



# **RESEARCH OF EASTERN AND WESTERN SCHOLARS ON RELIGIOUS-MYSTICAL SYMBOLS AND ITS STUDY IN MODERN HISTORIOGRAPHY**

**Elyor Alimkulov**

Senior Lecturer, PhD,

Uzbekistan International Islamic Academy Responsible Officer,

Committee on Religious Affairs

of the Republic of Uzbekistan

email: boshrooo@mail.ru

## **Annotation:**

This article examines the scientific works carried out by foreign researchers, as well as by encyclopedic Eastern scholars, who have conducted research on religious-mystical symbols. In particular, the meaning and essence of symbols are thoroughly explained with practical examples in the rare works of our great scholars such as Abu Nasr Farabi, Abu Rayhan Beruni, Al-Khwarizmi, Shahrastani, Abu Ali ibn Sina, and Yusuf Khos Khajib. It also reveals the special importance of Western scholars' research on religious-mystical symbols in the historical and theoretical study of the topic. This includes studies by the Belgian political scientist E.G. d'Alviella, American philosopher Charles Peirce, Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, American philosopher Charles Morris, German philosopher Hegel, English ethnologist and religious scholar E. Taylor, and other scholars who have explored various aspects of symbols.

**Keywords:** God, courage, chastity, justice, intellect, soul, ego, body, "Monuments of Ancient Nations," "Kutadgu Bilig," emanation, cross, earth, wind, light, truth, two-headed eagle, three-pronged spear, lotus flower, icon, representamen, interpretant, metasign, coins, household items, statues, ossuaries, seals, tamgas, banners, amulets, pottery, clay, stone artifacts.

The main supporting elements of religious-mystical symbol systems are ritual situations and myths. Based on these elements, religious concepts, worldviews, universally accepted rules, values, and norms develop in society. This, in turn, positively influences the development of various cultures and religions in society. Therefore, the significance of religious-mystical symbols increases with the advancement of religious knowledge in society.

Scientifically studying various religious issues is one of the practically important tasks of the present era. Researchers, both in the past and present, have shown interest in the content and essence of various religious views, as well as their symbols and signs. For instance, reliable information about religious-mystical symbols is reflected in the works of scholars of the Eastern Renaissance.

In particular, the interpretation of symbolic events and phenomena occupies a significant place in the works of Abu Nasr Farabi (870-950). For example, the scholar wrote about the great divine creator: "The first cause is the good in the world. The First Cause (God) itself is the good of the worlds. It is absolute good, a symbol of beauty and perfection. It is pure intellect and the source of all good things in existence." According to researcher M. Ortiqova, Farabi, first and foremost, described God, the creator, as a symbol and sign of perfection, stemming



from the scientific creative requirements of his time. In turn, through this idea, the thinker promoted a high spiritual ideal in the image of God, thereby encouraging people to strive for perfection in their lives. Farabi wrote in his reflections: "A virtuous city is like a whole and healthy body. This is a body whose all members cooperate with each other to preserve its integrity and life. Moderation in one's soul and harmony in all actions are formed only when human behavior is based on justice and fairness." Farabi primarily relied on the symbolic meanings in the customs and traditions of Turkic peoples in the concepts of "courage," "chastity," and "justice."

Abu Rayhan Beruni, in many parts of his work "Monuments of Ancient Nations," discussed how various totems were linked to specific constellations and planets, and how each environment had its own symbol. For instance, the scholar likened the symbol of the Sun to a lion, the Moon to a bull, Mars to a wolf, Mercury to a dragon, Venus to a dove, and Jupiter and Saturn to an eagle. According to reliable information left by Al-Khwarizmi, Shahrastani, and Beruni, it is stated that most religious-mystical symbols in Zoroastrianism drew sustenance from astral beliefs, as well as religious beliefs preceding the emergence of this religion.

