





Traditional calendar systems

Ancestors of Tajik people similar to other ancient nations had developed their own different calendar systems helping them to identify and measure the passing of time and seasons. Prior to the current established calendar systems has evolved and matured Tajiks people has focused on natural world around them to determine the system for measuring and observing the time and season, such as constellation movement, determining the length of the day and night and various natural events.

In ancient times in the urban centers, which were centers of development and leaning, people followed different forms of calendars based on the Solar or Lunar system, whereas in the rural regions followed the order of the natural world and systems inherent to the environment in which they lived and functioned.

One of the unique calendar systems recorded among the population of Badakhshan of Tajikistan and Rasht valley is that of «khirpichor» (Sun on man). This system of measuring time is based on the man's body parts. This system has been noticed also among Tajiks of Pakistan and Afghanistan. According to this time measure system the sun pauses on each body part during the day for a certain measurable moment and according to those following this system the new year or the start of the year is when the sun pauses on the area of heart i.e. on the chest. This solar pause lasts for three days and during this period *Navruz* or the New Year festival is celebrated.

Another manner of determining the periods of the day in the mountainous regions was according to the position of the sun in different (physical) parts of the environment e.g. on certain pick of the mountain, certain woods or tree, a built environment or rocks. These positions of the solar movement during the day would help them to identify sunrise, sunset or other time segments. The year segments were also determined depending on the position of the sunrise and sunset during the year or in different

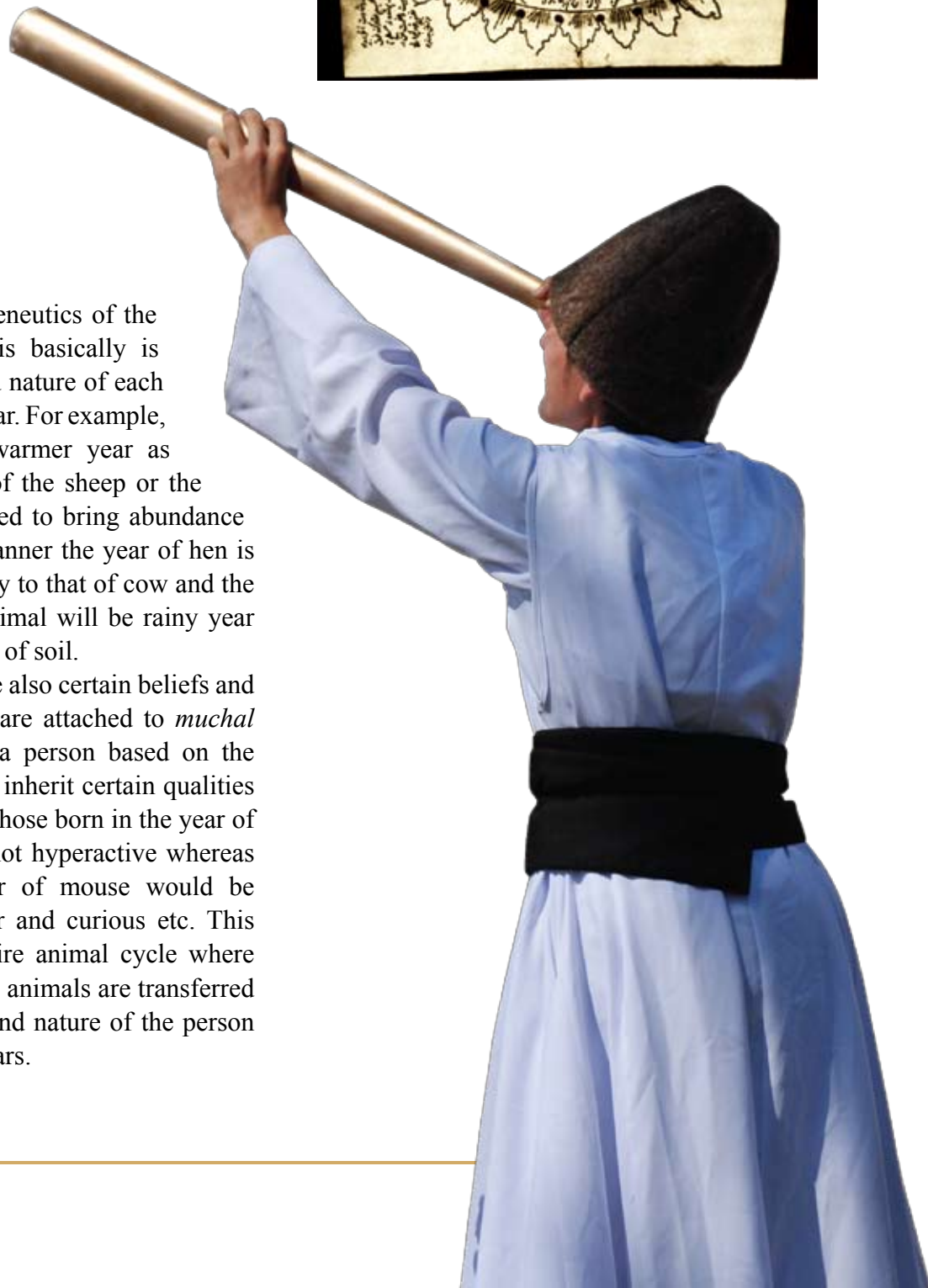
time space falling of the sun ray on certain parts of the house, through the window or reaching certain domestic animal.

