CHAPTER THREE

TRADITIONAL CELEBRATIONS AND RITUALS

CALENDAR FESTIVAL AND RITUALS

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- SUMANAKPAZI
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FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD RITUALS

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Among Tajik people there are series of ceremonies and events that preceding the Navruz – a New Year. One of the first such traditions when young children would from house to house to announce that the Navruz is coming is known as *gulgardonì* (taking flower around). This takes place in one or two week before the Navruz when young children in groups will go to the hills and collect the first flowers of the spring such as winter snowdrop, crocus and netted iris and bring these to the village and towns. Afterwards they go from house to house singing merry songs to tell the household owners that the spring has arrived. In their turn the households where children take the flowers will give them sweet and savory treats. When they get to see the first spring flowers they rub them gently in their eyebrows and cheeks making wishes.

The *gulgardonì* ceremony has varied songs and in total these songs contain well wishes and congratulatory words for the new year and new spring.

Spring has come, spring has come
The spring of tulips and poppy has come
The season of work for farmer has come
May it be well with you in the new spring.

Spring has come, spring has come
The parade of flowers is in process
Fields has turned into flower gardens
May it be well with you in the new spring.

Spring has come to be your guests
You must value it
If you value you are Muslim

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**Flower-visit (gulgardonì)**

**Calendar Festival and Rituals**
May it be well with you in the new spring.

Spring has come with multiple colors
Half of time is rain half is snow
Parrots are crying out in cages
May it be well with you in the new spring.

It should be noted that the gulgardoni custom is also widely known among Tajiks of the Central Asia. In Khatlon province winter aconite and crocus are taken from house to house. In Hisar valley a yellow netted iris blooms in this period, which people call it Navruz flower. In Sughd province and Zarafshan valley they gather blue bell (boychechak) and the ceremony is also called «boychechak» or «boychechakgui».

Snowdrops and crocus bloom around the 21st of January to 20 of February. Depending on the time when these flowers bloom the gulgardoni ceremony takes place accordingly. In majority regions the period for the gulgardoni ceremony occurs in the end of February and early march.

In Bartang valley of Badakhshan gulgardoni ceremony is called «gulkhkuf» meaning «flower has bloomed» and this is usually in April. In Bartang people will cook different dishes and go to visit holy places and shrines.

It is known that in distance past the gulgardoni custom was celebrated by the adults. However, now this is primarily children spring ceremony.
Intangible Cultural Heritage in Tajikistan
Navruz

Navruz is one of the well-known and oldest festivals of the Iranian-speaking nations. Its long historicity is evidenced by the fact that it has been integrated into cultures of Asia, Caucasus and the Middle East. Verbatim the word “Navruz” means a new day and it is celebrated on the first day of the Farvardin the first month of the Solar Hijri calendar and as such it is also called “New Year”. Navruz coincides with major natural events that are significant among the agriculturalist societies, such as start of the spring when the new agriculture season commences and it is also on the spring equinox – when the day and night reach the equal length.

Many ancient and medieval sources inform about the history and significance of the Navruz and modern scholarship also abound with academic publication on different aspects of this festival. Some sources where one can find direct illustrative information on Navruz are “Shahameh” by Firdawsi, “Navruznoma” by Khayam, “Osor-al boqiya” and “At-tafhim” by Biruni, “Zain al-akhbar” by Gardezi, “Almahosin val azdad” by Kisravi. According to this and other sources king Jamshed of the Peshadi dynasty has instituted the Navruz.

There are many rituals and customs that are hold prior to celebration of Navruz, such as “Gulgardeni” that takes place in one or two week before the Navruz. During this young children in groups will go to the fields and collect the first flowers of the spring such as winter aconite, crocus and netted iris and bring these to the village and towns. Afterwards they go from house to house singing merry songs to tell the household owners that the spring has arrived.

In the same timeframe i.e. one or two weeks before the Navruz people will start spring cleaning by putting their carpets and matrasses out and wash the household utensils and belonging. This is believed that a clean house signifies peace and prosperity in the coming New Year.

In the past there was also one tradition called “Chorshanbei okhiron” (the last Wednesday) this was celebrated in the last Wednesday before the Navruz. During this ceremony a fire was lit in garden and community would gather and jump over it and saying: “take my yellow and withering color and give me your red and blooming color”. It was commonly believed that this ceremony helped them to purge their sins and they would start a new year with clean soul and spirit. Nowadays this ritual is observed only symbolically.

