

## 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

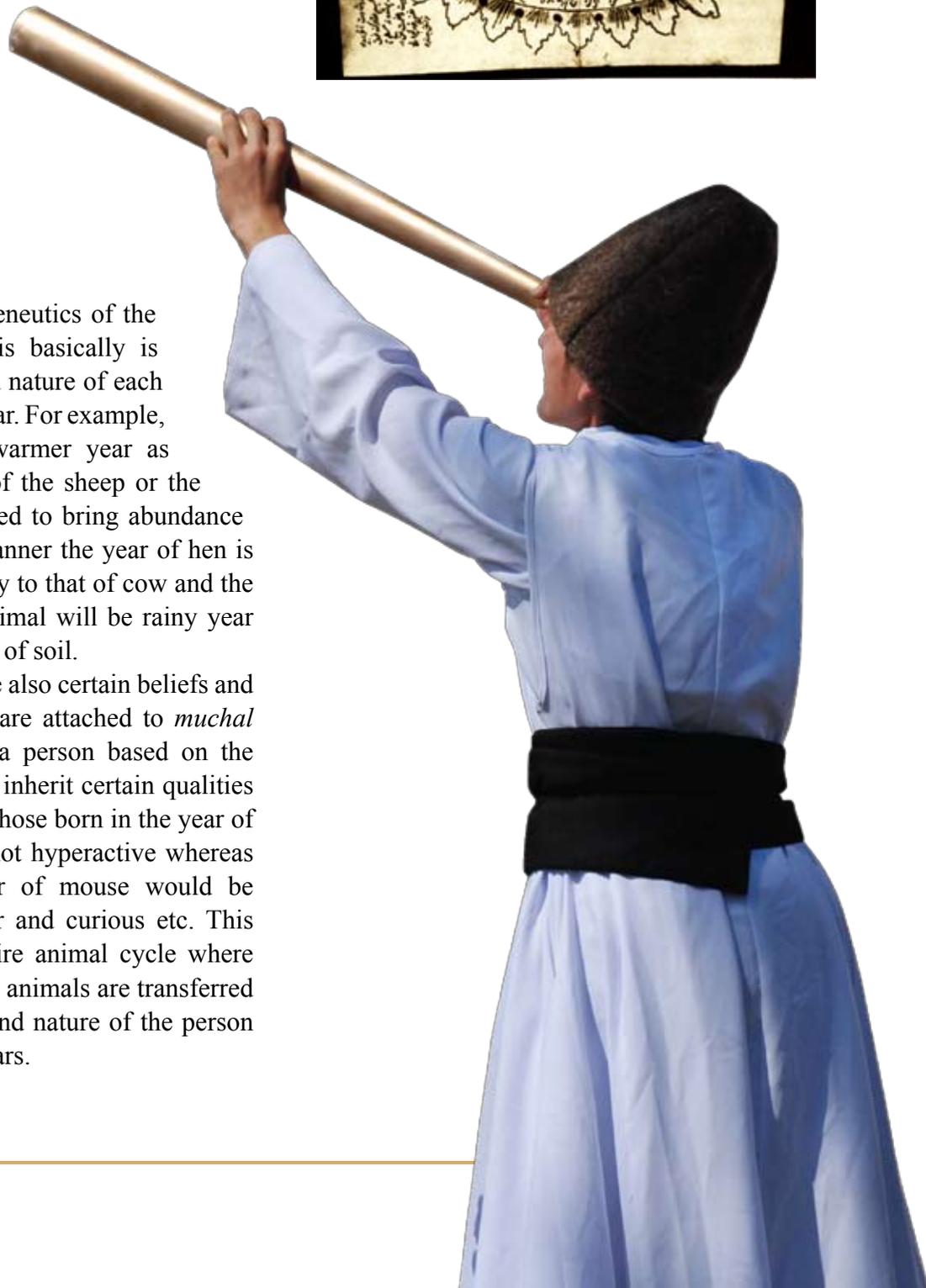
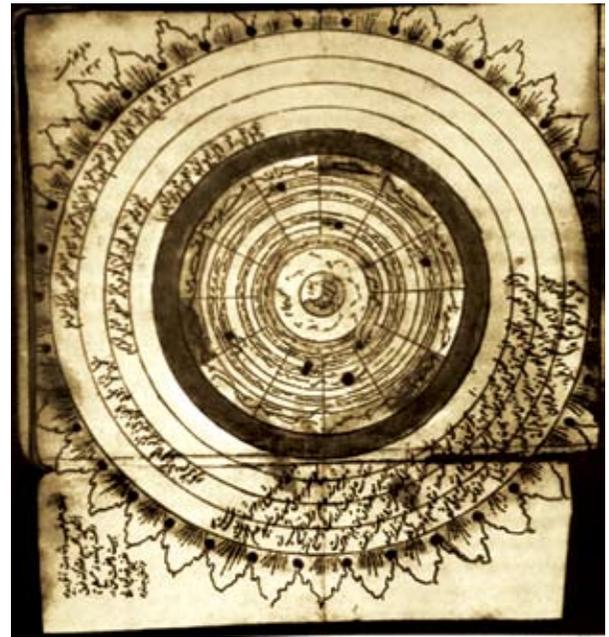
time space falling of the sun ray on certain parts of the house, through the window or reaching certain domestic animal.

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.