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RELIGIOUS ENVIRONMENT AND THE SPREAD OF ISLAM IN MAVERANNAHR IN THE WORKS OF HERMAN VÁMBÉRY

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Abstract. This article analyzes the religious processes in Maverannahr, the introduction of Islam during the period of the Arab conquest, the attitude of the local population toward the new religion, and the formation of the religious environment on the basis of the work *History of Bukhara or Transoxiana* by the nineteenth-century orientalist and traveler Herman Vámbéry. The author's information is studied through historical-comparative and source-critical methods, and the spread of Islam is assessed not only as a religious phenomenon but also as a political and cultural process. The results of the study demonstrate that Islamization in Maverannahr was a complex historical process that lasted for a long period.

Keywords: Herman Vámbéry, Maverannahr, Bukhara, Islam, Arab conquest, Qutayba ibn Muslim, religious environment, historical source.

Introduction. The introduction of Islam and its widespread dissemination throughout Central Asia constitute one of the most significant historical processes in the history of the peoples of the region. This process exerted a profound influence not only on religious life but also on political, social, and cultural development. In particular, from the eighth century onward, the territory of Maverannahr became one of the major centers of the Muslim East.

In studying this issue, the works of European orientalists are of considerable scholarly importance alongside local historical sources. One of the most valuable among these sources is *History of Bukhara or Transoxiana* by the renowned nineteenth-century orientalist and traveler Herman Vámbéry. In addition to the political history of Maverannahr, this work contains valuable information concerning the religious life of the region, the spread of Islam, ancient beliefs, and the formation of religious centers.

In his work, Vámbéry sought to present the history of Maverannahr not merely as a sequence of political events but as a process closely connected with religious and cultural development. In this regard, his work represents one of the important sources for the study of the religious history of the region.

At present, the reexamination of issues related to the religious history of Maverannahr, particularly the scientific analysis of information provided by foreign authors, constitutes one of the pressing directions of historiographical research. Comparative analysis of historical sources broadens the possibilities for identifying the distinctive characteristics of religious processes.

The relevance of the present study lies in the fact that the information presented in Herman Vámbéry's work makes it possible to determine that the process of Islamization in Maverannahr was complex and proceeded gradually through several stages.

Research Methodology. During the course of the research, such methods widely used in historical studies as historicism, objectivity, comparative analysis, systematization, and source criticism were employed.

First and foremost, Herman Vámbéry's work *History of Bukhara or Transoxiana* was examined as the principal source. The information presented in the work was systematized, and its content was analyzed in relation to historical processes. Particular attention was also paid to the specific characteristics of the author's views and his approach to historical events.

Through the application of the historical-comparative method, information concerning the introduction of Islam into Maverannahr was evaluated in connection with other historical developments. At the same time, the theoretical premise that religious transformations in the region represented a prolonged and complex process was substantiated.

Analysis and Results. Arab Conquest and the Introduction of Islam into Maverannahr. Herman Vámbéry describes the spread of Islam in Maverannahr in connection with the Arab conquests. According to the author, after the consolidation of the Muslim state in Western Asia, Arab armies entered Maverannahr following the route once traversed by Alexander the Great [1, p. 36].

These accounts indicate that the Arab military campaigns were associated not only with political ambitions but also with religious objectives. Vámbéry pays particular attention to the activities of Qutayba ibn Muslim. According to his observations, the primary aim was the complete subjugation of the region and the conversion of its inhabitants to Islam.

Qutayba ibn Muslim is mentioned as one of the most prominent figures of the Arab conquests in Maverannahr. According to Vámbéry, he was not only engaged in military campaigns but also devoted considerable attention to strengthening religious spirit among his soldiers. The recitation of the Qur'an and religious preaching constituted integral components of military expeditions [1, p. 49].

Historical evidence indicates that political fragmentation prevailed in Maverannahr during the early eighth century. This situation facilitated the conquest of the region by Arab forces. At the same time, the arrival of the new religion led to a confrontation with the ancient beliefs of the local population.

Although the spread of Islam initially possessed a military and political character, it gradually became an inseparable part of social and cultural life. In particular, Muslim religious institutions began to emerge in Bukhara, Samarkand, and other major urban centers.

The Process of the Acceptance of Islam in Bukhara and Religious Resistance. According to Herman Vámbéry, the inhabitants of Maverannahr did not embrace Islam immediately. In particular, the establishment of the new religion in the city of Bukhara was a prolonged and complicated process. The author notes that the people of Bukhara accepted Islam on several occasions, yet after a certain period they returned to their former beliefs [1, p. 78].

This situation demonstrates the loyalty of the local population to their ancient religious traditions. The Arab rulers, in turn, employed various methods to strengthen Islam. In particular, historical accounts mention that material rewards were granted to those who attended Friday prayers.

Although such policies facilitated the more rapid spread of Islam among the broader population, the complete transformation of religious views required a considerable period of time. Some individuals outwardly accepted Islam while secretly continuing to worship their former deities.

These accounts indicate that the process of religious transformation in Maverannahr proceeded gradually. The establishment of Islam in the region was connected not only with military and political factors but also with broader social and cultural developments.

Mosques and the Formation of Religious Centers. As Islam spread widely, the construction of mosques began in the major cities of Maverannahr. Referring to the congregational mosque of Bukhara, Vámbéry notes that it served not only as a place of worship but also as an important symbol of Muslim authority.

Mosques functioned as spiritual centers of Muslim society. They were places not only for prayer but also for religious education, the discussion of matters of state importance, and the organization of events related to community life.

