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Called whether Tartars, Turks or Afghans, we

Belong to one great garden, one great tree,

Born of a springtide that was glorious.

Distinction of colour is a sin for us.

نه افغانيم وني ترك و تارييم
چمن زاديم و از يك شاخاريم
تميز رنگ و بو بر ما حرام است
که ما پرورده يك نو بهاريم



A Persian Poem by Sir Muhammad Iqbal (علامہ محمد اقبال),
the most prominent poet of Pakistan from his book "
"PAYAM-I-MASHRIQ" (Message from the East),
English translation: M. HADI HUSSAIN

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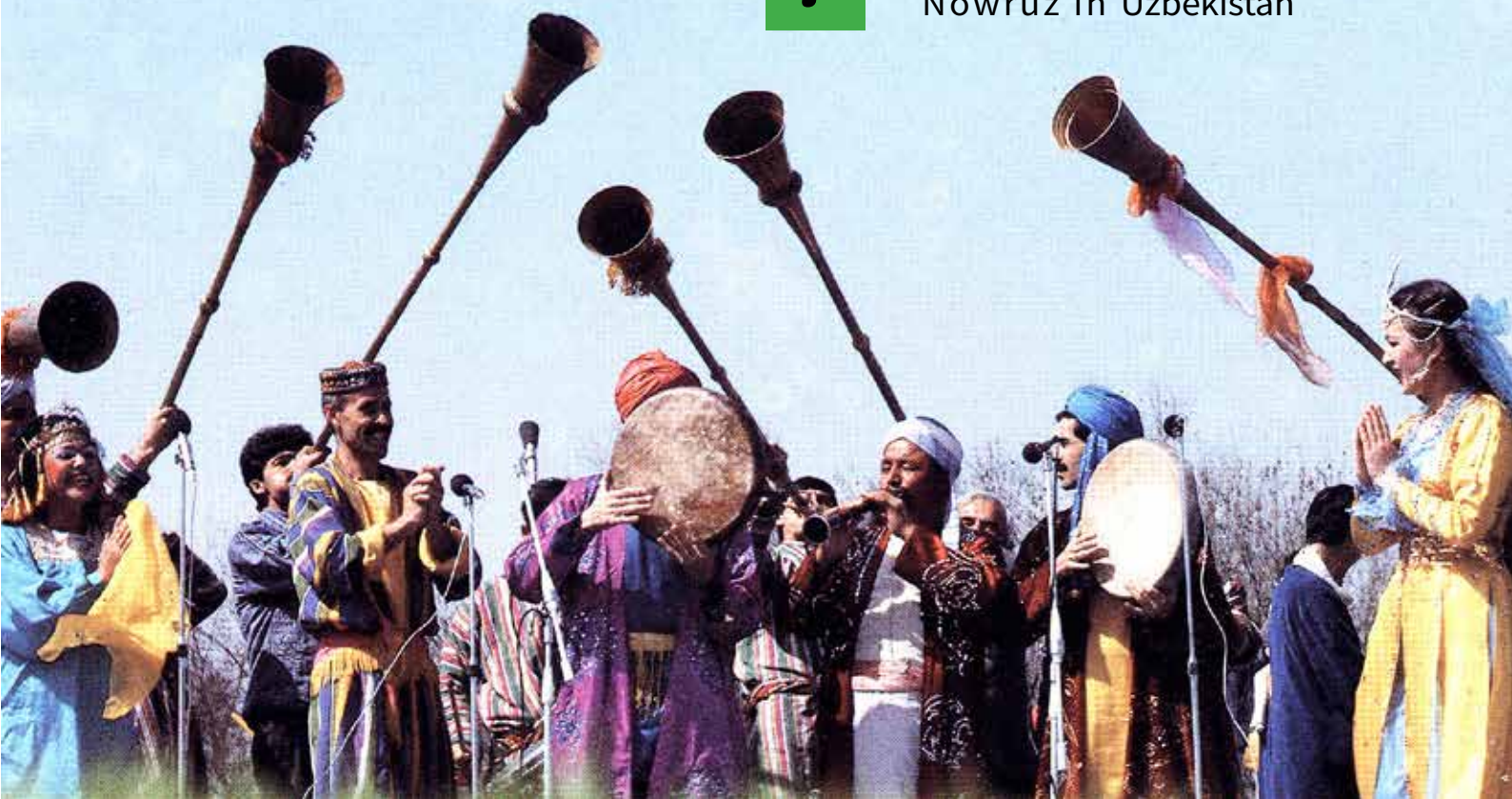
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Message of the President

Nowruz in ECO region



Celebrated on the first day of spring, “Nowruz” is the favorite holiday in almost all countries of the ECO region. Nowruz is an annual event that honors our common heritage, traditions, and culture with the birth of spring. “Nowruz” is the most ancient and cherished holiday of a New Year and spring. It is celebrated on the day of vernal equinox - March 21-22. Nowruz is the symbol of nature renewal and fertility. Nowruz provides an opportunity not only to enjoy ancient cultural customs, but also to promote peace and solidarity within communities.

Nowruz, i.e. ‘new day’, is a celebration of the spring Equinox. According to scholars, it originates from the Ancient Mesopotamia. Sumerians, 3000 BC, Babylonians 2000 BC, the ancient kingdom of Elam in Southern Persia 2000 BC, Akaddians all have been celebrating it in one form or another. In Babylon New Year was

celebrated the 21st day of Nissanu (correspondent to March and April) with festivities held further 12 days, each commemorated with individual rites, amusements and performances.

At its core, the Nowruz festival celebrates the awakening of the natural life. This awakening symbolizes the triumph of good, winning against the evil forces of darkness that are represented by the winter. Nowruz is the point when the oppressive presence of the cold winter finally begins to retrieve with the commencement of the lively and hopeful spring. This symbolic and poetic change corresponds to the mathematical instance of the sun leaving the zodiac of Pisces and entering the zodiacal sign of Aries, also known as the Spring Equinox.

While mulling over Nowruz from the historical perspective one must never forget that this ancient festival alongside its historical significance has also scientific importance which distinguishes it from other national and regional festivals worldwide. When comparing Nowruz with other New Year festivals one might wonder why none of them mark the Spring Equinox as the New Year. This is also evidence for the significance of our region in fostering science from the old times.

Keeping in mind the significance of Nowruz, through a partnership between the ECO Cultural Institute, Silk Road Universities Network (SUN), United Students of SUN (USSUN) and the Allameh Tabataba’i University, we dedicated this special issue to Nowruz. Most of the articles in this issue have been submitted by the students of the universities of the ECO region. I would like to express our deep appreciation for the outstanding contribution of Allameh Tabataba’i University. I also extend my sincere gratitude to His Excellency Nizomiddin Zohidi, Ambassador of the Republic of Tajikistan in Iran for imparting his in-depth knowledge on the history of Nowruz. Our special thanks goes to the students who provided informative on rituals of Nowruz in their respective country. I wish a happy Nowruz for all people who celebrate Nowruz worldwide.

Sarvar Bakhti
President of ECO Cultural Institute

Note by Chief Editor



It is a great honour to write this short note for this special issue on the Nauruz Festival just a few days before it happens. Nauruz or the 'New Day' is the first day of the Persian calendar. It falls on the vernal equinox (March 21st) and it was originally associated with the agrarian life for its relation with the time of cultivation and the collection of yields. In course of time, Nauruz became a symbol for 'imperial institution' during the Achaemenids, the Sasanians, the Umayyads and the early Abbasids, and continued as an important cultural element within the Persianate world to this day. Due to its relation with the nature and the fact that it always created time for happiness for people irrespective to their religious or cultural backgrounds, Nauruz has survived for centuries. It was celebrated in the Islamicate world as far as in al- Andalus under the Muslim rulers to central Asia and India under the Persian and Turko-

Mongol rulers. All this means that Nauruz created moments of cultural convergence in the past. It still has the ability to bring us together today. This crucial point is well reflected in the essays written for the present issue.

I would like to take this opportunity to record my deep gratitude to my colleagues on the Editorial Team individually and collectively. The Journal of ECO Heritage is the result of the achievement of an outstanding pool of individuals worldwide whose contribution expanded the horizon of the journal in depth and breath. The journal's editorial team has shown their commitment and dedicated hard work that I appreciate.

The journal, has maintained the aim of presenting the historical and cultural interconnectivity within the region. Nauruz festival celebrated in different ways by diverse populations is a historical moment of cultural convergence within the region and the ECO Heritage is proud to take part to highlight it. Projecting the historical interconnectivity and the cultural convergence are the main foundational elements of this journal. The current editorial team and I are intended to achieve this goal as much as we can. The themes for the next issues will specifically focus on these elements. To make a better contribution, the next issues will gradually move towards academic ideals for cultural works and a set of new regulations and guidelines for the submission of papers will be introduced. The Journal will be open to all individuals who wish to submit their papers related to the themes of the journal.

With this announcement, I close my note and wish you all a very Happy Nauruz.

Said Reza Huseini
Leiden University



Nowruz *in Afghanistan*

Nowruz is a traditional festival of Spring; it starts on the day of the vernal equinox, and marks the beginning of Spring in the Northern Hemisphere. The name 'Nowruz' comes from the ancient Avestan language meaning 'new day' and the festival symbolises the rebirth of nature, new life and new beginnings.

Nowruz is celebrated as the first day of the New Year in many countries around the world, including Afghanistan. Celebrating Nowruz has an ancient history of more than 3,000 years and is said to be celebrated by more than 300 million people annually. Although the exact date and founders of Nowruz have not been determined, but in some Persian texts such as Shahnameh and Tabari history, Jamshid and Kiomars and some other Achaemenids are mentioned as the founders of Nowruz. In this article, we want to take a look at the historical background of Nowruz, how to celebrate it, traditions and rituals of Nowruz in several cities of Afghanistan. Nowruz celebration in Afghanistan has a long history. It has been celebrated in Afghanistan for thousands of years. Unfortunately, there are no reliable documents about how and when Nowruz originated in Afghanistan, but some people consider its life to be the same as the history of the Aryan tribes.

Nowruz is celebrated in most cities of Afghanistan.

In this article, the great cities of Afghanistan, Kabul, Herat, Mazar-e-Sharif and Kanda, are explained and the customs of the people in these cities are described.

Nowruz In Kabul



Nowruz is celebrated in Kabul like in other cities in Afghanistan. Most of Kabul's current residents are those who have moved to the city from other provinces or neighboring countries after years of migration. For this reason, these people are the bearers of different cultural customs and traditions of Nowruz, although these customs are very similar.

On the eve of Nowruz, the market for clothes and fruits in Kabul is warmer than other days of the year,



Haft Mēwa (Dari: هفت میوه)

and men and women, especially children, wear new clothes to welcome the spring. On Nowruz, the people of Kabul gather for the pilgrimage of Sakhi (referred to Imam Ali), the righteous martyrs, lovers and mystics, Khajeh Safa, Babarshah Garden and the shrine of the great mullah; Some go to Qargheh, Maranjan hill, lawn, women's garden, Khajeh Safa slope, Ghazi stadium, Stalf, Karizmir, Gol Ghandi, Paghman, Charikar and other resorts, celebrate spring and welcome it.

Raise the flag of Sakhi pilgrimage

The famous Sakhi shrine is located at the foot of Asmayee mountain in the Karte Sakhi area. This shrine was built by order of Ahmad Shah Baba Durrani (1747-1747). Every year on Nowruz, many people gather there and a flag in the name of Imam Ali (as) is raised by Sunnis, and Shiites. A Shiite and a Sunni scholar take turns giving speeches. High-ranking government officials also attend. And the flag will be raised for 40 days.

Jashn-e Dehqān

Jashn-e Dehqān means The Festival of Farmers. It is celebrated on the first day of year, on which the farmers walk in the cities as a sign of encouragement



for the agricultural production. In recent years, this activity is being performed only in Kabul and other major cities, in which the mayor and other high governmental personalities participate in watching and observing.

Buzkashi: Along with other customs and celebrations, normally a Buzkashi tournament is held during the Guli Surkh festival in Mazar-i-Sharif a, Kabul, and other northern cities of Afghanistan.

Haft Mēwa (Dari: هفت میوه)

In Afghanistan, people prepare Haft Mēwa (literally translates as Seven Fruits) in addition to or instead of Haft Sin which is common in Iran. Haft Mewa is like a fruit salad made from seven different dried fruits, served in their own syrup. The seven dried fruits are: raisins, Senjed (the dried fruit of the oleaster tree), pistachios, hazelnuts, prunes (dried apricots), walnuts and either almonds or another species of plum fruit.

Samanak

It is a special type of sweet dish made from germinated wheat, and is normally cooked or prepared on the eve of Nowruz or a few days before. According to popular belief, Samanak is not only a vow to meet needs and desires, but also brings blessings and goodness. Samanak is distributed among friends and relatives during a special ceremony as Nowruz food. Women





Nowruz in the beautiful province of Herat

have a special party for it during the night, and cook it from late in the evening till daylight, singing a special song: Samanak dar Josh o mā Kafcha zanem – Dochtaran* dar Khwāb o mā Dafcha zanem (* Dochter means daughter, young lady or girl).

Nowruz in the beautiful province of Herat

The celebration of Nowruz and the New Year is several thousand years old in some countries. The ancient people of the land of Nowruz in each country, in accordance with the political borders of today, according to their customs, celebrate the new year and spring by holding gatherings of joy and happiness. The people of Afghanistan, like other countries in the field of Nowruz, celebrate these days and days of Nowruz with their own customs. Herat province is also one of the temperate provinces of Afghanistan and the different and pleasant climate of this province compared to other cities of Afghanistan promises people the feeling of spring coming sooner and this feeling of happiness and the emergence of spring freshness is not only.

It is evident on the faces of the people of this land, but also the mountains and nature of this ancient city are beautiful and pleasant, and the meadows, the meadows and the meadows scream the smell of spring and invite people from far and near to them. Nowruz is three thousand years old, and Herat, with a history of several thousand years, its people always

celebrate Nowruz. Nowruz in Herat has always been full of excitement and joy, the springs of Herat are very beautiful, the weather in this season is temperate and the mountains and plains are green, the people of Herat, although different from many parts of the country, but in a special way always welcome Nowruz. Herat is the only province where the welcome of Nowruz can be felt before the beginning of the New Year. The people of Herat also celebrate Nowruz on the last Wednesday of the year and the youth of Herat hold Nowruz ceremonies in a calm and intimate but limited atmosphere.

The ancient province of Herat is one of the largest and most important provinces in the country. Herat borders Badghis and the Republic of Turkmenistan to the north, Farah to the south, Ghor to the east and Iran to the west.

Herat has 15 districts and Shandand is its largest district. Herat city is the capital of the province and the province has fifteen districts. Herat has a brilliant and rich history in terms of history and culture and the population of this province is three million people. The province has a temperate climate that covers the Harirod area and most people in this province are engaged in agriculture and livestock, and this province is one of the largest producers of grain in the country and this province has a good reputation in the field of horticulture. More than 50 types of grapes are harvested from this province, peaches, figs and pistachios are other products of this province. Also, Herat is one of the leading provinces in the field of media activities.



Nowruz beauty ceremonies in Herat province

Nowruz beauty ceremonies in Herat province

First Wednesday of the year The people of Herat go to different places of entertainment on the first Wednesday of the New Year, and on this day, people cook delicious food and go to the plains and deserts with family and friends and enjoy seeing nature. And people from ancient times in Herat province have a tradition to go to bars and parks on the first Wednesday, Thursday and the first Friday of the year, and on this day recreational places such as Takht Safar, Bagh Mellat, Arghavan Park, Tarqi Park, Farhang Jangal Park And some people also go to shrines, such as the shrine of Mir Abdul Wahed Shahid and other places, the first Wednesday of the year is more special in Herat and women go to the women's garden on the first Wednesday of the year, which is a women's playground.

The 13 Badar celebration

The people of Herat in western Afghanistan celebrate the 13 Badar by attending parks and amusement parks in and out of the city, green plains and mountainous climates.

The 13 Badar is a public celebration and on this day all people Herat go to bars and fun with family and friends, and on this day the green slopes of the mountains and parks inside and outside the city of Herat welcome large groups of people, regardless of work and common occupations, to rejoice and dance and bread They spend thirteen Nowruz meals in the lap of nature. One of the rituals of this day among the people of Herat is tying green, which most young people do on this day. Tying green means tying life with nature to stay green and fresh forever Although in Afghanistan only the first day of the year is closed, in Herat people keep their business activities semi-active for 13 days. Many people spend the first days of the year with their families and enjoy these days with their families by eating delicious Nowruz foods and sweets.

House cleaning, preparing new clothes, baking cookies, baking samanak, preparing Haftsin are the traditions that the people of Herat perform on Nowruz days.

Boiling eggs and painting them in different colors and playing the game of war eggs among the youth is one of the favorite games of the people of Herat province, and besides that, the youth and children play another





game called Godi Paran Bazi. The sky of Herat becomes colourful and beautiful these days.

Due to the extreme heat of this city, the people of Herat are usually deprived of outdoor recreation in the summer, but the recreation areas inside the city, both during Nowruz and after, always get a new color and smell with the beginning of spring. And Nowruz rods in Herat are usually used in Obek hot springs, Sefid Kuh hot springs, Mania Garden, Mir Daud, Pashtun Bridge, Malan Bridge, etc.

In recent years, Nowruz celebrations have waned due to insecurity and the economic situation, and religious

scholars in Herat are urging people to refrain from holding Nowruz ceremonies on radio and television before Nowruz. Nevertheless, people want to be happy and enjoy these days.

Nowruz in Mazar-sharif

Nowruz is a popular occasion in many countries; the word means "new day" and it starts with new life of nature in spring when plants germinate, white blossoms attire trees like brides and sleeping creatures wake up from hibernation to celebrate start of a new year. Nowruz is full of motion and dynamism in a fresh



atmosphere and every creature try to be ready for a new start. In some part of the world human beings harmonize themselves with this flow, for example in Afghanistan people like to clean their houses, sew new cloths, bake special sweets like Bosraq, Simian, Jelawi etc. Besides that, many prepare Haft-miva which is a mixture of some nuts such as almond, walnut, pistachio and some dried Fruits like raisins and apricot all getting wet in sweet water and ready to be served in small cups after some days. The reason they call it Haft-miva is based on religious beliefs that say number 7 is a holy number. Another preparation

for this occasion is Haft-sin but the tradition of Haft-sin in Afghanistan and especially in its rural areas is not as common as it is in Iran or other countries that celebrate Nowruz and mostly Afghans assume Haft-miva as a symbol. These all are bound to the tradition of spreading Sofra (tablecloth) which is a very important part of Afghans culture, on the first day of New Year they spread the Sufra for ten days and each day they refresh it with fresh fruits and sweets which symbolizes fulfilment and Barakat for the rest of the year.

Afghans celebrate Nowruz at family and friends

reunion by singing Nowruzy songs, cooking Samanak and going to cemeteries on the last Thursday of the year to cherish the memory of those who are not alive, all of these are somehow general but there are some unique features of this ceremony in ancient Balkh where people believe Ali shrine (Talib's son) is located (it has been said that there is just his foot print) , because of this shrine nowadays people call the city "Mazar-sharif" that shows high level of respect for a city.

Historically, Nowruz is an ancient tradition and it was cherished in Balkh from the time of myths and will remain a part of public custom from those days. we can find its elements in Ferdowsi, Tabari and many other poets, writers or historian' books directly and see even fall and rise of dynasties and religions couldn't

change the basics of Nowruz costume, Salahoddin Saljoughi says Balkh was an important base for many religions like Zoroastrian, Buddhism and Islam but Nowruz which lasted a long time is not a part of any of them it's a special celebration that other cultures' ideas and... didn't change it very much. It has been said that to gain extremists' supports and to prevent their aggressive acts, Nowruz has been covered by some religious ritual. For example, every year at the beginning days of spring people try to join a public celebration in holy shrine of Ali in Mazar-sharif or Kabul. First day is for a very specific ceremony called Jahanda- bala, there is a long flowery Alam or better to say flag which people try to lift it upright and there is a belief that if Jahanda is lifted without any



problem it can be a sign of blessing and fortune and specially the year is suitable for agricultural activities. Not just for Jahanda-bala but for green flowery hills and plains around the city, Mazar is an attraction for Afghans. Pleasant weather, plains colored with red fragrant tulip and a beautiful nature make this city an attractive destination, even the special celebration of spring called ((Red flower Ceremony)) is named after beautiful tulip plains around Mazar city. Afghanistan is home of diverse ethnic groups and each of them is slightly different in celebrating Nowruz but you can find unity in diversity if notice that they have the same subject to celebrate and every spring is a chance to remind them they have so much in common beyond all differences.