One of the medieval scholars, Abu Ali ibn Sina (980-1037), presented such information in his analysis of the relationship between the world and man in his philosophical views: "The necessary existence constitutes a whole that is dependent on nothing, and it is the most willing, powerful, wise God. All other things exist potentially, and they originate from the necessary existence – God. Necessary existence and possible existence are a relationship of cause and effect. This process occurs gradually in the form of emanation\*, as a light emanating from the sun. In this order, intellect, soul (ego), and body, which exist in potential form, and in connection with them, celestial spheres arise and become existing things. All these are substances (jawhar). Besides these, there are accidents (obraz) in existence – the signs of things, symbolic expressions, color, size, smell, and other sensations." Through these ontological views, Ibn Sina expressed the attributes of existence in a symbolic spirit.

In the works of Yusuf Khos Khajib, special emphasis can be seen on signs, symbols, and emblems. In his most famous work, "Kutadgu Bilig" ("Knowledge Leading to Happiness"), the characters of the main protagonists are masterfully revealed through four symbols. The first is "justice," represented by the chief ruler Kuntugdi; the second is named "state" and is the chief vizier Aytoldi; the third is considered the symbol of "intellect" and "knowledge" and is the vizier's son Ugdulmish; and the last, fourth, is contentment, depicted in the character of his relative – Uzgurmish.

Yusuf Khos Khajib, dwelling on knowledge about existence, states that there is nothing that man cannot know, no riddle that cannot be solved by knowledge; knowledge also opens the way to the heavens. To know, he stresses, one must learn tirelessly. However, the work is not merely composed of abstract symbols and emblems. With this creation, the scholar described the social and historical conditions of his time while encouraging spiritual maturity. The use of symbolic expressions in the work is evidence of its profound semiotic meaning. The unique characteristic of "Kutadgu Bilig" is also defined by this.

The aforementioned ideas form the basis for the conclusion that the works of our great thinkers who lived in our land gave a special place to social, religious-philosophical views, including topics related to emblems and various symbols.

In the historical and theoretical study of the topic, the scientific research of Western scholars on religious-mystical symbols is also of particular importance. For example, the Belgian

political scientist E.G. d'Alviella, in his work "The Migration of Symbols" (La migration des symboles), discusses general and well-known symbols in various nations, specifically the "cross" symbol – among Persians, Chaldeans, Indians, Chinese, and Greeks, it symbolizes earth, wind, light, truth, and other concepts; the "two-headed eagle" – victory of the sun over clouds, a symbol of power; the "three-pronged spear" – found in Christian iconography, Gallic amulets, and Assyrian memorial stones. He also speaks about the "lotus flower," which was a symbol of divinity and existence in the eyes of Egyptian, Indian, and Eastern peoples. E.G. d'Alviella's research was limited to Christian religious symbols and did not consider the vast literary materials of the ancient world. In the Middle Ages, Christian religious symbols also found their expression in architecture, painting, miniatures, and legends.

The science of semiotics, which deals with symbolically meaningful signs, began to form in the 20th century. Initially related to medicine, it began to be used in French in 1752. Semiotics, which studies verbal and nonverbal signs, was first defined in explanatory dictionaries as "the science that studies the signs of illness" and was called semiology. Its theoretical principles, research methods, and tools were initially used and independently developed simultaneously in the works of the American philosopher Charles Peirce and the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure. F. de Saussure, who contributed to the development of 20th-century linguistics and is considered the founder of general linguistics, developed the theory of linguistic signs. According to him, language is a system of signs that express meanings and concepts. Human daily communication language can also be compared with other sign systems. For example, the alphabet of gestures for the deaf and mute, military signals, deference (polite expressions of respect), symbols in various ceremonies, even bird feathers and various smells are unique signs that can convey certain meanings. Among these, human language holds the most important place in terms of its content.