In Ishkoshim district solar movement is observed by means of «sangi oftobbin» (sun showing rock). This stone object was located on the flat area and has a hole in the size of a bowl in its middle part. The person in charge of observing the «sangi oftobbin» in kneeling position would look through the middle hole towards the north on the upright mountain picks. If the sun during his observation will rise from the 'window' between the picks it would mean that the year has reached spring or autumn equinox i.e. the day and night has equal length and the Nawruz can be celebrated.

Another form of calendar system is called «chilashumori» (counting the year in forty day segmentation). This form of calendar is still spoken and observed by older generations, which according to some scholars is a remnant of the Arian calendar system. In accordance to this system the year consists of certain number of «chila» (forty days) and the year commences from the «chillai kalon» (“big forty” days starting from December 21). Followed by this «chilai khurd» (small forty) that lasts for twenty days. In such manner there are «chilla» (forty) to each season of the year i.e. spring, summer and autumn.

Another current calendar system among Tajiks is that «muchal» or «muljar» an animal cycle calendar that has been incorporated from China. The *muchal* has 12-year cycle and each year has its unique animal representations and the year cycles every 12 years. In this calendar the position and order of the animals is as following: mouse, cow, tiger, rabbit, fish, horse, sheep, monkey, hen, dog and pig. This system is also used in determining person's age that in each *muchal* cycle a person grows in 12 years.

Tajiks based on their century old observations of this cycle has also developed their own



interpretation and hermeneutics of the «muchal» calendar. This basically is based on the quality and nature of each animal representing a year. For example, the year of sheep is warmer year as dictated by the nature of the sheep or the year of cow is considered to bring abundance in resources. In such manner the year of hen is considered to be contrary to that of cow and the year of fish as water animal will be rainy year helping the nourishment of soil.

In addition, there are also certain beliefs and worldview current that are attached to *muchal* calendar. For example a person based on the animal year born would inherit certain qualities of that animal. As such those born in the year of sheep are tolerant and not hyperactive whereas those born in the year of mouse would be contrary i.e. fast, clever and curious etc. This would apply to the entire animal cycle where quality and nature of the animals are transferred and seen in the action and nature of the person born on these animal years.

