



ANALYSIS OF CUSTOMS AND TRADITIONS OF CENTRAL ASIAN PEOPLES IN “DEVONU LUG’OTIT TURK”

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Abstract. Mahmud Kashgari’s “Devonu Lug’otit Turk” is one of the most significant sources illuminating the language, culture, customs, and traditions of 11th-century Turkic peoples. This work is not only important as the first dictionary of Turkic languages but also serves as a crucial historical document reflecting various aspects of Central Asian peoples’ lives, including their social structures, religious beliefs, and daily lifestyles. This thesis analyzes the customs and traditions of Central Asian peoples as presented in “Devonu Lug’otit Turk.” The analysis focuses on the social relations, religious rituals, family traditions, and literary-artistic thought of Turkic peoples, based on examples and information from the work.

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of the study is to identify the distinctive characteristics of Central Asian peoples’ culture by examining the customs and traditions described in the work and to analyze their influence on modern Uzbek culture. The research employs historical-analytical and comparative methods. The relevance of this thesis lies in highlighting the importance of “Devonu Lug’otit Turk” as a key source for deeply understanding Central Asian peoples’ culture and preserving national identity. The work provides rich linguistic, cultural, and ethnographic information, making it significant for understanding the history of Central Asian peoples.

Historical and Cultural Significance of the Work

“Devonu Lug’otit Turk” was written by Mahmud Kashgari between 1072 and 1074 to introduce the language and culture of Turkic peoples to the Arab world. The work is a dictionary of Turkic words, containing information about tribal and clan languages, poems, proverbs, and wise sayings. This information reflects the social structure, religious beliefs, and traditions of Central Asian peoples, particularly Uzbeks, Kyrgyz, Turkmens, and other Turkic tribes. The work sheds light on the artistic thought, linguistic richness, and social values of Turkic peoples. For example, the poems included in the work provide insights into the moral perspectives, family relations, and religious beliefs of these peoples.

The cultural significance of the work lies in its reflection of the unique artistic thought and social values of Turkic peoples. Additionally, it served as a bridge for Arab scholars to understand Turkic culture. The ethnographic information in the work covers various aspects of Central Asian peoples’ lives, such as daily routines, trade, warfare, and agriculture. This information is a vital source for understanding 11th-century Central Asian culture.

Social Relations and Family Traditions

The work contains important information about the family life of Central Asian peoples. Marriage ceremonies were organized as grand celebrations, with songs, dances, and special rituals playing a significant role. For instance, the work mentions traditions related to bride selection and matchmaking. During these ceremonies, singing songs and reciting poems was



customary, emphasizing the importance of family relations. For example, poems recited during marriage ceremonies reflect mutual respect among youth and the love and harmony within families. These traditions have been preserved in modern Uzbek culture, such as in the form of “nikah toy” (wedding ceremonies) and “sovchilik” (matchmaking).

The work also provides information about the social roles of men and women. Men were primarily engaged in warfare, hunting, and tribal governance, while women played significant roles in household management, child-rearing, and family rituals. For example, the work mentions women’s involvement in crafts such as weaving and sewing. These roles reflect the social structure of the time and continue, to some extent, in modern Uzbek families, although gender roles have evolved over time.

Religious Beliefs and Rituals

The work contains information about the religious beliefs of Turkic peoples, particularly pre-Islamic and Islamic traditions. In the 11th century, while Islam was spreading in Central Asia, elements of Zoroastrianism and shamanism were still preserved. For example, the work mentions rituals related to worshipping nature and fire ceremonies. These rituals involved offering sacrifices and reciting special prayers. Additionally, with the spread of Islam, new rituals such as funerals and marriage ceremonies are described.

These religious traditions significantly influenced Central Asian peoples’ culture. Modern Uzbek religious rituals, such as weddings and funerals, are closely connected to the information provided in the work. For instance, prayers recited by imams during marriage ceremonies and sacrificial rituals are considered a continuation of traditions from that era.

