

RELIGIOUS SYNCRETISM AND SPIRITUAL CULTURE OF THE CHERSONESITES**Atayan Anaid Romanovna**

Student, Belgorod State University, Russia, Belgorod

Shemaeva Elena Viktorovna

научный руководитель, Supervisor, Belgorod State University, Russia, Belgorod

In the first centuries of our era, the Greek pantheon of gods prevailed and persisted on the territory of Chersonesos for a long time [9, p. 18]. The Chersonesites worshipped such Greek gods as Zeus, Helios, Gaia and many others. Especially revered for them was the Virgin Artemis, the goddess of nature and wild animals, in whose honor they erected a statue in the form of a huntress girl and a magnificent temple. Also, the image of Artemis was imprinted on the coins of Chersonesos. The Chersonese also worshipped Artemis' brother Apollo, the god of healing, poetry and music. They associated Apollo with everything prudent, clear and represented him as an archer with fiery arrows [2, p. 104-118]. Most of all, Apollo was recognized among the nobility. Another god revered by the Chersonesites was Dionysus, the god of winemaking, viticulture and inspiration. Due to the fact that agriculture was the main occupation of the people and had an important role in their economic life, the cult of Dionysus was of great importance. Because of the rocky soil, it was much more difficult to grow crops than to engage in the development of viticulture. The wine produced in Chersonesos was sold to the peoples of the Northern Black Sea region to ensure the reliable material well-being of their population, which in turn contributed to the veneration of Dionysus among farmers on such a large scale. In honor of him, even luxurious celebrations were held, under the name of Dionysia. A large number of figurines and inscriptions have come down to us, testifying to the wide spread of the religion of Dionysus in Chersonesos. Such finds make it possible to assume that the Chersonesites were familiar with the orphic teaching, which was spread on the territory of the agrarian colonial outskirts from Sicily to the Northern Black Sea region in the IV-V centuries BC. Another significant find confirming the connection of the inhabitants of Chersonesos with Orphism is the rare bone plates found in Olbia with graffiti of the fifth century BC. E [7, p. 2-16].

Considering the religious and philosophical views of the Chersonesites, one should not forget about the close connection of Chersonesos with the main centers of culture, economy, politics and religion of the Greek world. An important place among them was occupied by Athens, where the entire scientific, literary and religious life of Hellas, Ionia, Sinope, Rhodes, Heraclea, etc. was focused. A number of documents have been preserved that testify to the connection of the Chersonesites with the main sanctuaries of Apollo on the island of Delos and in Delphi. A traditional celebration of the Chersoness was even held on Delos, at the expense of money donated by the citizens of Chersonesos. Any celebrations and ceremonies that were held in Greece had a connection with theatrical, sports and literary competitions, the participants and spectators of which were residents of the Mediterranean and the Black Sea region. Based on a large amount of epigraphic data, the Chersonesites were active participants in these events. And upon returning home, they shared their experience with their fellow citizens. The Chersonesites also adopted a lot of new things from merchants, foreigners who visited their city [4, C. 62-64].

Already in the first centuries of our era, the official cults of Apollo, Hercules and other gods began to lose their significance. Researchers attribute this decline to the deepening of the crisis of polis ideology. This process also had a downside, associated with an increase in private cults, which were managed by individual families or religious circles. These cults were associated with the veneration of such foreign deities having a syncretic character as Jupiter, the patron saint of heaven, who was

associated with Dionysus. During the excavations of the city, statuettes, inscriptions and relief images associated with them were found. Which in turn indicates significant changes in the worldview of the people, who began to neglect the images of traditional gods in search of new objects of worship [3, p. 121-124].

Noticeable changes in the religious consciousness of the Chersonesites, according to the burial materials, are in the period of transition from Hellenistic to Roman times. A characteristic feature is the manifestation of special attention to the fate of the deceased and the strengthening of faith in the immortality of the soul. This is evidenced by archaeological finds in the form of expensive tombs and crypts, and in the pictorial plots on the walls, you can notice a magical meaning. Similar burial structures were common on the territory of the Northern Black Sea cities and Chersonesos for a reason [5, p. 64-68]. One of the main reasons is, first of all, the growth of the material well-being of the social elite, as well as the rapid craving of public consciousness for the problems of the afterlife of the soul, due to the strong influence of religious views on the part of the population of Asia Minor. A distinctive feature of the funerary temples of the Chersonese necropolis and some other cities of the I century AD were colorful paintings depicting the ascension of the soul of the deceased by a winged genius [1, p. 92-93]. This is confirmed by a large number of reliefs depicting scenes of the afterlife meal. At the end of the second century, the funeral inventory of the Chersonesites began to include a large number of lamps. According to the paintings in the Chersonese crypts, fire worship was widespread in Cappadocia and other parts of Asia Minor. Fire played an important role in the worldview of the Orphics, who called themselves the torchbearers of Dionysus.