Gashtak

Gashtak is a traditional social event also called «gap» or «gapkhuri», which is usually popular among people living in the Sughd and Hisar regions. It is a social event organized by a group of people with something in common e.g. same profession, childhood friends, coworkers or relatives. They agree on a number of people would like to be part of the group and then every month each member of the group by taking turn organizes a meal and invites the rest of the group to get together. *Gashtak* is largely a men social get-together event although young women or elderly women also occasionally organize such events.

The central purpose of *gashtak* is sustaining relationships and growing in communal spirit of mutual understanding and friendship. In *gashtak* people will discuss various topics of a common interest or discuss the issues relevant to the group or larger society where they live. Of course another aspect of *gashtak* social is spend-

ing a restful time together and this particularly in mountain areas during the long winter nights people in *gashtak* will share stories and legends to help them to regain new visions of the future and live a hopeful life.

It is also possible for *gashtak* to be organized among the youth who have finished the same class from school or university; this also includes people from the same professional background or skills. The *gashtak* among professionals also include women groups or mixed gender groups.

Gashtak among the relatives are not very common but they are very sustainable form of the *gashtak*. This primarily focuses on intergenerational and interrelation support and sustaining relationships.

Gashtak is organized or held by the decision of the *gashtak's* host. In the rural areas it is at homes of people where in the cities it can take place in a teahouse or a restaurant.



Braiding

Braiding called *muibofi* is an ancient tradition among Tajik people attested by the archeological finds and murals of ancient time. The braiding skill was perhaps in high demand as the aesthetics of the braided hair was important in decoration. It was and is possible for women to braid ones' own hair or there were people hairdressers who would do this.

In the families girl's hair is braided by other women in the household such as mothers, sisters or aunts. According to the style preferred by the girl the hair braids can be of different styles either very fine braids or two big. In addition hair braids are distinguished by the occasion that is if for the wedding or events or regular.

Hair braids will include also all sorts of the

accessory that would be attached to them. The style is defined by the where the braids begins that is whether from the forehead or at the back of the head. The thickness of the hair and the occasion also dictates the style in which the hair must be braided.

Although the traditional hair braiding takes place in the homes the procedure is similar to that of hairdresser salons. The women wash their hair nicely before the braiding and towel dried. To nourish the hair or make it softer oil is applied. For braiding the hairdresser uses two or three different combs, first for brushing it then for dividing it that a much finer comb to divide the hair into an exact amount to make same size braids.





The hair accessories are also traditional elements that made by the women and have great regional diversity. The most common is called *jamolak* (hair extension) usually made from white, red and black cotton threads. This is braided with the hair for both decoration and also the *jamolaks* have beads and other decorative items attached to them which will keep the hair braids at the back and won't let them fall forward.

Hair braids are distinguished also by age and role of the women that is if it is bride, young

teenage girl or little girl.

According to the local traditional beliefs women wash their hair on Mondays and Fridays. Young women can wash their hair up to four times in a week. When braiding hair they take care not to let the hair fall on the ground or taken away by the wind as it is thought to be a bad fortune. The women spread a big head scarf and sits in the middle and braids her hair and the hair fallen during the process is collected and kept in safe place, sometimes are buried.

Teahouse

Teahouse in Tajik called *choykhona* is one of the traditional social spaces for having lunch, tea or simply gathering for conversation and meetings. Teahouses are common among Tajik people and in the last two centuries they have been integrated into the city's landscape as an official dining place.

Traditional teahouses consists of two separate spaces that is kitchen and sitting space. Some teahouses have traditional *kats* – trestle benches on which up to 10 people can sit on it the furnishing consists of a table and padded mattresses for sitting and pillows to relax. Teahouses outside the city are usually located by the streams or rivers banks. These places are used by the populace for rest and dinning. The city teahouses have fountains or other ponds to add it relaxed mode.

Teahouses are built in crowded places such as market places or the main streets. In some teahouses table board games including nard and chess are provided for the customers to play and rest. Traditional teahouses served only limited types of food and mainly concentrated on tea and varieties of traditional baking and sweets. The person serving in teahouse is called *choykhonachi*

– that is teahouse host. In teahouses they serve different types of tea according to the request of the customers.