Note: This article has been provided by the following author(s) who are the students of the universities of the ECO region, based on the partnership between the ECO Cultural Institute, Silk Road Universities Network (SUN), United Students of SUN (USSUN) and the Allameh Tabataba'i University. The information, facts and figures or any other details mentioned in the article do not necessarily represents the views of the ECO Cultural Institute. Accuracy or integrity of this content is the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Novruz *in Republic of* *Azerbaijan*

Natig Pashayev

Novruz holiday is a feast of spring, start of New Year in Azerbaijan. Novruz celebrations are one of the most interesting, favorite and important events in this country. Traditionally, Azerbaijanis start festivities 4 Wednesdays, before arrival of spring on 21st of March and celebrate on the vernal equinox – the beginning of the astronomical New Year, symbolizing end of the Old year and beginning of the New Year. Azerbaijanis pay homage to the four natural elements of earth, wind, fire and water. Each element holds a different symbolic meaning and plays a role in the return of spring:

- Su Chershenbes (Water Wednesday);
- Od Chershenbesi (Fire Wednesday);
- Yel Chershenbesi (Wind Wednesday);
- Torpag Chershenbe (Earth Wednesday).

According to the traditional beliefs the water is reborn on the first Wednesday: still waters come to motion; people head to springs and streams to fetch clean water, believing that it will ensure the wealth

of their household. Many jump across flowing creeks and family members sprinkle each other with water before going to bed.

The fire reborn on the second Wednesday, Azerbaijanis jump over a bonfire, which symbolizes purification. These leaps indicate the leaving of troubles and hardships behind. Later, people take ashes home to scatter across their gardens in the hopes of increasing fertility.

On the third Wednesday the wind opens tree buds and spring begins. People gather under trees and call the winds by shouting, "Yel Baba!" or "Wind Father!" If the wind blows "in response," and the branches touch the ground, their dreams will come true.

Earth Wednesday (Torpag Chershenbesi or Ilakhir Charshanba) is the final and most important of the four Wednesday celebrations central to Azerbaijan's Novruz holiday. Seven types of food are prepared, all with names starting with the letter "s." Fires are kindled and the herb rue thrown into them as protection



Bonfire on Nowruz Holiday

against evil, while ashes gathered on this day are sprinkled in all four corners of the house. Candles are lit for each family member, and the person whose candle burns the longest can expect their wish to come true. In the evening, young women approach mirrors while holding a candle, believing that in the light they may see the reflection of their future husband. Children play papaqatdi, a game in which they throw their hats in front of neighbors' doors before knocking and running to hide. Someone living in the house is then expected to fill the caps with sweets. Before dark there comes the time of fortune telling. Azerbaijani girls and young men sneak to doors of their neighbors

and “overheard” their conversation; then on the basis of the first words they have heard they try to tell their fortune and guess if their wishes will come true. Among Novruz holiday ceremonies the most important one is the grown of samani (wheatgrass, grew in a plate) which is a symbol of fertility, Novruz. Today in Azerbaijan the official celebration of Novruz holiday comes on March 21st. On the first day of the New Year it is a tradition to rise early in the morning. If it is possible people go where water is -to a river or a spring: wash themselves, splash water on each other. Water is a symbol of cleanliness and freshness.



Holiday Table on Nowruz

The holiday table on this day is very special. It is essential on this day to have seven dishes whose names begin with the letter “s”. They are sumakh, skad (milk), sirke (vinegar), samani (a special millet porridge), sabzi (greens) etc. Along with samani painted eggs and baked holiday sweets -pakhlava, shakarbura set a festival mood. All these have a symbolical significance. Azerbaijanis put the painted egg on the mirror. As soon as the egg moves the New Year begins. Everyone sitting at the table starts wishing a happy new year to each other. One of the essential parts of the holiday table is “Khoncha (xonca)” – a tray filled with sweets, nuts, candles and other treats. But the main meal of Novruz table is “pilaf”. The day before the holiday people meet to congratulate each other. On the first day of Novruz Ropewalkers demonstrate their skills, pehlevans (wrestlers) compete against each other, comedy performances with the participation of two characters, Kos-Kosa (goat beard) and Kechal (the bald), are held on the streets. Kos-Kosa represents the winter, Kechal – the spring. In the verbal competition Kechal always comes out a winner.

At the fourth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage which took place from September 28 to October 2, 2009, multinational nomination “Novruz, Nowruz, Nooruz, Navruz, Nauroz, Nevruz” of Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Turkey and Uzbekistan was inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The ancient spring holiday – Novruz bairamy – is one of the oldest and most beautiful Azerbaijani traditions.





Kos-Kosa (goat beard)
and Kechal (the bald)
Performance



Nowruz in Iran

Introduction

Nations throughout the world have designated specific days to celebrate the New Year; inhabitants of the land of Persia, in the same way, have chosen the beginning of spring- the rebirth of nature- as the beginning of the New Year. Nowruz events are deep-seated in Iran's history. Imbued with Zoroastrianism during the Sassanid era, Nowruz was regarded as a religious practice. The invasion of the Muslim Arabs and the fall of the Persian Empire caused Nowruz traditions to be marginalized due to its Zoroastrian background and was therefore left out as an official practice under the Arab caliphs. It was also considered haram (forbidden by the religion) and a heinous practice for its connection with Zoroastrianism. Al-Ghazali, the great Shafi'i jurist, for example, never regarded the nature of Nowruz traditions to be taboo, but declared that celebration of Nowruz was haram due to its connection with Zoroastrian rites. Only some local or pervasive dynasties such as the Samanids and the Buyid dynasty acknowledged this practice. The Samanids, who used royal titles to name themselves, tried to forge a genealogy and attribute themselves to the Sassanids, and paid remarkable tribute to Nowruz

festivities. With the efforts of Umar ibn Khayyam, the Jalali calendar- or solar calendar- was developed during the Seljuk era and consequently Nowruz was celebrated right at the beginning of spring. The advent of the Safavid dynasty liberated Iran from the yoke of the Arabs and the Mongols, with a new government being formed within the borders of the country. The Safavids, who sought to revive Shiism in Iran based on Shia principles, were concerned with the traditions of ancient Persia. This, however, had to overcome the challenge of religious legitimacy. As a result, the statements made by the Prophet (PBUH) and the Imams, as the only official interpreters of the Holy Quran in the Shiite sect in honor of Nowruz, gained significance. In this way, Eid Ghadir, which is called Eidullah Akbar (the great Eid) by the Shiites, was considered to coincide with Nowruz. Also, the day of the enthronement of Amir al-Mu'minin Ali ibn Abi Talib as the caliph was considered to coincide with Nowruz. Various hadiths were also highlighted to honor Nowruz. All these hadiths helped Nowruz to secure itself a religious standing.



Pre-Nowruz ceremony in Gilan

Nowruz in Gilan Province

Pre-Nowruz ceremony in Gilan

At the beginning of March, pre-Nowruz ceremonies begin in Gilan: such as bringing a bear and performing street plays by bears, as well as doing fireworks and reciting poems related to each play. Touring group of 5 to 6 people come to the villages these days and singing happy songs and dancing near the houses then receive money or food from the owners of each house as a reward.

Nowruz Khani (Singing for Nowruz)

It is a kind of informing people about the arrival of spring and Nowruz. It is performed by people who called them: Nowruz Nousal, and the time of their arrival is started from the first of March to the last Wednesday night of the year (Chaharshanbe Suri). Nowruz Khani poems are performed in both Gilaki and Persian and sometimes a mixture of these two languages. The theme of these poems usually referred to the arrival of the New Year, the praise of God, the description of spring and nature and the promise of joy and happiness, the wish of good and blessing for family members and the praise of respected people. In the past the gifts of the people to the Nowruz Khan were, some rice, a few eggs and a piece of clothing, wheat, sugar, dry tea and sugar which divide between them at the end of the night. After receiving gifts from the people, Cole Barkesh (Responsible for carrying) gave each family a boxwood branch so that the family members would always be refreshed and happy. This branch is never thrown away, and placed on a latch of house door, on a Haft-sin table, or in a treasury of rice for blessing.

Another ceremony, which is one of the theatrical rituals

before Nowruz in East Gilan, is called Rabechereh. The members of the group in this play are usually four people, one is a person how plays as a deer, the other is a deer grazing, the third person is Kol Barkesh and the fourth person is a co-singer. This ceremony is a symbol of the return and closeness of the sun (deer) to the Capricorn and the vernal equinox. Especially when the deer kills itself in the middle of the play and people bring it back to life with their gifts, it is a symbol of the resurrection of the spring of life to bring the depressed nature back to life in winter.

Another theatrical ritual that is very popular; is called Aroose Goley (Bride of flowers). The time of this show varied in different villages and it lasted approximately



Photo by Farshid Seyfi

between a week to 20 days and it started from the second half of March. After sunset, the troupe went from house to house and performed in front of each house. There are several main characters in this play: Pir Babo or Pir Baba (old man) - Arouos Goley (Bride) – Ghool (Giant) and Kas Khanum which is maid of Bride. This show is a combination of several myths that are based on people's belief and come along with happiness. In fact, this play is based on a legend that a man named Pir Baba lived in a forest and grazed his cattle in the forest every day. Once, 20 days left Nowruz; A Giant came out of his cave and after seeing the Bride in Pir Baba's cabin, he kidnapped her and took her to his cave, and since then, a fierce rivalry has begun between the two. The Bride is a symbol of the freshness and vitality of life and the beautiful nature of spring; Pir Baba is a symbol of experience, knowledge and the old year (the experience of which can be used in the new year), and the Giant is the manifestation of hardship and the problems of life and hard winter.

Chaharshanbe Suri

One of the most important and famous pre-Nowruz ceremonies in Gilan is Chaharshanbe Suri. This festival is celebrated on the eve of the last Wednesday before Nowruz. In this ceremony, people lit fire and jumped over it by singing hymns, believing that by doing so, they would get rid of the disease and would be in good health in the new year. Of course, in Gilaki language, the name of Chaharshanbe Suri is Goleh Goleh Chaharshanbe, which refers to the redness of the face against heat.

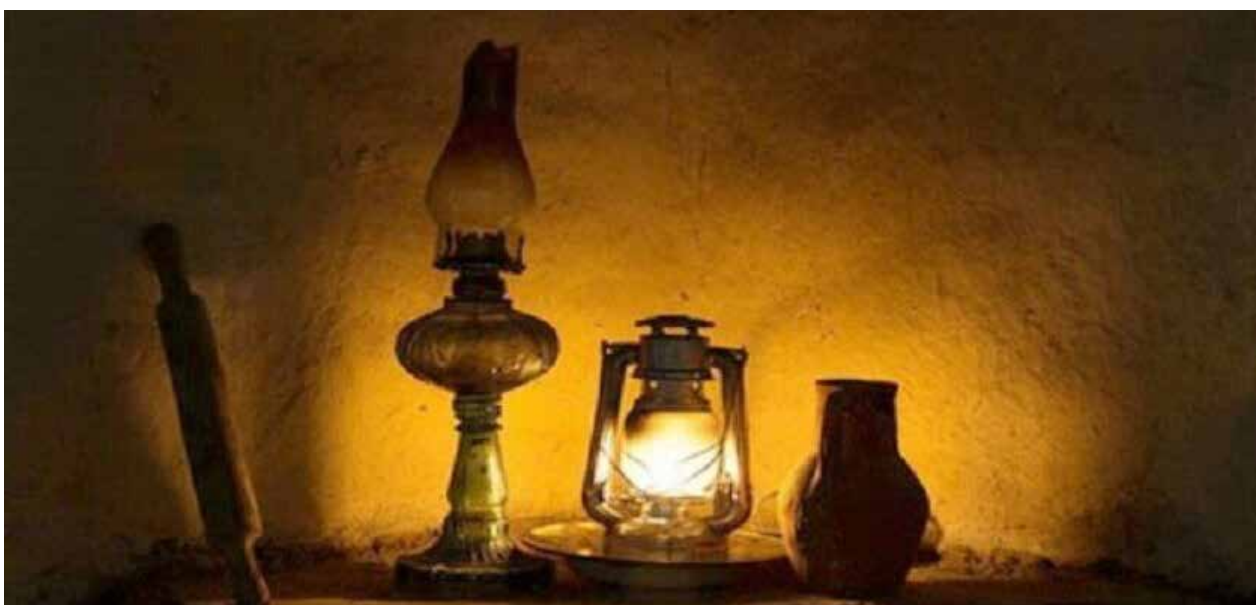
Normally during the day or night of Wednesday, the markets are full of people who buy mirrors, wooden combs; Espand (harmel); Pottery and nuts.

On this day, everything that is a sign of ugliness, depravity and antiquity is thrown away. Old pottery should be broken broken and replaced by new ones.

On Wednesday night, usually seven piles of dried straw are set on fire in the yard and open area. Everyone in the house takes turns jumping across the fire. The ashes from the Chaharshanbe Suri fire are valuable and usually dumped in paddy fields, vegetable gardens and at the foot of trees and flowers to prevent pests and strengthen the soil.

On the evening of the Wednesday, with the same Chaharshanbe Suri fire, a lantern is lit in all rooms and niches of the house. Usually these lights are kept on until the 13th of Farvardin (Sizdah Bedar: Thirteen Outdoor). Usually, water is drawn from a well on Wednesday, and this water is kept until 13th Farvardin, and it is used as a blessing, and it is believed that if they bathed with that water, diseases would be repelled and it would cause strength and fertility.







Nowruz bread and sweets

In the villages, Halva and Nowruz breads are baked. Nowruz homemade sweets are usually baked with rice flour in the plain areas and it is baked with wheat flour in the mountain areas. Nowruz breads usually include: Komaj, Kholfa Noon, Bapote Lasse Noon (rice bread) and Tamijan.



Haft-sin

Nowruz table is varied in the villages. Commons of these table: Holy Quran, mirror, lamp, growing greens, fresh spring branches and flowers, water, local breads, homemade sweets, rice, combs, scissors, coins, river fish, rose water, fruits, Esfand, Somaq, Samanu and coloured eggs. In the past, in addition to this, henna was also had a place on the Nowruz table and it was used on the palms and nails after the beginning of the New Year.

The eggs number on the Haft-sin table should be the same as the number of family members, because if it is less than that, something bad will happen in the family.

Ceremony of beginning of the New Year:

Drinking fresh water and pouring spring or wells water in the corner of the room and the entrance of the room and saying: (Go old and come new) to cause health throughout the year. Staying together with the whole family at home and around the Haft-sin table; to prevent displacement in the new year.

It is believed being awake at the exact moment of the beginning of the New Year causes awareness throughout the new year, and sleeping at that moment causes laziness and depression. Therefore, children and the elderly are awakened if they are asleep.

Usually the first food after the beginning of the New Year is meatless vegetable stew and only smoked or roasted fish meat is used.

Khone Pazani (Stepping into the house for the first

time): is another Nowruz tradition that is performed in the east of Gilan. Usually, a good-natured person enters the house with the Quran and a small jug of water set for him by the owner of the house, and walks in the rooms and porches, Wishes a long and happy life for the family.

According to the belief of people in Gilan, the lamb is an innocent animal which brings prosperity, and its visit in the first hours of the new year, brings good luck. Commonly a white lamb is chosen, its horns are ornamented with flowers, and after the beginning of the New Year, a handkerchief is tied around its neck and the lamb is taken to the villagers' house. People put eggs and sometimes amount of money in the handkerchiefs of the lamb.

One of the most important hobbies of Nowruz is playing with chicken's eggs, which in Gilaki language is called Morghone jang. The game can be played with one side of egg or both side or top of the egg. The method of play is that one person holds the egg in his fist so that only a small part of the egg is out of his fingers, and the second person, while holding the egg with his fingertips, hits the competitor's egg; Broken or cracked eggs are given to the other person.

Sizdah Bedar / Thirteen Outdoor or thirteenth of Farvardin:

Generally, the people of Gilan were very interested in joining nature from the dawn of the 13th of Farvardin and went to the plains and promenades of eye-catching and filled it with joy and happiness. Sometimes the Sizdah Bedar was an excuse for more sympathy of the people of one or more villages and Kadkhoda (alderman) welcomed them. The 13th of Farvardin was also a time of choosing a wife, and during sightseeing, joy and happiness, many boys chose their wives from among the girls of the village. On this day, the villagers were spreading a large tablecloth and everyone shared everything they had brought, and everyone ate whatever food they liked, as if all the residents of the area were one family who were together on this day.

Also according to the traditions of this day, sprouted greens that were been placed on the Haft-Sin table will be released into the river water or they will be thrown on the roofs of houses for the consumption of birds. They also release the small fish they had taken from the river back into the river. On this day, 13 pebbles will be thrown into the water. Also on this day, crossing the water is considered auspicious and if they are not able to cross the river, they cross a bridge three times. they considered it necessary to leave the house and join nature, and if a person cannot go out for any reason, he will go to the yard and walk under the trees and garden for a while.

Nowruz in Kurdistan

Legend has it that Kaveh's uprising took place in Nowruz, when the Kurds, as Kaveh Ahangar's adherents, defeated Zahak (who had serpents on his shoulders), saving the land of Iran from the devil. In Shahnameh (the Book of Kings), the roots of the Kurds were introduced as young people who had been freed from the clutches of Zahak. The Kurds would celebrate this day by lighting a fire and honoring Nowruz as gloriously as possible to keep its memory alive.

Fire Plays

In Kurdistan, the fire ritual, which is a "Relic of the Old Testament," is not limited to Chaharshanbe Suri; in comparison, the fire of Chaharshanbe Suri is a prelude to the fire of the night before Nowruz. Children and young people prepare to take part in this ceremony by getting all kinds of crackers from a month before Nowruz. With the setting of the sun on the last day of Esfand (the last month in the Iranian calendar, beginning on February 19 to March 20), the landscape of towns and villages completely changes. Nowruz fire is lit on all the roofs, with its flames licking the sky. The elderly and the young gather around the fire



and explode all kinds of crackers. The glory, grandeur, splendor and vivacity of the ritual is highly awe-inspiring which infuses the aroma of Nowruz into people's minds.

Shark Tour

Another Nowruz ceremony is the "shark" tour in the village. To do this, they choose two ebullient and funny young people. A very beautiful set of women's clothes is worn by one of them. The other, wearing a loose coat, is made up with branches out of boards, a beard of cotton or wool, and a long mustache of hair, and amble through the alleys in the village, accompanied by a group of young people. They go to houses, asking for a Nowruz gift. The sharks, who are sprinkled with jokes, make people laugh and are welcomed everywhere with complete purity and love. Their Nowruz gifts are all types of dried fruits and in some cases oil, butter or eggs. The children also arrange this program separately. One of them puts on the Kurdish pants of an overweight and tall man, with a piece of rope tied over them. Meanwhile, the shark, either veiled or without a veil, moves in front of a group of children, both boys and girls with some singing songs, and goes to the houses in their neighborhood. In each house, a number of eggs and some onion skins are boiled in water for a few minutes at a time.

Mir Nowruzi

The ceremony of "Mir Nowruzi" or "Spring Emir" is one of the theatrical rituals after Eid-e-Nowruz, which was held with many formalities in times gone by and it is now held in Mahabad region on the first Wednesday of the New Year in the presence of an eager general public. On this day, the people elect a common person from among themselves as their Emir and the Provisional Governor and give him the title of Mir Nowruzi or the Spring Emir. He sits on the throne on this day at sunrise. Then the "Gupal Zivin" (silver stick) man bows before the Emir and introduces the members of the Provisional Government as follows:

- 1) Spring Emir or Mir Nowruzi
- 2) The old minister, who is chosen from among the witty elderlies and is a wise man taking the role of advisor and problem solver;
- 3) The Right-Hand Minister, who issues logical rulings;
- 4) The Left-Hand Minister, who gives ridiculous and absurd orders;
- 5) Mirza, who is a schooled person and has the position of secretary;
- 6) The Servants
- 7) Dagger stabbers or executioners, who are dressed in red;
- 8) The "Silver Stick" man, who is the messenger of Mir Nowruzi;
- 9) Musicians, who usually number up to 25 and have cameo roles;
- 10) Singers and chanters, who sometimes sing in groups and sometimes in turns and some in the form of declamations.

