

NOVRUZ HOLIDAY IN SHIRVAN REGION

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Abstract: The article analyzes one of the national holidays Navruz-bairam - a holiday of spring and the New Year celebrated by the Turkic peoples; phrases that give information about its origin, folk traditions, celebrations that have appeared in connection with this holiday; elicits the original meaning, designation, the mythological basis of the rite. It is concluded that, spring traditions, customs and rituals reflect not only the ethnic history, but also the culture of population. So, during performing the traditions and rituals people adhere to special rules of thumb, and they have existed since ancient times and survived to the present day. It is emphasized that such rites and traditions are found in many Turkic peoples. The majority of them is associated with pre-Islamic beliefs, especially with Zoroastrianism and fetishism. The article separately refers to the celebration of Navruz holiday in Azerbaijan, coinciding with the spring equinox, which falls every year on March 20-21. According to Minoriski, the holiday being celebrated in Azerbaijan now was existed in Shirvan. The article also shows that the life of cattle-breeder has been existed since the ancient times in Shirvan, it affirms that the first song texts are the preparation to Navruz in this region.

Key words: Shirvan, Navruz, holiday, Tuesday, fire, water.

1 Introduction

Navruz-bairam is a holiday of spring and the New Year's coming according to the solar calendar of the Turkic peoples, which coincides with the spring equinox, which falls every year on March 20-21.

Navruz in translation from Farsi means "a new day", and "bairam" is a Turkic word and means "holiday". It is one of the most ancient holidays on Earth, symbolizing the beginning of a new life. Navruz acquired an official status in the Persian Empire of the Achaemenids (VI-IV centuries BC).

The celebration of Navruz is popularized among the Muslim peoples, "this is not a religious but a national holiday, which is associated with spring, the beginning of agricultural work, nature's great awakening and coming warm days" (Yarullina 2007: 23). The origin of the holiday is attributed to the cult of the Sun and the name of ancient Persian prophet Zarathushtra. The sacred book of the Zoroastrians "Avesta" is the oldest source, which covers the celebration of Navruz. According to the teachings of Avesta, every spring people should celebrate the beginnings of life on Earth which was born "in six kinds" (sky, water, earth, plants, animals and man). "According to the legend, many legendary events took place that day" (Zaragoza 2009: 11). According to the Turkic legends, on that day the Turks broke out of the encirclement, having left Ergenekon (the territory embosomed in mountains). Therefore, Navruz was adopted by the Turkic peoples as the beginning of the New Year and has been celebrated to the present day (Urmanche 2009: 252).

Russian research scientist K.A. Inostrantsev, referring to the unknown author's book «Китаб-ал-махасин уа-л-аддал», cites the opinion of Kisrawi, who lived in the 9th century, concerning the emergence of Navruz: "Kisravi says: ... There was Niruz (Navruz) the beginning of the approval of his power (Jamshida); then it (Niruz) took a fixed form and became a custom ... And Jam divided the days of the month (into six parts) and destined the first five days (to be the holiday) for the nobles; and the next

five days to be Niruz for the King, during which he gave presents and did good deeds; then the next five days (to be a holiday) for the royal servants; and the five ones for those being close to the king; and five - for his army; and the next five days - for the people. Altogether, thirty days" (Foreigners 2007).

The above legends point to the ancient origin of Navruz. From them, one can infer the following: most of the legends associated with Navruz consist of the events concerning King Jamshed; it is discovered from the legends that one adhered to the laws of nature when defining Navruz.

2 Methods

Ritual folklore, national holidays of the Turkic peoples, the traditions, peculiar features of performance, its mythological foundations and poetic texts are investigated in the works by I. Urmancheev (Urmancheev 2009), F.S. Bayazitova (Bayazitova 2010), R.K. Urazmanova (Urazmanova 1984), I.G. Zakirova (Zakirova 2011), L.I. Mingazova (Mingazova 2016), F.S. Sayfulina (Sayfulina 2006:117), A. Nabiyeva (Nabiyeva 1989), S. Ashurbeyli (Ashurbeyli 1982), A.Xürrəmçızı (Xürrəmçızı 2006), O. Paşabəyli (Paşabəyli 2009), A. Oleari (Oleari 1985) and others. Despite the rituals, customs, rites having been considerably researched, some of them, for today, continue to be out of researchers' eyeshot (Mingazova 2014:253).

