

RITUALS AS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT FORMS OF HUMAN CULTURE

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ABSTRACT: A ritual is often an integral part of tradition and custom, usually carried out in a formal and spiritually uplifting atmosphere, featuring universally recognized symbolic actions. Examples include aqiqah (the naming ceremony), wedding ceremonies, funeral rites, remembrance rituals, sowing ceremonies, and harvest rituals, among others.

It is well known that rituals are not only one of the most important forms of human culture but also an effective means of its development. Among the forms of folk art and culture, rituals are the most massive events that attract a large audience. Rituals play a significant role in preserving, embodying, and developing a nation's best traditions, customs, and moral values. They also hold great importance in educating younger generations, helping them grow into well-mannered and well-rounded individuals.

INTRODUCTION

In his monographic research on Uzbek ritual folklore, folklorist B. Sarimsoqov notes that rituals often contain numerous superstitions and that their historical foundations are closely linked to ancient belief systems.

Since ancient times, traditions and rituals have not only brought goodness to people's hearts but also served as powerful values that unite the nation, foster social harmony, and cultivate respect, dignity, and compassion. Due to these qualities, customs and rituals have played a crucial role in societal development. Therefore, every nation preserves the rituals created by its ancestors—refined over centuries in artistic and aesthetic terms—treating them as a cherished heritage and continuously developing them as part of its cultural progress.

Ritual folklore, in addition to being an invaluable example of intangible cultural heritage, contributes to enhancing the artistic and aesthetic taste of younger generations and strengthening the spiritual unity of the nation.

From the moment a person is born until their final breath, they grow and develop within the traditions and values of their people. The adoption of Islam had a profound impact on the Uzbek way of life, culture, spirituality, psychology, economy, and social structure. However, the nation's ancient identity did not disappear entirely. Many long-standing traditions continued to be preserved.

By the second half of the 19th century, with the Russian conquest, significant changes occurred in the Uzbek people's lifestyle, way of thinking, and educational principles. It became impossible

to live solely by the customs and traditions prescribed by Islamic teachings. Despite this, even during the Soviet era, when numerous transformations took place, the Uzbek nation managed to retain its cultural identity.

During this period, reformist educators such as Behbudiy, Avloniy, and Fitrat put forward various ideas on moral and educational development. In this work, we will explore some of their contributions.

The Stability and Cultural Significance of Regional Rituals

Regional rituals are distinguished by their stability and traditional character. The existing materials in this field encompass seasonal and family-household rituals. Uzbek rituals are diverse and unique, yet they have not been fully studied in linguistics. In the fields of literature and ethnography, significant research has been conducted on this subject. However, given the diversity of dialects, it can be said that Uzbek rituals exhibit a comparable level of variety.

Customs and rituals have endured as stable traditions closely linked to the religious beliefs of our ancestors, influencing people in every era. As B. Sarimsoqov puts it, a ritual is a phenomenon that arises from the material and spiritual needs of human life, possessing natural actions, decorations, and texts—it can be considered a kind of “stage performance.”

Researchers have classified Uzbek rituals into two major groups: family-household rituals and seasonal rituals. While acknowledging this classification as accurate, we believe that religious rituals should also be included as a distinct category. A deeper analysis of rituals reveals that religious ceremonies constitute an independent classification. Most rituals associated with human life events belong to the category of family customs and traditions.

A defining characteristic of the Uzbek national mentality is that social life and people’s lifestyles are largely governed by traditions and customs. The Uzbek people place great importance on marriage traditions, including the selection of a bride or groom, where families gather detailed information about potential in-laws, considering their social background, position in the community, and reputation. For this reason, public opinion plays a crucial role in shaping an individual's life and future. In this regard, the saying “The West is governed by laws, while the East is governed by customs” is particularly relevant.

Indeed, in the East, including among the Uzbeks, many traditions hold the same authority as laws. For instance, in all family and community rituals, the mahalla (neighborhood community) plays a central role. Customs related to neighborly relations, family life, and household ceremonies are strictly followed, much like legal obligations. In Western societies, individuals primarily use communities as a platform to express their identity, demonstrate their talents and abilities, and achieve personal goals. In contrast, in the Uzbek community, traditions and public perception remain dominant forces in shaping personal and social life.

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