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Religions of Central Asia and their influence on society in the early Middle Ages. (5th–11th centuries)

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A B S T R A C T
This article systematically studies the impact of various religious movements on society in Central Asia in the 5th–11th centuries. The study aims to shed light on the spread of Islam and the processes of its synthesis with the previous religions of Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism, as well as their role in political, social, and cultural life. Methods Based on historical-source analysis, Arabic and local written sources (in particular, chronicles) and archaeological finds—architectural monuments, inscriptions—were analyzed using a comparative-conceptual approach. The results showed that Islam became the main faith in Central Asia from the 7th century through the Arab conquest, trade, and cultural exchange until the 11th century. Zoroastrian, Buddhist, and Manichaean teachings merged with Islamic traditions, giving rise to new religious, architectural, and literary manifestations. Central cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, Khiva and Merv formed a religious-educational and scientific environment through a network of madrasas. Interfaith tolerance encouraged dialogue and cooperation, contributing to regional stability. The study reveals in detail the processes of religious integration in Central Asia and their political-cultural consequences. This model of religious-mosaic in Central Asia can serve as a source of inspiration for modern interfaith tolerance and scientific cooperation.

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INTRODUCTION*: Central Asia, with its rich history and cultural heritage, is one of the regions that played an important role in the formation and development of many religions. The early Middle Ages are considered one of the most dynamic periods of these processes. During this period, Islam spread widely in the region and had a profound impact on various spheres of society. However, even before Islam, religions such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism existed in this region, which were distinguished by their religious and cultural traditions. Although Islam became the main faith in the region as a result of the Arab conquest, the processes of interaction and synthesis with local religions continued. This led to significant changes in the social, political, and cultural life of society. Religious tolerance and relations between different confessions, the formation and development of the religious education system, as well as the development of religious architecture and art are among the notable aspects of this period. This article provides a comprehensive analysis of the impact of religions on society in Central Asia during the High Middle Ages. The processes of the spread and consolidation of Islam, its interaction with local religions, religious tolerance and interfaith relations, the development of religious education and science, and the specific features of religious architecture and art are covered on the basis of historical sources and modern research. The first section of the article examines the spread of Islam in Central Asia and its impact on society. The introduction of Islam into the region during the Arab conquest, its impact on political and social life, as well as the processes of its acceptance by the local*

population are analyzed. The second section studies the religions that existed in the region before Islam and their interaction with Islam. The relationship of religions such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism with Islam, their synthesis, and competition with Islam are analyzed. The third section is devoted to religious tolerance and relations between different confessions. The coexistence of different religious confessions in the region in the developed Middle Ages, the relations between them, the level of tolerance and conflicts are studied. The fourth section analyzes the development of religious education and science. How the Islamic religion influenced the formation and development of the education system, the emergence of madrasahs and other educational institutions, their role and significance in the development of science are considered. The fifth section is devoted to religious architecture and art. How the Islamic religion influenced the architecture and art of the region, the construction of mosques, madrasahs and mausoleums, the study of religious influence through their architectural style and decoration are analyzed.