Teahouses also perform social function for holding meetings, announcing special events and or public discussion of certain issues relevant to the social life of the community. Some teahouses are furnished with TV and radios as well. The street or traditional performers also often come to teahouses to perform for the public and earn money. Forms of the traditional singing performed in teahouses include national epic songs and folk music.

In the northern regions of the Tajikistan the social event *gashtak* often are held in the teahouses. Usually for such occasion those organizing *gashtak* would bring their own ingredients and cook their own meal where teahouse host provides them with a space to conduct their event.

Tajikistan is rich with the beautiful teahouses such as «Rohat», «Saodat» and «Istaravshan» teahouses in Dushanbe. Across the country there are many teahouses owned privately or as joint venture corporation.





Hashar

Hashar refers to a collective gathering to do a large-scale job such as digging a water channel or planting a big garden etc. Usually *hashar* is organized for the event that benefits the entire community as such nobody is paid for their volunteer participation and labor. The *hashar* tradition witness the ancient culture of mutual assistance that Tajik people have had in the past and it continues to this day.

There is also *hashar* organized for a benefit one individual for example building a house or collecting harvest. For such work those who

come to help are given small token from the harvest or a fed a meal. Whereas for the social *hashar* people will come eating their own food at homes and now rewards are given. It is possible that during the *hashar* few of the community members would contribute towards cooking a big meal like oshi palav or other food.

The *hashar* was also common during the collective farm days when those assigned a big plot of land to sow or irrigate or harvest would call for *hashar* and the community would come to help him. People for *hashar* also bring their





own tools needed for the job, which means that when invitation for *hashar* is sent it is declared what type of job is supposed to be achieved.

Hashar is collectively planned-in-advance event that is people would first discuss it and chose a date when majority can participate. These days *hashar* are organized for the big and small jobs directed towards to the wellbeing society and improving the environment of the community such as fixing the roads, planting trees or empowering the river banks.





Tajik national costume

Tajik costume has seen a long historical development and evolution and represents cultural and beliefs system. In particular should be noted that Tajik people pay special attention in the color of the fabric from which costumes are made. Ancestors of the Tajik people – Sogdian and Bactrians made their clothing from the cotton and silk fabrics. The white color was particularly common as it symbolized happiness and cleanness. In addition, for the special event clothes colorful fabrics were used. This tradition has been preserved for centuries and today also people make clothes for different occasions based on the century old styles of color and patterns. The female clothes for special occasion are made from *adras* or *atlas*, in addition there is a rich tradition of embroidery clothes made from cotton fabrics.

Traditional Tajik female clothes include tunic dress, a hem, vest coat, overcoat, *yaktah* (a robe), headscarf, head, woven socks and shoes. Traditional female dresses of Tajiks have long sleeves and around the neck and edges of the sleeve and skirt are embroidered. Underneath the embroidered dresses women usually wear a white plain dress. In Rasht, Darvoz and Badakhshon female dresses are also adorned by colorful had woven ribbons. The front peace o the dress, often the chest part is fully embroidered and that is called *peshak*. The hems are made either from the matching fabric or other fabrics are ankle long with a hand woven ribbon attached in the lower part.

The city dwelling Tajik women usually worn dresses made from *adras*, *shohi* (a form of silk fabric) or *atlas* and they wore overcoats or robes made from velvet.

Women hats are also common element in Tajik costume and have specific regional characteristics in the northern regions are square and in other regions can be round-shaped. There are types of hat called *toqi* in Tajik, which are worn by young girls and newly wedded. Elderly wom-

en would put a scarf on top of their hats.

Tajik women headscarf is called a *ruimol* and has very rich types, such as *shol*, *farang*, *zargaroni* and *rubast*. These are made from silk or cotton fabrics sometimes hand embroidered or sometime with tapestry pattern. Elderly women usually wear darker color headscarves. The way women ties their headscarf also have age characteristics that is younger and older women would tie their headscarf differently. The style of wearing or tying headscarf known is *tagi manah*





(the scarf tied from the front under the chin), *peshoniband* (from the forehead) and etc.