During the Navruz celebration Tajik people cook and prepare multiple types of food and beverages to decorate the Navruz table on the feast days. For example one of the central dishes is sumanak, which is prepared from the juice of sprouted wheat.

Another tradition of the Navruz festival is preparing a table containing seven dishes. In ancient Zoroastrian tradition holding such feast was to offer food sacrifices, however later this was transferred to be a celebratory feast where people would gather and eat those items prepared.

Among Tajik people there is tradition known as “haftmeva” (seven fruits) when during a festival people will put seven types of locally grown fruits to be shared. These were pomegranate, apple, pear, grapes, walnuts,
INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TAJIKISTAN
almonds and dried apricots. The types of the fruits were not arbitrary and could be changed by other types of the fruits, which the household could afford. From beverages the apricot compote was most popular as it is nutritious and healthy. In some parts of the Hisar and Zarafshon valleys people would prepare compote from seven types of dried fruits. In addition, many dishes in the Navruz season contain fresh herbs, spring vegetables and grains.

One other tradition that is observed during the Navruz with ancient history is reconciling those who were in tensed relationships. This carried huge symbolic weight as people believed that the New Year had to be started without hurt and sadness and reconciliation with those who hurt us was beneficial.

On the Navruz celebration day, which would last from seven to fourteen days many sport activities such as wrestling, running and other games among young adults and children are organized. The most popular game is perhaps wrestling, which is held in almost every county across the country.

Tajik folklore abounds with poetry dedicated to Navruz, which are than sung during the Navruz celebrations. The central theme of these songs and poems is about the beauty of the spring contrasted by the coldness of the winter and how Navruz resurrects the sleeping nature after the winter and brings light and brightness in the nature and people's lives.

Navruz is a connecting bridge between the current generation with the rich tangible and intangible history and culture of their ancestors. It is perceived to be an international and global event bringing together people of different ethnic and language groups together both in Tajikistan and elsewhere.

Navruz today is an international festival and since 23 of February 2010 it was included into the UN's list of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and each year now the 21st of March is celebrated as an International Day of Navruz.

Navruz is also included into UNESCO's Representative List of intangible cultural heritage.
Traditional Celebrations and Rituals
Sumanakpazi

Sumanakpazi refers to the cooking of sumanak, a dish prepared during the Navruz festival. Sumanak is made of juice extracted from the wheat sprouts and is cooked in flour mixture and oil. The process of sumanak preparation is as following: certain amount of wheat is taken and washed and soaked in the water than the extra water is drained and the wheat is left under the rain (if it is rain season) and is kept in the shade or a humid place for few days until the wheat sprouts.

When the wheat has grown to a desired size then 3 or 4 women will be gathered in the house of one who hosts the sumanak cooking. The preparation starts by extracting juice from the wheat sprout by means of hammering it in a pounder. The juice then is poured through a sieve to clean it. Afterwards a fire is lit and big cauldrons are heated with the oil in them. Than the wheat juice is poured into them and seven small stones or walnuts are added. The later elements has both practical and symbolic significance: the seven is a perfect number and is meant for the new year to be perfect it also helps during the mixing the sumanak in the cauldron it helps the substances not to stick in the cauldron. After the sumanak is in cauldron the women take frame drums and begin singing the traditional sumanak song, which is sung by everyone present:

Sumanak dar jush mo kafcha zanem,
Digaron dar khob mo dafha zanem.
Sumanak bui bahor ast,
Sumanak avju baror ast,
Melai shabzindador ast,
Idi Navruzi muborak!

Sumanak is being boiled and we are clapping.
Everyone goes to sleep we play our frame drum.
Sumanak is a scent of spring,
Sumanak gives strength and prosperity,
Sumanak is a fruit cooked in sleepless night,
Happy Navruz!

Sumanak is cooked overnight i.e. 8 to 12 hours. When it is ready one of the elderly women prays over the dish and pours it into bowls for the host family. Afterwards than sumanak is distributed in the neighborhood and it is believed that it counts as a good merit for distributing it widely among elderly, sick, and poor families.