The American scholar Charles Sanders Peirce introduced the word semiotics as a synonym for the term semiology. The term semiology is now used to describe the specificity of a certain system of signs. Peirce divided semiotic signs into three groups: icons or iconic signs that resemble the object, indexes that directly point to the object, and symbols that convey abstract meaning not related to the object. According to Peirce's theory, "the field of relation of a sign consists of three directions: 1) the sign, more precisely – the representamen, a material means that replaces something; 2) the interpretant, a means that is in the mind of the percipient and describes the sign; 3) the object reflected in the sign."

Another American philosopher, Charles Morris (1901-1979), introduced the concept of "metasign" – which provides information about signs – into semiotics. In his works "Foundations of the Theory of Signs," published in 1938, and later "Signs, Language and Behavior," published in 1946, he defined three components of semiosis as a process that usually includes three or four factors, dating back to the Greeks: sign vehicle, designatum, and interpretant. He also identified the interpreter as the fourth component and introduced the basic principles of the new science into scientific discourse. These terms openly express the unrevealed factors in the popular idea that a sign points to something for someone. For example, a hunting dog, upon hearing a certain sound, behaves as if it is hunting a chipmunk. Here, the specific sound is the sign vehicle (S), the dog's behavior is the interpretant (I), and behaving like hunting a chipmunk is the designatum (D). Or, a traveler prepares to behave appropriately (I) in a specific geographical location (D) based on a letter (S) from a friend. In this way, in semiosis, one thing takes into account another thing through a third thing. As the



science of semiotics developed, Ch. Morris largely relied on the views of the American philosopher Ch. Peirce (1839-1914) in this process. In particular, Ch. Morris wrote in his book "Signs, Language and Behavior" that the idea first stated by Ch. Peirce, that the significance of signs is inextricably linked to the determination of the habits they generate, was the basis for his work.

Recalling the German philosopher Hegel's idea: "Not everything that seems ordinary and known to us is understandable," we realize that every thing, event, process, and the signs reflecting them may be familiar and known to us, but not always understandable.

The English ethnologist and religious scholar E. Taylor (1832-1917) is considered one of the prominent figures of the evolutionary theory in anthropology, as well as one of the researchers who put forward a number of theoretical views on the emergence of religious-mystical beliefs. In his work "Primitive Culture," he put forward ideas about the origin of existence, the world, cosmic bodies, the underground and above-ground world, and the symbolic essence of various plants and animals.

Scientific and explanatory dictionaries related to religious-mystical terms were published in the mid-20th century by M. Botvinik (1917-1994), M. Kogan (1907-1982), M. Rabinovich (1907-1997), B. Seleskiy, and Ye. Meletinskiy (1918-2005), and these dictionaries were widely used in studying the historical foundations of the topic.

In the early 20th century, symbolic signs reflected in the ornamental patterns of Asian and European peoples were generalized by art historians, while A. Malchik thoroughly studied the development of patterns in Kyrgyz folk applied art. Sh. Khanna's research on the comparative study of the unique signs and symbols of ornamental patterns in the traditions of Iranian and Central Asian carpet weaving is considered one of the first steps in this direction.

Linguist D. Mingboboieva, in her book "The Mystery of Symbols," presented information about the cultures, religious, mythological, and poetic ideas of the world's peoples, which is a manifestation of attempts to study the language of symbols. The book systematically explained and interpreted mythological heroes, widely spread symbols and signs among the people, and the specific and general aspects of various interconnected emblems, according to their importance.

Orientalist H. Karomatov aimed to create a history of religion in Uzbekistan and revealed a series of processes, from the early forms of religious beliefs such as animism, fetishism, and totemism that developed among the ancient ancestors of Uzbekistan, to the rise of Islam to the status of monotheism. Works by E. Rtveladze, A. Askarov, Yu. Buryakov, A. Leskov, G. Pugachenkova, and V. Shishkin, dedicated to studying the history, culture, religious beliefs, and other aspects of Uzbekistan, have been published.