According to Vámbéry, some Christian churches were subsequently converted into mosques. This reflects the profound transformations that occurred in religious life following the Arab conquest.

The construction of mosques and their role in social life became one of the most important factors in the formation of Islamic culture in Maverannahr. In later periods, these institutions also developed into centers of science and learning.

Ancient Religions and Issues of Religious Tolerance. Herman Vámbéry also provides important information concerning pre-Islamic religious beliefs in Maverannahr. In particular, he notes that idolatry and Buddhism were widespread in certain regions. Reports concerning the immense wealth preserved in the temples of Paykand indicate the existence of ancient religious centers in the region.

According to the author, Buddhism and Christianity in Eastern Turkestan continued to exist alongside Islam for a considerable period of time.

These observations demonstrate that the spread of Islam did not immediately result in the disappearance of other religious beliefs. On the contrary, for a certain period different religions coexisted within the same territory [1, p. 80].

From a historical perspective, such circumstances testify to the existence of processes of religious synthesis and cultural interaction. Consequently, Maverannahr developed as a region characterized by multiculturalism and diverse religious traditions.

Discussion. Herman Vámbéry's *History of Bukhara or Transoxiana* constitutes one of the important sources for the study of the religious history of Maverannahr. The information provided by the author demonstrates that the introduction of Islam into the region and its gradual transformation into the dominant religion as a result of the Arab conquests represented a complex historical process.

The information presented in the work indicates that the spread of Islam was not merely a religious phenomenon but was also closely connected with political and social developments. In consolidating the new faith, Arab rulers employed not only military power but also economic and ideological means.

Vámbéry's observations reveal that the peoples of Maverannahr did not abandon their ancient religious beliefs immediately. The complete establishment of Islam required several centuries. In particular, the formation of religious life in cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand constituted a prolonged historical process.

Furthermore, the work places special emphasis on the position of Bukhara as a religious center of the Muslim East. In subsequent centuries, Bukhara became one of the leading centers of Islamic scholarship and produced numerous renowned scholars.

Although some of Vámbéry's views were shaped by the perspective of nineteenth-century European Orientalism, his accounts possess considerable source-critical value for the study of the history of Maverannahr. Therefore, a comparative analysis of his work alongside Eastern and local historical sources is of great scholarly significance.

The Formation of Bukhara as an Islamic Center. In his work, Herman Vámbéry describes Bukhara not only as a political and economic center but also as one of the most important religious centers of the Muslim East. Referring to the city as a "center of scholars," the author places particular emphasis on its significance in scholarship, trade, and religious life.

Beginning from the eighth and ninth centuries, Bukhara emerged as one of the cities where Islamic sciences flourished. During the Samanid period, the political and cultural prestige of the city increased considerably, transforming it into one of the major intellectual centers of the Muslim world. The sciences of hadith, fiqh, tafsir, and kalam developed there, and many distinguished scholars were produced.

The scholarly activities of such eminent thinkers as Imam al-Bukhari, Abu Hafs Kabir al-Bukhari, and Abu Mansur al-Maturidi further strengthened the prestige of Bukhara within the Muslim world. In subsequent centuries, the city retained its status as a center of religious education.

According to Vámbéry, even in the nineteenth century Bukhara remained one of the principal centers in which Islamic traditions had been preserved. He particularly noted that while Islamic values were weakening in many parts of Asia, ancient Muslim traditions had been maintained in Bukhara.

These observations demonstrate that Bukhara occupied an important position not only in Central Asia but also throughout the Muslim world as one of the major religious centers.

Historical Significance of Religious Processes. The religious processes that took place in Maverannahr exerted a profound influence on the subsequent development of the region. As a result of the spread of Islam:

- new spiritual values were established;
- science and culture flourished;
- the number of mosques and madrasas increased;
- Islamic law and administrative institutions became firmly established;
- Central Asia evolved into one of the important centers of Muslim civilization.

Moreover, the spread of Islam facilitated the interaction and synthesis of Arab, Persian, and Turkic cultures. As a consequence, a distinctive Islamic civilization emerged in Maverannahr.

Herman Vámbéry's accounts demonstrate that these processes were complex and multifaceted in character. The establishment of Islam was achieved through the combined influence of military, political, economic, and spiritual factors.

Conclusion and Recommendations. Herman Vámbéry's *History of Bukhara or Transoxiana* represents one of the important sources for studying the religious history of Maverannahr. On the basis of the author's accounts, it is possible to analyze the introduction of Islam into the region during the period of the Arab conquests, the stages of its spread, and the attitude of the local population toward the new religion.

The results of the study allow the following conclusions to be drawn:

First, the spread of Islam in Maverannahr was a prolonged and complex historical process that occurred not solely as a consequence of military campaigns but also under the influence of political, economic, and cultural factors.

Second, the local population initially remained attached to their ancient religious beliefs, and the complete establishment of the new religion required several centuries.

Third, mosques and religious centers played a crucial role in the formation of Muslim society. In particular, the city of Bukhara subsequently developed into one of the major scientific and religious centers of the Muslim East.

Fourth, although Herman Vámbéry's work was written within the framework of the traditions of nineteenth-century European Orientalism, the information it contains possesses significant source-critical value for the study of the religious and cultural history of Maverannahr.

Thus, *History of Bukhara or Transoxiana* occupies a special place among written sources for the study of the formation of Islamic civilization, the religious environment, and the history of spiritual life in Central Asia.

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