Sumanak is exclusively prepared in the spring in Navruz season and it is never prepared in other seasons. There is variety of modes of how sumanak is cooked, such as small bread backed in the charcoal, as a soft paste in the cauldrons.
Ashaglān

Tajik culture has rich and ancient ceremonies and beliefs associated closely with the natural world. When there is a need for a supernatural intervention people have devised a ceremony and ritual, which enabled them to ask gods for assistance and intervention. One of such ritual (ceremony) that is performed during the draught; ritual for calling the rain is «Ashaglān». In different parts of Tajikistan this ritual is called by different names, for example in Khatolon province and Rasht valley it is called «ashaglān» whereas in Hisar valley and Sughd province it is known as «Sus-khotun», «Chilla-khotun», «Yalkon-khotun» and «Tuyi sus-khotun».

Ashaglān ceremony is celebrated by the advice of the council of elders of the community that is when it is needed. On a chosen date a woman is decorated to represent ashaglon, putting in her old loose clothing normally worn by old ladies. Than the lady holds her arms up lifting above hear head a puppet. The puppets head is covered by a headscarf. The puppet transformed into Ashaglān is than accompanied by women and taken from house to house and water is sprinkled in her as it is moved. The women crowding ashaglon will sing, clap and dance during the procession. When ashaglon procession is going a song dedicated to her is sung which is:

O true Ashaglān
Shake your sleeves gently
My green pastures have dried out
Once again pour the rain
I have a brother who is farmer
I have desire for rain

In the regions where Ashaglān is known as «Sus-khotun» the following song is performed:

Sus-khotun hoy sus-khotun
Make the rain pour fast
Pour the rain drop by drop
Nourish the earth with water
Make the grain grow in abundance
Birds are left thirsty
Farmer women left hungry

As the procession goes loud singling is heard across the village and everyone comes out to splash water on ashaglon's face. People go up their roofs to observe the procession and all join in asking and calling for the rain.

Ashaglān procession has an officiator who is rewarded as he takes the ashaglon from house to house; usually people give him grain products i.e. wheat, beans etc.

Every household who receives the ashaglon in his or her home must splash it's face with water and give grain product to the officiator. As the procession moves from one house to another people keep joining the procession sometimes reaching the amount of the whole villagers and can navigate from one village to another as well. It is very festive ritual and people go splashing water on one another in celebratory mood.

After the procession ends women gather in one house and cook dishes with the grain products, such as gandumkucha (soup with wheat) or noodle soup with grains and the food is distributed as a alms to everyone passing by or among the villagers themselves.
Traditions and Celebrations
Eid-al-Fitr is one of the traditional Islamic festivals celebrated in Tajikistan as in any other Muslim societies. It is celebrated at the end of the month of Ramadan. The significance of the Ramadan and the Eid among Tajik people has seen centuries old development and evolution process and has its own local peculiarities including its poetical expressions. The Ramadan first of all is accepted as holy month and as one of the compulsory religious practice during which the faithful communities fast and spend much of their time in prayer and devotions.

The Ramadan fast lasts from sunrise till the sunset and is a complete fast that is no drink or eats or other bodily enjoyment must be refrained. There is also a special midnight prayer called *taroveh*, which is performed every night during the 30 days of Ramadan.

One of the unique features of Ramadan month in Tajikistan is recital of «Rabi man» (My Lord) poetry cycle by young adults and children. Often the singing of the «Rabi man» includes going from one house to another house.

*Rabi man yo rabi man yo Ramazon.*
*Rabi man Alloh mohi Ramazon.*
*Rabi man, chand ruz mehmoni man ast,*
*Shabako oshaki yavgoni man ast.*

My Lord, my Lord, O Ramadan.
My Lord is Allah it is a month of Ramadan.
Ramadan is my guest for some time,
My Lord is my meal of delight at night.

The «Rabi man» cycle encompasses many devotional and religious quatrains from both folklore and Sufi poets and is sung with worship tune. The children who go around singing «Rabi man» are given gifts of all sort of eatable items. After their finish their cycle they gather in one place and share together the collected food.

Another tradition related to Ramadan is the Lailat-al-Qadr – the night of Appreciation,
which falls in the 27th night of the Ramadan. At this night many people who fast during the Ramadan would not sleep but spend the night awake in prayer and praise of God.

In the last three days of the Ramadan preparation for the Eid begins when households will buy and prepare festive and traditional food such as bread, fried pastry etc. On the Eid day the most cheerful are children, who on the break of the morning will go from the door-to-door wishing people happy Eid and receive gifts.