Obaidullah Ayubian has mentioned in his book, "Mir Nowruzi Treatise in Kurdistan," for the glorious performance of this ceremony in the past. The issuance of ridiculous and whimsical rulings by Mir Nowruzi is very interesting and pleasant for the people."

More surprising than the appointment of the Spring Emir is his downfall from the interim government.

According to Hafez's poems about Mir Nowruzi and its provisional government, it is clear that this Nowruz show dates back to the distant past.

Nowruz in Khorasan

In Khorasan, everyone adheres to and is interested in the customs of Nowruz and works hard to implement the ancient traditions of this national holiday. Some people go to the mosque or to the shrine of Imam Reza (AS) before the New Year. The issue of the moment of delivery of the New Year in the holy shrine of Razavi and the moment of delivery of the year in the shrine, saying or performing the Ya Moqalebal Qoloobe Valabsar and performing the complete New Year ceremony such as Naqare Zani, what is preserved from this tradition in TV is broadcast.

The special rituals of Mashhad, which are based on the existence of the enlightened holly shrine in the city, are like the old tradition of Mashhad called Eidi Imam Reza (AS), who from one week before the delivery of the year, every person who went to visit the shrine, put small coins in his pocket. They threw gold (small gold) on all four sides and at the time of the New Year, the people who came to the pilgrimage took the coins as Eidi of Imam Reza (AS) and to bless their money.

Nowruz in Khuzestan

Beside the common New Year, there are some special traditions in Khuzestan province which is located in the southwest of Iran. Due to the fact that Khuzestan province became industrial very soon, many social habits and behaviors caused by indigenous culture in this region have faded and some of them have been forgotten. However, some of these customs still exist among the people.

In one of the local games in Khuzestan, young people came to the square and brought boiled eggs with them. Two persons stand in front of each other and collide the eggs, if one of the eggs break, the holder of it is the loser. Another game is called "Alakhtor"; two groups compete with each other, two players from each group come to the middle, raise one foot and grab their ankle with their hands, then each of the two players tries to upset the other balance by pushing the rival player. All the players of the two groups play in pairs and the scores are calculated at the end and the group which gets the higher scores is declared the winner and the opposite group should give them a piggyback.



Bakhtiari local dance

Another ceremony of Nowruz is cooking Samanu or “Samanu Pazan”. Samanu is prepared by housewives with wheat flour, oil, fennel and black cumin. Samanu Pazan is one of the Nowruz traditions that is prepared by women with a special ceremony from the first of “Esfand” (a month before Nowruz). They also cook different sweets and cookies which are served on the Haft-sin table such as date cookie or “Naan-khormae” which is originated from the city of Dezful.

Nowruz-Bal

When talking about Nowruz, usually the Iranian New Year, which is celebrated at the beginning of spring, comes to mind, but this essay wants to talk about a celebration that is held in the middle of summer. Nowruz-Bal is the beginning of New Year in the calendar of inhabitants of the southern shores of the Caspian Sea, which takes place in the middle of summer. “Bal” in Gilaki language¹ means flame of fire and Nowruz-Bal means the flame of the fire of New

Year. This celebration has been celebrated throughout history in the vast area, where nowadays, is located in Gilan², western Mazandaran³, Alamut⁴ and Taleghan⁵.

Why is Nowruz-Bal celebrated in the middle of summer?

The common calendar of Gilan has its roots in the ancient Iranian calendar (Yazdgerdi) and this calendar, according to Iranian traditions and astronomical calculations are the oldest Iranian calendar. This calendar was an annual cycle, which means, over time, the beginning of the year was moving away from its origin, which was the vernal equinox. This rotation lasted for years until the beginning of the year reached the middle of summer and the time of harvesting agricultural and livestock products. Since this was the best time to pay taxes and tributes to the rulers, they chose a leap day called “Vishak” to keep the beginning of the year in this time (Humand, 1996, p. 56).



Naan-khormae



Bazzar-e Eidi-ya



Photo by Mahin Asgari

Why do people light a fire in Nowruz-Bal?

From ancient times, the people of Gilan believed that lighting fires on Nowruz-Bal would reduce the intensity of snow and cold in winter and protect them from damage that could be caused by severe cold. The fire has also been a means of communication. To announce the beginning of New Year, the senior shepherds, wearing Shula⁶, went to the highest peak of the mountain around them and lit a fire. By doing so, they informed the other shepherds of the beginning of the migration season and the taking of livestock down the mountain, and the farmers of the time of the harvest. People also used the flame of the fire for another reason, and that was to predict the weather for the coming months. It is said that the people of the mountains believed that if the smoke of the fire of Nowruz-Bal went to the mountains, the winter would be good and if the flame went to the plain, they would have a hard and snowy winter (Asgari, 2019).

How is Nowruz-Bal celebrated today?

Nowadays, Nowruz-Bal is celebrated not for the end of the fiscal year, but to keep the old traditions alive and under the pretext of coming together and being happy. The festival is usually held in its original form with lighting a fire, singing folklore songs, and numbers of traditional entertainments of Gilan.

1- A Caspian language, and a member of the northwestern Iranian language branch

2- One of the provinces of Iran

3- One of the provinces of Iran

4- A county in Alborz province, Iran

5- A region in Qazvin province, Iran

6- A traditional cloak worn by shepherds

Note: This article has been provided by the following author(s) who are the students of the universities of the ECO region, based on the partnership between the ECO Cultural Institute, Silk Road Universities Network (SUN), United Students of SUN (USSUN) and the Allameh Tabataba'i University. The information, facts and figures or any other details mentioned in the article do not necessarily represents the views of the ECO Cultural Institute. Accuracy or integrity of this content is the sole responsibility of the authors.

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The Hāji Firouz street show in Tehran. An ethnographic study and a historical insight on a norouz tradition in Iran

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Introduction

A large number of street vendors and beggars in search of their living could be observed at the crossroads of the Iranian Capital. The Iranian New Year's Eve is one of the most prosperous times at crossroads of Tehran. The growing number of cars on the one hand, and the New Year traditions on the other hand, make this period a considerable source of income for these crossroad workers, who take the opportunity to adapt their solicitation to the surrounding context and claim their New Year's gifts (eidi) from passers-by. Among other activities that favour the quest for money in the public space, we notice the Hāji Firouz performance. This street performance, often played as a two-person team, leans on a character called Hāji Firouz who wears red suits, has dyed skin and sings while playing percussions. The music, song and dance are the sine qua non of the spectacle. On the occasion of Norouz, this show is performed at crossroads, and sometimes door to door to "bring the news of arrival of spring" and seems to have ancient roots in the Iranian culture and mythology.

Nowadays, this street show is almost exclusively performed by the Ğorbat population.

A brief introduction on Ğorbats

Ğorbats constitute one of the Iranian semi-itinerant populations known commonly as Kowli. In fact, there is no scientific way to prove the Gypsy or Indian origins of this group. Thus, we need to find an anthropological definition. According to anthropologists who have studied similar groups (Berland, 1978; Rao, 1985), this group could be defined as "peripatetic". That is to say that historically, Ğorbats did not own any lands or herds and did not use to practice any kind of food production. Two main clans constitute this group: ironsmiths and carpenters. Within each clan, Ğorbat men used to make small and transportable artefacts that Ğorbat women sold during their practice of peddling. Thus, the whole clan used to move toward their clients, from one nomad tribe to another or from one village to another, in order to exchange their commodities against food, clothes and money.

Nowadays, we notice the presence of Ğorbat groups in several provinces in Iran. In the present paper, we focus on the Ğorbat of Mazandaran and more precisely on the city of Babol where the Ğorbat clans (ironsmiths and carpenters) live in a homogenous

and outlying neighbourhood. Other residents of Babol fear this neighbourhood. In general, the relations between these itinerant groups and the wider society have always been contentious. It has always been forbidden for Ğorbats to marry other Iranians, to share their food and, in some parts of Iran, to wear local costumes. In contact with other populations, the rejection that Ğorbats experience prevents them from certain activities and some occupations. Thus, their domain of contact with the wider society is considerably restrained.

After Land Reform (about 50 years ago) and their forced settlement, the nature of their relations with the wider society has not changed. Hādūri seems to be the only cultural interstice where the contact is possible. In Ğorbati language, hādūri means selling small objects as street vendors or begging. It is, in fact, the most traditional and the oldest practice of this group. According to the Persian dictionary of Dehkhoda, hādūri means begging with insistence. The same word is used by Ğorbats from Babol to describe women's practice of selling small objects door to door. The actual form of hādūri consists of mendicancy with insistence and street vending at the crossroads; mostly in Tehran. Thus, they spend most of their time in Tehran to work and make regular travels to Babol for holidays and collective ceremonies.

The urbanisation of hādūri seems to have introduced the child labour force to this practice. Regarding the masculine culture of the street in Tehran, a woman cannot stay alone all day long in the public space, especially at the crossroad. The presence of a child transcends the status of the women to the status of mother, which is a more respectable status for a woman in the Iranian-Islamic public space culture. Thus, Ğorbat women take advantage of this status during their work and the child becomes the main actor of hādūri, while he attracts the attention of child-caring passers-by.

As another result of the urbanisation, Ğorbat men have abandoned their manufacturing and invest their time mostly in the illegal market of narcotics. Women and children are the only representatives of the Ğorbat population who appear in public space and make contact with the wider society. Men stay mostly in their residential neighbourhoods; either in Babol or in one of the poorest quarters in the south of

Tehran. Accordingly, the practice of Hāji Firouz street show presents an exceptional moment in the social division of tasks among this population. It represents the unique appearance of Ğorbat men in the public space and leads to a contact with the wider society.

In the present paper, we will first describe the practice of Hāji Firouzi in its current form, performed by the Ğorbat, in Tehran. Second, we will linger over the origins of this street show and the character of Hāji Firouz, whether or not in connection with Kowli populations' customs. We will finally come back to the current exercise of this show and its appropriation by Ğorbats. The latter call this practice Hāji Firouzi. Adding an *i* at the end of the word makes it a practice, an action; while the name, without the *i*, designates the name of the character who is performed.

The Hāji Firouz performance at crossroads

Public passages are the places where the performance of Hāji Firouzi has always taken place. In the actual practice, the crossroads usually occupied by Ğorbat women and children become men and children territory for a period of two weeks leading up to New Year's Day. Ğorbat men and children who perform this show form a two-person team (a father and his child, a paternal uncle and his nephew, two cousins) and go to the same crossroads that their kin women (wife, sister, close cousin or aunt), with whom they maintain good relations, have previously appropriated. Otherwise, they have to fight to acquire a location at a new crossroad. Once there, Hāji Firouz performers put on the costume they have planned for the occasion, dye their faces and start "to turn" (*gaštan*)¹ between the cars.

The location of the duo is first in front of the car. The oldest Hāji Firouz hits on his drum and sings, while the younger one dances. For a few seconds, this little spectacle takes place in front of the car until car passengers show some interest in the performance. In this second time, both Hāji Firouz walk towards the doors of the vehicle and await their New Year's gifts while continuing their show. If the donation does not take place, the performers proceed to another car. The dancer, i.e. the younger person, is the one who receives the money. Compared to an ordinary *hādūri* session realized by Ğorbat women, the theatrical aspect of this practice facilitates the money earning. As a rule, the Hāji Firouz does not use traditional oral solicitation which is usually pronounced in a begging session.

¹ The same term is used in an ordinary *hādūri* session.

² This recalls the tradition of *zanpūš* in the Iranian theatre, which consists of a male actor playing the role of a woman.

The Hāji Firouz appearance

Ğorbat Hāji Firouz wear a special costume for this occasion. Dyeing their face in black, wearing red clothes and a headwear are essential elements of Hāji Firouz outfit. According to my observations, Ğorbats' outfit for this performance covers a wide range of choices. It could include an appropriate costume for the occasion, a soccer jersey or a simple t-shirt. The material of these clothes has no importance. However, the red colour must appear in the outfit of the character. The costume pieces consist of a tunic and wide red pants in nylon. Pants are sometimes replaced by a red skirt². The headwear appears to be of secondary importance. However, the head hardly remains bare. A scarf, a hat, a small headband or a simple "birthday hat" are substitutes that they use to assert their disguised appearance.

Ğorbat must provide their costume yearly. It is rare for an outfit to survive from one year to another. As a result, the costume is often improvised, with an element of creativity, while preserving a few essential features (see pictures below). The make-up (dyeing the face black) seems to be inherent to the performance of Hāji Firouz and takes place in the street before the performance starts. One of the techniques for this theatrical make-up is to use burned newspapers applied with slightly wet hands on the face skin. Another technique is to hold hands in front of an exhaust pipe of a bus and wait for the burnt gas to cover and dye hands, then to apply the black on the face skin. Coal is also used for this purpose. However, dyeing the face depends on children's or their responsible adults' taste. Jamileh, for instance, uses red cosmetic to draw clown features on the face of her daughter.

Ğorbat children resort to dance as a begging technique. Listening to music and dancing constitute the most favourite activity in Ğorbat's daily life. However, musical instruments and playing music do not play a central role in Ğorbat customs. When it comes to the practice of Hāji Firouzi, we observe one of the rare cases of Ğorbats playing music.

All duos get at least one instrument, called *tempo* and sometimes a tambourine (see pictures above). The *tempo* is a percussion instrument, very similar to the *djembe*, but originating from the coasts of the Persian Gulf. During Hāji Firouz performance, Ğorbats hang it around the neck with a string and hold it horizontally under the arm. The *tempo* is, like the costumes, procured each year before the period of street show begins. They often buy and resell or rent the instrument merely for the feast period. If municipality officials arrest Ğorbat performers, the

tempo will be confiscated. Given that the instrument is relatively expensive (22,000 tomans in March 2012) Ğorbats are not keen to invest in its purchase. Therefore, they arrange to form a team of Hāji Firouzi with kin members who have an instrument at their disposal.

Despite the prohibition of dancing in public space by the Islamic Republic laws, Ğorbats continue to dance during their performance of Hāji Firouzi. Men, boys and prepubescent girls give themselves over to dancing in order to reincarnate the character of Hāji Firouz. In Islamic beliefs, dancing in public is interpreted as sexually provocative. According to the theologians (mojtahed), any practice deliberately provoking the excitement of individuals of the opposite sex is condemned by the Muslim religion. Despite the differences between the customs of Ğorbats and those of the wider society, the dance of women in public is condemned by both populations. Ğorbat men do not tolerate their wives' dancing in the public space, for two reasons. As mentioned above, dancing per se is appreciated within this population. Ğorbat women dance deliberately during their in-group ceremonies in the homogeneous context of their neighbourhood. In this context, the presence of other Ğorbat men does not seem to offend husbands or fathers. In the context of the street, the question of nāmūs takes on an unprecedented scale. On the question of nāmūs, the two populations come together with slight differences. Pitt-Rivers's (1983: 50) explanation of the question of honour safeguarding within the Andalusian family sums up what the Iranian nāmūs means. He explains that the sexual purity comes to the woman as a virtue and men have the obligation to uphold the honour of women. A man's honour is therefore dependent on the sexual purity of his mother, his wife, his daughters and also his sisters, not his own. Thus, an honourable woman is born with all that is appropriate of "shame", takes care to avoid human contacts which could expose her to dishonour; she is not supposed to be able to succeed in this task without the support of the male authority.

We notice that the relationships between man and woman in the Ğorbat culture contradict on several points the relationships defined by the concept of nāmūs. Nonetheless, Ğorbats borrow this term from the vocabulary of the non-Ğorbat Iranians and apply it in their familial relationships. However, they do not refer to the same meaning as other Iranians. First, the concept of nāmūs in the Ğorbat environment concerns a pubescent girl whose kin members (from lineage and alliance) are concerned about her safety, appearance and dating, but only in the semi-domestic space; that is to say in their neighbourhood in Babol and in their residential quarter in south Tehran.



Apart from these two places, the girl spends her days at crossroads far from male members of her family. Thus, her protection is a matter of concern of the adult woman who accompanies her to work. However, it is not a question of protection against contact with unknown men but only against the risks of kidnapping and arrest. Therefore, the concept of nāmūs does not involve the same factors for the Ğorbat population as for non-Ğorbat Iranians.

Among the Ğorbats, men are required to protect girls who belong to their lineage. This principle requires a father to protect his daughter, for example. For Iranians this concept also encompasses the married woman, who must be protected against a foreign male gaze by the men of her immediate family. Otherwise, the woman could be approached by foreign men. According to the Islamic precepts, this event would, above all, endanger family's honour. On the other hand, according to Ğorbat customs, when it comes to a married woman, family honour is not so much at stake. It is above all a matter of a balance of power between the two spouses. Thus, Ğorbat men wish to prevent their wives from dancing in front of strangers, i.e. the non-Ğorbat passers-by. However, young Ğorbat girls do take part in street dancing, sometimes unbeknownst to adults.

As for the music, the rhythm Ğorbats play during the practice of Hāji Firouzi, has no particularity distinguishing it from other musical practices. It



consists of simple strikes on the instrument aimed at maintaining a certain happy and cheerful rhythm. Likewise, the Ğorbat dance during this performance does not represent a specific dance. The children dance as during wedding ceremonies which take place within their group; referring to several folkloric dances from different Iranian regions. The movements as well as the music are a jumble of several musical references. During the practice of Hāji Firouzi, we find the same jumble. It is the same for the rhythm played on this occasion, as well as for the songs. The songs are, however, the only element whose origins can be verified, referring to the works of historians and folklorists. We will come back to the comparison of the original songs of Hāji Firouz and those sung by the Ğorbat children, after a look back at the origins of Hāji Firouz's show.

At this point, it is appropriate to explore the origins of Hāji Firouz, which is linked to ancient Iranian traditions. For a majority of researcher-historians, this character has no direct connection with the Kowli or Ğorbat populations. Most of the authors make no reference to the so-called "Kowli" and find the origin of Hāji Firouz in Iranian mythology or in the practice of servitude, in the 16th century, or in the time of Sassanid Iran.

Historical overview of Hāji Firouz character and performance

According to common descriptions, Hāji Firouz is a character linked to Norouz ceremonies. During the New Year Holidays, he appears through a street show in order to bring "the good news of the arrival of spring". The style and the colour of his clothing, the black colour of his skin, his music and songs are

recognized as the particularities of this character. A red shirt and a red or black waistcoat on top of it, a red short pleated skirt over red pants and a cone-shaped hat constitute his outfit. He darkens his face and neck, often holds a percussion instrument like the tambourine or the drum, and sings a specific song. His lyrics speak of Norouz's arrival in a humorous tone. His show is obviously accompanied by the rhythmic movements of the body or facial expressions that Shahri (2002) described as follows:

"As they chant each line of the song and tapped their tambourine, they would jump and leap [...] bow, bend and fold in half and twist their limbs, contort their facial features and muscles [they] made people in presence happy [...]" (Shahri, 2002: 114-translated from Persian by M.A.)

Thus, the Hāji Firouz seeks to bring joy and good humour to passers-by and, therefore, to receive a tip as a reward. The origins of this character and his show remain quite controversial. While historian Bahar M. and anthropologist-folklorist Boloukbashi A. see the source of this practice in pre-Islamic ceremonies and mythology, Shahri J. considers that the source of inspiration for this character lies in the practice of bondage. For Boloukbashi (2001), ātašafroz (people who used to light fires in the streets) are the source of street shows related to the Iranian New Year and Hāji Firouz would be the sequel to this kind of performances. Street actors and musicians constituted the ātašafroz groups and used to appear on public pathways during the Norouz period. Their task was to bring the "good news of the arrival of spring" (*moždeye farāresidan-e bahār*). Boloukbashi reports that each actor blackened his face and put on red or coloured clothes, with a pointed bugle-shaped headwear which



was embellished with bells and tassels. The ātašafroz carried torches, swallowed the flame or sprayed drops of oil on it, which they kept in their mouths in order to make it more fiery. The musicians of each atašafroz group played the tambourine (dārie) and the drum (tonbak/donbak). The shape and colour of the clothes, the black make-up of the character, as well as the message he seeks to communicate ("the announcement of the arrival of spring") accompanied by songs and music lead this Iranian folklorist to bring the two traditions together and to consider them as the continuation of the same practice.

