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THE DEIFICATION OF THE KUSHAN RULERS

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Abstract

The article explores the divine legitimization of the Kushan rulers, focusing on their political and ideological structures through a multi-source approach involving historical, epigraphic, numismatic, and art historical evidence. It highlights the complexity of reconstructing Kushan history due to scarce and scattered sources but stresses the importance of available materials for understanding the empire's governance and religious ideology. The study analyzes the "saptanga" model of governance, a seven-element framework from ancient Indian political thought, as applied in Kushan statecraft. It examines the hierarchical roles of the king (Svami), ministers (Amatya), people and territories (Janapada), fortresses (Durga), treasury (Kosa), military power (Bala), and allies (Mitra). The article also elucidates how Kushan kings legitimized their authority by adopting divine titles such as "Devaputra" ("Son of God") and employing religious symbolism on coins and monuments, illustrating a synthesis of Hindu-Buddhist and transregional (Chinese and Iranian) influences. This legitimization was less reliant on grand Vedic sacrifices and more on iconography and numismatic imagery, reflecting the Kushan adaptation of the cosmic order concept (Rita) and their political-theological ideology.

Keywords: Kushan empire; divine kingship; saptanga model; Numismatics; epigraphy; political Ideology; devaputra; cosmic order (Rita); hindu-buddhist syncretism; transregional influence.



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Introduction

Today, the Republic of Uzbekistan is developing steadily towards deepening democratic reforms and consistently continuing the processes of modern modernization. As our President Shavkat Mirziyoyev noted, the reforms implemented in recent years serve to ensure national interests, increase the well-being of the people, and form a qualitatively new stage in the life of society. The most important result is that the reforms being implemented have entered an irreversible stage and are manifested as a spiritual awakening of society.


As the President specifically acknowledged, it is impossible to consistently continue democratic processes in society without abandoning dogmatic views, changing old ways of thinking, and building faith in renewal in the minds and hearts of the population. Because without changing the system of views and values in the human mind, the possibility of forming a new system of relations and building a new social life will be limited. In this sense, spiritual renewal is becoming the main driving force of democratic reforms.

Main Part

It is worth noting that the spiritual and cultural reforms implemented in Uzbekistan from independence to the present have been formed in three stages in terms of content and essence:

1. The period of national and spiritual revival (1991–2000) - a stage of awareness of national identity, restoration of historical memory, and rediscovery of spiritual heritage;
2. The period of development of national and spiritual progress (2001–2016) - a stage of strengthening the institutional foundations of spiritual and educational policy, ensuring ideological stability;
3. The period of national rise (from 2017 to the present) - a stage based on the principles of building an open and democratic society, accelerating spiritual and educational renewal, and aimed at developing human capital.

Modern development processes are directly related to the level of humanity's understanding of the world, its ability to apply the acquired knowledge in the interests of national and universal interests. In today's global changes, the level

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of development of each nation is determined by its reliance on the spiritual renewal and democratic principles it has created for the future of humanity.

The ultimate goal of the reforms being implemented by Uzbekistan is to secure the country's place in the world political, economic and cultural space. In this process, special attention was paid to strengthening universal human values equality, justice, purity, honesty, kindness, harmony and humanity. By combining national values with universal human principles, broad opportunities were created in society for peace, prosperity, democracy, freedom of conscience and the development of every person.

Also, one of the priority tasks was to educate the younger generation in the spirit of spiritual maturity, increase the spiritual literacy of the population, support the diversity of opinions in society, and create conditions conducive to the discovery of human creative potential. As a result, the spiritual and educational development model of New Uzbekistan has become the main support for the principles of a new life that is being formed on the basis of sustainable development of society, open thinking, and democratic values.

In the context of globalization, the demands of the times demand a high level of knowledge, professional competencies and continuous self-improvement from all layers of society, especially from employees serving in the internal affairs bodies and the national security system. Effective work in the security sector requires the training of personnel with modern knowledge, broad-mindedness, ability to foresee the strategic situation and a deep sense of professional responsibility. Such specialists serve as a reliable support not only for themselves, but also for the peace and security of society. This is precisely where the wisdom of the great scholar Abu Rayhan Beruni, “The essence of administration and management is to protect the rights of the oppressed, to sacrifice one’s own peace for the sake of social peace,” is manifested, even today.

Since the Republic of Uzbekistan gained national independence on August 31, 1991, the development of the spiritual and educational sphere has been one of the most priority tasks of state policy. In this regard, conceptual approaches have been developed aimed at assessing cultural heritage, understanding national

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identity, and renewing the spiritual life of society. This policy was based on the following four main criteria:

1. humanism - recognizing human interests as the highest value;
2. progressivism - striving to use the achievements of modernization and science;
3. populism - taking into account the interests of all segments of society;
4. patriotism - protecting national interests and increasing responsibility for the prosperity of the country.

