

ABOUT THE ORIGINS OF THE TATARS’ “NAURUZ” FESTIVAL

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The relevance of the researched problem is due to the importance of preserving the mentality of the Tatar people in the process of globalization. Important role is given to study of the origins and in the new environment to restore traditional, often half-forgotten holidays, such as the syncretic ritual calendar feast of Nauruz. Revealing of its origins and development provides a fuller and deeper view of other spiritual and social life areas of Tatars' and their ancestors, inseparably linked with calendar-ritual culture, mutual influences in the traditional cultures of other Nations. The leading method of problem study is complex and systemic approaches. They identified the main methods of the sources analysis, such as comparative-historical, historical-genetic, interpolation, etc. The author comes to the following main conclusions, that the penetration and diffusion of the Nauruz feast is the result of close trade and economic, cultural, religious relations with Eastern countries, primarily Central Asia. It becomes not only part of enlightened spiritual culture of the Turkic-Tatar community, but also traditional folk culture. The article can be useful for celebration events of the Nauruz feast.

Keywords: Nauruz, Iran, Persian, Islam, Bulgarians, history

INTRODUCTION

M.M. Bakhtin (1990: 13) argued that “celebration (any) is an important primary form of human culture”. The tradition of the New Year celebration is rooted in antiquity. In pagan times, the holiday symbolized the beginning of a new life cycle. The universality of celebrations, starting with the Stone Age, can be considered as a permanent element of human culture, and their observance is one of the main forms of collective human behavior (Anisimov, 1966). The celebration of the New Year on a national scale is reported among the Sumerians in Mesopotamia (Emelyanov, 2009). Syncretic character in calendar rituals and festivals has survived till our days (Bakirov, 2012).

Traditional festive-ritual culture is centuries-old concentrated experience of the Turkic-Tatars. It is a unique timeorienting point, a set of traditions, rituals, customs, and worldviews and is an indissoluble part of the syncretic spiritual culture. If in Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Tajikistan “Nauruz” is an official holiday, in Tatarstan for the Tatars in Russia, it is being revived only in recent decades and, as the history of Tatars, has passed a difficult way of development (Yola ham uenZhirlary, 1980; Khayrtdinov & Mironova, 2015; Sitedikov *et al*, 2015; Khayrtdinov, 2015; Ibneyeva, 2015)

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Calendar holidays of the sun meeting held during the spring equinox are similar for the peoples of the world. The same phenomenon we see observing Russian caroling and Tatar Nauruz. And the lyrics are very similar. Even the terms “Nauruzeightoo (to say Nauruz)” and “to scream caroling” are almost identical (Nosova, 1975, p.49).

METHODS

When working with this theme, we have identified and used various kinds of sources: written, material, ethnographic, folklore, language and others. *Written sources* are represented mainly by the works of the Arab-Persian authors, Turk-Tatar writings, literary and fiction works of authors of the Golden Horde and the Kazan khanate.

Archeological materials are the important sources, being sometimes the sole ones, particularly for the ancient periods, as they allow not only to clarify information recorded in written sources, but sometimes to reveal those or other phenomena of spiritual culture in new ways.

Significant importance for our study is *Ethnography data*. Ethnographic materials show surprising parallels being kept. A careful study of these parallel phenomena provides an opportunity to unite facts recorded in the historical Ethnography with archaeological data or written sources.

Original source for historic interpretation is *folklore*. By comparing the folklore of the Kazan Tatars with the written data and archaeological materials, semantic content of some fine stories of archaeological materials were revealed, with conclusions about their ancient origins being drawn.

Data of linguistics was also used to a certain extent. In some cases etymological, semantic analysis of words, historical terms related to the field of spiritual culture was available to be associated with certain periods of history.

The use of holistic method is not only means of attraction of heterogeneous material in one study, but also the principle of mutual verification of facts and the objectivity of the conclusions.

RESULTS

The relationship with the Muslim Central Asian Turk-Iranian world

Penetration and diffusion of the “Nauruz” festival-rite of Tatars and their ancestors is connected with the establishment of close relations with diverse Muslim Turk-Iranian world of Central Asia. This process runs parallel with the spread of Islam. The first time the Bulgarians got acquainted with Islam in the identity in the Azov Sea, in the Northern Caucasus (Davletshin, 2004). The Central Asian region played the main role in this process. And further spread of Islam is associated with the Khazar Khanate, which mainly comes from Central Asia (Moscow, 1990).

So, those Bulgarians who came to the middle Volga and Kama, the majority of whom professed Islam and who built the new state on the Volga and Kama, obtained a rich spiritual heritage from this time. Moreover, it was during this period that there were being laid the foundations of that in the future Bulgarians would accept the Islamic religion and its Central Asian Hanafi sense.

