been strengthened, and programs of environmental education and awareness-raising have expanded; for example, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Environmental Protection" and sectoral regulatory documents define responsibility and monitoring in the use of natural resources. [6] However, there are also differences between legal norms and real practice, which indicates that the transformation of ecological culture is a complex process determined not only by normative acts, but also by economic incentives, management quality, and public participation.

One of the final conclusions of the retrospective analysis is that Uzbek folk ecological culture, as centuries-old experience, has three main pillars: the first is the practice of collective management of resources such as water and land; the second is the appreciation of elements of nature in connection with purity and blessings through religious moral norms; the third is the introduction of the ideas of thrift and care into everyday life through folk pedagogy and customs. Transformation is the reorganization of these pillars in accordance with historical conditions: during the period of centralized irrigation policy, collective management was limited, but technical knowledge increased; during the period of independence, national values were restored, but market pressure and urbanization created new environmental risks. Therefore, today the development of ecological culture is not only a matter of propaganda, but also a matter of harmonizing historical experience, legal institutions, economic incentives, and scientific and technological solutions. Global experience shows that sustainable resource management is often effective through the participation of the local community, transparency and accountability, and the integration of traditional knowledge with a scientific approach. [10] The historical experience of Uzbekistan also shows that there are cultural foundations for such an integrative path: hashar, mahalla, water turn, tree planting traditions, views on keeping nature clean - all of these can serve as a social support for modern environmental policy and education.

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