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On Typological Bases Of Cult Architecture In Ancient Fergana (From Antiquity To The Middle Ages)

B. Dedekhanov

Senior Lecturer, Department "Production Of Building Materials, Products And Structures",
Namangan Civil Engineering Institute, Uzbekistan

ABSTRACT

Based on archeological data, the author offers in the paper a typological description of the cult (temple) architecture in the Fergana Valley. For the first time, the data on temples and shrines of ancient and early medieval periods were collected and generalized.

KEYWORDS

Temple, sanctuary, idols, Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, typology, hearth-altars.

INTRODUCTION

In ancient period, various religions were spread on the territory of the Fergana Valley. Their cult suggested the construction of temple structures, but there was no distinct connection between the type of the temple and the cult of a particular deity. Initially, the people of ancient Fergana worshiped the idols in connection with the "cult of ancestors, totemism and other pagan beliefs" [3, 141] – the cults of water, rocks, trees. For such beliefs, there were places of worship

without architectural forms, the so-called natural shrines - Kadamjoyi. The sacred natural objects, for example, sacred mountains, rocks, trees, water sources, etc. could serve as the places of worship. A vivid example is the Holy Mountain Suleiman-Too, the sacred significance of which was emphasized by its bizarre forms, geological and morphological structure, and the presence of horizontal stone platforms at different levels, suited for collective

rituals [5, 9]. In this regard, the Mountain in ancient times served as a sanctuary and a cult-ideological center. The settlements located on the lower levels of the Mountain supported this sacred zone. Similar examples can be observed in world practice. So, initially at early Zoroastrianism in the Iranian world, the construction of temples was uncharacteristic [9, 326] - the function of a place of worship was performed by open-air sanctuaries (they could store sacred fire in small rooms built in the thickness of high stone terraces) [10, 49].

THE MAIN FINDINGS AND RESULTS

Along with worship of the main forces of nature, the ancient Fergana people, in the absence of a single religious system, worshiped various cults. We can assume the existence of both official and unofficial religions, and the construction of appropriate structures for certain rituals associated with a particular cult. Based on archaeological excavations, the author in this paper offers a typological description of ancient religious structures that were located on the territory of the Fergana Valley. In accordance with this description, the structures could be temples (religious centers associated with individual and mass worship) [6, 94], sanctuaries (for example, in rural districts), and religious (cult) rooms in residential buildings.

Religious sanctuary rooms. Considering the evolution of the cult architecture of ancient Fergana, in the Chust period (XII-VII centuries BC) religious beliefs were associated with Zoroastrian ideas in the form of worship of the main forces of nature - the cult of fire and sun. At this period, the hearth cult and the corresponding structures were developed - the hearth place was considered sacred in ancient times [10, 94]. Initially, these places presented the shrine dugouts discovered in the settlements of Osh - one of the first cult centers of Eastern Fergana and Dalverzin - not only a political, but also a cultural center of the Chust culture. These structures with a cult hearth in the center, intended for worship, did not differ much from ordinary residential buildings. This tradition

continued in the ancient period, when special rooms were accommodated for family cult in a residential building [12, 31]. These rooms were not special chapels, they were the main living rooms of the family, performing both utilitarian and symbolic functions. "In these sanctuaries, rites of worship of the ancestors and mass celebrations on the seasonal holidays occasions were held" [6, 94]. House temples and chapels (prayer houses) were of various structures and could include one or more rooms [7, 74]. They were widely spread in the 6th-8th centuries, playing the role of sanctuaries in large households (for example, on the Shortepa manor of the 8th century AD; the sanctuary was distinguished by its size, layout and interior decoration - sofas along the walls and a hearth on a dais) [2, 4].

Along with home sanctuaries dedicated to family cults, separate structures, the so-called urban temples, were also built in Fergana, supposedly intended for the royal cult.

Temples. For this type of structures associated with urban area development, the sacred part and open space (courtyard) were distinguished [6, 94]. In the planning structure of the temples there were certain patterns associated primarily with the conduct of religious rituals. An example is the construction of a cult center in Kyzlyartepa in Margilan (IV-VI centuries). It was an impressive temple of fire-worshippers in the urbanized center (with a lateral length of 14.6 m), located on a two-level clay platform - a stylobate, characterized by an isolated position, the presence of a central room - cella (6x6 m) in the perimeter bypass of the corridors. This layout, new to Fergana, represented the type (described by G.A. Pugachenkova) of a "hall in the bypass of corridors", which can be found in many historical and cultural areas of Central Asia (for example, the temples of Bactria in Khalchayan and Surkh-Kotal). Such a planning similarity indicates that the ancient architecture of Uzbekistan did not develop in isolation (despite the state borders), but in constant interaction between historical and cultural areas. In its

genesis dating back to residential architecture, this layout made it possible to carry out a bypass ritual around the shrine. A similar layout and arrangement of paired hearths was repeated in the temple in Gairattepa (east of Andijan), although this monument is far from the temple on Kyzlyartepa both chronologically and territorially.

Sanctuaries. We are considering the fire shrines of a monumental nature, erected at the settlements or urban centers, and which had fairly large sizes. The structure in the settlement of Sultanabad (late III – early II centuries BC) also consisted of three rooms, the central one was of rectangular shape (with a preserved wall length of 4 m). It was a sanctuary, distinguished not only by the wall thickness (170 cm), but also by the interior with two rectangular hearths connected together in the center, on the four sides of which there were other hearths of round shape. “The hearth system played an important role in the ritual ceremonies” [2, 2]. The sanctuary was surrounded by a bypass corridor and, as B. Abdulgazieva believes, the plan of this sanctuary is similar to the “religious structures of the early Middle Ages”, when there were no drastic changes in the temples layout. The appearance of similar monumental temples of the type of a “hall in the bypass of corridors” in Kyzlyartepa and Sultanabad was a new phenomenon in the development of temple architecture of Fergana; their architectural parallels gravitated towards the southwestern regions of Central Asia [3, 84]. The fact of using five hearths located in a special way - one in the center, the others in pairs, can be observed in other fire temples of the Fergana Valley (for example, in the fire temple in Sartepa) [1, 10].