On the Eid day there are public communal prayers are organized especially dedicated to the end of the Ramadan. After the prayer finishes people will be going to visit the cemeteries to offer prayers for their deceased kin and than afterwards would visit the homes of their relatives wishing them happy Eid and reciting from the Quran.
Idi Qurbon (Eid al-Adha)

Idi Qurbon - eid al-Adha (Arabic), also called the «Sacrifice Feast», is the second of two Muslim holidays celebrated worldwide each year, and considered the holier of the two. It honors the willingness of Ibrahim (Abraham) to sacrifice his son, as an act of submission to God's command.

Idi Qurbon omadu qurboni kardan lozim ast.
In tariqi yodgor az hazrati Ibrohim ast.
The Eid of Qurban came and it is time to make sacrifice.
It is honored remembrance from his holiness Ibrahim.
In the Islamic lunar calendar, Eid al-Adha falls on the 10th day of Dhu al-Hijjah and lasts for four days until the 13th day. However, in the Gregorian calendar, followed by the Muslims of Tajikistan the dates vary from year to year drifting approximately 11 days earlier each year.

In Tajikistan men in the early morning of the Eid take a bath and puts on new and nice clothing and go to the mosques for special Eid prayer. Before the Eid prayer the preachers would usually remember the traditional story of the Eid al-Adha and call on people to do good deed.

Women on the Eid day would be busy baking and cooking and setting up traditional feast tables. Children on this day would go from
house to house wishing people happy Eid in exchange households will give them eatable and other types of small gifts.

The ceremony of sacrificing an animal takes place after the Eid prayer ends. The community on this day will first the cemeteries to pray for the souls of their departed kin and relatives afterwards they first visit the households who has lost someone recently. In these visits usually they prayer for the souls of the deceased and their restful journey into the Afterlife.

Only those who are financially capable and wealthy are allowed to make sacrifice on this Eid. The animal accepted for the sacrifice is a lamb or ram, but other clean animals such as goat or even cow is also permitted. According to the requirement of the Islamic law the sacrificial animal must be clean, and has no physical defects. The lamb or ram must be not younger the 6 month and the cow or other large animals must be 2 year or older.

Some people distribute the meat of the sacrificed animal among the poor people or feed orphans.

This Eid has not just the ritualistic features but it is also an occasion, which brings people together around a festive table and helps in communal organizations and coexistence.

The Tajik folklore is rich of quatrains and couplets dedicated to the Eid al-Adha, which demonstrates the religious and heart-felt sentiments of the Tajik people to this religious feast.

_Idi Qurbon omadu qurbon kunem,
Jon fidoi hazrati Rahmon kunem.
Hojiyon andar tavofi Ka’abaand,
Mo ba ustodoni khud ehsom kunem._
Mehrgan festival

Mehrgan festival is one of the ancient seasonal festivals of the Tajik people. This festival is celebrated according the Old Iranian solar calendar on the 16th day of the month of Mehr and the day is called the day of Mehr as well. The date for the Mehrgan festival according to Gregorian calendar it falls on the 8th of October. The term Mehr according to the Iranian mythology is the name of the Zoroastrian deity Mithra who is considered to be the god of contract, friendship and light. The name of this festival in ancient sources is also mentioned as Mitrakana. Mehrgan festival has an ancient history and possibly had been celebrated among the Arian people at the time when Mehr was worshiped as central deity.

About the genesis of the Mehrgan there are multiple information found in ancient sources. For example on of such sources Bundehishn informs that when on the day of Mashi and Mashyana the first male and female from the lineage of Gayumarth were born marked the Mehrgan day. Other sources mention King Faridoon as a founder of the festival.

Mehrgan is an autumn festival and relates to the agriculture and gardening. During the Navruz farmers sow and in autumn they gather the harvest; in the spring they plant trees and prune them to be fruitful and in the autumn they gather the harvest. In such manner Mehrgan festival is an event when people bring their thanksgiving offerings to God for the abundance of the harvest gifts.

In past Tajik people in celebration of Mehrgan would set up a festive table-clothe where they would put variety of fruits and objects such as lemon, sugar, water lily, apple, grape, pears, wheat, a mirror and scales. Each of the elements put on the table carried they own individual unique symbolic meanings. The agriculture products to decorate the feast table ought to have golden, white and bright colors signifying the happy heart and abundance. The mirror and scale was signifier of the Mithra's attributes as god of brightness, commitment and justice.