Archaeologists and art historians have provided encyclopedic information about unique works of art, coins, household items, sculptures, ossuaries, seals, tamgas, banners, amulets, tools made of iron and non-ferrous metals, pottery, clay, and stone artifacts related to ancient religious-mystical themes. The scientific study "Essays on the Art of Central Asia" co-authored by G. Pugachenkova and L. Rempel includes scientific information on sculpture, miniatures, architecture, fine arts, coroplastics, carving, pottery, blacksmithing, textile production, bone, and wood carving from ancient and early medieval times.

L. Rempel's study "Chain of Time: Centuries-Old Images and Traveling Plots in Central Asian Traditional Art" broadly covered gods and goddesses, deities, mythological heroes, scenes, tamgas and seals, symbols and signs in various objects, and their historical-comparative



analysis, origins, and essence from ancient times to the period the scholar lived in Uzbekistan. The role of symbols and signs depicted in the above in understanding existence, astral symbols in the form of predators, anthropomorphic deities, legendary images, seals and coins expressed in the form of semi-rulers and deities, and symbolic images in the external decoration of various household items of a religious-mystical nature were specifically studied.

Furthermore, L. Rempel scientifically investigated the problems of Islamic art in our country in her monograph "Problems of Artistic Culture of Central Asia and Muslim Art in the 9th-13th Centuries," while academic A. Hakimov conducted historical and scientific research on winged creatures and the world of birds, the world of plants and nature, zoomorphic, anthropomorphic symbols, sphinxes, griffins, giants, demons, sirens (divine simurgh, anqa, humo, dog-bird symbols), packs of predatory creatures, symbolic horsemen, and marked symbols in the region.

Important archaeological scientific data on the history of Buddhism in Tarmita-Termez have been obtained by archaeologists such as Sh. Pidayev, J. Fusman, K. Abdullayev, T. Annayev, M. Bolganova, V. Solovyov, R. Salomon, A. Ivamoto, and J. Annayev. In particular, the Termez archaeological expedition led by scholar Sh. Pidayev discovered samples of wall paintings in the monastic part of the Karatepa monument, where symbols depicting the appearance of the Bactrian population, their clothing, jewelry, and various forms of religiously related symbols used in Buddhist rituals and customs were reflected. J. Annayev, based on the principles of historicity and objectivity, revealed the meaning and essence of the architectural style, architectural layout, material culture, numismatics, and symbolic signs and images related to Buddhist teachings found in the art discoveries of the Buddhist temples built in the ancient Termez Buddhist monuments, Zurmala, Karatepa, Fayaztepa, and Northern Bactria with reliable evidence.

Ethnologist A. Ashirov deeply studied the ancient beliefs of the Uzbek people before the advent of Islam, including early religious beliefs, shamanism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Mazdakism, and their related customs, rituals, and traditions in daily life based on field research. The author broadly illuminated the stages of their development and their mutual symbiosis using historical and ethnographic data, specifically using ancient religious beliefs as examples.

Currently, a large fund of applied art samples preserved in the State Art Museum of Uzbekistan includes various ornamental patterns in metalwork, embroidery, gold embroidery, jewelry, pottery, ganche and wood carving, painting, textiles, printing, carpet weaving, and leatherwork, containing symbols related to anthropomorphic, zoomorphic, zooanthropomorphic, ornithomorphic, celestial, and cosmogonic themes, which have been systematically analyzed by scholars in the field.

Art historian S. Aliyeva conducted scientific research in the field of glazed pottery in Uzbekistan. She periodized artistic pottery from a historical point of view and studied the evolution of glazed artistic pottery used in the 9th-21st centuries. The scholar scientifically summarized the technology of creation, structure, unique symbols and emblems, production centers, proper use of ornamental patterns, stages of their development, and the distinctiveness of local craft schools of various daily items and vessels found in the ruins of Afrosiab in the 10th century. The study comparatively analyzed with clear evidence that many of the mentioned items and vessels used characters related to religious-mystical symbols.