Massé (1938) reported the verses ātašafroz used to sing. The first lines are borrowed, thereafter, by Hāji Firouz, replacing the subject of "fire maker" by that of "Hāji Firouz".

"Came the fire maker; - he comes once a year. - I, the little fire maker, - I am poor once in a year - Casings and guts came. - What was not, came" (Massé, 1938: 147-translated from French by M.A.)

Bahar (1996) considers the character of Hāji Firouz to be borrowed from a Mesopotamian tradition or a myth from ancient Persia. This Mesopotamian tradition consisted of the appearance of figures wearing black masks in public space on New Year's Eve. They recounted, in the form of a show, the return of Tammouz - the Mesopotamian god of fertility - from the world of the dead. The return of this character to the world of the living represents the rebirth of nature and the return of the fertility of the earth in spring. The second part of this hypothesis put forward by Bahar, relates the character of Hāji Firouz to the return of the Iranian myth Siavash - who became the god of abundance and prosperity - and his alliance with the goddess of fertility, Soudabeh. According to

Bahar (1996), Siavash is directly related to the myth of Tammouz. Hence its designation of "the black-faced man" which Bahar sees as a continuation of the Tammouz ceremony, during which people blackened their face or wore black masks.

"The ceremonies of Hāji Firouz with blackened face, recall this same concept and its surprising antiquity. Since it is very likely that the rite of Hāji Firouz is one of the oldest rites in Iran, related to the rite of Siavash and its contemporary" (Bahar, 1996: 194-translated from Persian by M.A.)

Shahri (2002), for his part, shares the most common public opinion on the source of this performance, which considers that Hāji Firouz represents the black servants of the time when the "master-servant" relationship (arbāb-nokari) were current; the time when "harems and eunuch houses" (haramsarā va xājesarā dāri) were in use, he writes.

"Hāji Firouz was a group formed during the arbāb-nokari era and the time of harems and eunuch houses; since they [the servants] had been released or expelled or their masters were bankrupt and they were losing their homes. Thus, because of their hairless face and their black colour and [...] their inability to pronounce certain consonants, they became the subject of mockery of the people and thus earned their living; until the traveling lūti who played drums and the motreb rūhozi [musicians] realized their attractiveness and profitability. First the lūti, then the musicians trained them and taught them to do buffoonery. With their gradual disappearance, blackening their face, wearing red clothes and turning their tongues, [the lūti and motreb] followed [the servants] by their names as Siāh (Black) and Hāji Firouz. [They dressed in] red clothes because of his

cheerful appearance and [called themselves] Firouz because of the name given [to the servants] by their master to promote the auspicious. "(Shahri J., 2002, volume 4: 113-translated from Persian by M.A.)

Shahri believes the title of Hāji would be attributed to these servants following the completion of the pilgrimage to Mecca, which they reached by accompanying their master. Razi (2004) agrees with Shahri that Hāji Firouz is a representative of black servants, but from the Sassanid era: "At that time, at New Year's time, black slaves wore colourful clothes and distinguished make-up and turned in the city. [They used to] play the tambourine and sing Norouz songs, with their special accent, they entertained the people" (Razi H., 2004: 44-translated from Persian by M.A.).

The point noted by Shahri rightly emphasizes the humorous aspect and buffoonery of Hāji Firouz's character; which may tell us more about the origin of this show. These latter points are also found in one of Norouz's oldest shows, i.e. *kūse barnešin*, that scholars like Razi H. (2004) talk about.

It is a kind of street carnival performed by a main character called the *kūse* and agents of the king's authority accompanying this character. The latter used to climb, naked, on a quadruped and circle around the city; the agents of the authority following him. He applied specific oils to his skin to protect himself from the cold. He carried a crow on one hand, a scarecrow in the other hand and complained about the heat. The townspeople threw water and snow at and made fun of him. This rite was intended to bring the good news of the arrival of the hot season and the fertility of the soil. According to the beliefs of townspeople, giving money to this character brought good luck. It was believed that this period corresponded to a time of the year when the fate of each was taking shape. The state agents who followed the *kūse* were tasked with collecting this money. According to some accounts, townspeople or traders who refused to donate money were subjected to violent acts by the agents. The money collected until noon was the exclusive property of the king, and the money collected during the afternoon belonged to *kūse*. "The buffoonery of *kūse*, fear of the state, and perseverance of the *kūse* encouraged townspeople to donate money" (Razi, 2004: 119).

According to mythologists like Razi, the character of *kūse* and the rite of *kūse barnešin* refer to the change of seasons. The crow as a pet accompanying the character is intended as the symbol of winter and the physical state of the character would be a setting communicating the news of the arrival of the warm season. Razi notes that these representations have disappeared over time, giving way to the purely playful aspect of the rite. The playful aspect of the

performance would, according to this author, be safeguarded by black servants in the Sassanid era. The practice of alms giving that appears in this rite, with a view to changing or influencing the fate of the donor, as well as the playful and humorous aspect communicating the arrival of spring, are all criteria that bring this rite closer to the performance of Hāji Firouz.

It is difficult to find a single origin for the character of Hāji Firouz. Its origins and its spectacle disappear more and more from the common culture, since the Islamic revolution of 1979. The Islamic State discourages the celebration of pre-Islamic rites and prohibits street performances accompanied by song and dance. He considers them incompatible with Islamic precepts and harmful to the "Islamic culture" he tries to establish. As for Hāji Firouz, Shahri warned already, in the 1920s, the end of "true blacks" generation and "true Hāji Firouz". Nowadays, Ġorbats are almost the only ones to have saved a trace of this practice.

Is there a Kowli origin in Hāji Firouz performance?

Beiza'ii (2000) distinguishes two periods in the history of Iranian theater. First, the pre-Islamic period when the theater was exclusive to kings. This period corresponds to the era of an Iranian king (Bahram Ġūr) who brought in a few thousand acrobats and street musicians from India. Bahram ordered these musicians to give joy to the people (Liégeois, 1971). According to Beiza'ii, the Kowli founded street entertainment in Iran. The second period of Iranian theater corresponds, according to him, to the post-Islamic period when the spectacle was condemned and qualified as *makrūh* (Despicable, not recommended) by religious prescriptions. Those who practiced it were called "inferior". They were not respected by religion and were looked down on by society. At that time, women were not allowed to play in the streets. Young boys, not yet having a deep voice, often performed the roles of women.

Despite the repression on the theater during the Islamic period, Beiza'ii reports that the Kowli and certain acrobats continued to practice their profession. The settlement of the Kowli in the cities coincides, according to the author, with the expansion of entertainment in Iran. Every evening there were performances in the city's central square, with humour and mockery as the main themes. He admits that the Kowli have founded a number of humorous shows (Beiza'ii, 2000: 52). According to him, the main themes of street performances are distinctive features of members of the Kowli population. Mocking accents and appearances was the main subject of their humour. Having lived on the outskirts of urban or rural communities, having travelled to different regions and having encountered diverse populations,

they have developed, the author concludes, specific capacities in imitating accents and exaggerating the particularities of each ethnic group.

Beiza'ii recognizes them not only as the founders of street performances, but also as the source of inspiration or even as inventors of the character of Siah. The latter, whose name means black, is the main character of a form of popular Iranian theater (*rūhozi*), based on specific themes of: *arbāb-nokari* (master-servant), injustice and class struggle. While acknowledging the influence of other Iranian shows on the character of Siah, through a reconciliation of names and appellation, Beiza'ii finds the Kowli as being at the origin of the Hāji Firouz. It is true that having master-servant relationships as the main plot, and class struggles as a reference, the Siah appears as an inspiration of black slaves.

“It is possible that in the days of the unification of Islamic territories, where traders moved to the African coast, some black traders or wage earners would be brought here [to Iran]. The same is true towards the end of the 16th century, when the Portuguese brought slaves from Ethiopia and Zanzibar to the shores of the Persian Gulf in order to build their fortresses. [...] However, the most important remain the Kowli of Asia and in particular of India wandering, both before Islam and after, both in large groups and in small communities, who were heading here [Iran]. They were scattered all over Iran and selling, traveling, music, dancing and imitation were their intrinsic criteria. Even today, some [in the Azerbaijan region] call the Kowli “qarači” or “qarāči” which means black in face and refers to their black skin colour. And the suffix of “zangi” or “barzangi” which follows the name of Siah, refers most probably to Zanzibar and more probably to “zangār” or “zangāl”, titles assigned to the Kowli, meaning impure [...]. In Iranian comedy shows, Siah is in all likelihood a Kowli. [...] Siah continues for a long time to appear in Norouz performance groups such as Norouzi xān, Mir Norouzi. He appears under the names of Hāji Firouz, ātašfrūz or other. He wears make-up or wears a mask, dances and makes antics [...] He is finally found in imitation shows and in particular in pieces based on mockery of accents and appearances.” (Beiza'ii, 2000: 164-translated from Persian by M.A.)

In comparisons Beiza'ii makes of the humorous aspect of the shows, as well as the imitations of different accents and appearances, it seems consistent to consider Kowli origins for the character of Siah. However, one should be wary of the similarity of the characters of Siah and Kowli. The Kowli have seldom known master-servant relationships. The reports that are in such a pattern are probably unfamiliar to them. They often worked in the informal sectors, and on the



periphery of mainstream society. Thus, class struggles, in a relationship as precise and individualized as that of the servant to his master, has never been Kowli's primary concern. Referring to their social history, we notice a completely different hierarchy which is that of the castes in India, where this community probably comes from. Besides, Beiza'ii also makes it clear by using the title of “impure” assigned to the Kowli. Therefore, it seems less consistent to us to see the Kowli as the basis of Siah's character. It goes without saying that these social themes are found in the character of Siah, as Beiza'ii specifies. The distinction he makes concerns precisely the origins of this character which he attempts to relate to the Kowli, drawing on an older history in Iran, rather than relating Siah to African slaves who, as he says, have a shorter history in this country. This story may be shorter but no less anchored in common thought. The period of the presence of black slaves must, moreover, be a more recent period compared to the arrival of the Kowli, since in common thought there is often a tendency to relate Hāji Firouz and Siah to African servants.

Shahri who supports this latter opinion, mentions the hairlessness and the particularities of pronunciation and accent of Hāji Firouz due to his castration by his master. It should be noted in addition that Siah is part of the repertoire of rhymes collected among Gorbati children. This proves that Siah is known to the Gorbats and takes part in their cultural repertoire. Through

their practice of Hāji Firouzi, Ğorbats sing songs from Siah's rūhozi show.

Besides the red costume, dyed face, playing drums and dancing, the songs of Hāji Firouz remain almost the same through the time.

In the version that Boloukbashi (2001) proposes, the song of Hāji Firouz would be:

"This is Hajji Firuz, this is one day in the year. Everyone knows it, I know it too, it's Norouz, it's one day a year. My master, hi to you, my master, hold your head up (look up), my master, look at me, my master, do me a favour, my master the white goat, my master, why don't you laugh ?! It slams, it slams, it slams, I don't snap [fingers]. It slams, it slams, if I slam here, my companion complains! If I slam over there, my companion complains! This poor black man, how patient is he! » (Boloukbashi, 2001: 38-translated from Persian by M.A.)

It was recalled by Beiza'ii and it appears in this quote from Boloukbashi, the trace of the character of Siah can be found in the songs of Hāji Firouz. The use of the term "master" refers to the controversies surrounding the character of Siah. In the tradition of this street performance, there is an amalgamation - the significant link between the character of Siah and Hāji Firouz - which makes it difficult for historians to search the origins of Hāji Firouz.

In the reproduction of the song by Ğorbat children, two distinct parts of the song (reported by Boloukbashi) are adopted. The first part seems logical in that it introduces the character and contextualizes the presence of the performer through its references to the Hāji Firouz's show. The second part deserves more thought. During this reproduction, other songs from the rūhozi pieces appear.

Farzin sings during his performance of Hāji Firouzi at the crossroad:

It's one day a year / He farts, fart, fart / He comes from up there, yes, yes / I love every guy's mustachio / black servant, jump in the air / Give my gift / It is Norouz / It's one day a year. I love every guy's uncle / Give my gift / You gave my gift / I'll take the money and your ass.

In this second part, sung by the Ğorbat child, we see, on one hand, the traces of an obscene language, specific to children's language; as Gaignebet (2002) calls it "the obscene folklore of children". And the insertion of verses from rūhozi (popular theater) songs, on the other hand: "I love every guy's mustachio." This mixture is probably a reconciliation of cultural references among the Ğorbat, which finds its legitimate reason in the proximity of the two characters but also in the resemblance of their shows, particularly in form.

Appropriation of the performance by Ğorbat

population

In sum, we distinguish three sets of criteria in the character of Hāji Firouz and his theater: 1) The pre-Islamic spectacles and the Mesopotamian beliefs, 2) Kowli populations and 3) the black servants of the 16th century. First, we have the set of criteria for the appearance of the character. Black skin and hairlessness are apparently characteristics shared between the character of Hāji Firouz, the character of Kūse barnešin in the pre-Islamic show, the black slaves (according to Shahri's notes), and the Kowli recognized as black-skinned. Second, we have the criteria related to the humoristic aspects of the character; masxaregi (the buffoonery), taqlid (imitation) and an accent with an unknown origin. These criteria refer first to the buffoonery themes very common in street performances in Iran (mentioned by Beiza'ii), then to the Kowli populations. It is conceivable that the slaves spoke Persian with an accent unknown to all, as it is moreover mentioned by Razi. However, the themes of antics that are ubiquitous in Hāji Firouz's show, are not recognized among the black servants. The third series of distinctive features concerns the performance consisting of dance, music and song in public space. Studying the history of street entertainment in Iran, Beiza'ii notes that this practice has always been quite foreign to Iranians; it was sometimes the exclusive property of kings, sometimes condemned and despised by the dominant customs. Therefore, it seems consistent to assign the expansion of this practice to the Kowli when all the historical accounts concerning them highlight their practice of music and singing in the public space.

To return to the interest shown by the Ğorbat for the practice of Hāji Firouzi, while remaining wary of the similarities that bring the Kowli and the Ğorbat in the same category, it is appropriate to emphasize the latter's passion for music and dancing. The Ğorbats remain among the few Iranian populations who practice dancing in public spaces, despite its condemnation by the authorities. Taking advantage of the occasion of the New Year celebrations and the tradition of Hāji Firouz, by dancing in front of the cars and playing music, they create an exceptional space-time in the urban life of the citizens. However, they continue to respect the dominant rule of Islam which prohibits dancing of pubescent women and girls in public space. In doing so, men take the place of women at the crossroads.

It is also worth returning to the question of imitation of accents, since it occupies an important place in the jokes between Ğorbats. Both in daily conversations and in songs, on the occasion of Hāji Firouz performance, they have fun imitating accents and singing popular songs that they know either in Māzani (the language



of the province of Māzandarān), either in Lori (the dialect of Lor), or in Turkish. Since Māzani is not their language of origin, the Ġorbats of Babol do not fully master it. However, due to their long stay in this province, they know its sounds and intonations and often have fun imitating this dialect.

It is interesting to draw our attention to the margin of freedom Ġorbats seek to use while practicing the Hāji Firouzi. Men's dancing in the public space is totally unknown for the citizens of the Islamic Republic. Thus, passers-by marvel at this freedom and express their appreciation by honking, laughing and finally, by donating considerable sums of money. It is no coincidence that Ġorbat men, who repel the street work and the contact with the wider society, are very diligent in performing the role of Hāji Firouz. Women, can also challenge the tolerance threshold of passers-by, by making some rhythmic movements. However, they remain very suspicious of foreign eyes and of remarks from members of their group. The newly pubescent girls, who had been practicing Hāji Firouzi until the previous year, are struggling to stop participating and compete alongside the younger ones in their red outfits who earn much more and much faster than them. Thus, unbeknownst to adults, they indulge in dancing in front of cars. This distracts them and changes the monotonous pace of hādūri on the one hand, and helps them speed up their rate of gain, on the other hand.

By a closer look to the connections, approved or contested, between the Hāji Firouz street show at its origin and the practices of the Kowli and Ġorbat populations, we realize that there are continuities and discontinuities between this traditional performance and its current practice. Despite the precise dress code given to the character of Hāji Firouz, the Ġorbat do not follow exact disguise rules. Some constants are,

however, respected. Wearing red clothes, covering their heads and dyeing their face remain the basic elements that they respect for this practice. As mentioned for the songs and the comparison between old version and actual version sung by Ġorbats, the latter do not worry about the content. Nonetheless, they have the merit of continuing the tradition of Hāji Firouz's street show while including their own interpretations. They have appropriated this spectacle and participated in its continuation in time.

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Naryn *in Kazakhstan*

Traditions are a reflection of the essence of a nation, an indicator of how it lives, what it thinks, what it believes in. Kazakh foundations are also no exception to this definition. They were formed for centuries from the Kazakh nomadic way of life and passed through time, space and all the obstacles that time put before them, and have reached our days, some in their unchanged, and some in a somewhat deformed state. But the fact that today the Kazakh people remember and honor, even if not all, but still most of their traditional rituals, is an undoubted plus for the further development of the nation. Regardless of what people have now, what was bequeathed to them by their ancestors is certainly worth special attention and detailed study. After all, all sorts of beliefs, traditions and customs did not appear from an empty place. With traditions, people pass on their knowledge and observations from generation to generation, and young people, drawing on these observations, draw their own conclusions and, of course, begin to relate to the world no longer as a newborn chick, but as a

seasoned eagle, who has seen a lot and experienced a lot on his life path.

Naryn – Kazakh new year

For the nomad Kazakhs, the change of the seasons was of great importance. Winter was the most difficult time of the year. In this time the Kazakhs lived in kystau (winter pastures for livestock). In the 12-cycle calendar, jutes (mass death of livestock) occurred every five to six years. If people and cattle survived winter, it was considered to be a success. Therefore, the oncoming of spring, when people moved to kokteu (spring pastures), brought a lot of happiness. The main holiday of spring is Naryn.

Naryn is the most important holiday in the year, both among Kazakhs and many Asian peoples, which has been celebrated for more than five thousand years. Naryn is a holiday of spring, renewal of nature, the beginning of a new year and a new life. The celebration of Naryn has pagan roots, it is a celebration of nature



worship. Naurz is celebrated on March 22 on the day of the spring equinox. On this day, the heavenly bodies: constellations and stars after a year-long cycle come to the points of their original stay and begin a new path-the circle.

Naurz holiday among the Kazakhs is called “Uwlistin Uwli Kyuni”, which means “Great day of the people” or “Zhana Zhyl” – “New Year” in English. The name of the holiday “Naurz” consists of two old Persian words “nau” (new) and “ryz” (day). Naurz is the day of the revival of nature, awakening it from sleep. This is a very symbolic holiday and, accordingly, many traditions and customs are associated with Naurz.

Naurz from the Kazakhs is called not only the holiday itself, but the whole month of March. Children born this month were usually called names derived from the word “Naurz”, for example, boys - Naurzбай or Naurzбек, and girls - Naurz or Naurzгул, etc. According to the mythological ideas of the Kazakhs on the eve of the holiday of Naurz, happiness goes on the earth, therefore the night was called the night of happiness on the eve of the holiday, that is, Naurz is the day of good, light, when flowers blossom, birds start singing, the steppe is covered with lush green grass, streams, the New Year is coming down to Earth.

Celebration of Naurz

In modern Kazakhstan, Naurz is celebrated for three days - from March 21 to March 23. It is a public holiday. The main principles and traditions of the holiday have not changed. As before, people wish each other well-

being. Nowadays, during the Naurz holiday, large and small cities, villages become festival centres, felt yurts – traditional nomad houses are erected in city centres and rich dastarkhan (table) is laid down in each of them. City squares get full of yurts, and many performances take place there. Here one can learn about the culture and lifestyle of nomads and find people wearing beautiful national clothes, listen to Kazakh songs and play of musical instruments, etc. Traditionally on this day they congratulate by saying “Koktem tudi!” Also there are many contests of wit-poets held on this holiday, that are called “akins” in Kazakhstan; the feast cannot be without national contests among which is national wrestling “kazaksha-gures”, logic game called “toguz kumalak” and of course horse games “kyz-kuu” and “bayga”. Theatrical staged performances are played in the streets. Another old Naurz tradition is “altybakan”, where girls and boys gather together to socialize and ride on the swings.