In 20-ies of IX century, during the Tahirid reign and then Samanid, Islam spread in the Central Asian lands with the center in Bukhara. Turkization of the local population begins in this period (Gafurov, 1949). Later on these territories, the same relationships will be continued by the descendants of the ancient dynasties of the Ghaznevids state. Volga Bulgaria is forging links with Samanid, Ghaznevid states, borrowing from them not only Islam, but also the system of government, monetary and weight system of taxation, and takes much from the field of culture. Volga Bulgaria, at least until the arrival of the Baghdad Embassy, was in certain cultural-religious dependence on the state of Samanid (Kovalevsky, 1956).

However, “Nauruz”, and Islam cannot be bound directly. The celebration of Nauruz in the Muslim world, including among the Tatars, in the recent past was perceived by the Muslim clergy ambiguously. But Islam became the ideological basis for the rapprochement of culture of the Bulgarians with the culture of the peoples of the East. Many people, even not having any relation to Islam, or even contradictory phenomena, entered Volga Bulgaria on this ideological basis. The penetration and spread among the Bulgarians remnants of pagan beliefs of the countries of the Muslim East is a striking example of this. The ceremonies introduced from the Islamic centers or even things that were almost saints for the Bulgarian-Muslims, had magical value. It also happened with Nauruz.

Muslim Iranian solar calendar

The other reason of celebrating Nauruz by ancestors of Tatars was an adoption of Islam religion and one of its attributes - Muslim Iranian solar calendar, first month of which is called Nauruz.

On this occasion major Tatar chronologist of the XIX century Mardjani quotes a fragment from a book of Melly of Salimjan Dustmuhammad Ibn al-kavali (died in 1873): “Hey, a smart man, know that the solar year has three types of reckonings. One is called “the reckoning of the Persians”. It was used by the Bolgar people. Another is called “the reckoning of the Roms (the Romans)”. It was used by Christians. The third (“the reckoning of the Hamal”) was used by Muslims of all cities. Mardjani, Sh. (1885-1887).

“Persian reckoning” refers to one of the Iranian calendar. In Bulgar times until 1079, the East population had used the Iranian calendar of Yazdegerd era. Then it was reformed by the outstanding Persian mathematician, astronomer, poet and philosopher Omar Khayyam (1040-1143). Chronology with this calendar used to have place at Seljuk Empire and therefore got a name of the era of Jalal ad-Din –

named after the emperor of Seljuk dynasty of Sultan era. (Katanov, 1920: 212; Ermolaev, 1980: 88).

The Bulgar solar calendar

The fact that the Bulgars had their own solar calendar, with Nauruz being the first month, proves that Nauruz was celebrated in the Central Volga Region. This is also evidenced by the fact that the month of the new year among the peoples of the Central Volga Region was called in Persian “Nauruz” (new day) (Davletshin, 2004).

A large prevalence of figures of migratory birds in the Bulgar archaeological materials is connected with the idea of seasonal changing in the Central Volga region, at the same time it is connected with Nauruz, the beginning of the new year. At first there appeared rooks, spring heralds. In honor of the arrival of spring Tatars cooked porridge (“the feast of the rook”), sang songs, recited spells, incantations. (Davletshin, 1990: 101).

The beginning of the year in these calendars was timed to the spring equinox. More recently, in the calendars of some of the Central Volga Region peoples the New Year was also celebrated in the spring equinox and was called by the Persian word “Nauruz”. At the end of the XVIII century Johann George, an ethnographer and explorer, member of the Petersburg Academy of Sciences, noted that the Kazan Tatars began their New Year with the equinox in March (Georgi, 1799), i.e. 21-22 March according to the modern calendar. The Tatars inherited the celebration (rite) of “Nauruz” from the Bulgars. Mardzhani, who believed the prevalence of rites “Nauruzeitu” and “Nauruzbaite” among the Kazan Tatars in the recent past to be the Bulgarian heritage, and he was absolutely right. (Iardzhani, 1885).

To gain knowledge in such scientific and cultural centers of the East as Bukhara, Samarkand, Nishapur, Balch, Bagdad, Merv, Ghazni etc. became the highest step in Muslim education since the Bulgar times. The Bulgars who studied there got directly acquainted with the achievements of science of that time, and with the culture of the East. Many scientists received special training with the well-known scientists in madrasas in the East. Kharezm and Bukhara became a beacon in science, education and culture for the Bulgar Tatars. Everything went on like this till the beginning of the XIX century. Bukhara remained to be the centre of attraction for the Tatars up to the beginning of the XX century. The Tatar proverb says: “Stumbling, you will reach Bukhara, having learned from mistakes, you will become a scientist” (Tatar khalikmakallari, 1967). No wonder, the “Nauruz” festival was renewed in the XIX century among the Kazan Tatars because of the Tatar shakirds who had received their education in Bukhara.