Different forms of comparative analysis allow to trace the processes of continuity of artistic merits of various national literatures and folklore, typological convergence, to determine the interrelations and influences, which were subsequently concretized in the works by theorists of comparative literature study, M.P. Alekseev, V.M. Zhirmunsky, N.I. Conrad, I.G. Neupokoyeva. They have devised the basic abstract theorems of Russian comparative literary criticism (Konrad 1972; Neupokoyeva, 1976).

3 Results

Navruz is a holiday of kindness, unity and harmony with nature. It is believed that good angels descend on earth on Navruz - the Farishta, in order to give people hope, joy and prosperity. But the houses where evil and animosity have settled, the angels do not look in. Therefore, one of the essential conditions of the holiday is the forgiveness of offenses, debts and the reconciliation of the quarreled (Inostrantsev 2007).

One of the territories in which all customs, rituals, songs and beliefs of Navruz have been extensively performed since ancient times is Shirvan (Azerbaijan).

4 Discussion

According to the Minor State, since ancient times Shirvan Shah has already won great fame in the nearest countries for the intensified development of the culture of farming and animal husbandry; achieved the economic growth by expanding the natural exchange of agriculture and livestock, and the products. It becomes known from the majority of folklore texts that for the first time the words about planting and sowing, the songs about milking, as well as the songs of milch animals, sai rites have appeared in Shirvan. The rhythmic system in the dialect and the style of the performance of the songs survived to this day has preserved almost all the functions belonging to the lexicon of the spoken language of the Shirvanites, and they need to be separately studied. It should also be taken into account that most of them were recorded and published from Shirvan at the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries. The same can be said about the rituals created in Shirvan and also about other labor and domestic songs. For example, if to pay attention to the sai rituals and to the majority of the sayachi words (the words of a person composing songs about milch animals), then in these literary patterns one can see the life traditional for the Shirvan population and the details related to agriculture and sheep

breeding. It can be traced in the songs such as «Чобан негмелери» (“Shepherd’s Songs”), «Бэнек» (“The Place of Nomadism”), «Бэнекчи негмелери» (“Nomadic Songs”), «Санам» (“Playground Rhyme”), «Саячы» (“A man Who Composes the Songs about Milch Animals”) and «Джютчю негмелери» (The Songs of a Plowman”).

The nomadic life having existed since ancient times in Shirvan confirms the creation of primary song texts for the preparation of Navruz in this region. The observations show that the celebration of rites, rituals, primary beliefs related to Water, Fire, Wind and Earth occurred in Shirvan and spread along the ancient the Silk Road to all regions of Azerbaijan.

O. Paşabəyli writes about carrying out Navruz in the Shirvan region: “The noted customs related to last Tuesday of the year are popular in different localities of the Geokchay province and the Kutkashen district of Sheki province” (Paşabəyli 2009:112).

It is necessary to give general information about this. Last Tuesday of the year is the last forty days Tuesday of the scourge. And the local population calls it to be “the last Tuesday of the year”. The last Tuesday, in Mirza Muhammad Kirmani’s translation, is called «Çаһарşәнbeyi çәрхи» (“Circulatory Tuesday”). It means that how much the name has been changed, the last Tuesday of the year is the same as «Çаһарşәнbeyi çәрхи», and çаһарşәнbeyi-suri.

This custom, adopted from the Persians, is associated with ethnographic questions, in addition to the name of which, there are some changes. The population confirms the phenomenon of this Tuesday to be the last Tuesday of the year with a series of evidence. So, they divide the winter into three parts: First Great Forty Days, Second Short Forty Days and Third Forty Days of the scourge. From December 22 to February 2, the First Great Forty Days take place, from February 2 to 22 - the Second Short Forty Days and from February 22 to March 22 - the Third Forty Days of the scourge.

As can be seen, whatever the information on conducting Navruz in Shirvan given by the author was valuable, there is an error in the issue of the division of the Gray month. First, the Great Forty Days begin on December 21 and end on January 30. The Short Forty Days begin on January 31 and end on February 20. Then, there comes the Gray month, which has four Tuesdays. The New Year is on 20th of March. In turn, the Gray month, needs a special comment.

There are also four Tuesdays in Shirvan. The first is associated with the cult of Water, the second - of Fire, the third - of Wind and the fourth - with the cult of Earth. The belonging of every Tuesday to one of the elements means resurrection, revival, warming of one or another life-giving element.