There are almost no special differences in the celebration of Naurz in different regions of the vast country. A week before Naurz, it was necessary to have time to visit all the relatives and relatives, for this sometimes it was necessary to overcome huge distances. At the meeting, they always asked: “Amansyn ba?” (Are you healthy?), “Kystan shyktyн ba?” (How did you overwinter?). While they were going around all the nearby villages, the holiday of Naurz was coming. Since ancient times, March 14 was considered the beginning of the new year in



Kazakh culture. This custom has been preserved in West Kazakhstan, Atyrau, Mangistau regions, and some districts of Aktoobe region. Meat was cooked in every house, but no one was invited on purpose. Every family should visit at least five homes where older relatives live.

At the holiday, elders of the age of relatives visit with the words: "Bir Jasymen", "Jasyna jas kosylumen!", in English "Happy new year", "With one age!". Aksakals uttered bata-blessing and wish "Zhasyn uzak bolsyn!" - "May your years be good!". Traditionally, people shake hands and then give three hugs. In women, it is customary to touch each other alternately first with the right, then with the left shoulder. Thus, "korisu" is a harbinger of Nauryz.

The history of Nauryz

The history of Nauryz dates back to the time of Zoroastrianism, when people worshipped the sun and fire. It was fire – the seventh creation of Zoroaster – that gave it its name. The ancient name has not been preserved, but the meaning is reflected in the language of the peoples of Central Asia – Nauryz, Navruz, Nooruz, which is close to the old Persian "sip of the first day of the New Year".

It is said that the holiday originated in the vast provinces of Ancient Persia-Sogdiana and Bactria. A stone cubic altar was erected in the city squares. Accompanied by musicians and singers, an old priest was brought to the altar, who threw pre-prepared branches into the fire. The plants crackled, smoke billowed, and the priest poured two cups of wine and oil into the flames, which made the fire flare up with renewed vigor. The people who watched these actions loudly exclaimed: "Agni (the god of fire) has accepted our sacrifice! Agni loves us! Agni has heard our prayers!" Reciting prayers, the Bactrians say to the gods to destroy all evil and give new life to fire, water, fields and gardens. The earth then dressed in a green outfit, the cold receded, the snow melted and snowdrops grew.

Since those ancient times, the day of the spring

equinox is associated with the arrival of heat. Eastern geniuses Mahmoud al-Kashgari, Abu Reyhan al-Biruni, Firdousi, Alisher Navoi, Omar Khayyam left many works about the celebration of Nauryz.

Dishes served during Nauryz

During the celebration of Nauryz, a lot of food was prepared, symbolizing prosperity and abundance. At noon, a bull was slaughtered at the appointed place and a special meat dish "bel koterer" was prepared, which means "straightening the camp". According to the Kazakhs, the bull was considered one of the most powerful animals, and food from it gave people strength and endurance. A festive dastarkhan was served in every dwelling. Before and after the meal, the mullah recited prayers in honor of the ancestors. Then the eldest gave a blessing (bata) to ensure that the year was prosperous.

"Nauryz kozhe" is the most important of all meals during these days and a main symbol of Nauryz, since it is prepared specially for this day. Nauryz kozhe is special for its unique recipe. It should consist of 7 ingredients that symbolize the 7 elements of life: water, meat, salt, oil, flour, cereals (rice, corn or wheat) and milk. These ingredients symbolize joy, luck, wisdom, health, well-being, speed, growth, and divine protection. Nauryz is full of symbols. When Kazakhs celebrate Nauryz, the presence of the number "7" is mandatory — it contains 7 days of the week — time units of the infinity of the universe: 7 bowls with nauryz-kozhe should be placed in front of the aksakal (in English white-bearded, old man). Everyone should visit 7 houses and invite 7 guests. "Nauryz kozhe" is the bright evidence of national culture, generosity, and hospitality.

During the celebration of Nauryz, the Nauryz kozhe is offered to all guests in any city or village of Kazakhstan. Besides, other traditional Kazakh meals, such as beshbarmak, kuyrdak, boursak, and many types of meals made from milk (yoghurt, kurt, cream, butter, cheese, etc) which symbolise plenty and prosperity are also offered. If you are offered food during Nauryz it is customary to eat until you are completely full «so that the year will be full».

In the spring, people rush to renew themselves physically and spiritually—they are freed from debts, old unnecessary things, repair clothes, housing, ditches, wells, ask forgiveness from relatives for past sins, make peace with neighbors, invite guests, give gifts to relatives.

Conclusion

Of course, the modern outlines of the holiday are significantly different from their previous content. These are not only theatrical performances and richly



decorated yurts, delicious nauryz-kozhe, but also holding charity events, folk sports games, caring for green spaces, planting trees, cleaning parks and other recreation areas, streets and squares.

Today, "Nauryz Meiramy" has become a national holiday of spring, labor and unity. Today, this holiday is celebrated by representatives of 130 nationalities living in Kazakhstan. The ancient holiday of Nauryz was harmoniously transformed into modern life and began to play an important role in strengthening friendship and harmony in society. Modern Nauryz is an important link in the "connection of times", history and modernity of Kazakhstan. Nauryz kutty bolsyn to everyone (Happy Nauryz)!

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Note:

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Nooruz *in Kyrgyzstan*

Nooruz (or Nowruz) is celebrated on the spring equinox, usually March 21st, and marks the beginning of a new year. Although originally a pagan holiday, the equinox is considered a holy day among Zoroastrians, and is celebrated across Eurasia.

Marking the beginning of spring, Navruz (meaning March equinox) is one of the largest traditional holidays in Central Asia. Nooruz (or Novruz) is celebrated on March 21, the day of the vernal equinox, and marks the beginning of the new year. Initially, Nooruz was a pagan holiday of the Zoroastrians, who considered the day of the vernal equinox sacred. Now it is celebrated in countries such as Azerbaijan, Albania, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Georgia, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China (XUAR and other regions), Mongolia, Pakistan, the Russian

Federation (Bashkortostan, Dagestan, Tatarstan and other regions), Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, etc.

Located in the heart of Central Asia, Kyrgyzstan has been celebrating Navruz (Nooruz in Kyrgyz) for a long time as its national holiday. During Nowruz, archa twigs are burnt to rid the house of evil spirits at the gathering the evening of Nowruz. Women in traditional Kyrgyz dress prepare for the coming festivities the evening before Nowruz. Nowruz is a day to spend with family, visit friends and neighbors, and maybe show off a bit; the kind of day to dress up in your finest clothes and your nicest hat and head out to socialize.

Boys, born on March 21, are named Nooruzbek or Nooruzbay, and girls are called Nooruzgul. Snow on Nowruz is believed to bring good luck, and is



compared to the beauty of a girl. The night before Nowruz, containers are filled with spring water, milk, and grains, to ensure rain and a good harvest for the coming year. People also make sure that their house is in order and clean, and repay their debts and ask for forgiveness from those whom one offended. Festivals and dances are held, often with different types of national dances from countries that also celebrate Nowruz.

Nowruz food and drink

When the Navruz holiday comes, Kyrgyz families gather to make holiday desserts: Sumolok and Boorsok. In the old times, Sumolok was a ritual dish prepared before the start of spring sowing. Sumolok is a sweet paste made from germinated wheat and stir cooked in a Kazan, a large traditional pot in Central Asia. Sumolok has become an important cuisine in Kyrgyz culture since almost all of Kyrgyzstan celebrates the holiday by making it. In villages and towns, families



gather around a kazan full of Sumolok and take turns to stirring the Sumolok. Usually it takes a whole day and night to finish the cuisine, which is why a typical Navruz scene in Kyrgyzstan is pictured as a group of families sitting around a Kazan while singing and stirring Sumolok.

Boorsok, on the other hand, is cooked faster than Sumolok. Also a traditional sweet in Central Asia, Boorsok is a type of fried dough in various shapes. Kyrgyz Boorsok is typically shaped like a pressed doughnut.

Traditionally the day started off with music, especially with the Karnay, a long horn similar to a trumpet. Tables are set with a white tablecloth and a spread of food, most prominent of which is Sumolok. Sumolok is made from wheatgrass that has been cooked, sometimes alone, sometimes with flour and oil, for hours or even days. Small stones are added to the large cooking pot to keep the grains from burning, and legend has it that if you find a stone in your cup, you





can make a wish and it'll come true. Since Sumolok takes so long to cook, women usually gather to sing to pass time and to make sure that the dish is infused with positive energy.

No celebration would be complete without horse games in Kyrgyzstan. Horse games are commonly organized for Nowruz, and can be found at the Hippodrome in Bishkek and in other areas. There are archery competitions, contests, and races, but teams will also gather for championship games in kok-boru. Nowruz sport: Kok-Boru

The highly anticipated traditions of Nowruz converge with Kyrgyzstan's most important sport, Kok Boru, to usher in the new year.

Kok Boru players pray after the winning the final match on Nowruz in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan. For locals and tourists alike, Nowruz is also often an excuse to get out and watch Kok-Boru., known originally as Buzkashi (a Persian phrase meaning 'goat dragging'). The name of the game varies from country to country but the chief objective is the same: a team of horsemen carry a goat carcass to a large goal at the end of a playing field while preventing a competing team from doing the same. Though deeply traditional,

some visitors understandably may find the sport unsettling or even gruesome. The rules of the game sound simple, but the crashing of twenty fierce riders who are attempting the already significant challenge of dragging a whole goat from ground to horseback to goal is an event meriting the furor of the large crowds that gather to watch. Add in large sums of cash and prizes like new cars, and it becomes a local focal point of the holiday season.

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Nowruz in Pakistan

Abstract:

Nowruz is defined as the Iranian New year and it is celebrated worldwide by ethno-linguistic groups in the beginning of spring season. It has been celebrated for over thousand years by different communities in Western Asia, Central Asia and South Asia. It is observed by the people of Iran, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, India, Iraq, Syria, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Pakistan. In Pakistan Nowruz is being celebrated with a great enthusiasm. In this article we will discuss how Nowruz is being celebrated in Pakistan.

Key words: Nowruz, history, tradition, Iran, Pakistan. Nowruz is usually defined as Iranian New Year which is celebrated at the beginning of spring season. It has been celebrated for over a thousands of years by various communities on the day of vernal equinox. Nowruz is also pronounced and written in different spellings such as Norooz, Navruz, Novruz, Nooruz, Nawrouz etc. (Katzman 2010/11)

“The word ‘Nowruz’ is a compound word; No and Ruz together mean New day, and it is the name of the first day of the first solar month, ‘when the sun in Aries’. In the original Pahlavi (ancient language of Iran) word it

means the tip of ruzh or the tip of the day. Abu Rayhan al- Biruni in his definition of Nowruz says: ‘It is the first day of the month of Farvardin and the reason it is called New day is that it is the forehead of the year.’ Historians and scholars have differed about the status of Nowruz. It is believed that from the time of the migration of the Aryans to the Iranian Plateau and bordering with the civilizations of Mesopotamia, they divided the year into two parts and the celebrations of Nowruz and Mehregan (harvest festival) were the beginning of these two sections. Nowruz was celebrated marking the summer solstice and the Mehregan was celebrated marking the beginning of winter.” (Mireskandari 2012/5)

Iranian calendar was reformed in 11th century. Since then, Nowruz has been celebrated on the first day of first month of Iranian calendar known as Farvardin. According to English calendar it is celebrated on 21st March. United Nations have officially recognized Nowruz as an International day. (Abdollahy 1990/7)

“The name of Nowruz does not occur until the second century AD in any Iranian records. We have reasons to believe that the celebration is much older than that date and was surely celebrated by the people and

royalty during the Achaemenid times (555-330 BC). It has often been suggested that the famous Persepolis Complex, or at least the palaces of Apadana and Hundred Columns, were built for the specific purpose of celebrating Nowruz. However, no mention of the name of Nowruz exists in any Achaemenid inscription, a fact that can point to its non-Indo-European roots. Our oldest records of Nowruz go back to the Arsacid/Parthian times (247 BC-224 AD). There are specific references to the celebration of Nowruz during the reign of Arsacid Emperor Vologases I (51-78 AD). Unfortunately, the lack of any substantial records about the reign of the Arsacids leaves us with little to explore about the details of Nowruz during their times. After the accession of Ardashir I Pabakan, the founder of the Sasanian Dynasty (224 AD), consistent data for the celebration of Nowruz were recorded. Throughout the Sasanian era (224-650 AD), Nowruz was celebrated as the most prominent ritual during the year. Most royal traditions of Nowruz such as yearly common audiences, cash gifts, and pardon of prisoners, were established during the Sasanian era and they persisted unchanged until the modern times.” (Rezakhani 2004/2)

Chaharshanbe suri is a part of Nowruz festival that is being celebrated on the last Wednesday before Nowruz. Chaharshanbe is Persian name of Wednesday

and Suri has two meanings: festive and scarlet. The festivities of chaharshanbe includes jumping over the bonfire and spoon banging. The ancient Iranians used to celebrate the last days of the year in the honor of the spirits of the dead which is referred as Farvardinegan. They believed that the spirits of the dead would come to meet their families and they would re-unite. (Mosaheb 1966/811)

In Iran, Nowruz festivities last for 13 days and holidays are being observed for 13 days. On the 13th day, people leave their houses. They go for picnic and enjoy nature. This ceremony is known as Sizdebedar. The rituals of Sizdebedar includes throwing away the sprouted greens, knotting the greens before throwing them and prank-playing. (Shahpur 2012/240)

According to Shahnama of Firdosi, it is believed that Nowruz has a connection with the mythical Iranian king Jamshid, who celebrated Nowruz to say Goodbye to winter and save mankind from killer winter season. He constructed a throne studded with gems, on which he sat and shined like sun. All the creatures of earth presented him jewels and proclaimed that it was a new day, known as Nowruz. That day was the beginning of spring season which is called Farvardin, the first month of Iranian calendar. (Davis 2006/7)

The customs and traditions of Nowruz includes House cleaning, shopping, visiting family and friends, Haft



sin, Haft mewa, Khoncha, Kampirak, Amu Nowruz, Haji firuz and poetic compositions. Before the arrival of Nowruz, people clean their houses which is called spring cleaning and buy flowers such as tulip for the decoration. They buy new clothes for the New Year eve and pay visit to their friends and family. Guests are offered tea, cake, cookies, dried fruits and other snacks. Some families have large gatherings on Nowruz. Before the arrival of Nowruz, all the family members gather around a table known as Haft sin. The table consists of seven things that begin with the letter “SEEN” “س” of Persian:

1. Sabze (سبزه).
2. Samanu (سمنو).
3. Persian Olive (سنجد).
4. Vinegar (سرکه).
5. Apple (سیب).
6. Garlic (سیر).
7. Sumac (سماق). (Rezakhani 2004/2)

The table also includes Quran/ Divan-e Hafiz, a mirror, painted eggs, goldfish, candles and a bowl of water. People also prepare a mixture of dried fruits which is called haft mewa. The mixture includes raisins, Persian olives, pistachios, hazelnuts, prunes, walnut and almonds.

Nowruz is commonly celebrated in Iran, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, China, India, Iraq, Russia, Syria, Turkey, Uzbekistan and Tajikistan.

In Pakistan, Nowruz is commonly celebrated in Gilgit-Baltistan, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and Quetta. “The main thing is that the Iranian New Year - Nowruz - coincides with the day Hazrat Ali ascended the throne of the Islamic Khilafa (Or appointed so by the Prophet Muhammad on the day of Ghadir).” (Zaidi 2019/2)

The Persian department of Lahore College for Women University celebrates Nowruz every year with a great zeal, focusing the arrival of spring season. In Pakistan the spring festival is known as ‘Jashn-e Baharaan’; Jashn means festival and Bahaar is known as spring. The Persian department of LCWU invites the ambassador of Islamic Republic of Iran and also the Iranians living in Pakistan. Local music is being performed, haft seen table is decorated, Iran’s culture, souvenirs, handicrafts and artistic attraction are being showcased.

In Gilgit-Baltistan, Hunza and Chitral Nowruz is celebrated with a great energy. The celebrations are quite different from the celebrations of modern Iran. Just like Eid, people dress up and visit their family and friends. They offer special prayers in mosques and Imam Bargahs. Men perform on traditional songs and girls and women play rope and sing songs. In Lahore, the roads and parks are decorated with a variety of flowers. Flower shows are being organized. The canal





road is being decorated with beautiful flowers and lights. A few years ago Basant was being celebrated in Pakistan in the beginning of spring and yellow was the theme color of the event. In colleges and universities, spring festivals are organized with food stalls and musical shows. The common colors for spring festival are yellow, orange, shocking pink and parrot green. (Sulaqani 2000/11)

There are some other events that have a connection with Nowruz. It is believed that the universe started its motion, Hazrat Adam a.s was born, the Quran was revealed to Prophet Mohammad (PBUH), Prophet Mohammad (PBUH) smashed 360 idols in Mecca, He (PBUH) declared Hazrat Ali a.s as his successor at the Ghadeer, Hazrat Ali a.s was born in Kabaah, Hazrat Salman Farsi was born on this day and he used to prepare food and sweets for Hazrat Mohammad (PBUH) and Hazrat Ali a.s on the day of Nowruz. (Mireskandari 2012/6)

So, we can see that the customs and traditions of Nowruz are same as the customs and traditions of other Islamic Eids. Despite thousands of years, the rituals of Nowruz have never been forgotten.

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Nowruz *in Tajikistan*

Tajikistan's biggest annual celebration is the spring festival of Nowruz, literally "New Day". Nowruz marks the beginning of the Persian New Year, which starts at the spring equinox. (The exact date of the celebration depends on the timing of the equinox). The roots of the festival are Zoroastrian – the religion Persians had believed in before they converted to Islam. For the Tajiks, Nowruz represents a festival of friendship and renewal of all living beings. Humping over the fire on the last Wednesday of the year is practiced by the Tajiks as well. One tradition that has survived in Tajikistan is gathering of wild flowers by children in the villages. They bring the flowers back and while wearing colorful attire walk around the village, knock on people's doors and present them with a flower. This happens one week before Nowruz and there are many old folk songs that are sang by the children during the event.

House cleaning is done before the celebrations start and this includes washing and polishing all the dishes in the household. The lady of the household has a few specific tasks. Before the New Year arrives, she places two sweeping brushes (jaroo) that are painted red outside the

door just before the sunrise and keeps it there all the day. After the sun is fully risen, more house hold items are brought outside and a red cloth is hanged outside. The red color signifies the household welcoming the spring-sun and by opening doors and windows the new spring air is welcomed into the house.

Nowruz morning starts with a sweet breakfast. New colorful clothes with spring motives (flowers) are worn. Special food and sweets are prepared. All kinds of games including playing with eggs, bird fighting, slaughtering a goat and wrestling are part of the celebrations. Women also prepare a paste by cooking sumanak, a porridge made from sprouted wheat that is traditionally eaten on the spring holiday. A major part of the celebration is the selection of a queen for the Nowruz that has become a national celebration and is broadcast nationally by the TV stations in Tajikistan. The celebration includes a major parade with young women dressed in their national dresses carrying the ceremonial objects used on the Nowruz spread with young men and women dancing and musicians playing. March 21st and 22nd are official Nowruz holidays in Tajikistan, but celebrations start before these dates and continue afterwards.

Celebration of Nowruz in Tajikistan is an incredible eye-ful in its beauty. On these festive days spring comes entirely to the ancient Tajik land and it may be finally seen in its fine splendor. The caressing sun cherishes the mountain peaks and lucid snowdrops fight their way through slobber. These first spring florets are the main harbingers of the festival. Traditionally, village children give them out as a symbol of the beginning of spring.

Tajikistan prepares for Nowruz in advance, first of all, spiritually: by paying debts and forgiving old insults. This day of the holiday, people put on clean clothing, symbolizing a complete expurgation. Rituals with fire dating back to Zoroastrian roots of the holiday are obligatory in this day. All households should come round a bonfire or torch alight in sign of good hope against the best. By lunch time, hosts invite guests to festive tables, served with the traditional dishes for Nowruz holidays: sumanak (concoction from wheat sprouts), sambusa (sausage roll from puff-paste or rissole with greens), sabzi (vegetables) and so on. All in all, there should be seven ritual dishes beginning with “S”.