The religious worldview of the Chersonesites was noticeably distinguished by the interaction of traditionally Greek and Dionysian-Orphic views, with Mithriatic, Asia Minor, Roman and many other religious views. At the same time, in Chersonesos, as in many ancient cities in the first centuries of our era, religious search focused mainly on three syncretic figures such as God the savior, God the almighty and the fertility of the earth. Thus, the cult of the "God of the Highest", which did not have its own name, got its spread thanks to the syncretisation of the main gods of the Greek and Roman pantheons. On most of the inscriptions of the third century found in Chersonesos, one can see a dedication to "god" without any definitions [10, p. 154-157]. However, there is no reason to associate such initiations with Christianity. Although, as in the Christian texts of that time, so in the initiations there is a general craving for monotheism inherent in late antique syncretic religiosity. In such conditions, the images of the three gods - the intercessor, the highest and the savior - often intertwined or even merged into a universal image of God. In the funeral cult, the Chersonesites represented the image of the god from the features of Dionysus-Sabazius and Mithras. The funeral rite itself was carried out on the basis of Orphic-Dionysian and Asia Minor features, which partially formed the symbolism of the Christian cult [6, p. 213-219]. In Christianity, as well as in the syncretic religions of the peoples of the Black Sea cities, the unity and difference of God the highest and God the savior were associated with the image of the "father" and "son", the prototype of which, apparently, were Zeus and Dionysus. Such inconsistency was generally characteristic of late Antique syncretism, although it was not realized in everyday religiosity. In the III-IV centuries, the philosophy of Neoplatonism and the dogmatics of traditional Christianity became the main forms of overcoming them [8, p. 81-83]. Another important image of religious syncretism, common in the Northern Black Sea region, was a female deity, which reflected the features of Artemis, Cybele, Isis and many other goddesses. The cult of the mother goddess reached an incredible spread in the late Antique world, and the main object of worship was the mother of Jesus, Mary, called the intercessor of people before God. The religious consciousness, in particular, of the illiterate masses in their movement, not relying on the logic of their faith, followed their emotions and associated associations [4, p. 77-79].

Thus, we can say that the religious worldview of the Chersonesites of the first centuries was quite ambiguous and contradictory. With the traditional Greek cult, new religious trends spread in Chersonesos. Thanks to the traditions and beliefs of the Greek population, the old Greco-Roman gods did not leave the arena, but acquired new features of Christian gods. Also in Chersonesos there is an appeal to pagan monotheism, which is the result of religious searches of that era.

References:

1. Fomin, M.V. On the Early Christian burial tradition / M.V. Fomin // Problems of history and archeology of Ukraine: Materials of the VII International Scientific Conference. – Kharkiv, 2010. – p. 92-93.
2. Meshcheryakov, V.F. About the cult of the Virgin Goddess in Tauric Chersonese / V.F. Meshcheryakov. – B.M.: GPIB, 1979. – pp. 104-118.
3. Meshcheryakov, V.F. About the time of the appearance of Christianity in Tauric Chersonese / V.F. Meshcheryakov. – Leningrad: MIRA, 1978. – pp. 121-124.
4. Meshcheryakov, V.F. Religion and cults of Tauric Chersonese in the I-IV centuries AD: dis. ... Candidate of Historical Sciences / Meshcheryakov Valery Fedorovich. – Kharkiv, 1983. – 337 p.
5. Romanchuk, A.I. Several inscriptions on medieval ceramics of Chersonesos / A.I. Romanchuk, E.I. Solomonik // Byzantine Time-book – Moscow, 1987. – Vol. 48.
6. Yakobson, A.L. Early Medieval Chersonese. Essays on the history of material culture / A.L. Yakobson. – Moscow; Leningrad: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the USSR, 1959. – 364 p.
7. Zavadskaya, I.A. Baptistry of Chersonesos / I.A. Zavadskaya // Materials on archeology, History and Ethnography of Tavria, 2002. – Issue 8. – pp. 251-272.
8. Zubar, V.M. From Paganism to Christianity / V.M. Zubar, A.I. Hovorostyany. – Kiev: Inst. Archeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, 2000. – 179 p.
9. Zubar, V.M. Tauric Chersonese and the Roman Empire / V.M. Zubar // AN of the Ukrainian SSR. Institute of Archaeology. – Kiev, 1991. – 33 p.
10. Zuckerman, K. Bishops and garrison of Kherson in the IV century. / K. Zuckerman // MAIET. – B. Moscow, 1994. – Issue 4. – 561 p.