Traditional men's clothing among Tajiks were short tunics made from cotton fabrics, overcoats, cotton filed coats, *toqi* – hat, turban. In mountain regions men also used to wear *chakman* - an overcoat made from animal skin.

Traditional male tunics were not richly ornamented as female one and they were exclusively made from cotton fabrics. The overcoats were worn with a handkerchief tied in the waist. Men *joma* – overcoats (robe like) were made from colorful horizontal lined pattern cotton fabrics such as *alocha* or *beqasab*.

The early 20th century the European men wear was introduced and this gradually replaced many traditional men's clothing except few such as overcoats or robes or hats. Today Tajik men were the traditional clothing in mixed with the European.

Traditional Tajik costume has great regional diversity and are easily distinguished by their type, stitching style and types of fabrics used. In rural areas majority men still wears traditional coats, robes and heats.









Traditional medicine

Traditional medical knowledge and practices are a part of intangible cultural heritage of the Tajik people. Ethno medical knowledge is transmitted from generation to generation and in the course of the time new methods and means are discovered, documented, preserved and practiced. The most common aspects of the traditional medicine are traumatology, herbal medicine, clay therapy, honey and *mumiā* (mummy). Traditional medicine of Tajiks also includes spiritual-ritual methods such as *ruhfarori* when a healer invokes prayers dedicated to certain spirits and saints or exorcism. In traditional medicine the core of the illness is determined to be attached with the natural elements such as cold, heat or physical effects of the environment.

Traditional healers prior prescribing the treatment would inquire about the symptoms and conditions of the sick person to determine

the cause of the illness. They also by means of questions determine the physical or natural typology of a sick person. The knowledge of the four major substances of the environment that is air, soil, fire and water and also the animal cycle calendar in which the person is born are important in determination of illness and the required treatment.

According to the traditional medical knowledge the healer is able to determine the typology of physical structure of a sick by touching; if he senses the hot energy the person is of warm nature or cold etc. The examination of the sick person's skeleton, hair, skin etc. also informs of his natural original typology.

Determination of the sick person typology helps in prescription of the medical herbs or other substances. Usually the opposite elements are prescribed. If the sick person is of a warm na-





ture than he cannot consume the herbs or other eatables of the same nature, this includes also animal products such as meat, fat or dairy products.

The division of the warm and cold nature also applies to entire natural products. For example, sour-sweet apple is of neutral nature whereas sweet apple is first degree warm and also humid in nature.

Phytotherapy is distinct from homeopathy and anthroposophic medicine, and avoids mixing plant and synthetic bioactive substances. Phytotherapy is regarded as a main aspect of the traditional medicine. In this plants are used in different forms such as dried, fresh, cooked or burnt. Traditional healers prepare medical properties from various parts of the plants that is

roots from certain plants or leaves from certain plants etc.

In medicine, traumatology is the study of wounds and injuries caused by accidents or violence to a person, and the surgical therapy and repair of the damage. Traumatologist in the Tajik traditional medicine is called *shikastaband* that is one who bondages the broken. The traditional practices in folk traumatology are not very different from the mainstream medicine.

Honey is a natural product that has been widely used for its therapeutic effects. It has been reported to contain about 200 substances. In Tajik traditional medicine it is used to cure the illness caused by the cold both taken internally and applied on the skin.

Therapy involving substances extracted



from animals is also widely practiced. Usually the healer depending on the illness prescribed different properties from the animals, wild and domestic alike. For example, the freshly taken out skin of rabbits or sheep is used to as bond-

age on the parts of the body or the whole body for someone who has sever cold. It is believed the warm skin would absorb all the cold related effects to itself. In similar manner the fat from various animals are also used.

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