Nowruz is widely celebrated both in cities and villages.

On this day, everybody goes to the main square to watch festive shows participated with singers, dancers and musicians. It is impossible to imagine the celebration of Nowruz in villages without horserace, national sports contests, and cockfighting, flying the kites and pigeons, and traditional goat snatching (buzkhkasi).

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Nowruz; Ajam and Arab

Cultural Conversation in the First Centuries of Islam



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Nowruz is one of the oldest and greatest rituals of the Ajam, which throughout the millennia of civilization history, has best embodied the ancient customs, religious beliefs and world views, spiritual and moral values and historical and cultural property of the Tajiks and Iranian people. Throughout history, especially in the crucial moments when the spiritual entity of the Iranian people was in the abyss of annihilation, this ancient ritual has played a significant role in preserving the culture and civilization and securing national dignity. This mission of Nowruz emerged in its entirety and in all its dimensions, in the first centuries of Islam, after the Muslim conquest of Persia.

It was natural that by the spread of Islam in Iran, some customs and traditions lost a little their previous glory and Zoroastrian religion was erased from history, but it seems that the spread of Islam did not have much effect on Nowruz and gradually it was institutionalized in the Islamic society because there were factors that contributed to the promotion of Nowruz in the context of Islam.

The first factor is the prominent popularity and humanitarian aspect of Nowruz, which manifested itself in the eyes of the Arabs as a tradition not in opposition to Islamic values. In fact, the rituals of Nowruz have been intertwined with people's life since ancient times, offering joy and happiness, purity and warmth, kindness and benevolence, chivalry and generosity. Such values are valid and respected by all tribes and clans, irrespective of their religious affiliation. Realizing the passion and interest of the people of Greater Khorasan to Nowruz as well as its virtues, although the ritual portrayed Ajam ancient mythological and historical facets, the ancient festivity was legitimized and allowed by Arabs on the

advent of Islam. As it is mentioned by Abu Rayhan al-Biruni in his *Asarul-Baqiah* (vestiges of the past), in a tradition he portrays the positive view of Prophet Muhammad (S) to Nowruz and narrates that "during Nowruz, a silver plate of 'halvah' was offered as a gift to the Prophet Muhammad (S). The prophet asked: "what is it?" They replied: "This is a gift from Persia marking Nowruz." The prophet replied: "Yes, Almighty Allah revived the dead and ordered the clouds to rain. Here, sprinkling of water became a custom this day." The Prophet of Islam then ate the halvah saying "Make everyday Nowruz!" (7: pp. 279, 556). In another tradition it is narrated that, "on Nowruz some Halvah was sent to imam Ali (AS) as a gift. The imam asked what the occasion was. His followers replied that it was a Nowruz gift from Iranians. The Imam then said: "I wish everyday was Nowruz for us" (1: v. 11, p. 248)." In the works related to the life and jurisprudential record of Imam al-A`zam (the great leader), including *Khayrat al-Hisan fi Manaqib al-Imam al-Azam Ibn Hajar Maki* (d. 1509AH/909CE), it is also quoted the grandson of Imam al-A`zam, that on Nowruz the great-grandson of the Imam brought 'Faloodeh' (a kind of halvah) for Imam Ali (AS) as a gift and Imam said to him: "Bring us Nowruz gift every day" (3: pp. 64-65). In the above narration and other traditions there are references to the celebration of Nowruz and its rituals in Arabic and Persian sources testifying the respect and admiration the rulers of the Islamic Ummah presented to Nowruz as Islam began to spread.

No doubt, the Ajam continued celebrating Nowruz even after the Arab conquest; in fact, they kept on honoring and celebrating their national rituals to turn the pervasive despair of the Arab conquests into a hope for a bright future for their ancient culture and civilization. The humanitarian aspect of Nowruz, in the days of conquests, often overcame oppression, enmity, and resentment and inspired peace, reconciliation, coexistence and tolerance between the Arabs and Iranians. The evidence for such a virtue of Nowruz is a tradition appeared in the book *The History of Qom*; it reads that "a group of Arabs led by Abdullah and Ahwas, the sons of Sa'd ibn Malik ibn Amir al-Ash'ari, reached the city of Qom on Nowruz in the year 712/94. The governor of Qom treated them kindly and invited the leaders of the corps to celebrate such great festive occasion. The culture of Nowruz, which heralds peace and tolerance, prevailed over arms and weapons, and a compromise was reached between the local people and the Arab corps (10: pp. 242-244). This best

represents why Nowruz has survived through ages of tumult, which has its roots in the humanitarian quality of this ancient ritual.

Nowruz survival during Arab conquests of Iran is also tied to its timing which marks the beginning of the solar calendar. Persian New Year coincides with the first day of spring and the beginning of farming. Since the solar months synchronizes more with the seasons comparing to the lunar months which cycle through all the seasons, it was more conducive to taxation. Therefore, the Arabs, willingly or otherwise, adopted solar calendar as the system for collecting taxes and tributes from farmers and regulating the financial affairs of their fledgling caliphate, and relied on Nowruz as the beginning of the cultivation and agricultural cycle. Moreover, the Arabs did not have enough experience in state affairs so Hormuzan, the Iranian frontier governor prisoned at the battle with Muslims, made great contribution to making important fiscal and institutional changes on the Sassanid institutional infrastructure to establish the first Islamic divan during the Caliphate of Umar (634-634 AH/ 13-24 CE), the second of the four companions of the Holy Prophet (AS) (16: pp. 76-77)

Following the establishment of the first Islamic institution, the Arab rulers realized the importance of the Iranian legal system and sought to maintain certain pre-Islamic governing traditions in favor of the administrative structure of the Islamic caliphate. During the Umayyad Caliphate (750-661AH/133-41 CE), especially when the Abbasid dynasty gained the reins of power (750AH/133 CE), not only several divans (high government ministries) were founded in imitation of the Sassanid divans, but also members of the Ajam community were elected as the secretaries and managers of these divans. This contributed the spread of the Ajam state traditions in the state structure of the caliphate; Thus, Nowruz, which marked the beginning of the fiscal and agricultural year and regarded as an important tradition of governance, was accorded and survived during the caliphate from the early centuries of Islam.

Some of the customs of Nowruz, especially the custom of offering Nowruz gifts, which rooted in the humanitarian aspect of this celebration and later became part of the court rituals, gained certain grandeur in the Islamic Caliphate. As mentioned earlier, there are several traditions which hold the custom of offering Nowruz gifts to the Holy Prophet (AS) and Imam Ali (AS). At the time of the Arab conquests, the Ajam maintained observing Nowruz rituals, offering Nowruz gifts to each other and to their "uninvited

guests", the Arabs likewise. At first, this was more of an emotional aspect and was practiced in the spirit of respecting the rituals of Nowruz; however, in the Umayyad era, some Arab caliphs benefitted from this tradition to retain taxation and to fill the treasury. As a result, the financial dimension of this ritual outshined the emotional and humanitarian aspect of offering Nowruz gifts. Ahmad ibn Ali Qalqashandi in his book *Sobh al-Asha* maintains that the first caliph who made the tradition of Nowruz gift-giving customary during the Umayyad era was Hajjaj ibn Yusuf, the governor of Iraq, (14: v. 2, p. 420) who became known for his bloodthirstiness.

Anyway, in the Umayyad era Nowruz gradually permeated the realm of the caliphate and subsequently introduced the historical and spiritual values of the Ajam to the Muslim community. Since Nowruz tradition has its roots in the history, culture and civilization of pre Islamic Iran, it is closely interwoven with the Iranian ancient mythology and mythical kings and heros including Jamshid and Fereydu; it recounts part of the history of the kings and their battles and revives the atmosphere in which the connection with the spirituality of the ancient Iran in the Islamic dominion is created. In such an atmosphere, an Arabic-language poet of Persian origin, Ismail Ibn Yasar (d. 749AH/132CE), despite the Umayyad's strong Arab fanaticism, referred to the glorious history of the Iranians and recalled the memorable past events as the main theme of his Pro-Ajam poems employing Persian concepts and spirituality in Islamic Arabic poetry:

والهرمزبان لفخر أو لتعظيم
وهم أدلوا ملوك الترك و الروم
مَنْ مَثَلُ كَسْرَى وَسَابُورِ الْجُنُودِ مَعَا
أَسْدُ الْكِتَابِ يَوْمَ الرُّوعِ إِنْ زَحَفُوا

"Who competes with Khosrow and Shapurand Hormozan in decency, greatness and strain? They fight like lions in battle, the lions to which the Turks and Romans surrendered."
(5: v.4, p. 423)

Meanwhile, with the efforts made by the Iranian scholars, the first Pahlavi Islamic works including the great book on the history of the Sassanid kings, which contained the pictures of 27 kings of the Sassanid dynasty, their records and advice which were translated in 1131AH/731CE for the Umayyad caliph, Hisham Ibn Abdul Malik (106-126 AH/ 724-743 EC) and welcomed by him (17: p. 99).

It was the time when Abd al-Hamid ibn Yahya al-Katib (d. 133AH/750CE), the great Arabic-language stylist of Persian descent, introduced the spiritual and formal

elements of Islamic Persian literature into Arabic prose and shaped a method of writing which encompasses a coherent combination of Ajam excellent artistic taste with the Arabic language capacity of expressiveness and Islamic thought (11: pp. 185-220). It was at that time when the captive people of Greater Khorasan recited songs while doing repairs to the Ka`ba. There is, however, no doubt that Nowruz was the recurring theme of their songs; as Al-Jahez al-Basri, Arab prose writer and author held "they seem to have written originally in the Arabic language" and were more popular than ever during the reign of Khosrow Parviz (8: p. 278). These songs enchanted the Arabs and made them imitate their rhyme which consequently gave way into the emergence of a musical movement whose followers including Ibn Masjah, Ibn Suriy, and others, recited Arabic poems according to the rules of Persian prosody (5: v. 1-3.)

The spiritual and cultural adaptations that emerged during the Umayyad caliphate, in general, kept the pre-Islamic Persian glory and identity, including Nowruz and its traditions, alive and laid the foundations of the Ajam spiritual movement in Islamic context.

Such movement which took place during the Abbasid reign was the overthrow of the Umayyad Caliphate (133AH/750CE). As some scholars testify, unlike the Umayyad caliphs who were known for their bias in favour of the Arabs, the Abbasid Empire was considered as non-Arabs and was started in Khorasan led by the commander Abu Moslem al-Khurasani.

Therefore the Ajam tradition of Nowruz was completely restored and at the time of Al-Mansour`s ascension to the throne, as the second caliph of the Abbasid dynasty (137-159AH / 754-775CE), it was celebrated officially in the territory.

At the same time, the fertile ground was provided for the full awareness of the Islamic society about Nowruz and its rituals. On top of that, the extensive movement of translation of Persian Islamic works into Arabic occurred in the Islamic Empire which played a major role in preserving and reviving the Ajam history, culture and civilization.

In the Catalog (Kitab al-fihrist) by Ibn al-Nadim and other reference sources in Arabic, the names of 25 translators are mentioned, who would translate Pahlavi works into Arabic and would introduce the spiritual works of Ajam to the Islamic society of that era. Also in these resources, the translation of more than 60 historical, literary, ethical books and Andarznameh (Books of Advice) up to the pre-Islamic period are mentioned in Arabic. Of course, the actual

number of translations of Ajam works up to the Islamic period must be much more than this; because the authors of the sources did not mention the names of the works by translators when mentioning the names of translators, and sufficed it to say "have translated some books from Persian". Among these translations, important sources of knowledge about the history and civilization of the Ajam, such as Khodai-nameh, Taj-nameh, Ayeen-nameh, Ga'h-nameh, and the like, which certainly contained complementary news about Nowruz and its rituals. In this regard, in Arabic literature, the first books on Nowruz and Mehregan, the history of the origin and rituals of these ancient traditions, were written by authors who were originally Iranian, those who were translators of Pahlavi works into Arabic. One of these books, entitled *الاعیاد الفرس (و اعیاد الفرس علت)* the Origin of Iranian Celebrations, was written by Zadoyeh Ibn Shahoyeh Isfahani (زادویه ابن شاهویه) (اصفهانى). Al-Biruni in his book 'The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries' (الانوار الباقية عن القرون الخالية), has cited three times from the aforesaid book, on the old Iranian days and months, celebration of Nowruz and the month of "Shahrivar" (the sixth month of the Solar Hijri calendar) and the day of "Azar jashn" (3: pp. 70, 282, 289). Zadoyeh Ibn Shahoyeh is also renowned as the translator of Khodai-nameh from Pahlavi to Arabic (7: p. 305). Certainly, Zadoyeh has written his book on Nowruz and the other Ajam celebrations in the same context of Khodai-nameh.

Another translator of Khodai-nameh, Musa Ibn Isa Kasravi (second half of the ninth century) had also written a book titled Al-Niruz and Al-Mehrejan, which has been a reference for the author of Tarikh-e Tabaraestan (The History of Tabarestan), Ibn Esfandiari, citing the story of Zakhak (Biorasb), (6: p. 83). It seems that Musa Ibn Isa Kasravi has admitted that both Khodai-nameh and Al-Niruz and Al-Mehrejan are reliable sources of knowledge about the ancient Ajam festivals. Authors after him including Allama Jahiz in Al Mahasin Wal Azdad and Al-Biruni in 'The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries' has cited from Kasravi many times, describing Nowruz and Mehregan (17: pp. 231-235; 3: pp. 291).

During the same period, another book on Nowruz and the other Ajam festivals, entitled *الاعیاد والنوازیز (Festivals and Nowruz)*, was written by Abulhussain Ali Ibn Mahdi Kasravi, an Iranian writer (7: pp. 163-164).

Ibn Nadim testifies that another book on Nowruz and Mehregan was written by Ali ibn Harun Munajem, entitled Al-Nowruz and Al-Mehregan (the same name as the above-mentioned book by Musa Ibn Isa Kasravi), in the same period (7: p. 161). Unfortunately, these four books have not survived, but made an unprecedented contribution in their time and the following centuries

to raising awareness in the Muslim community on the ancient Ajam rituals and promotion of them in Islamicized format.

At that time such books were translated from Pahlavi to Arabic, thanks to the efforts of the patriotic Ajamand from the second half of the 8th century, Nowruz and other Ajam festivals were emerged in Arabic prose works, elaborating on the origin of Nowruz and how its rituals became popular. As supporting evidence, we can refer to two well-known books that have survived and are attributed to Jahiz, an Arab Allama. The first book is *Al Mahasin Wal Azdad* (Merits and Demerits), which includes a special section titled *Mahasin Al-Niruz and Al-Mehrejan* (Merits of Nowruz and Mehregan). The author has indicated old stories about the origin of Nowruz dating from the reign of Jamshid and Mehregan dating back to the reign of Fereydoun and has explained the rituals of Nowruz, concluding this section by mentioning some information about *Barbad Khonyagar* (musician) and his songs.

The second book is entitled *Kitab al-Taj fi 'Akhlāq al-Muluk* (The Book of Crown in the Ethics of Kings) which was written using the Sassanid literature and is considered a pre source in the Islamic worldview for research on the political and moral thoughts until the advent of Ajam Islam. (Unfortunately, this aspect of the book has not yet received appropriate attention). There is a special section in this book, titled *Hadaya Al-Mehrejan Wal-Niruz min Al-Mulk va Lah* (Nowruz and Mehregan gifts to the king and from him) in which the custom of exchanging Nowruz gifts between Ajam kings and different classes of society is explained (16: pp. 219-223).

At first glance the valuable information about Nowruz and its rituals in the aforesaid books seems to reflect the pre-Islamic period of the history of this festival; But in practice, it is a reflection of the revival of Nowruz in the Abbasid era. This is fully confirmed by the references in the sources about Nowruz and the preservation of its rituals in the concerned period.

In 'The Remaining Signs of Past Centuries', Al-Biruni narrates the story of the reform of Nowruz's timing in the first centuries of Islam, and this story is a proof of the credibility the Abbasid caliphs attached to this ancient Ajam celebration. According to this cultured scholar, due to the elimination of intercalary issue in the Islamic era chronometry, Nowruz arrival time was not precise and in the Abbasid era, it would arrive before its natural and real time. The departure of Nowruz from its original time also disrupted the tax system and collection, causing farmers to go bankrupt

and spreading poverty among the people.

Barmakians, in particular, Yahya Ibn Khalid Barmaki strived to correct the situation and delay Nowruz by two months; But Yahya's enemies considered it as an attempt to revive the religion of his ancestors, being "Majus", and accused him of bias in favor of Ajam and enmity with Arabs. Hence, Yahya Barmaki withdraw his decision and the time of Nowruz remained undecided (3: p. 52).

Later, al-Mutawakkil, an Abbasid Caliph (847-861) took measures to correct the time of Nowruz. To this end, he consulted a reputable Mobad (Zoroastrian cleric) and in 857 he ordered Ibrahim Bin Abbas Suli, the famous writer, historian and astronomer, together with the said cleric, to "count the days and establish an immutable law and write on behalf of al-Mutawakkil to all cities to delay Nowruz" (3: p. 52). Regardless of its financial and economic motives, this action by al-Mutawakkil was effective in revival of the old tradition of Nowruz. Bahtari, the great Arab poet who was very observant, noted the matter and praised the action by the Abbasid Caliph:

Nowruz returned to the same day that Ardeshir had instituted, and you returned this Eid, which was always undetermined, to its original state (3: pp. 52-53; 14: p. 6069). In the meantime, al-Mutawakkil was killed and the time of Nowruz was not reformed. The other Abbasid caliph, al-Mu'tadid bi-llah (892-902) also endeavored to do this and by delaying Nowruz, he brought it closer to its natural time (3: pp. 53-54). Al-Biruni, emphasizing that the time of Nowruz still needed to be reformed even after what al-Mu'tadid bi-llah did, has indicated the reasons for this situation. The reasons could be disregarded because what matters is the official recognition of Nowruz as the ancient Ajam festival in the Abbasid era.

During the Abbasid era, as Nowruz gained official recognition, it was also gradually recognized by the official religious circles as a celebration that does not contradict Muslim beliefs. In the books by Islamic thinkers, both Sunnis and Shiites, narrations have been quoted that have often indicated Nowruz as a celebration in harmony with Islam. Most of these narrations have been collected by an Iranian scholar, Reza Sha'bani, in a study entitled *Nowruz Rituals* (13: pp. 158-180). It should be noted that due to the harmony between Nowruz and the Muhammadan religion, in the eyes of Islamic scholars this ancient celebration turned into a day when creation began, God made a covenant with His servants, Noah's ark was landed in Mount Judy, Hazrat Ibrahim (Abraham) built the Kaaba, Gabriel was revealed to the Prophet of Islam, and the like. The said virtues Islamicized the

ancient festival of Nowruz and assured preservation of the festival and its rituals; In this manner, Ajam Nowruz gained Islamic legitimacy and revived not only the special ritual of Nowruz, but also most of the traditions of culture and civilization up to the pre-Ajam Islam. The status and credibility of Nowruz at that time was beyond the scope of a popular celebration, because the celebration represented the essence of the Ajam culture in the Islamic environment and at the same time, was an active factor in the intercultural dialogue between the Ajams and the Arabs.

This mission of Nowruz is very well reflected in the Arabic literature of the Abbasid era, poetry in particular. Great Arabic-speaking poets including Abu Nuwas (d. 815), Walibah ibn al-Habab (d. 786), Ibn Rumi (836-896), Ibn Mu'taz (861-908), Abu Tammam (788-845), Bahtari (821-897), Hassan Ibn Wahab (d. Around the year 850) and others composed odes in praise of Nowruz and observing its rituals, then presented them to the rulers of their time, following the ancient Ajami tradition. Writing verses on Nowruz in the Arabic poetry of that era became so common that the Arabic-speaking Iranian writer, Hamza Isfahani (883-961), compiled a collection of these poems titled *Al-Ash'aar ul Sayerah Fi Al-Niruz and Al-Mehrejan* (popular poems describing Nowruz and Mehregan). Although this collection has not been survived; but at that time and a few centuries later, it gained fame and was cited and adapted by medieval scholars, including Abu Rihan al-Biruni (3: pp. 51, 79). The poems composed in Arabic to describe Nowruz (and Mehregan) were a cultural bridge to introduce the themes and concepts of the Persian-Tajik literature of the pre-Islamic period into Arabic prose and verse, and an effective means of the spiritual connection between Ajams and Arabs. To prove the effect of Nowruz and Ajam cultural traditions in Arabic poetry of the era (which is an issue to be discussed in a separate study), we refer to only two verses by Kushajim, the celebrated Arab poet, as an example of Ajam and Arab poetic dialogue. The literal translation is as follows:

When I got acquainted with Nowruz, I liked the tradition of sprinkling water and lighting fires

And I, also, from the passion of love, celebrated Nowruz alone, with the fire of my heart and the water of my eyes (9: p. 466).