During the Soviet period when the agricultural societies were united in collective farms they celebrated Mehrgan as «Idi hosilot» (Harvest festival). On a certain day in the month of October the heads of the collective farms with the members of farms would organize massive fair to display the samples of the year's harvest. These fairs would have very celebratory nature and music was played and people congratulated one
another for the abundance of the harvest.

After gaining its independence Tajik government is directing its attention to revive the traditional cultural festivals and as such Mehrgan has been inserted into the event calendar in Tajikistan by the decree of the president of the Republic of Tajikistan, Founder of Peace and National Unity, Leader of the Nation his Excellency Emomali Rahmon. The first Mehrgan festival in independent Tajikistan was officially celebrated on 8th of October 2011 in Sh. Shotemur Agriculture University with participation of the head of state and thenceforth every year on this day it is celebrated across the country. The festival is marked by organization of agriculture fairs accompanied by musical festivals.
**Wedding**

Wedding in Tajikistan is celebration in accordance to the geographical, cultural and religious contexts where it is held. The weddings are complex events encompassing ritual ceremonies and cultural and cheerful elements such as singing, dance and sometimes sport and other forms of communal activities.

Weddings have different segments and it starts by the choosing a bride, match making or bridal proposal, engagement family party called *noshikanon* followed by *fotiha* that is religious event when prayers are made for the future of the bride and groom. In run up to the wedding day than is the ceremonies of bringing gifts to the bride that is a dowry given by a groom, *nibandon* (baking bread for the wedding) *oshi nahor* (breakfast feast given on the morning of the wedding day), *sarshuyon* (washing the hair of bride and putting on her make up) *sartaroshon* and *salabandon* for the groom (trimming the hair and beard of the groom and putting on him his special wedding clothes), *shahbari* (when groom comes to take his bride), *arusbiyoron* (wedding procession when the bride leaves her paternal home and goes to the groom’s house).

All the ceremonies involved during the wedding have their own special songs that are sung by those present. The Tajik folklore is rich of the poems, quadrants and long song cycles dedicated to the wedding. For each ceremony that takes place individually either in the bride’s or groom’s house there are set of established and fixed rituals and singing that accompanies these. One of the most popular singing is called «Sartaroshon» (hair grooming). The «Sartaroshon» cycle includes themes of happy life, parent’s prayers, separation of the bride from her kin, establishing a new family etc.
«Sartaroshon» is performed by a lead singer and chorus is sung by those present.

In the past this song was performed in the groom’s house when someone honorable or elder of the family would stand by the groom and clip edges of his hair whilst those present, groom’s friends and family would sing. At the end of the ceremony the man performing the ceremony is given gifts. In the song the singers would encourage those present and the groom’s family members by naming them to do certain things such as bestowing money on his head as sign of prosperity or putting a hat on his head as sign of him becoming the head of the family.

Chorus:
_Ustoi langi sartarosh,
Sara pokiza tarosh._
Lead singer:
*Khohari shah ba tu megum,*
*Ba sari shah tanga buchosh.*

There is similar in function a song which is sung during the bride leaving her paternal home, which is called «arusburor» (going out of the bride). The friends of the bride sing this. The theme of the song is devoted to the bride being taken away and her home being deprived of a helper, cook and someone kind etc.

Singer:
*Buror, buror kholae,*
*Zudtar burorushe kholae.*

Chorus:
*Sari degdoni baland,*
*Buzgholaboni ochae.*

Weddings in Tajikistan have great regional characteristics each distinguished by certain cultural events performed. Many of the events carry great symbolic meanings and represent deep philosophical perceptions of the Tajik people about wedding and what it means. For example, the new bride is kept behind a special curtain where she and her groom is given a sweet tea – symbolizing a sweet life or when the bride comes to her husbands home she circles a fire symbolizing a bright and warm life that awaits her.