Worship of Nature and Sacrificial Rituals

The work provides information about the Turkic peoples’ traditions of worshipping nature. For example, reverence for natural elements such as fire, water, and the sky was widespread. These beliefs originated from shamanism and Tengriism, and the work mentions examples of the “rain-making ceremony.” Specifically, during droughts, communities would gather, recite special prayers, and offer animals (often sheep or goats) as sacrifices. Words and poems recited during these rituals aimed to establish a connection with nature. For instance, the work includes a poetic fragment called “prayer to water,” which describes the sanctity of water and its glorification as a source of life.

In modern Uzbek culture, these traditions have been partially preserved in modified forms. For example, in some villages, “rain prayer” rituals are still practiced, where imams recite Islamic prayers, but the structure of the ritual resembles pre-Islamic traditions. This demonstrates the religious syncretism of the Uzbek people, blending Islamic and pre-Islamic beliefs.

Funeral and Burial Rituals

The work provides details about the funeral rituals of Turkic peoples. With the spread of Islam, burial ceremonies began to follow Sharia rules. For example, the text mentions the practices of washing and shrouding the deceased and reciting specific prayers. However, pre-Islamic traditions were also preserved, such as offering sacrifices in memory of the deceased or singing specific songs. The work includes examples of “lamentation” or “marsiya” style poems recited during these rituals, reflecting philosophical thoughts on death and the transience of life.

In modern Uzbek culture, funeral rituals primarily adhere to Islamic rules, but in some regions, pre-Islamic traditions persist in the form of “third day,” “seventh day,” or “fortieth day”



memorial ceremonies. The prayers recited and the practice of offering sacrifices during these rituals are closely linked to the information provided in the work.

Marriage Ceremonies and Religious Prayers

The work elaborates on marriage ceremonies, which were organized as grand celebrations where religious prayers and poems played a significant role. For instance, it describes the “nikah reading” ritual, during which imams recited special prayers. Additionally, pre-Islamic traditions included singing specific songs for the bride and groom, expressing wishes for family happiness and prosperity. One example in the work is a poem dedicated to the bride, portraying her as a symbol of love and harmony within the family.

In modern Uzbek culture, marriage ceremonies are conducted according to Islamic principles, but the tradition of songs and poems from the work persists in “nikah toy” (wedding) rituals. For example, “yornoma” or “wedding songs” are considered a continuation of the religious and cultural elements described in the work.

Literary and Artistic Traditions

The poems, proverbs, and wise sayings in “Devonu Lug’otit Turk” are vivid examples of the literary and artistic thought of Central Asian peoples. The poems in the work reflect the moral values, love, loyalty, and patriotism of these peoples. For example, the work includes love poems and epic tales of heroism specific to Uzbek tribes. These poems are not only literary but also hold social and cultural significance, reflecting the life philosophy of the peoples.

Proverbs and wise sayings illuminate the wisdom and moral perspectives of the peoples. For instance, the proverb “Do not mourn the past, nor rush toward the future” reflects the attitude of the people of that era toward life. These traditions continue in modern Uzbek literature through proverbs and wise sayings, such as in oral folklore and contemporary poetry.

CONCLUSION

“Devonu Lug’otit Turk” is a significant source for studying the customs and traditions of Central Asian peoples. The social relations, family traditions, religious rituals, and literary-artistic thought described in the work illuminate the lifestyle of 11th-century Turkic peoples. These traditions have been preserved in modern Uzbek culture, playing a crucial role in maintaining national identity. For example, marriage ceremonies, religious beliefs, and literary traditions continue to hold an important place in the cultural life of the Uzbek people today.

In the future, further in-depth study of this work could analyze other aspects of Central Asian peoples’ culture, such as economic life, trade, and craftsmanship. These studies would contribute to enriching our national culture and deepening the understanding of cultural connections among Central Asian peoples.

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