Following such a spiritual dialogue, a new type of Arabic poetry, "Nowruziyat", emerged. A transformation took place in the poetry, from the repetitive imagery of desert and sands landscapes, to depiction of the enchanting nature in spring and description of beauty of gardens; On the other hand, this dialogue helped to preserve and revive the traditions of Ajam culture and

spirituality in the form of Islamic worldview as well as Ajam-Arab cultural solidarity. As a result, the pre-Islamic Ajam history and political and spiritual assets gained credibility and importance against the values of Islamic civilization. Rustam-i Dastan, as the symbol of courage, Khosrow Anoshirvan, the symbol of justice, Bozorgmehr Bakhtkan, as the symbol of wisdom and the other Ajam mythological and historical heroes who all were "Majus", entered the Islamic Tajik and Persian literature. Nowruz and the other pre-Islamic Ajam festivals were equalized in importance with the Islamic observances. Indeed, an example of this is evident in the following verse of some praiser, in which the poet has praised his host's generosity and nobility, and has likened the days staying with him to the days of Nowruz and Mehregan, equating these pre-Islamic Ajam festivals with the Arabic Islamic celebrations:

... A man of nobility, I enjoyed his company two days, as if the days were Eid al-Fitr and Eid al-Adha or Nowruz and Mehregan (2: p. 654).

Thus, the Arab's dominance in the Greater Khorasan ended with the Ajam cultural dominance in the territory of Arab Muslim civilization. There were fundamental differences between the two dominance. The first dominance was established by force of arms and army, and the second dominance was achieved by the power of culture, dialogue and spiritual harmony, and Nowruz played an identity-building and prestige-creating role in it.

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Nevruz *Festival in the* *Turkish History*

ABSTRACT. While traveling from the Balkans to the Pacific Ocean, it is seen that people enthusiastically celebrate Nevruz in every part of this geography. After the cold winter days, and with the warming of the weather, resurrection of nature as if awakening from a deep sleep, the greening of the trees and rising of water levels are undoubtedly important for every society, whether they are nomadic, forager or farmer. This article aims to outline the place of Nevruz celebrations in the Turkish history, although Nevruz festival is a kind of welcoming spring ritual, celebrated by the peoples of Iran, India, China, Russia and many other countries. The reason for excluding the historical process in other countries is not to ignore the other cultures, but to contribute to the colorful picture of Eurasian geography with the colors of Turkish History.

KEYWORDS. Ergenekon, Nevruz, New day, Solstice, Ninth of March, The Old Turkish Religion, Spring Festival, Feast of Fertility, The Ancient Traditions of Anatolia.

I. Exodus from Ergenekon

The spring festival, which is more commonly known today in Persian as Nevruz; is a national holiday celebrated for thousands of years in Anatolia and the Turkic world under different names such as Ergenekon Festival, 9th of March, New Day, Spring Festival and Festival of Fertile.

The history of the Ergenekon Festival can be traced back to the Türeyiş Destanı (Epic of Genesis). These records are available from five different sources in the early period. Two of them are Chou Shu and other one is Sui Shu all in Chinese. And the rest of the two sources are Cami'üt Tevarih and Şecere-i Türk¹. The Chinese records in the Sui period (581-617), which is the oldest of these sources, tells the legend of the descent of the Kök Turks by referring to the events during the 5th century. The arrival of the dynasty (A-shi-na family) to Turfan region through the Gobi Desert, and later the attacks and massacres of the Juan-Juan, which are also the basis of the legend too, are described in the Sui records².

We can summarize the common points of all these records as follows. The Tengri (god) created the blue sky above and the dark earth below, and then were made between them both the sons of men. And split them into tribes. One of them was the tribe of Turk,

1-Gömeç, S. (2014). *Türk Tarihinden İzler*. Ankara: Berikan Yayınları vol.1. pp. 28-31
2-Çay, A. H. *Ergenekon Destanı ve Nevruz Bayramı*. Milli Folklor Dergisi. n. 25, pp. 2-3

who was a brave, virtuous person with leadership skills. After his death, his tribe continued to be called by his name. Realizing that they could not win by fighting alone with this tribe, their enemies united against them and committed a massacre, and only a small child survived from that massacre with hands and feet cut off. God commissioned a gray female wolf to protect this child. This gray wolf breastfed and fed the child and saved him from death. When the boy grew up, he coitioned with the wolf and had children. Then the wolf brought them to an idyllic, secluded plain with trees, lakes, fertile soil, surrounded by mountains.. They lived and procreated there for hundreds of years. When they could no longer fit in this place -named Ergenekon-, they tried to find a way out. Finally, an ironmaster realized that this mountain was made of iron, and proposed to melt the mountain. Together, they gathered piles of wood, and stitched bellows. When the day came, the oldest Turk fired the wood. Together they began to pray to the tengri, while fanning the flames. Finally, the iron mountain melted, and the way opened for the people of Ergenekon.

As can be understood from the Chinese annals and other historical remains, this place was visited every year during the Ergenekon Festival. There sacrifices were sacrificed, various entertainments and sports competitions and congresses were held, and new





khans were elected. They called this valley "Ata Sini (Ancestors Grave)" or "Kutlu Atalar Mezarlığı (Holiness Ancestors Cemetery)"³ which is closely related to the Ancestors Cult of the Old Turkic Religion.

The day the iron mountains were melted was 21st of March according to the Gregorian calendar -the equinox when the night and day are nearly exactly the same length. And the date was 9th of March according to the Rumi calendar, and the first day of the new year according to the twelve-animal Turkic calendar. It is no coincidence that 21st of March is the the first day of the new year both in the Jalali Calendar which is prepared by the Great Seljuks, and also the calendar of Ak Koyunlu Begliq. Until 1981 the beginning of the fiscal year of the Republic of Turkey was considered as March. Turks have been celebrating this day as a holiday since the day they left Ergenekon -for more than one thousand and five hundred years-. This can be seen as a continuation of an ancient tradition.

When we look at the common rituals of the celebration ceremonies, we can see the cults of sacrifice, fire and water together with the ancestor's cult. Iron is forged in Nevruz celebrations, in the memory of the wise ironmaster; the leader of the exodus from Ergenekon. These cults, which have an important place in the Old Turkic Religion, will be explained in the following paragraphs. However, it is useful to mention the related parts of the Twelve-Animal Turkic Calendar

and the Old Turkic Religion in order to better comprehend these rituals.

II. Tracing the Nevruz Rituals

II.I Bloody & Bloodless Offerings

The Twelve-Animal Turkic Calendar is the oldest known calendar used by the Turks. According to Mahmud al-Kashgari, the names of twelve different animals were given to the years⁴. Many important days from the ages of their children to the dates of wars have been calculated according to this calendar. It starts with the year of the rat and returns to the beginning after twelve years. This calendar is a solar calendar, and one solar year consists of twelve months because the moon changes shape twelve times in this period. In addition, time is determined on the basis of the season, which is very important for a nomadic tribe. Spring; an awakening or resurrection, when herds graze, and nature begins to revive, is expected with hope after the cold winter season. This period is a great ordeal. After th, the small ordeal begins, and the end of the small ordeal is accepted as 21st of March⁵.

The traces of the lifestyle and culture shaped in the harsh conditions of the steppe continued to be preserved even after the settled life was established. Various rituals that hold people together, instill a national consciousness and feed the feelings of unity and solidarity are very important. Looking at these rites and rituals in general, there are also community-

3- Gömeç, S. *ibid.* pp.32-33

4- Kaşgarlı, M. (2018). *Divanü Lügat-it Türk.* (çev. Besim Atalay), (7. bs.). Ankara: Türk Dil Kurumu Yayınları. vol.1. pp. 119

5- Şengül, A. *Türk Kültüründe Nevruz ve Anadolu'da Nevruz Kutlamaları.* *Türk Dünyası Dil ve Edebiyat Dergisi.* vol. 26. pp..65



related ones besides the individual celebrations of people and families such as weddings, births and naming. These are the festivals related to the calendar such as New Year, Spring and Summer, as well as those that are related to the products such as the first milk from the animals, the return to the highland, sheep shearing, barley, threshing, vintage festivals⁶. Since these celebrations reflect the common joys, efforts and common feelings of the individuals in that society, they are very important in terms of holding the community together, strengthening the bond between them and instilling a sense of unity.

It is understood from the oldest sources that the ancient Turks sacrificed during these festivals in Kutlu Atalar Cemetery; the location of this cemetery is unknown but estimated to be close to Ötüken-Yış where the Turkish Khan lived.

When we look at the sacrifice tradition, two different rituals are encountered: Bloody and bloodless offerings. It is also seen that they prefer to present their offerings on high mountains with big feasts because mountains, forests and high places are sacred⁷.

“Saçı”(gift) is a kind of bloodless offering to please the good spirits and to protect them from evil spirits. Although it is mostly seen in funeral ceremonies in Turkic traditions, it is one of the traditions that are still kept alive after Islam⁸. The water poured over

the grave after the dead body was buried (kumiss in earlier times), various foods such as halva prepared and distributed on the third, seventh, and fortieth days of the burial are the saç (gift) of the bloodless offering tradition. Products such as milk and butter are precious and sacred for a nomadic community as are millet, wine, wheat for a farming community, or money for a tribe engaged in trade. Every society chooses their saç among the things that are valuable for them⁹.

The saç tradition can be encountered not only in funerals, but also in many other places.. Saçı was scattered on the bride in the marriage ceremonies of the Turks both in the period when the Old Turkic Religion was dominant and also after the conversion to Islam. Although millet and wheat are the most common saç seen in Anatolia today, the blood of gibiers in the hunter-gathering period and milk or kumiss in the horse-shepherd culture were also scattered as saç. This is the remnant of an ancient sacrificial ritual. In addition, the same tradition is observed in childbirth, naming ceremony and finally in the New Year celebration; the Nevruz festival¹⁰.

Sacrificing during the Nevruz feasts is still seen in some parts of Anatolia today. For example, in the Artvin region, people wearing their newest clothes on 21st of March, climb a nearby mountain and sacrifice after entertaining and giving treats¹¹.

6- *ibid*, pp. 205-207

7- Gömeç, S. (2016). *Şamanizm ve Eski Türk Dini*. (3. bs.), Ankara: Berikan Yayınevi. pp. 96

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9- Gömeç, *ibid*, pp. 97

10- İnan, A. (2015). *Tarihte ve Bugün Şamanizm Materyaller ve Araştırmalar*. (8. bs.) Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları. pp. 91,92,160

11- Şengül, A. *Anadolu'da Nevruz Kutlamaları ve Emirdağ-Karacadağ Örneği*. Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Dergisi. vol. VII. S.2. pp. 16



II.II The Fire of Nevruz

The religious beliefs of a community are undoubtedly shaped by their economics and the geography they live in. Our oldest neighbor; the Chinese State, who wants to get to know the Turkic communities closely for various reasons, also recorded the rituals of the Old Turkic Religion. According to these sources, all families that have established a state in Central Asia were in Kök Tengri cult. According to this, it is the Kök Tengri who gives qut to the rulers and enables them to gain victory and protect them from disasters. It is seen in the old Turkish inscriptions that the name of God is sometimes remembered together with the sky and the earth-water. The sun illuminates the whole universe while the Turkish flag illuminates the homeland and the world. For this reason, in the Oguz Kagan Epic, it is written that "let the sun be the flag, our sky tent" (kün tug bolgıl, kök kurıkan). The sun-moon, hence crescent moon and stars in the Turkic culture are not just about Islam or any other religion, as supposed¹².

Most of the beliefs associated with the sun, moon, star, lightning, etc. are related to the Kök Tengri cult. Altai shamans swear by the sun. According to them, the Sun is female and mother, and the Moon is male and father. And fire represents the Mother Sun on the ground¹³.

Since the sun is the creature that Turkic peoples fear and respect most, the East, where the sun is born, has

always been the sacred direction until the Turks' entry into Islam. Even after Islam, this belief continued for a long time and the first tomb gates were built towards the east¹⁴.

In the prayers of Altai Turks for fire, they say "You are separated from the Sun and the Moon". Based on this, it can be said that there is a connection between the cult of the Sun and the cult of fire. According to the legend, the fire was sent from the sky to mankind from Tengri Ülgen. When the first human, Targın Neme, was expelled from Arunsüdün and descended to the earth, God shows him the fruits and herbs of the earth and tells him to eat them. The man, who eats with these all summer long, has a hard time when winter comes and learns to prepare food for the next winter when summer comes again. The animals pillage these foods prepared for the winter. And when the man expels them with a stick, the animals complain to Ülgen. Upon this, Ülgen says, "Let animals eat grass, and people eat their meat and make clothes from their skin." Thus, the need for fire arises. Ülgen gives two, black and white stones from the sky. Targın Neme burns fire with these stones. That is why fire is sacred and it is strictly forbidden to extinguish it with water, spit on fire, play with fire.

Along with the fact that the Old Turkic Religion is closely related to the family and oven cult, fire has a purifying aspect that helps cleansing from evil spirits. For example, it is seen in the records that

12- Gömeç, S., Çeliktas, (2020). M. Eski Türklerde Tabiat Varlıklarına Karşı Duyulan Saygı. Türkistan'dan Anadolu'ya Tarihin İzinde-Prof.Dr. Mehmet Alparğu'ya Armağan. vol. 1. Ed. Zeynep İskefiyeli, M. Bilal Çelik. Ankara: Nobel Akademik Yayıncılık. pp. 466

13- İnan, A. ibid. pp. 23-26

14- Baykara, T. ibid. pp.192-193



the Byzantine ambassadors who came to the West Köktürk Khan in the 6th century jumped over fire and passed through fires before meeting with Hakan. This belief lived among the people in various ways even after converting to Islam. In the ritual called "Alazlanma" in Anatolian Turkish, a piece of oily cloth is ignited and circulated around the patient. Thus, it is believed that the evil spirits which make a person sick will be expelled and the fire will cleanse and purify the person¹⁵.

It is witnessed that in all official and unofficial Nevruz celebrations in Anatolia, a fire is lit and people revolve around the fire praying or jump over it. As a different example, a shovel of ash taken from the furnace of the house in Kırşehir is sprinkled on the street saying "March in, trouble out"¹⁶. Thus, people enter the new year purified from their sins, throw their pain and illness into the fire and hope that they will spend the new year healthier.

II.III Sacred Waters of the Earth

Another element encountered in the Nevruz ritual is water. In order to talk about the existence of a cult, sacrifices should be presented to the sacred subject of the cult, and it is seen that in ancient Turks, sacrifices were offered to waters such as springs, streams and lakes¹⁷.

One of the Altai legends begins with: "Before, there was only water; there was no earth, sky, moon or sun".

In ancient Turkish inscriptions and sources, water is often referred to as ground - water as together. It has evolved into homeland cult over time. The concept referred to by Kök Turks as "sacred ground-water" in the Orkhon Inscriptions is the sacred homeland. The enemies attacking the Turkish homeland are defeated with the help of Umay and ground-water. The most important representative of them is the mountain¹⁸. According to the legend, there are two proprietors named Taluy Han and Yayık Han. Among them Taluy is the owner of large waters such as the seas and the ocean. On the other hand, Yayık Han is the owner of the waters flowing with enthusiasm. Once upon a time, the world floated on water. But since it was soil, some of it would dissolve in water and another part would sink into the water. Thereupon, Tengri took a belt and tightly wrapped the world around its edges and prevented it from dispersing. And this belt is the mountain chains surrounding the world. More specifically, these are the Ural Mountains. The name of the great river flowing from these mountains is "Yayık" and it is important in terms of making sense of the place-cult together. The rivers that flow large and exuberantly in Anatolia are still described as "Yayık"¹⁹. This should not be a coincidence.

In the Bilge Tonyukuk inscription, it is mentioned with ground-water, Tengri and Umay together. For example:

"... I say, Wise Tonyukuk, we came over the Altai Mountains, we came by crossing the Irtysh River,

15- İnan, A. *ibid.* pp. 59-61

16- Bekki, S. *Ateş Etrafında Oluşan Halk İnançları ve Nevruz Ateşi. Türk Kültürü ve Hacı Bektaş Veli Araştırma Dergisi.* vol. 41, pp. 254

17- Türkyılmaz, A. *İslamiyet Öncesi Türklerde Su Kültü ve Günümüze Yansımaları. Uluslararası Kültür Araştırmaları Dergisi.* vol.4. pp. 88

18- İnan, A. *ibid.* pp. 43

19- Türkyılmaz, A. *ibid.* pp. 85-86

(Enemy) said that "it's hard for them to come from here" and they didn't realize we were coming, There is no doubt that Tengri, Umay, and the holy ground-water (holy homeland) raided them..." (The protection of Tengri, Umay and the blessed homeland had fallen upon us)

Similar sentences are encountered in the Köl Tigin and Bilge Kağan inscriptions.

"... Above, the Turkish Tengri, the sacred place of the Turk made the water as follows:

So as to the Turkish Nation would not disappear, for become a nation, held to my father İlteriş Kagan and my mother İlbilge Katun and raised them from the hills of Tengri lifted them up.

My father Kagan rebelled against seventeen men. So that the ground-water (homeland) that our ancestors kept would not become unclaimed...²⁰

"So that the ground-water of Kögmen is not left unattended ..."

As seen in the inscriptions, Tengri and ground-water; appoint to the kagans for ruling the Turkish Nation, they punished those who did not do their duty well and those who rebelled.

Settling along the water is vital for human beings. Like every community, the ancient Turks were like that. Therefore, they respected to water very much. According to the beliefs still living in Anatolia, they are the waters of the ancestral home. In Dede Korkut, it is seen that the phrase "ablution with pure water" has many meanings from cleaning the heart to the integrity of faith. Could the current belief that 'no one should put their hands in bath water' in Anatolia be related to the saying "ablution with pure water"?

In the Old Turkish Epics, in Kitab-ı Dede Korkut, it is often seen that water letsheroes to cross over it and drink from itself. In other words, water spirits protect the heroes. It does not choke, gives permittance for passing, does not kill leaving them thirsty, gives them water to drink. In Anatolia, rituals such as taking the basmala while drinking water, drinking water by sitting, sipping water are still alive. When the ground-water cult is mentioned, it is seen that the soil is never mentioned without water²¹.

It is possible to find traces of the ancestral cult in the idea that the ground and waters of the Turks are also helping them. In the Old Turkic Religion, blood is sacred, but bone is more sacred than blood²². When the soil which holds the bones of their ancestors was watered with blood, and the spirits of the streams they

dwelled on their slopes embraced the soil by greening them, and the land fed their animals and themselves, this makes the land their "homeland", and homeland is sacred.

Water has purifying and healing properties. In the Epic of Manas, in the episode about the birth of Manas, Yakup Han and his wife Çıyırıcı do not have a child for a long time. Yakup Han says;

"Çıyırıcı did not go to saints grave,

in the apple (in ground) she was not swaddled,

She didn't spend the night (washed) in the hot spring²³!"

In this last verse, Prof. Dr. Gülensoy has translated as "hot spring", and Prof. Dr. Bahaeddin Ögel has interpreted as "Couldn't spend the night beside the blessed springs" Women who do not have children, spend the night beside the blessed springs on Nevruz and scattering saçı in the dry river with water and make a wish to have children. Just like fire, scattering saçı in water and jumping over it was deemed auspicious²⁴.

In Kutadgu Bilig, the phrase "If there were no kagans who put morals, Tengri would spoil seven floors" is encountered. The sky and earth, which are nine layers in the Old Turkic Religion, started to be expressed as seven layers after converting to Islam. This number seven is also encountered in Nevruz rituals celebrated in Anatolia²⁵. "Yeddi Levin Night", where seven kinds of fruits are served around Kars and Iğdır, is an example²⁶.

