

PECULIARITIES OF CEREMONIES RELATED TO CHILD REARING IN THE SURKHON VALLEY

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Abstract: Purpose of the study: Surkhandarya region, located in the south of Uzbekistan, is considered one of the regions with a rich historical and cultural heritage. In this oasis, ancient customs and traditional rituals have played an important role in the way of life of the people. In particular, rituals associated with the birth of a child, raising him or her, and instilling educational values are distinguished by their diversity and deep meaning.

Research methods: This study was conducted using methods such as interactive methods, comparative statistics, interviews, questionnaires, and field ethnographic research.

Results of the study: This article analyzes the rituals related to raising children in the Surkhan oasis, the reasons for their formation, social function and their place in modern society. This study serves to highlight their importance in preserving traditional values, providing a healthy upbringing to the younger generation.

Conclusion: This study used ethnographic observation, interview and analytical-historical methods. Interviews were conducted with representatives of the population of different ages living in the Sherabad, Denov, Boysun, Muzrabot and Jarkurgan districts of the Surkhandarya region. Also, written sources and scientific articles available at the Institute of History of the UzRFA and local cultural centers were studied.

Keywords: Surkhandarya, child rearing, ritual, tradition, cradle wedding, sunnat wedding, national values.

Introduction

The Surkhandarya Valley is considered one of the most historically and culturally rich regions of Uzbekistan. Here, traditions and customs that have developed over centuries have become an integral part of people's lives. In particular, ceremonies related to childbirth, raising, and nurturing children occupy an important place in the social and spiritual consciousness of the people. The ancient pedagogical experience of the Uzbek people has largely been passed down from generation to generation through such ceremonies.

Uzbekistan has historically been home to a polyethnic and multi-confessional culture. The territory of our country has witnessed the migration and settlement of many peoples over time. Naturally, this has brought various cultures and customs into contact and led to their mutual transformation. Additionally, numerous religions and beliefs have developed harmoniously within our territory. The results of these historical processes can still be observed today in many of our customs and ceremonies.

In ceremonies related to child-rearing in Uzbekistan—such as childbirth, *chilla* (forty-day period after birth), cradle ceremonies (*beshik toyi*), *aqiqa* (sacrifice for a newborn), calling the *azan* (Islamic call to prayer in the newborn's ear), naming the child, and *tushov kesdi* (first haircut ceremony)—one can observe elements of both Zoroastrian and Islamic beliefs. From this perspective, Uzbek national customs and ceremonies can be regarded as a cultural complex accumulated over a long historical period, incorporating the best experiences from each era and belief system.

Research Methodology

While some people regard Uzbek national values and customs merely as superstitions, others perceive them as a necessary part of religious and social life. These customs are not mere superstitions but hold educational and practical significance, a fact that has been confirmed over time. For example, the forty-day *chilla* period following childbirth, introduced according to religious beliefs to protect the mother and child from evil and misfortune, is, from a scientific perspective, an extremely important period for the health of both the mother and the newborn, and for the mother's recovery. Modern medicine also emphasizes that due to the weakened immune system of both the newborn and the mother recovering from a difficult childbirth, they must be kept separate from other people.

Furthermore, a woman who has not yet been purified from postpartum bleeding (*nifas*) is considered ritually impure and cannot be present everywhere. In the Surkhandarya Valley, local communities observe the *chilla* period with great care, following numerous rules and prohibitions. In many villages of the Boysun district, families mark the house as *chillali* by sprinkling ash around it, signaling to neighbors and visitors that no one should enter the house during the forty-day period.

Another important ceremony after childbirth is the cradle-binding ceremony (*beshikka belash*). This ceremony has both religious and educational significance. The cradle is an essential item for the early life of a child, providing shelter, comfort, and a symbolic 'homeland.' For this reason, our people have long cherished and honored the cradle. It serves to ensure that the child sleeps well, rests in a peaceful environment, and that their bones and body develop properly.

In accordance with local beliefs, various objects are placed in the cradle to protect the child from the evil eye, malevolent forces, and other harms—these include amulets, special knives, the Qur'an, and other protective items. In the Surkhandarya Valley, there is a belief that the cradle should never remain empty. Even when the child is not yet placed in it, some item—such as a toy, clothing, or even a stone—is put in the cradle to maintain its symbolic and protective function.

Results

The ceremonies related to childbirth in the Surkhandarya region can be classified as follows:

1. **Birth Announcement and Sharing the Good News** – The first ceremony related to childbirth is the announcement of the newborn and sharing the good news. When a child is born, it is customary for the relatives of the parents to ask, "Is it a boy or a girl?" This is part of the tradition. On that day, relatives, family members, and neighbors gather to congratulate the family. Sweet treats are usually distributed during this ceremony, and good wishes are offered for the child.
2. **Cradle Ceremony (Beshik Toyi)** – In Uzbek national values, the cradle ceremony holds great importance. The cradle is considered a special item for the child and symbolizes many cultural values related to child care. The cradle ceremony is usually held 7, 9, or 11 days after the child's birth. During this ceremony, the cradle, the child's clothes, and other necessary items are presented as gifts, and prayers are recited by the mother and grandmother of the child.
3. **Chilla Ceremony** – The 40-day Chilla ceremony ensures full care and attention for the newborn and the mother. During the Chilla period, the child is kept in a clean environment and properly cared for. At the end of Chilla, prayers (Aqoh) are recited by devout people for the health and happy life of the mother and child, and as a symbol of the child's purity, the baby is washed in Chilla water.
4. **Naming Ceremony** – Giving a name to the child is also considered very important. Parents often choose names for the child even before birth, and these names are usually connected to historical or religious figures or words representing goodness, luck, and blessings.

A special person, or the father or ancestors, is invited to perform the naming ceremony, offering prayers for the child's bright future.

5. **Sacrificial Ceremony (Aqiqa)** – In some families and communities, performing a sacrifice for the newborn is also a customary ceremony. Aqiqa is one of the Sunnah practices in Islam. According to its rules, two animals are sacrificed for a boy and one for a girl.

Discussion

The analysis of ceremonies related to childbirth in the Surxondaryo region shows that these ceremonies have historically served several functions in society and among the people, and they hold the following significance:

- They instill moral and religious values;
- They strengthen the family's prestige within society;
- They ensure continuity and connection between generations;
- They introduce the child as a member of society.

Although these ceremonies are changing in some respects in modern times (for example, simplified weddings, electronic invitations, events held in restaurants), their fundamental essence remains preserved. Even today, these ceremonies continue to maintain their significance as an integral part of our spiritual life.

A distinctive feature of these customs and ceremonies in the Surxondaryo region is that they are mostly conducted based on local community units, as well as in coordination with relatives. In other words, the participation of “neighbors” and “relatives” defines the overall spirit of the ceremonies. Additionally, folk oral creativity—such as songs, proverbs, and prayers—is widely used in these ceremonies.

Conclusion

Ceremonies related to child-rearing in the Surxondaryo region are not only a cultural heritage but also a powerful educational tool. They help the child adapt to society, instill values, and serve to preserve national identity. Studying these ceremonies and analyzing their integration into modern life is a relevant scientific direction. In today's society, where traditional values are gradually losing their place, researching national customs and traditions and implementing them in practice should not be confined to a particular academic or scientific community but should be promoted across society and at the national level. Indeed, one of the aspects that demonstrates the existence and uniqueness of each nation is its history, past, and the system of customs and traditions inherited from ancestors.

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