Relevance of the Topic *The topic of Central Asian religions and their influence on society is relevant in the developed Middle Ages, since during this period the interaction of different religions in the region and their impact on social life were significant. In the 5th–11th centuries, religions such as Islam, Christianity, Zoroastrianism, and Buddhism existed in Central Asia. Along with the spread of Islam, religious and cultural changes took place in the region. Along with the adoption of Islam, there was an increase in the religious practices of Muslims, the construction of mosques and madrasas, and the development of science and culture. In addition, new social structures and laws were formed in the region under the influence of Islam. The interaction of different religions in Central Asia and their relations with each other had a great impact on the social and cultural life of society. For example, along with the spread of Islam, religious and cultural ties developed between Muslims and Christians. In addition, under the influence of Zoroastrianism and Buddhism, specific religious and cultural changes took place in the region. The influence of religions on political and economic life was also important. For example, under the influence of Islam, new political structures were formed in the region, rulers and emirs ruled on the basis of Islamic laws. In addition, in connection with the influence of Islam on economic life, trade routes developed, new economic systems were formed. The influence of religions on cultural and scientific life was also great. Under the influence of Islam, science and culture developed, madrasahs and scientific centers were established. In addition, in connection with the cultural influence of Islam, new approaches and styles appeared in the fields of architecture, literature and art.* ***A brief analysis of scientific research on the topic.*** *A number of scientific studies have been conducted on the religions of Central Asia and their impact on society during the developed Middle Ages. These studies mainly cover issues such as the introduction of Islam into the region, its interaction with local religions, the level of religious tolerance, the development of religious education and science, as well as the development of religious architecture and art. For example, Adham Amandavlatov's article "The Place and Role of Zoroastrianism in Central Asia" analyzes the history of Zoroastrianism in the region, its religious and philosophical principles, and its significance in society. This study examines the principles of Zoroastrianism based on the struggle between good and evil, its philosophy calling for moral purity, and its impact on the cultural, religious, and social life of the peoples of Central Asia. Also, the article entitled "Archaeology of the Middle Ages" analyzes the spread of religions such as Buddhism, Zoroastrianism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism in Central Asia and their archaeological traces. The article discusses the ruins of Buddhist temples in the Fergana Valley, ossuaries related to Zoroastrianism in Khorezm, and other archaeological finds. In addition, the article entitled "The History of the Formation and Development of Religious Confessions in Central Asia" provides information on the formation of religious confessions in the region, their history, and current status.[16] The article analyzes religious confessions in Uzbekistan, their history, and their place in society. Purpose of the study. The main purpose of this study is to comprehensively study the impact of religions on society in Central Asia during the developed Middle Ages. To achieve this goal, the following tasks have been set: 1. The spread of Islam in Central Asia and its impact on society: To analyze the processes of Islam's entry into the region, its impact on political and social life, as well as its acceptance by the local population. 2. Religions that existed in the region before Islam and their interaction with Islam: How the relationship of religions such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism with Islam, their synthesis, and competition affected various spheres of society. 3. Religious tolerance and relations between different confessions: To study the coexistence of*

different religious confessions in the region in the developed Middle Ages, the relations between them, the level of tolerance, and conflicts. 4. Development of Religious Education and Science: How Islam influenced the formation and development of the education system, the emergence of madrasahs and other educational institutions, and their role and significance in the development of science. 5. Development of Religious Architecture and Art: How Islam influenced the architecture and art of the region, studying religious influence through the construction of mosques, madrasahs, and mausoleums, their architectural style, and decoration. The research tasks are: Analysis of historical sources, Study and analysis of existing historical sources on the spread of Islam and its interaction with local religions, Study of archaeological and cultural monuments, Identification of religious influences through the study of religious architecture and works of art, Study of the religious education system: Analysis of the activities of madrasas and other educational institutions and their contribution to the development of science, Study of religious tolerance and interfaith relations, Analysis of relations between different religious groups and determination of the level of tolerance, Familiarization with modern research, Familiarization with modern scientific research on the topic and application of their results in one's own research is one of the main tasks. Subject of Research – In particular, issues such as the spread of Islam, its interaction with local religions, the level of religious tolerance, the development of religious education and science, and the development of religious architecture and art will be studied..

The main part *is Central Asia, one of the regions that played an important role in the spread and development of Islam. The developed medieval period between the 9th and 13th centuries is characterized by major changes in the region's religion and culture. During this period, Islam became not only a religious faith, but also a major factor shaping various spheres of society. The Arab conquest accelerated the penetration of Islam into Central Asia, which had a profound impact on the social, political, and cultural structure of the region. The spread of Islam, in turn, intensified interactions with existing local religious and cultural systems and gave rise to new religious syntheses. The favorable geographical location of Arabia, the presence of wealthy city-states along the caravan routes, increased the interest of powerful neighboring states in the region. [16.68] The spread of Islam occurred mainly in two main directions, (Figure 1) 1. The military route, the spread of Islam, which began in the Arabian Peninsula, occurred primarily through military campaigns carried out by the Arabs. Under the large armies led by the caliphs, including the Umayyads and Abbasids, Islam spread to Eastern Europe, North Africa, Central Asia, and India. This process involved many major battles and conquests. 2. Spread through trade and cultural contacts: Islam also spread through trade, culture, science, and religious contacts. In the Middle Ages, Arab merchants and scientific missions spread Islam widely through trade routes in Central Asia, India, and Africa. This was the route through which Islam spread, usually peacefully, to various regions. It was especially widespread in Central Asia and East Africa. In many areas of Central Asia, such as Samarkand and Bukhara,*