The priority areas for radically improving the system of spiritual and educational work were determined as follows:

- Strengthening a healthy worldview in society and transforming creative ideas into a nationwide movement through the widespread promotion of the idea of "From national revival to national advancement";
- Ensuring the continuity of spiritual education between the family, educational institutions and the mahalla system;
- Organizing propaganda and educational activities on a scientific basis, increasing the effectiveness of scientific research in the field and introducing a permanent monitoring system that ensures the stability of the socio-spiritual environment;
- Implementing comprehensive measures against such negative vices as indifference to the fate of the nation, localism, tribalism, corruption, disregard for family values and irresponsibility for the upbringing of youth;
- improving the culture of using the Internet among the population, strengthening conscious immunity against ideological threats occurring in the information space;
- ensuring the priority of spiritual and moral criteria, national and universal values in all areas of culture, literature, cinematography, theater, music and art, as well as in publishing and printing products and mass media;
- conducting systematic study of geopolitical and ideological processes, conducting an effective ideological struggle against global threats such as terrorism, extremism, fanaticism, human trafficking, organized crime and drug trafficking, and developing international cooperation in this regard.

Result and Discussion

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The implementation of these areas is an important component of systemic reforms that strengthen the conceptual basis of spiritual and educational policy in Uzbekistan, strengthen the spiritual immunity of society and serve the development of human capital.

Analyzing the dynamics and main directions of reforms implemented in the spiritual and cultural spheres during the period of new Uzbekistan, we see, first of all, that legal guarantees for these political and educational processes have been created and strengthened. From the first years of independence, a regulatory and legal framework for the development of the spiritual and educational sphere has been formed and gradually improved. In this regard, the following regulatory documents formed the foundation of this sphere:

1. Decrees of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

- “On the establishment of the Republican Public Center ‘Spirituality and Enlightenment’” (April 23, 1994);
- “On further improving the activities and increasing the efficiency of the Public Center ‘Spirituality and Enlightenment’” (September 9, 1996);
- “On Support for the Republican Council for Spirituality and Enlightenment” (September 3, 1999).



These decrees made it possible to centrally manage spiritual and educational policy, form organizational mechanisms, and widely introduce the foundations of the national idea.

2. Resolution of the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

- “On Increasing the Efficiency of the Propaganda of the National Idea and Spiritual and Educational Work” (August 25, 2006, No. PQ-451).

This resolution was an important stage in the development of national ideology, strengthening the organizational and methodological foundations of spiritual and educational work and increasing their effectiveness.

3. Resolutions of the Cabinet of Ministers of the Republic of Uzbekistan:

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– “On the organization of the activities of the Republican Public Center ‘Spirituality and Enlightenment’” (June 8, 1994);

– “On measures to further deepen spiritual and educational reforms and increase their effectiveness” (July 24, 1998).

These documents served to systematically organize spiritual and educational work in the regions, strengthen cooperation between state and public institutions, and stabilize the spiritual and cultural environment in the regions.

4. Documents related to the new stage after 2017:

– “On increasing the effectiveness of spiritual and educational work and raising the development of the sector to a new level” (July 2017, No. PQ-3160);

– Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers “On measures to increase the effectiveness of spiritual and educational work in the education system” (September 17, 2018, No. 736);

– Resolution of the President “On additional measures to increase the effectiveness of spiritual and educational work” (May 2019, No. PQ-4307);

– Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers “On approval of the concept for increasing the effectiveness of spiritual and educational work in secondary general educational institutions” (October 2022, No. 558);

– Resolution of the President “On measures to radically improve the system of spiritual and educational work” (March 26, 2021, No. PQ-5040).

These documents set out urgent tasks such as organizing spiritual and educational work based on new methodological approaches, modernizing youth education policy, ensuring ideological stability in the information space, and strengthening the consistency of educational work in the education system.

Conclusion

In conclusion, it is worth noting that Uzbekistan, having chosen the path of democratic development, has consistently implemented spiritual and cultural reforms, including the main directions of this area among the priority tasks of state policy. The large-scale reforms carried out in the country served, first of all, to abandon the ideological views inherent in the former Soviet system, to form a

new ideological and theoretical basis for the development of society. In the new concept of development of Uzbekistan, the processes of spiritual and cultural renewal were manifested in the following strategic directions:

1. Formation of a new ideological basis for the development of society based on the national idea. From the first stages of independence, a new ideological and ideological concept was created based on national interests and universal human values. This served to renew the consciousness of society, strengthen national identity and build a spiritual foundation aimed at development.
2. Implementation of the concept of the development of a democratic society based on spiritual and cultural reforms. The main directions of the reforms were to strengthen democratic values, ensure the conscious participation of citizens, and form theoretical and organizational mechanisms for building an open and just society. This process raised the modernization of spiritual and educational policy, increasing the intellectual and spiritual potential of society to a new level.
3. Consistent implementation of reforms supporting the processes of national and spiritual revival of the nation and awareness of national identity. During the years of independence, Uzbekistan has achieved significant results in restoring national values, restoring historical memory, in-depth study of cultural heritage and its inculcation in the education of the younger generation. The consistent policy implemented in this regard served to strengthen the identity of the nation, ensure socio-spiritual stability, and create a spiritual environment necessary for the development of society.

In general, Uzbekistan has gained extensive experience in the field of spiritual and cultural reforms, and the policy of spiritual uplift has become a strategically important direction in the country's new development model.

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