Weddings involve lots of the expenditure and sometime hard for people with lower income to compile with the expenses traditionally expected for the wedding. Thus in 2007 (updated in 2017) the government of Tajikistan has accepted a special law on regulations of the traditional events and function which is directed towards the limited excess expenses and instead spending money towards things which would greatly benefit the new family. However, the cultural aspect of the wedding that is singing and dance and other rituals still continue in the same manner as these do carry huge economic loss.
**Gulbazm**  
*(Flower party)*

*Gulbazm* is a recital party in form of poetry challenge competition mainly taking place during the weddings by the young men and girls. During gulbazm participants will hold a flower and when one participants challenges the other will give him or her the flower. *Gulbazm* is organized after when few songs have been sung during the wedding and the wedding Master of Ceremonies (MC) by taking a flower will recite the following line to launch gulbazm.

*Gulbazm muhabbatgahi yoron boshad,*  
*Aз yor ba yor she’rboron boshad.*  
*Donandai abyotu sukhan burd kunad,*  
*Maghlub shavad har on ki nodon boshad.*

(Gulbazm is the the loveplace of the friends,  
It is when friends pour poem to one and another.  
Only those who know poems will win,  
Those who don’t face the defeat.)

Afterwards under the joyful music he takes the flower and gives it to any random girl in the wedding. The young lady in her turn with dance comes forward and has to respond to the couplet recited by the young man. It can be any sort of poem or couplet dedicated to love, wedding or a simple well wish for the newly weds. Afterwards she takes the flower and goes to pass the flower to the next person, usually girls to boys and boys to girls. In this manner the recital event would go for 15 or 20 minutes when the flower will be passed from had to hand by those young ladies and gentlemen present. To call the end of the recital the MC will take the flower and read the following:

*Gula mondem boloi bom,*  
*Gulbazma kardem tamom.*

(We left the flower on the rooftop,  
We call the gulbazm finished.)

Given the romantic nature and context where the recital is performed it is believed this tradition was invented by people deeply in love, who otherwise could not engage in communication explicitly in public. And such event would allow them to express their feelings through poetry in public.

In gulbazm event poetry pieces recited represent a wide range of genres from both classical poets as well a folklore compositions.
Oiling the hands

Oiling the hands in Tajik «ravghanrezon» is a feminine ceremony celebrated during the wedding, which takes place after the bride’s arrival in the groom’s house. This ceremony is also known as «dastcharbon» and «surfabaroron». The principal goal of this ceremony is extremely symbolic and based on the meaning of imagery of elements used in the ceremony. At the heart of the ceremony is performing a ritual invoking a life full of happy and blessings to the newly wed bride.

The structural process of the ceremony goes as following: on the wedding day groom’s mother invites her lady neighbor and relatives and spreads a tablecloth used for making bread dough (surfa) with flour on the yard. One of the elderly and respected women from the gathered will take the new bride’s hand and circles around the surfa three times in each step bestowing special prayers of blessings on her. After the third circling the bride sits at the surfa and she is given milk, oil and flour to prepare dough. While she is mixing the dough someone from the groom’s family or the same elderly lady will be pouring oil in her hands streaming into the dough. From the prepared dough a bread will be baked which is called «kulchai arus» (bride’s bread).

In Faizobod district a new bride makes soft dough, which she uses to knead noodles and chapatti. Those gathered for the ceremony will cook the noodle soup (ugro) and taste the bread and in exchange invoke well wishes and prayers to the new bride.

The same ceremony in Panjakent city is called «dastcharbon» and it takes place on the second day after the wedding party. In this area on the surfa bride is given sheep fat-tail to chop. There is a custom that until this ceremony is performed a new bride is not permitted to engage in any of the house chores in her husband’s house.

In its other meaning ravghanrezon is an inaugural ceremony initiating newly arrived bride to her new life and chores that she will continue in her life. After the ritual women will play frame drum and sing and dance and celebrate a birth of new family.
Salomnomakhoni

Salomnomakhoni refers to a special ceremony that takes place on the occasion of arrival of the new bride to her husband's home. Salomnomakhoni verbatim means «greeting recital». In this ceremony a cycle of traditional song called «salomnoma» (salutation) is recited by a female folk singer. This ceremony is widespread and common in Dushanbe, Panjakent, Hisar, Khujand and other cities of Tajikistan.

Salomnoma song include couplets consisting of prosaic poetry greeting to God and Prophets and following them the rest of the household and community named one by one in chronological order. This ceremony is also sometime referred as ruybinon that is «unveiling the face of the bride» when the family members and close relatives of the groom, primarily women gather together to greet the new bride. The ceremony is accompanied by bringing the mirror and asking bride and groom to look at together and also bringing a lit candle or making the new couple to drink from one cup a sweet tea.