The sanctuary in the Kairagach estate (IV-VI centuries), which occupied a central place and was connected with the family cult, consisted of 3 rooms in series, among which the main one was a 4-column sanctuary (of area 25 sqm), whose walls were decorated with red paintings in the form of plant shoots. The sacred fire was kindled in the center of this room - in the hearth of a rectangular shape with a round recess.

Two more rooms (one large and one small) and a courtyard were “subordinated” to the temple [6, 94]. In general, the presence of house shrines, as well as mini-temples in Central Asia, can be observed later, during the Middle Ages, “when pagan beliefs were banned and maintained only in domestic life” [12, 172]. Mandatory ceremonies could take place not only in temples, but also at the house hearth (for example, a house temple in the suburban quarter of Kuva) [6, 95].

The layout “a hall with four columns around which the remaining rooms were built” is considered to be the defining sign of the fire temples [15]. The formation of this layout facilitated the ritual bypass around the shrine. The sanctuary built on the edge of rural settlement in Karatepa (I century AD) in the Chust district, with two living rooms adjoining it, was similar to this layout. It represented in plan a central cult room (5.5x5.5 m), surrounded on all four sides by long narrow corridors. The cult ritual, usually performed around the altar, in this temple was performed around the sufa, located in the central room. The peculiarity of the structure was emphasized by its closedness and location on a 2-meter high platform, and the structure solemnity was emphasized by a specially protruding lobby, to which the clay steps led. Such a layout - “a hall in the bypass of corridors or of corridors and premises” [15, 73], widespread in Bactria, according to G.A. Pugachenkova, could have penetrated into Fergana from Sogd. And, as is well known, it was the border Sogd that had a great influence on the consecutive development of the temple architecture of ancient Fergana.

In the medieval period, the traditions of temple architecture have continued, and this is evidenced by the sanctuary in Maidantepa (IV-V centuries AD), located in the center of the settlement. In the ceremonial 4-column hall (50 sq m), occupying the southern corner of the structure, there was a deep niche with a rectangular dais, intended for performing religious rituals associated with fire worship [8, 105]. It should be noted that in the medieval period “there

were no drastic changes” in the planning of fire temples [2, 3]. This is evidenced by the sanctuary of fire worshipers in Zauraktepa (VIII century AD); it is of rectangular shape (17x26 m) with a cranked ledge, in which a central sanctuary for religious rites surrounded by wide bypass corridors stands out [1, 14]. According to B. Abdulgazieva, this temple located on the main trade road, served as the social and religious center of rural district; it was associated with the fire worship, as evidenced by the structure layout and its interior.

The people of ancient Fergana (and Sogd) on the eve of the Arab invasion had various religious beliefs. With the strengthening of Zoroastrianism in the V-VIII centuries AD (in urban and rural areas) the Buddhism was beginning to spread (in Sogd, Khorezm and Semirechye), so, Fergana “was in the orbit of the Buddhism influence” [9, 79]. The traditions of temple architecture in Central Asia (and Near East) already existed long before the spread of the Buddhist religion (already in the ancient period), and it could be assumed that the architecture of Buddhist temples was influenced by the principles of fire temples design. This is evidenced by the original layout of the early medieval temple in Kuva (Kuba), built with a residential quarter on a hill and “satisfying the spiritual and domestic needs of its inhabitants” [17, 224]. The temple was intentionally built on the site of a pagan temple (shrine), and, according to V.A. Bulatova, Buddhists used the popularity of the former pagan temple and “included the local deity into bodhisattvas” [14, 32] to attract the local population to this sacred place. The cult complex had three sections and consisted of an entrance group, an elongated trapezoidal courtyard and the temple itself, which in turn consisted of a square sanctuary (11.9 x 11.2 m) and a rectangular temple (21 x 14 m), which had independent entrances. The cult dominant of the sanctuary was the chapel of oblation-altar, located on a square platform (6.3x6.38 m), which occupied the middle of the room, to which a three-step ladder led. Most likely, a bypass ritual characteristic of Buddhists

took place around this platform, on the corners of which there were once wooden columns.

CONCLUSIONS

Thus, we can assume that in the development of the temple architecture of ancient Fergana, a consistent development process is observed - from simple family mini-temples to classical “fire” temples built according to the rules of religious etiquette. It should be noted that the temple architecture of Fergana (as well as residential architecture) “grew” from the earth and this is evidenced by the dugouts-sanctuaries (in Osh, Dalverzin). In many respects, the distribution of the layout of the type of a “hall in the bypass of corridors or of corridors and premises” in Fergana was facilitated by the bordering with the Sogd region, where a similar layout was used, in particular, in religious architecture. But Fergana, among other historical and cultural areas, was distinguished by its originality, which can be seen on the example of the architecture development. While observing the principle of closed composition in the planning, the isolation from the outside world, the adherence to a certain planning idea (dictated primarily by ideological requirements), Fergana people brought in some new elements. So, “the innovation of the Fergana people who re-formed and adopted in their own way the cult of fire” [4, 138] is the presence of hearth-altars that differed from similar altars in the neighboring regions. Further research by archaeologists in this region will reveal the problem in a new perspective. Later, in the VII-VIII centuries in connection with the Arab invasion a change of religion took place.

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