(Figure 1) Here is a map of Central Asia showing the spread of Islam. [18]

In the cities, cultural, scientific and religious centers of Islam were formed. These territories were important not only for the adoption of Islam, but also for its development and progress. The influence of Islam on political life was very noticeable. The first Islamic states in Central Asia, including the ***Umayyad*** *and* ***Abbasid*** *caliphates, had a direct impact on the social and political structures in Central Asia. The political approach of Islam also had a great influence on the formation of the structure of power. The Islamic religion strengthened the system of state governance and created a new political and social structure based on Sharia law. However, in this process, interaction with other religions and beliefs existing in the region continued. Before the spread of Islam, a number of other religions existed in Central Asia, including Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism and Nestorianism. Table 1 Zoroastrianism was active only in the 6th century and did not last long in the region. Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism each spread over about four centuries, significantly influencing the religious mosaic of Central Asia. Islam arrived in the early 7th century, became firmly established over at least four centuries, and has continued to be active as a major religion in recent centuries.*

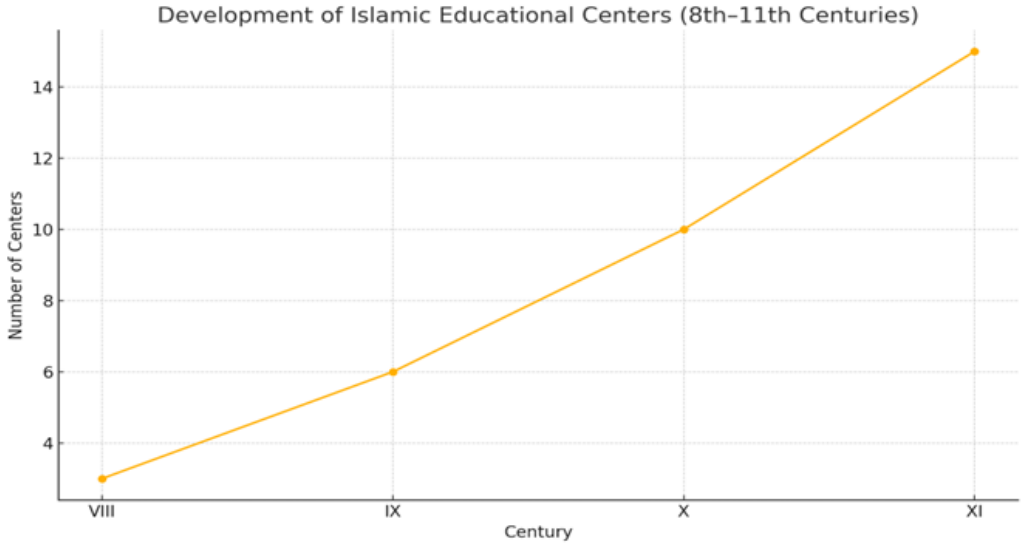
Religion	***The century that began***	***The century has ended.***	***Period length***
Zoroastrianism	*VI*	*VI*	*0*
Buddhism	*IV*	*VIII*	*4*
Monism	*III*	*VII*	*4*
Christianity	*V*	*IX*	*4*
Islam	*VII*	*XI*	*4*

(1-Table)