Salomnomakhoni is a joyous ceremony and women during this ceremony dance and join the lead singer to repeat the chorus. After the ceremony ends they sit together round the table and eat the meal. This way the women of the community welcome a new member as the married women attains a new social status after her wedding.
Cradle-laying (gahvorabandān) is a ceremony celebrated within a family on occasion of putting a newborn child to his or her cradle. It is occasion celebrated at the birth of the first child in the family after the newborn turn forty day old. It is usually women's parents who look after the logistics including purchase of a cradle for their grandchild. Cradle-laying is celebrated by a feast where relatives are called in a chosen day.

After the feast meal a cradle is brought into the room where the young mother and her baby is and put in the middle; a elderly and revered woman, who has her own children, grandchildren and her offspring are of good manner and health, is chosen to officiate the ceremony. A lady from the family circle brings hazorispand (Peganum harmala herb believed to fumigate from the evil powers) and smokes it around the cradle. When the cradle is set up an elderly woman pick up the child and puts him (her) in reverse order and asks «should I lay down to sleep this way?» next she repeats laying child in different odd positions and each time asks «should I lay down to sleep this way?» and women present in the room answer «No» and urge by saying «grandmother put him/ her to sleep in correct way!»; once she puts child in proper order everyone answer «Yes». Than child is tied into the cradle and afterwards she points by her index finger to child’s mouth and spells out «I give my sleep to you». In some places the woman also pray that «may you posses the sleep from wolves, dogs and all neighbors».

When the ceremony finishes child mother brings some gifts to the elderly woman and some sweets, dried fruits and bread is poured to the presence of those gathered and they take those with them.

In some regions during the ceremony child's mother takes seven bites of bread and puts them under the child's bedhead signifying that child should have abundant life. There is also a tradition of putting knife or other iron tools under the cradle matrasses to ward off the child from the evil powers. A type of bead from evil eye is knotted in the cradle's handle to protect child from the evil eye.

Cradle-laying ceremony is a widespread traditional ritual and has great variety among Tajiks in both Tajikistan and Uzbekistan.
Circumcision ritual

Circumcision ritual is a traditional event of the Tajik Muslims organized on the occasion of circumcising a male child in the family. According to the Islamic law every male child before reaching puberty must be circumcised. Traditionally the circumcision in Tajik is called «dast halol kardan» (making hands ritually clean) that means a male child who is circumcised becomes a man and whatever he does or performs is ritually clean. Thus circumcision ritual belongs to rites of passage.

A child is circumcised by a «khatnagar» a traditional man who has inherited the skill of circumcising from his forbearers. The traditional circumcision is conducted without anesthesia the wound is sealed with burned cotton. The circumciser uses special knife called «poku» similar to a Swiss knife very sharp and thin.

After a child has been circumcised his relatives and parents gave him different gifts and care for him until he recovers. According to the local beliefs a child who has been circumcised should not be left alone and for the period of forty days people he is accompanied and looked after. To ward him against evil spirits his parents will put chilly paper, garlic or keep Quran in his room.
These days the circumcision ritual is held in the circle of family members and close relatives without concert and invited feast as it was before the Law on regulation of traditional rituals and celebrations in the territory of Republic of Tajikistan.
Oshi nahor

*Oshi nahor* refers to the breakfast feast thrown early in the morning by the household where a wedding takes place. It is organized for the members of the community and as such sometime it is called «oshi qavm» (feast for community). It is held on weekend morning and lasts for 2 or 3 hours.

As this event marks the official start of the wedding preparation for it takes place in 2 or 3 days in advance including inviting the community and relatives. The event proceeding it is called «sabzirezakunon» (cutting the carrot) when the men of the community get together to help peel and cutting the carrots used for cooking the wedding or *oshi nahor* meal. The owner of the house will either buy meat or slaughter a cow for its meat to be used for the meal. The close relatives will contribute towards this event or simply bring either cash or other forms of gifts.

