




Muslim saints and mausoleums in Central Asia and Xinjiang

Yasushi Shinmen, Minoru Sawada, Edmund Waite, Collectif

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Extrait

SAWADA Minoru

TOWARDS A CLASSIFICATION OF MAZARS IN FERGHANA VALLEY

Ferghana Valley is a vast extent of land, about 300 km from east to west and about 170 km from north to south. Although the greater part belongs to the state of Uzbekistan, it extends also into parts of Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. The people indigenous to Ferghana Valley are Uzbek, Tajik and Kyrgyz, and ail of them are Muslims. In their religious and social life sacred places (which we call mazars) have been playing an important role from the past down to the present.

Twice in the summers of the years 2004 and 2005 I conducted fieldwork there, visiting mazars in Ferghana Valley in the course of expeditions for the research project "A Study of Islamic Sacred Places in Central Asia : With a Focus on Ferghana Valley" together with other members of the project, namely, SHINMEN Yasushi, Ashirbek MUMINOV, Nadirbek ABDULAHATOV and KAWAHARA Yayoi. We visited about 50 sites of mazars in the year 2004 and about 80 in 2005, and gathered information on mazars from caretakers of mazars, religious leaders, local intellectuals, local inhabitants, and so on. I have listed the names and locations of these mazars in the order of the dates when we visited them in the appended list (Sacred places surveyed in Ferghana Valley).

In Central Asia sacred places are referred to by several terms such as mazâr, ziyârat-gâh (both meaning "place of visit or pilgrimage"), maqbara ("mausoleum"), dakhma ("mausoleum"), qabr ("grave") (mazâr also means "grave"), qadam-jây ("stepping place"), and so on. Thèse expressions are often omitted in the names of sacred places, and the names of personages by themselves indicate holy places. Titles like nicknames are used for some places, e.g. Bastan Buva (F7 in the list) (buva means "grandfather, old man"), Imam Ata (F37, F54) (ata means "father"), Bibi Buvayda (F 10) and Bibi Seshanba Ena (F35) (bibî means "grandmother, lady"). In the list there are included some sacred places where nature worship seems to have been performed, e.g. Chashma (F90) (chashma means "spring of water") and Sang-i Ayina ("Mirror Stone") (F112).

Ferghana Valley possesses a diversity of sacred places. We saw a holy tomb in a domed building isolated in the midst of a vast cemetery, and we also visited a mausoleum with the facilities of a room for ritual or rest, a hauz (pond) and trees within the sacred precincts. There are many mazars in cities and towns, but on the other hand many people visit sacred places with a chashma (spring) and trees in mountainous areas far from their homes. In some mazars trees, stones, rocks and water are venerated as holy objects (Figure 1.6). We can also indicate the diversity of mazars from the perspectives of location (city / village / upland country, etc.), scale of premises, and number of visitors.

In spite of the diversity mentioned above, I think it is important to classify the mazars surveyed by us in order to understand the special features of the mazars in Ferghana Valley. In this chapter I would like to describe as many mazars as I can by trying to classify them into five groups depending on the categories of religious personage commemorated there.

(...) Présentation de l'éditeur

Sacred places or mazars, as they are referred to in this volume, play an important role in the intricate system of religion of the Muslim people in former Soviet Central Asia and Xinjiang (Chinese Central Asia). There

are numerous mazars all over Central Asia, and most of them are the mausoleums of Islamic saints, in which various people are believed to have been buried : Islamic saints and leaders of Islamic mysticism; saints and prophets who belong to central Muslim traditions; legendary saints whose existence is questionable; kings and leaders who were active during the Islamization period. A pilgrimage to a mazar is normally motivated by pleas for intercession from the religious personage buried in the shrine and is typically associated with Sufism. This volume provides the cogent results of recent historical and anthropological research conducted by ten international scholars in the Ferghana Valley and Xinjiang Uyghur region, and offers new perspectives for research on the mazars in Central Asia. On the basis of these results, we can broaden the scope of our research on the beliefs of Islamic saints and their mausoleums in the Muslim regions around the world.

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