III. Nevruz: from the Central Asia to the Republic

Information about Nevruz in the Great Seljuk Empire can be obtained from Nizam-ül Mülk's work named "Siyasetname". In the Ottoman Empire, Nevruz celebrations can be found in many sources, from travel books to chronicles. Sultan II. Abdülhamid formed an Ertuğrul Regiment, of the youngsters of the Karakeçili Tribe, whom he introduced to the German Emperor as "My Relatives". The Karakeçili Tribe used to visit Ertuğrul Gazi Tomb in Söğüt every March, organize various festivals, make sacrifices, cook and distribute food here. Nevruz was celebrated with enthusiasm among the people. The same tradition has been transferred to the Republic period²⁷ and it is seen that even in the gloomy times of our War of Independence, Nevruz celebrations were not laid aside. Mr. Abdullah Şengül expresses this situation in his article with the words "The effort to give Turkish people their own cultural identity, personality, self-

20- Ercilasun, A.B. (2016). *Türk Kağanlığı ve Türk Bengü Taşları*. İstanbul: Dergah Yayınları. pp. 513, 517, 617

21- Ögel, B. (1995). *Türk Mitolojisi*. Ankara: Türk Tarih Kurumu Yayınları. vol. 2. pp. 315-324

22- İbid, pp. 324.

23- Gülensoy, T. (2002). *Manas Destanı (Türkiye Türkçesiyle)*. Ankara: Akçağ Yayınevi. pp. 29

24- Ögel, B. *ibid*. pp. 330

25- Ögel, B. *ibid*. pp. 255-261

26- Şengül, A. *ibid*. vol. .26. pp. 67

27- İnalçık, H. (2019). *Osmanlı Tarihinde Efsaneler Gerçekler*. (13. bs.), İstanbul: Kronik Kitap. pp. 49

respect and identity ..." and "Atatürk believes that the way to be modern will be opened to the nation, whose own identity, personality and national identity have been acquired". It is impossible not to agree with this statement²⁸.

IV. Conclusion

Until now, the legend of the genesis of the Turks, the legend of the Kök Börü and the hunter-gatherer lifestyle, the ancient traditions of the Old Turkic Religion, which continued to take shape with the acceptance of the proprietors and finally Islam, and the thousands of years of accumulation of Turkish culture were mentioned. Anatolia has been a cradle for many tribes and is one of the oldest lands of humanity. Many peoples, beliefs, cultures, languages, lifestyles have settled in here, made trade, and fought from time to time and married each other. For this reason, Nevruz is a holiday celebrated in this geography regardless of sect, religion, belief or ethnic origin, considering the common form of celebration, although it varies slightly from city to city, from region to region.

Before the anniversary of March 21 comes, spring cleaning of the people of these lands is witnessed. Houses, shops and barns are cleaned until they are immaculate. It would not be correct to call it a cultural mosaic. Today, the cultural richness of Anatolia is not a mosaic in which every color can be selected individually. But it is like the art of marbling, which each culture can transfer its color to another with soft touches. And if you try to separate one from the other, this would deteriorate the whole painting. Actually, if we think about Nevruz, we can think of the same picture for every faith, every culture, every lifestyle, every people sharing the same geography from Eastern Europe to the Pacific Ocean. In this article, the traces of Nevruz ritual celebrated only in Anatolia were tried to be followed up in Turkish history. When we read the Nevruz traditions of other countries, which are very natural and beautiful, we will find very similar rituals and culture. Many peoples, both large and small, who have lived together in this geography for thousands of years celebrated the arrival of spring together, even though they did not worship the same god, they were warmed by the same sun under the same sky, grazed their animals together, adopted different forms of worship while worshipping the same god at another time. It can be thought of as a huge painting of marbling, who married or made trade with each other, and established alliances against invasions. Many colors that dance and touch each other cheerfully in pure water and make each other beautiful...

It is impossible to remove a color from that water. It's like the cultural synthesis of our land.

28- Şengül, A. *ibid.*, pp. 64

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Nowruz in Turkmenistan

Nowruz has Iranian and Zoroastrian origins; it has been celebrated by diverse communities for over 3000 years in Western Asia, Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Black Sea Basin, the Balkans, and South Asia. It is a secular holiday for most celebrants that is enjoyed by people of several different faiths but remains a holy day for Zoroastrians, and some Muslim communities. The ancient peoples followed the course of the sun and moon closely and knew that the seasons began to change on this date. For them, it was as if the powers of light had overcome the powers of darkness, allowing the earth to awaken and life to be rekindled. Many of us have similar feelings today, even though we understand the more scientific explanation: that the northern hemisphere begins to tilt toward the sun at this date, which results in longer and warmer days. The people of the Republic of Turkmenistan have been banned from holding Nowruz celebrations for decades due to the dominance of communist politics and culture in the (former) Soviet Union, of which it was a republic, but after the country's independence in 1991, the President of the country announced the

New Year as "Nowruz" in order to revive the long-standing tradition of the country. For this reason, Nowruz is celebrated every year on March 21 in this country. A total of 4 days are closed in this country from March 20 to 23 to celebrate Nowruz.

Nowruz is associated with important celebrations and events in Turkmenistan. The main celebration of Nowruz in this country is held in the middle of the mountain range of Akhal, an ancient land in the geography of ancient Iran, where many civilizations lived. In Turkmenistan, according to ancient traditions, there is a large place for spring celebrations, which is appropriate for the large population of participants. Residents of Turkmen villages during the Nowruz holidays welcome their neighbors and friends in a special tent called 'yurt' with open arms. Next to the yurts decorated for Nowruz, there are boards covered with carpets and rugs, next to which a group of handicrafts display and others play group games on the ground. By setting up these tents, they gather a large crowd in the courtyards of these tents and place a long swing and a large white yurt behind the

symbolic gates of this village.

The first thing that guests encounter when entering this village is a market with colorful decorations in which handicrafts are very popular and various items such as colored souvenirs, hats, musical instruments, household items, painted teapots, Traditional rugs, jewelry, and crochet are available. There are people here who are called 'Bakhshi' (narrator-singer) and attract the attention of the listeners by performing traditional songs and poems. In addition to the villages of this country, Nowruz celebration with official concerts is held in the main hall of Ashgabat, the capital, in all provinces and cities, and in universities, schools and even kindergartens, so that the presence of people in Esteghlal Park of Turkmenistan in Eshgh Abad is very impressive every year, groups of people and students come to the park as artistic and fun groups and some of them wear clothes that remind them of the past and how Nowruz was celebrated in those days, including; The red-clad elders who promise the arrival of Nowruz and the artists who with their golden clothes represent the assemblies of rulers and rulers in the Nowruz and Eid greetings.

The pavilions set up along the streets and parks serve the people with sweets and syrup, and a kind of festival is held in the city. Nowruz is celebrated at the beginning of spring and the Turkmen have special etiquettes for this day, including cooking special Nowruz dishes and holding various games and competitions. Turkmen women cook sweets and sweet snacks from the days before Nowruz, of which Semno is definitely one, and bring sweets home in the New Year. Among the

traditional and local foods and sweets of the Turkmen are 'Nowruz Kacheh' and 'Nowruz Bameh', which has a special place in the Turkmen Nowruz tables and decorates their Nowruz tables with 'Semni' (Semno) and all kinds of Nowruz chocolates. At the same time, they give a different atmosphere to this celebration and joy. Other Turkmen Nowruz dishes include 'tamdyrlama', 'gutap' fragrant kebabs and pilafs, 'bash barmaq', 'baversk', 'chorba' (soup), and meat and milk soups. Which are very popular among the guests.

During Nowruz, public Nowruz rituals in Turkmenistan are usually held in the main squares of cities and villages, and young Turkmen men and women celebrate special days; games and entertainment, including horse racing, wrestling, handkerchief jumping, and war roosters, Ram horns, play chess, checkers and swing actively participate. Wearing new clothes, visiting, and jumping over the fire are other Turkmen customs during Nowruz. Nowruz wrestling is usually held in happy and fun squares, which are decorated for this occasion with replicas of famous historical monuments of Turkmenistan, ancient Urgench, the ancient city of Merv, rural, new water, etc. so that seeing These monuments convey a sense of travel to antiquity to the viewer. To celebrate Nowruz, the Turkmen have been decorating their cities and villages since the days before the end of March, as well as preparing receptions and parties. Therefore, seeing and visiting during Nowruz has a special place and status among the Turkmen people.

roadster competitions, which have a special place among Turkmen throughout the year, are given



more attention on Nowruz, and therefore, Turkmen Nowruz festivals are associated with equestrian competitions, because these competitions are one of the main pillars of Turkmen Nowruz celebrations on Eid days are celebrated all over Turkmenistan and double the joy and excitement of Nowruz. In these Nowruz competitions, skilled Turkmen riders, along with their own 'Akhalsikhe' horses, are an integral part of the festivities. In Turkmenistan, after performing the rituals of moving house before Nowruz, it is customary for women to weave white and black threads together, and in the middle of it, they put pecans, eye shadows, beads, salt, and daghdan (which is a kind of wood) and hung high on houses as a sign of blessing. Among the Nowruz entertainments of the citizens of this country, the game "Atadi beads" means throwing beads, in which Turkmen girls gather together and mark their beads with a symbol and throw the seeds in a container full of water.

The method of this Nowruz entertainment is such that the girls gather together and one of them takes a bowl, combines the beads, takes them to the girls, then each girl makes an intention in her heart and identifies a bead that has a sign. He says that the beads belong to him and throws them in the bowl. Then one of the girls or women reads a verse from the long poem of Atadi beads in order, and then the person holding the bowl takes one of the beads out of the bowl without looking. The bead belongs to whoever it is, the verse in which it is recited belongs to him, and that is, she interprets his will and intention according to the verse recited. One of the Nowruz songs is the traditional song 'Shadivaneh', in which groups of young people gather together these days and sing its poems en masse, thus announcing that Nowruz has arrived.

Another Turkmen tradition is to shave the boys' hair on the last Wednesday of the year, so that some hair is left on either side of the head, on the ears, or behind the head, and it is called "qolpaq". Another custom that has become less common among the Turkmen today is to go to the desert on Syrian Wednesday. They used to look at the springs as auspicious, and on the way back, they picked up some pebbles and threw them seven times to the other side of the qibla to ward off evil from them and their families.

In addition to Ashgabat, the people of the village of Qari Qala, a part of the city of Sardar today, have special beliefs about the shrines of that area called 'Bolamakli Olia' and 'Qir Bibi Jan', which link the sanctity of these shrines to Nowruz. They believe that in the distant past, a girl named Bibi Jan lived in this place, who was loved by one of the rulers. On Nowruz, she was preparing semno in this place, which they said ruler intended to achieve by force, but Bibi Jan God raises the hand of the needy and the weeping one





asks him to save him from the ruler. At that time, a deep gap is created in the middle of the land between the lifeless and the ruler, and Semno's cauldron is turned upside down and dropped so that he is probably buried there. For this reason, the citizens of Turkmenistan consider this place sacred and go there during the days of Nowruz, giving alms by sacrificing sheep and cooking food and asking God for rain and abundant blessings.

On this day, about 200,000 saplings are planted in the center and suburbs of Ashgabat and about 450 trees throughout the country. In addition to planting new trees, work has been done to take care of existing plantings. A festive concert holds at the *aylasynyň ak asi* Nowruz building as part of the big celebrations in honor of the spring holidays. Famous pop performers, theater artists, bands, and dance groups from all over the province attend this concert every year. This holiday is celebrated as a holiday that strengthens peaceful relations between governments and promotes the historical and cultural traditions of the people living from Central Asia to the Balkans and the Middle East.

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Nowruz *in Uzbekistan*

*From the depths of time immemorial,
born as a radiant spark,
like a diamond in the bowels of Mother Earth,
the blessed Navruz came to us*

It is believed that Nowruz is more than three thousand years old. It officially became international only in 2009, when UNESCO included it in the list of the intangible cultural heritage of mankind. The origin of this holiday is rooted in the pre-literary era of human history. It acquired official status in the Achaemenid Empire as a religious holiday of Zoroastrianism. It continues to be widely celebrated after the Islamic conquests, up to the present time.

For the first time, the holiday is mentioned in records dating back to the seventh century BC. The scriptures say that on that day, trading shops were closed, people put all work processes aside, people treated each

other and had fun.

As noted in the sources, Nowruz as a holiday was initially formed among sedentary farmers, then gradually spreads among the semi-sedentary and nomadic Turkic-speaking ethnic groups.

This is how the ancient Greek chronicler Strabo described the celebration of Navruz: "In the most ancient times and to this day, the inhabitants of Mesopotamia gather on this day in the Temple of Fire - this is the most revered holiday when merchants close their shops, artisans stop working. Everyone is having fun, treating each other with those drinks and foods touched by fire. "

It should be mentioned that Nowruz originated in the geographical area called Persia. Even if this physical region no longer exists, the holiday is still celebrated in these Persian influenced cultural areas. Moreover, Nowruz is a holiday of diverse ethnic communities and religious backgrounds.

Over the centuries that it has been celebrated, Nowruz has significantly changed and it can be noticed in a way that people have developed various traditions, and the new ones have been added to the old ones. However, the original message of this holiday is still the same which is the celebration of renewal and rebirth.

The Uzbek people always have a special attitude to Nowruz. For them, this is not only a holiday, it is a chance and an opportunity to start everything from scratch, to forget everything bad, to forgive all insults. Preparations for the holiday are made in advance: people take part in Khashars (mass cleaning of the territory), whitewash trees, dig up gardens and orchards, unload unnecessary things. And the celebration itself lasts up to 20 days.

In our time, great attention is paid to the celebration of Nowruz. This holiday has its own unique traditions in different regions of the Republic.

The main spring holiday and the second Uzbek New Year calls on people to celebrate spring by honoring the main life symbols - water, earth, sky, animals, plants and humans. Since ancient times, large festivities, festive markets, horse races, dog and cock fights have

been organized in Uzbekistan on Nowruz.

Unlike the European New Year, Nowruz is traditionally celebrated in the afternoon, but also always in the family circle. The most important day of the holiday is the first, March 21st. In the next thirteen days in Uzbekistan, they go to visit relatives, buy and plant seedlings of young fruit trees, meet with cheerful companies in the bosom of spring nature. In Uzbekistan, it is believed that the deeds done by a person during the 13 days of Nowruz will be done by him throughout the year. Therefore, it is customary not to consult with anyone these days, to forgive each other's debts, to live with everyone in peace. Everyone should be well fed and happy: then the year will be successful and fruitful. The holiday is accompanied by competitions of folk singers and storytellers, martial arts of horsemen and wrestling of heroes

On the day of the celebration of Nowruz, it was not approved to work. That is why, people traditionally rested on this day, had fun, gathered in groups. Just like all the people of the world, there is a belief: how you spend the first day of the new year, so the whole year will turn out. There is even such a belief that the more fun and joyful Nowruz is, the more nature will give. Therefore, Uzbeks organize festivities, dance, perform ritual songs, exchange gifts, and provide assistance to those in need.

On this day they visit the burial places of close relatives, especially the elderly. Then they go to the places of mass festivities, where various games are





held, sports competitions: Ulok (goat running), Kurash (wrestling), performances of tightrope walkers.

According to an old tradition, Uzbeks try to make the festive dastarkhan (tablecloth) as rich as possible with a variety of dishes and sweets.

The main among the customs of celebrating Nowruz in Uzbekistan, perhaps, remains the New Year's treat "Sumalak" - a dish cooked over a wood fire from flour and sprouted wheat grains, sometimes with the addition of spices.

Sumalak is a festive dish of Uzbek cuisine made from sprouted wheat grains. Prepared, as a rule, during the Nowruz celebration. This traditional Uzbek dish is cooked in a cauldron in cottonseed oil and flour for 20-24 hours. It is noteworthy that stones are also used to prepare Sumalak, which are not naturally eaten. There is a belief, to whom the stone falls, he must make a secret wish, it will certainly come true.

To this day, there is a custom to treat neighbors and acquaintances with this festive spring dish. There is also a belief that if you try Sumalak from seven cauldrons during the celebration, you will certainly find happiness.

The main treats of the holiday are pilaf, Shurpa, boiled lamb and Kok-samsa - pies stuffed with spring herbs, young shoots of steppe herbs.

This holiday, celebrated for many millennia, has a huge role for the human being, as it always gives hope and faith and upon stepping it energizes and prepares

for a new life. After the celebration of the first day of Nowruz, field work usually begins, which is also accompanied by the performance of various rituals.

In the year 2020, the concept of holding the national holiday of Nowruz, which embodied the main idea of "Nowruz - a new day, a blessed new era, my dear Uzbekistan!" and organizational-practical, cultural and development of a program of spiritual and advocacy work reflected the current state and level of importance. In the preparation of this concept and program, special attention was paid to the following issues in order to hold all the events as a real public holiday and celebration, to ensure the active participation of the general public:

- On the days of Nowruz, the harmony between people and nature, the love and care for the motherland, the preservation of the environment, its blessings, the appreciation of today's peaceful life, gratitude, organizing spiritual and educational events that encourage people to live with their senses;
- to express in an effective way, the large-scale democratic reforms carried out in our country in recent years, the positive changes taking place in the lives, hearts, and minds of our people in harmony with the age-old values and traditions of Nowruz;
- to widely cover the history of Nowruz the meaning, and significance of the customs and traditions associated with the celebration of Nowruz among

the population of each region in the festive events organized in all cities and villages, in the media;

- to carry out charitable activities related to the full respect for the elderly, the generous assistance to people in need, based on the qualities of kindness, harmony, and solidarity inherent in our people;

- to demonstrate the practical results of the systematic work carried out in our country to strengthen the atmosphere of interethnic friendship and harmony, the traditions, customs, and values of various nationalities and ethnic groups who are citizens of Uzbekistan;

- organization of public clean-up days, large-scale landscaping and landscaping works in cities, villages, and mahallas on the eve of Nowruz, a symbol of prosperity and well-being;

- handicraft exhibitions, bookstores, mobile shops, preparation, and sale of green food at the venues.

It should be added that the Republic of Uzbekistan, together with the Committee for Tourism Development always makes extensive preparations for the organization of visits of foreign and domestic tourists to the national holiday of Nowruz.

It is known that Nowruz is not celebrated as a holiday of any nation or culture but as a part of the heritage of all mankind. Also, the celebration of Nowruz together with Uzbekistan and ECO member states further strengthen the ties of friendship between cultures. As a result, there is cultural harmony between nations. In addition, due to the fact that each of the ECO member states has its own traditions, they have a unique approach to the celebration of Nowruz.

Note: This article has been provided by the following author(s) who are the students of the universities of the ECO region, based on the partnership between the ECO Cultural Institute, Silk Road Universities Network (SUN), United Students of SUN (USSUN) and the Allameh Tabataba'i University. The information, facts and figures or any other details mentioned in the article do not necessarily represent the views of the ECO Cultural Institute. Accuracy or integrity of this content is the sole responsibility of the authors.

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Established in 1995, ECO Cultural Institute (ECI) is a specialized, international organization, located in Tehran, Islamic Republic of Iran, which aims at fostering public awareness and preserving the rich cultural heritage of its member states.

Within the framework of its Charter, which has been approved by the member states, ECI has been entrusted with the key mandate to preserve and promote the common cultural heritage of the ECO region to encourage understanding among the nations of the region.

To this end, ECI has always organized a diverse range of art, cultural, literary, research, academic and sporting events and has published books and journals in English, Farsi, Russian and Urdu with the approach to strengthen cooperation and preserve the common cultural heritage of the member countries.

The ECO region is a vast territory with centuries-old history, rich civilization and culture which includes 10 member states, namely the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan, Republic of Azerbaijan, Islamic Republic of Iran, Republic of Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Islamic Republic of Pakistan, Republic of Tajikistan, Republic of Turkey, Turkmenistan and the Republic of Uzbekistan.



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The Students of ECO Region are Kindly Encouraged to Introduce their Cultures, Customs, Ceremonies, Rituals and Festive Traditions which Carry on the Lineage of their Ancestors.

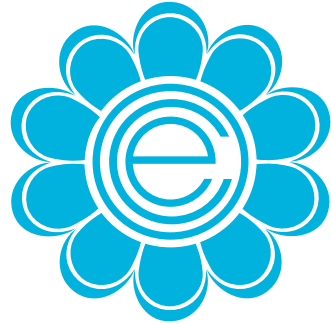
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