Two kilometers from the city of Geokchay, adjacent to the village of Shahadet, there is a big tree. This tree is called the forty-days of Khon. Approximately in meters from the earth in the middle of the tree there is a hollow (Paşabəyli 2009: 113). This makes us be aware of the ancient times of man’s trust in the cult of tree (Sayfulina 2014:117).

There is a chain of traditions and customs, rituals associated with the Shirvan Navruz attributes and elements, which, like those bringing luck, are widespread among people: when tying a colored cloth on the tree, to ask it for health, when jumping over the river, to get rid of diseases, when jumping over a fire, to get rid of the evil eye, from evil, when drinking water from this water, to clear the voice, etc. Such traditions were the expressions of different beliefs and the cults, as well as the sacred rites among the people.

Most of the above customs exist in Shirvan today. But it should be noted that the presentation of the four elements in the structure of Navruz in the form of Tuesdays is very attractive since, despite the exact preservation of these customs in Shirvan,

and the fact that the fourth last Tuesday indicated here is marked by the element of tree, its substitution by fire and earth is not widely spread in Shirvan. In times of rapid expansion of mass technological progress, Navruz customs have for millennia retained their primary conservatism in the following form:

1. Tuesday Water
2. Tuesday of Fire
3. Tuesday of Wind (Air)
4. Tuesday of Earth

It should also be noted that there is no clarity in the matter of which Tuesday is included in what week, nor among the population, nor in comprehensive research studies. On the contrary, this is a controversial issue. Thus, some people put water into the first place, some - fire. This fact confirms once again: Navruz is a very ancient ritual complex. Without going into the philosophical essence of the elements of Fire, Water, Air and Earth, it should be noted that, just like in other regions, the people in Shirvan attach special importance to the conduct of Tuesdays on the basis of these four elements.

The Navruz customs in Shirvan do not end with it. Preparation for Navruz is solemn. A few weeks before the holiday, Syamyani is grown (wheat grown in a plate during Navruz), the houses are put in order, the ground is dug. Closer to the holiday of Navruz - on the last Tuesday of the year, festive sweets, called shekerbura, bakhlava, shorgogaly are baked. Eggs are usually painted in red in boiling water with the onion skin. All people prepare for the holiday in a festive high spirits.

The finest day for Navruz in Shirvan is the day of coming Navruz. Despite the fact that people prepare for Navruz for weeks, a special celebration attracts attention on Navruz’s day. And this is natural: preparing for the day of celebration will not replace the day of the holiday. On the day of Navruz holiday, the doors of all houses are left open. This is done both for the purpose of celebrating the spring air and treating guests to sweets, nuts, almonds, etc.

Whatever the material level the population would have, they do not forget the customs of Navruz. At home, they keep even a small amount of nuts in reserve, preparing at least one helping of gogal-sweets. One of the most popular mass events is the joyous celebration of Navruz by children. For them, eggs are painted, which they use to compete with each other or experience happiness. Naturally, this is associated with the most ancient mythological concepts. Egg symbolizes the act of birth. The well-known proverb “try your luck on a nut”, despite the abundance of nuts during Navruz, the nut seems to lose its strength and is replaced by the concept “try your happiness on the egg”.

Another custom - to place stealthily the belt during the Navruz holiday in Shirvan- has survived to this day. People call it “putting a belt or a hat”, and sometimes “putting stealthily a sack”, among which the expression about the hat is the most popular.

The doors are left open for flipping hats. When tossing the belt, the thrower hides. They hide not with bad intentions, but because of the customs. Nuts and sweets are put in the belt, and the door is closed. In Shirvan, to spy upon the master of the belt is considered a misdemeanor.

On the example of the aforementioned customs and rituals, we were able to trace the features of the celebration of Navruz-bairam in Azerbaijan and the process of its changing from ancient times to the present day.

3 Summary

Thus, there is a special need to collect new materials about rituals and customs, and in particular, the songs about planting

and harvesting, rituals of sai and the words of sayachy in Shirvan, and to investigate them.

5 Conclusion

Thus, Navruz-bairam has been adopted by the Turkic peoples as the beginning of the New Year and is celebrated to the present day. This day coincides with the spring equinox, which is on March 20-21 every year. Unfortunately, many Turkic peoples do not preserve the ancient attributes of this holiday. One can see from the analyzed material that Navruz in Azerbaijan's Shirvan has preserved its primacy until today.

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