These religions, with their religious and cultural traditions, were widespread in the region and had a profound impact on social life. Zoroastrianism, for example, has a long history in the territories of present-day Central Asia and has made a significant contribution to the cultural life of the country with its belief system and social structures. The spread of Buddhism also left its mark on many parts of the region, especially in the Fergana Valley, Bukhara and Samarkand. With the spread of Islam, the interaction of these religions continued. Before Islam, there were various religions in Arabia. According to the traditions of the Semitic tribes, they worshiped the Sun, the Moon, the uncontrollable forces of nature, various gods and spirits, each tribe had its own gods, totems or fetishes, which were sometimes contradictory to each other. The religious beliefs of the tribe provided unity only to the members of this tribe, there was no pan-Arab religion [17.127], and some elements of Zoroastrianism and Buddhism were absorbed into Islamic culture. For example, some elements of Buddhism and Zoroastrianism can be seen in Islamic art and architecture. In addition, there was a specific religious synthesis and concepts of Islam, the final result of which was the emergence of new religious traditions and practices. Religious tolerance, mutual respect and dialogue between several religious groups were of paramount importance in the history of Central Asia. The process of the spread of Islam and its integration among local peoples is characterized by the development of religious tolerance, the formation of new religious rules and social structures. During the Middle Ages, Central Asia was often a place of conflict and rivalry between different religious groups, but tolerance was also largely maintained in society as a whole. The widespread spread of Islam in the region and the conversion of many peoples to this religion contributed to the establishment of open and tolerant relations with other religious beliefs. In particular, Islam's promotion of social justice and harmony strengthened mutual respect between different religious confessions in society. Islam's contribution to religious tolerance and social integration continued for a long time in the region. Development of Religious Education and Science With the spread of Islam in Central Asia, a system of religious education was also formed. Islam considered education to be very important and also attached great importance to the development of science. During this period, madrasahs and other educational institutions, such as those in Bukhara, Samarkand, and Khiva, became centers of learning. These centers were not limited to providing religious education, but also achieved great achievements in the fields of science. Scientists such as Ahmad Ferghani, Al-Khwarizmi, and Al-Bukhari not only contributed to the development of Islamic science with their works, but also had a great influence on the culture of all mankind, and madrasahs and other scientific institutions made a great

contribution to the development of science and culture. The subjects taught in them, including astronomy, mathematics, medicine, philosophy, and other sciences, served as the basis for the development of modern science. With the spread of Islam, religious architecture and art also changed. The distinctive style of Islamic architecture, including the construction of mosques, madrasahs, and mausoleums, created some of the greatest architectural monuments of the period, including cities such as Samarkand, Bukhara, and Khiva, which demonstrate the highest examples of Islamic architecture. Mosques and madrasahs became not only religious centers, but also centers of science and culture. Their architectural style and decoration, geometric patterns, became an integral part of Islamic art.

Research findings *This study provided a comprehensive analysis of the spread of Islam in Central Asia and its impact on the religious, social, and cultural structure of the region. The study examined the introduction of Islam into the region, its acceptance by the local peoples, and the interactions between Islam and other religions. The main findings of the study are as follows: Spread of Islam and Impact on Society; Islam spread to Central Asia primarily through Arab conquest and trade routes. The Arab conquest had a direct impact on the political and social structures of Central Asia. Islam also brought about changes in the legal system, economic, and cultural life of society. Interaction with Local Religions: The introduction of Islam into Central Asia continued to interact with religions such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism. These processes led to new religious syntheses. Islam, with its cultural and religious traditions, harmonized with the traditional religions existing in the region. Religious Tolerance: During the developed Middle Ages, Central Asia provided tolerance between different religious confessions. Islam supported coexistence with other religious groups. During this period, there was mutual respect between different religions, although there were also contradictions and conflicts, the level of tolerance was high. Science and Religious Education: The formation of the Islamic education system made a great contribution to the development of science and culture in Central Asia. In particular, Madrasahs and other scientific institutions also had a great impact on the development of science. Centers of science were formed in cities such as Bukhara and Samarkand, and they made not only religious, but also scientific achievements. Graph 1 Development of Islamic educational centers (8th–11th centuries) 8th century (3 centers): The period began with the expansion of the Arab caliphates and the establishment of the first madrasas. At this stage, there were not too many scientific institutions, and political and military campaigns took precedence. 9th century (6 centers): As a result of the encouragement of science under the Abbasid Caliphate, the number of centers doubled. In particular, the first madrasas were opened in Bukhara and Samarkand. 10th century (10 centers): Interest in the scientific heritage increased - the number of schools operating in astronomy, mathematics, and medicine increased significantly. 11th century (15 centers): The network of madrasas reached its peak. During this period, "scholars-imams" were trained, and secular sciences began to be actively taught along with fiqh and hadith. This graph clearly shows the gradual expansion of scientific learning centers in the region during the Middle Ages: an increase of approximately 50–60% was observed each century.*



(Graphic-1)