Local rites of Nauruz

The Nauruz Day was celebrated by all the Turks-Muslims, including the Tatars, although this holiday is not included in the Islamic canon. Nauruz lasted for about

10-12 days, and was accompanied by complex rituals and magnificent theatrical performances. People cooked ritual porridge (“kuzha”) from the germinated barley grains, went outside and congratulated each other exactly at midnight. This day shakirds of madrasah went from house to house and read Nauruzbaite - poems about everything noteworthy that happened in the past year. Then the national assembly gathered and an examination and ordination to brides and grooms, boys and girls (“Nauruz-Beck”), who were supposed to get married in the coming year, was carried out (Sharafutdinov, 2004). The whole month after that day was also called Nauruz. The name of this festival is preserved in many Tatar names and surnames. The Golden Horde Khan Nauruz was named after this festival and indirectly this fact also confirms the presence of the feast of Nauruz at that time.

In the past, the Volga Tatars, as well as their neighbors, e.g. the Udmurts, the Mari, had some special evenings when riddles were asked and solved. The Tatars held such evenings in the Nauruz month, i.e at the beginning of the year (Tatar chaliktabishmaklari, 1970). In general, the Tatars presented Nauruz as a youth holiday. In Zakazanye, for example, during the celebration of Nauruz young people harnessed themselves to the sledges where the local mullahs were sitting and gave various festivals, recitation, sang songs, had fun and stopped at each house. Saying “Nauruz”, they asked for food, money for public entertainments. “Say Nauruz” in Tatar folklore had a set of options. The shakirds trained in Muslim madrasahs became organizers of ceremonies. Therefore, there is some convergence of the Nauruz with Muslim culture. Shakirds often used “the legend of Nauruz” with Muslim preaching (Mukhametzyanov, 1977: 157а.).

In many aspects, the “Nauruz” holiday has something in common with the New Year’s holiday called “Nardugan”, widespread mostly among the baptized Tatars and some groups of the Tatar Mishars. Basically, it coincided with the New Year in the Christian calendar. The principal moments of “Nardugan” are mummers play, fortune-telling on rings with special songs *jizaksalu*, various girlish divinations about the fate, the future etc. Often these holidays are confused, even one and the same ceremonial song begins with mentioning of Nauruz, and ends requesting Nardugan.

Nauruz, hosts!
 Let it be blessed
 Life will be full,
 Poultry will increase,
 Foals will frolic
 Yields will grow
 Grains will be full
 Nardugan, Nardugan!(Mukhametzyanov, 1977).

Thus, since the ancient times celebration of the New Year at Tatars was closely bound by local rites of the New Year celebration. And in contrast to southern regions, in the Central Volga Region and the Urals Region it coincided with the old calendar and with awakening of nature and was closely connected with the rites of farewell to winter and meeting of spring.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Traditional folk festivals attracted the attention of writers since the 18th century. However, R.K. Urazmanov (2001, 1992) and D.R. Sharafutdinov (2004) have carried out special investigations on this issue. The latter examined some aspects of identification of historical roots of the Nauruz holiday in the Bulgar time. Independently stays a research of an American scientist Oariel Azertyuk, who tries to find the most ancient roots even in the Shumerian culture (Azertyuk, 2010). He connects this holiday with the Shumerian god of spring Ishtar (Ister). M.I. Akhmetzyanov finds a similar character (IshBabay) in the archaeographical texts devoted to Nauruz (Tatar kchalkinin boringi irim-arbaulari ham terle falnamalare, 2012).

However, the historical roots of Nauruz are not fully investigated. This article provides some replenishment of the gap.

The Tatar holiday is experiencing revival in the last decades. It acquires new forms, the main goal being to strengthen the unity of various groups of the Tatar nation in particular, and all the Turkic-Muslim nations in general. The theater festival "Nauruz" uniting the Turkic nations of Russia and foreign countries that is annually organized in Kazan serves this aim. Materials of the article will help in holding the festival and enriching our spiritual world in new conditions.

Thus, the holiday "Nauruz" at Tatars has deep roots, going to the early Bulgar period, to the period of distribution of Islam and penetration of a Muslim, Iranian solar calendar. Penetration and distribution of the Nauruz holiday is a result of close trade, economic, cultural, religious, connections with Eastern countries, primarily Central Asia.

The crucial role here was played by the educated part of the Turkic-Tatar societies, who were educated in the centers of Islamic world. In the new natural - cultural environment of Turkic-Tatars Nauruz has received some new local features, by influencing different areas of spiritual life became a truly national holiday.

At the heart of this celebration lay the local ceremonies connected with meeting of Spring, as the meeting of the New year until the XIX century coincided with the beginning of astronomical spring in the Central Volga region and the Urals.

The peculiarity of Tatar Nauruz celebration is in the fact that different groups of Tatars celebrated it differently.

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