In one of the scientific studies conducted by academic A. Hakimov, the unique blue pottery traditions of the Fergana Valley, and the content of religious-mystical symbols and images in the external and internal artistic decoration of ceramic dishes were meticulously and deeply investigated. For example, religious, philosophical, and mythological symbolic ornaments and emblems can be seen in pottery items made by masters such as: "chorbarg," "yulduzgul," "o'rdak aftoba," "par pashsha," "baliq," "kord-pichoq," "chayon," "chashmi gov," "inson yuzi." Issues related to symbols have also been studied in scientific research conducted in the field of fine and applied-decorative arts.

Supernatural symbols such as winged horses, camels, tigers, lions, winged and one-eyed people, and fairies, often encountered in fairy tales and Uzbek folk epics, are found among the artifacts belonging to the "Amu Darya Treasure." It can be noted that such heroes, i.e., sphinxes, griffins, and rhytons, are found not only in works of art but also hold a special place in folk epics.

Professor B. Babadjanov and researcher U. Rustamov published a brochure titled "Inscriptions of the Shah-i-Zinda Architectural Complex (Texts, Translations)." The brochure, through the analysis of texts in the monuments within the Shah-i-Zinda ensemble, showed that they served as a material bridge for the hopes and dreams of our ancestors who lived in the distant past to reach our present day through written lines.

Historian G. Baboyorov, in his study "The State System of the Western Turkic Khaganate," lists symbols such as: "horse / title" (khagan, yabgu-khagan, yabgu), "tent/yurt" (yurt/ruler's tent), horde, "throne" (o'rgin, o'rnak, o'runluk), "banner," "flag," "drum" (ko'birga), "jiga" (tassel worn on a head covering), "belt" (qur), "sword," "bow," "dagger," "whip," "tamga." In particular, the place where the ruler lived, i.e., the "horde" (e.g., residence), considered the center of the state, was studied with reliable evidence as a sign of rulership and power, as well as the "toy" (feast) given by the khagan to the people for various reasons, also being considered a symbol of rulership.

Although limited, reliable research has been conducted on the construction style, architecture, and the essence of unique symbols and signs in the architectural monuments and historical sites in our country. Examples include the scientific works of S. Bulatov, M. Sabirov, Ye. Barsukova, M. Soipova, I. Abdurahmonov, A. Ulmasov, G. Hamroyev, and J. Begimqulov.

According to the above considerations, some studies close to the topic of religious-mystical symbols, which are part of the field of religious studies, have been studied from a historical and theoretical perspective. In this, scientific research conducted in various fields, as well as unique sources, written books, and archaeological investigations, have each been illuminated in a unique style. The conclusions, theoretical views, suggestions, and recommendations of researchers on the topic differ from each other and do not repeat one another.

In conclusion, it should be noted that the topic of religious-mystical symbols has been comprehensively covered from the perspective of historiographical analysis in the research of many scholars and researchers who lived and worked in the past. Existing symbols have been compared, contrasted, and generalized. Regardless of the different forms of symbols, they all conveyed a certain meaning and idea, which served to enhance the general thinking of people, the development of fields, and had a strong impact on the flourishing of general culture, enlightenment, and spirituality.

The special reverence and appreciation of religious symbols in our way of life create a basis for their continued existence. A certain religious symbol embodies historical events and beliefs.

The more people refer to them in their daily lives, the more they become an integral part of their vibrant life, which means the place and functions of symbols in society will continue to strengthen. If religious-mystical symbols do not attract people's attention, if they do not show their existence and influence, then naturally their symbolism will also disappear. However, religious symbols usually consist of a collection of ideas and meanings that strongly influence human thought and belief. Therefore, a person can easily forget and abandon various elements implemented by other forms of social development, but it is difficult to get rid of religious symbols. This is because religious symbols contain an enchantment, a magic that influences a person's conscience and belief. For example, the belief in heaven and hell is considered a belief derived from religious information.

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