Religious Architecture and Art: *With the spread of Islam, religious architecture and art took on a new form. The construction of mosques, madrasahs, and mausoleums created high examples of Islamic architecture in Central Asia. These monuments were used not only for religious purposes, but also as centers of science and culture. Changes in architectural style and geometric patterns became an integral part of Islamic art. The conclusion drawn from the main results of the study is that the spread of Islam in Central Asia and its interaction with local religions led to large-scale social, political, and cultural changes in society. This process played an important role in shaping the culture of Central Asia. Significance for the Future The spread of Islam in Central Asia and its impact on society, in addition to being of historical importance, will also have an important place in the future. The results presented in the study, rather than just a historical context, have a significant impact on the religious, cultural and social life of the region today. Further study and analysis of these processes in the future will provide several important aspects for Central Asia and its peoples: Religious Tolerance and Interfaith Relations: Central Asia continues to develop as a multi-ethnic and multi-religious region. The period of Islam's integration with other religious faiths is still important today as a historical experience. The experience of Central Asia can serve as an example in strengthening religious tolerance and managing interfaith relations in the future. In order to prevent religious conflicts and social tensions, it is necessary to support tolerance and multiculturalism on the basis of these historical processes. Development of Science and Education: The influence of Islam on the science and education system in Central Asia shows that this region has passed important stages in its scientific development. Madrasahs and scientific centers played a central role not only in religious, but also in scientific and cultural development. Today, effective methods can be created based on the experience of Central Asia in developing the science and education system. In the future, culture and scientific development can help develop global scientific cooperation in Central Asia, relying on its historical roots. Architecture and Cultural Heritage: Islamic architecture and art of Central Asia are valued not only at that time, but also today as high art and architectural monuments. The issue of preserving cultural heritage and passing it on to future generations is relevant. Architecture, established by the Islamic religion and its cultural influence, is important not only for religious purposes, but also for the development of tourism, culture and art. This will create great opportunities for the Central Asian countries in the future in the development of tourism and cultural industries. Social and Political Changes: Religious and political changes in the history of the peoples of Central Asia are closely intertwined. While Islam has influenced the political system of the region, the interaction between religious beliefs and politics continues today. The influence of Islam on social life and its role in unifying society will not lose its importance in maintaining social stability in the future. This historical experience can be an important basis, especially in the development of religious education, social justice, and the legal system.*

General Conclusion *During the High Middle Ages, the influence of religions on society in the Central Asian region included very extensive and complex processes. During this period, the spread of Islam, the preservation of local religious traditions, and their interaction with Islam led to significant changes in the social, political, and cultural life of society. Islam spread widely in Central Asia after the Arab conquest, leading to the emergence of new religious and cultural systems in society. The spread of Islam also led to changes in local religious traditions and sometimes to their integration with them. In addition, religious systems that existed in Central Asia before Islam, such as Zoroastrianism, Buddhism, Manichaeism, and Nestorianism, also left their spiritual and cultural imprint. These religions, along with Islam, created religious and cultural diversity in the region. Religious tolerance and interfaith relations were one of the main features of Central Asian society. Throughout the Middle Ages, processes of interaction and synthesis between Islam, local traditions, and other religious movements continued in the region, which shaped the religious, political, and cultural structures of the region. The development of religious education and science also played an important role in the history of Central Asia. Islam, through the formation and development of its educational system, created new directions in the field of science. Madrasahs and other educational institutions contributed to the development of science and culture. Samarkand, Bukhara, and other cities, which were important centers of science and religious education during this period, played a special role in the development of Central Asian culture. In addition, religious architecture and art also gained great importance during this period. Islam shaped architectural styles and created new approaches to the construction of mosques, madrasahs, and*

mausoleums. These large structures became not only an expression of religious beliefs, but also an integral part of Central Asian architecture. Mosques and madrasahs were built in central places of cities and played an important role in governing the religious and cultural life of society. At the same time, the spread of Islam in Central Asia and the interaction of local religious traditions play a major role in shaping religious tolerance in the region today. Mutual respect and cooperation between different religious confessions have been an important factor in maintaining stability and peace in society. The history of Islam in Central Asia and its interaction with other religions continue to influence the religious and cultural life of the present day. At the same time, an in-depth study of the religious history of Central Asia is important not only for understanding the past, but also for strengthening religious tolerance and interfaith relations in the modern world.

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