According to the Law on regulation of the traditional customs the number of invitee for the *oshi nahor* should not exceed the norm.
TRADITIONAL CELEBRATIONS AND RITUALS
Mourning and mortuary ceremonies

Mourning period is observed after the passing away of someone dear and it is observed for up to one year. There are series of activities and physical and visible expressions of the mourning observed by the household members of a deceased. This includes type of clothing their would wear, ceremonies conducted and how certain usual habits in the household is transformed with a stark visibility of grief and lament. In the last decades the mourning period encompassed wide range or ceremonies; these are funeral and burial, oshi sari taxta (a meal given to the funeral participants on the day), sebegaha (commemoration of the third eve), dushanbegi and jumagi (commemorative feasts given on Mondays and Fridays), bist – commemoration of the twentieth day, chil – fortieth day, shashmohagi – sixth month, eleventh month and first anniversary. Currently after the funeral only the third, fortieth and annual commemoration days are observed in large scale by inviting friends, relatives and members of community. The remainder observances are limited only to the close circle of the family of the deceased. In general the mourning ceremonies, particularly commemorative feasts are known as khudoi, oshi khudoi and nondihi.

Mourning starts from the event of the death with the lamenting howling of the members of the family. In the past there were known when during the lament women would untie their hair, strike themselves in chest and face, pull their hair or scratch their faces. Young women and elderly ladies would cut the fringes of their hair short as demonstration of their deep grief.

In many regions of Tajikistan there were a practice of professional mourners-lamenters – a ladies who would come to the deceased house and join the family to lament by singing songs of lament and mourning. These professional mourners are known as «ovozandoz» (Regar region), «güyanda» (Hisar region), «nolakun» (Faizabad, Ramit and Rasht regions), «haidaregh-khon» (Darvaz region), «kushovoza» (Hisar and Obi Garm regions).

One of the ancient forms of the mourning ceremonies of Tajik people was mourning dances called «sadro», «sama’» and «sudur» which were performed on the funeral day at the home of the deceased. «Sadro»-dance was a group dance performed by women during the funeral of a young adult person.

In Badakhshan province a mourning dance is known as «pāyamal», which can be performed a group or individual by both men and women. The motions in this dance are very expressive and demonstrate the deep grief and unhappiness.

Prior burring a funeral namāz (ritual prayer) is performed by men and after the burial these return to the home of the deceased where they will perform dedicatory recital of Quran.

In the deceased’s household cooking is prohibited for three days and only after the performing the «sebegohi» ritual cooking can be permitted. This ceremony is also knowns as «halolkunon», «siyohburoron» and «siyohshuvon» during which a small animal is slaughtered and a meal is cooked. Usually close relatives and neighbors are called for this ceremony. This is followed by the «haft», «hafta» or «oshi sari haft» ceremony commemorated on either the fourth or sixth day after the burial.

The «chil» ceremony (commemoration of the fortieth day) is observed between the 35 and 37th day after the burial and it is big event where members of community, far immediate and distance relatives are called. Usually a big cattle is slaughtered to cook soup or pilav. Women cook «atalai safed» (unfried flour porridge with milk) and kalama (fried bred). Among the population of Hisar and Rasht regions the fortieth commemorative day is called «khātir-
Traditional Celebrations and Rituals

jamii arvoh» (settling of the spirit of the deceased) and «azoburoyon» (the leaving of the mourning). Usually after the celebrating of the fortieth day members of the deceased's person's family will gradually discontinue their mourning. In some parts of the Zarafshan valley men would not shave till the fortieth day and for women listening to the music or even participation to festive events were prohibited.

Women mourning clothing during one year is typically made from plain fabrics of white or dark colors and they will not adorn themselves with jewelry. Those mourning will refrain from participating in festive, such as wedding parties and wearing different type of clothing and attending festive ceremonies becomes possible only after the first anniversary ceremony is observed. In contrary the mourning period is 'lighter' for men and usually lasts till the fortieth day and afterwards they can participate in social gatherings.

The first death anniversary is celebrated similar to the fortieth day where all distance and close relatives, members of community, coworkers etc. are invited to the feast. After celebrating the first anniversary all the practices withheld during the mourning year will be permissible again.

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CHAPTER FOUR
TRADITIONAL KNOWLEDGE AND SOCIAL PRACTICES

- TRADITIONAL CALENDAR SYSTEMS
- GASHTAK
- BRAIDING
- TEAHOUSE
- HASHAR
- TAJIK NATIONAL COSTUME
- TRADITIONAL MEDICINE