

**TRADITIONS AND CUSTOMS OF UZBEKISTAN. CULTURAL
EVENTS**

*Jizzakh branch of the National University of Uzbekistan
named after Mirzo Ulug'bek*

*The Faculty of Psychology, The department of Foreign languages
Philology and teaching Languages*

*Scientific advisor: Teshaboyeva Nafisa Zubaydulla qizi
nafisateshaboyeva@gmail.com*

*Student of group 401-22: Atajanova Mohinur Sanjar qizi
atajanovamohinur717@gmail.com*

Abstract: *to understand the meaning of Uzbekistan, nestled in the heart of Central Asia, boasts a rich tapestry of traditions and customs that reflect its diverse cultural heritage. Steeped in history and shaped by centuries of crossroads between East and West, Uzbekistan's cultural landscape is a vibrant mosaic of influences from Silk Road merchants, conquerors, and indigenous traditions. From the intricate designs of its renowned ceramics to the melodic strains of its traditional music, Uzbekistan's cultural heritage is celebrated through a myriad of customs and cultural events that serve as a testament to its enduring legacy. In this exploration, we delve into the traditions, customs, and cultural events that define the soul of Uzbekistan, offering a glimpse into the colorful tapestry of this enchanting land.*

KEY WORDS: *kupkari, beshik to'yi, cradle ceremony, fotikha to'yichalans, hashar, morning pilaf.*

The main feature of the Uzbek family is traditionally reverential respect for elders. Uzbeks usually lives in large families consisting of several generations, therefore, preference is given to a large houses on the land. Significant place in family life as element of the hospitality is tea ceremony. Uzbek Holidays,

Uzbekistan, along with Uzbek customs and traditions, is very rich in various holidays, festivals, and events! Uzbek people love and know how to celebrate. They celebrate weddings, anniversaries, and national holidays – any festive event in Uzbekistan cheerfully, hospitably with an abundance of delicious national dishes to the sounds of national instruments and traditionally with incendiary dances. The main public holiday is Independence Day – September 1. Two more significant holidays are the Constitution Day – December 8, and the Day of Remembrance and Honor – May 9. Some of the most significant Muslim holidays are Eid-Al-Fitr and Eid-Al-Adha. Nestled in the heart of Central Asia, Uzbekistan stands as a testament to the crossroads of civilizations and the convergence of diverse cultures. Its rich tapestry of traditions and customs is woven with threads of history, reflecting the legacy of ancient Silk Road merchants, conquerors, and indigenous peoples. From the bustling bazaars of Tashkent to the ancient cities of Samarkand and Bukhara, Uzbekistan's cultural landscape is a vibrant mosaic of influences that captivates travelers and locals alike. Uzbekistan's traditions and customs are deeply rooted in its history and geography. Hospitality, for instance, is a cornerstone of Uzbek culture, with guests often welcomed with open arms and lavish feasts. The art of hospitality extends beyond mere etiquette, embodying a genuine warmth and generosity that is characteristic of Uzbek society. Another hallmark of Uzbek tradition is its rich culinary heritage. Central to Uzbek cuisine is pilaf, a fragrant rice dish often adorned with succulent meats, vegetables, and spices. Served ceremoniously on special occasions, pilaf epitomizes the fusion of flavors and influences that define Uzbek gastronomy. Uzbekistan's calendar is punctuated with a myriad of cultural events that showcase its artistic prowess and cultural diversity. One such event is Navruz, the Persian New Year, celebrated with fervor and joy across the country. From traditional music and dance performances to vibrant street festivals, Navruz heralds the arrival of spring and the renewal of life. Another highlight of Uzbekistan's cultural calendar is the Silk and Spices Festival, held annually in the ancient city of Bukhara. This vibrant event pays homage to Uzbekistan's historic role as a hub of trade along the Silk

Road, featuring colorful parades, artisanal craft displays, and tantalizing culinary offerings. Uzbekistan's traditions, customs, and cultural events serve as a window into the soul of this enchanting land. From the timeless allure of its ancient cities to the vibrant celebrations of its festivals, Uzbekistan beckons travelers to embark on a journey of discovery and enlightenment. As the country continues to embrace its rich cultural heritage, it stands poised to enchant and inspire generations to come.

One of the biggest Uzbek holidays is Navruz! The translation of “Navruz” is a “new day”. It is an Oriental New Year celebrated on the 21st March. According to historians, the holiday is more than 3000 years old. It is the symbol of nature’s awakening! How do Uzbek people celebrate Navruz nowadays? Navruz is a family holiday; usually Uzbek people celebrate it together relatives and friends. Due to this event, the folk plant different types of trees and flowers everywhere. Local people get ready for Navruz in advance. In every “mahalla” (neighboring community) people do “khashars” (joint works). People, united by the common task of preparing for the holiday, bring the city or village into a proper festive look. On 21st March the festive fun begins. Ladies set festive tables in each “mahalla” (neighboring community)! There is such a sign – the richer the table will be, the richer the whole coming year will be! The main festive dishes are pilaf/plov, shurpa, and samsa with the first spring herbs. Also, on the table should be a variety of snacks, sweets and fruits. But the highlight of the program on this day is a plate with sprouted wheat! This dish must be on every festive table! From the grains of sprouted wheat, the main holiday delicacy is prepared – sumalak. Sumalak preparation process is a real ritual in which only women take part. The cooking process takes a whole day. Women, replacing each other, slowly stir the sprouted grains of wheat in a huge cauldron, which, thanks to their efforts, gradually turn into a thick, viscous brown mass. During the cooking process, women sing folk songs about spring and Navruz. They also make sacred wishes! When sumalak is ready, our people would love to distribute it to neighbors, friends, colleagues, relatives ...

Kupkari / Uloq

It is one of the ancient fierce games have been played by strong and brave horse riders for many centuries in Central Asian countries. In the past local rulers used to arrange such games to pick up the strongest and most clever guys for their armies. Nowadays it is still quite popular in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. Riders contend to grab a lifeless goat to deliver it to a designated spot. Usually, short but strong horses are chosen by riders because it is easier to pick up a goat from a ground. Riders mostly wear thick cotton jackets, trousers and headdresses with ear covering parts somehow to save themselves from the whips of other exited riders. An organizer puts expensive awards (ox, sheep, carpets, TV, car and etc.). The number riders will be minimum 20 and could reach to endless ... Despite the fact that riders have different professions, they do not play this game for earning or gaining awards, but they do just for passion (like a racer getting it by driving hyper cars!) Some travelers may mind the idea of riders' contending for the body of a lifeless goat; however, it is considered as an inseparable part of Central Asian nations' cultures. It is usually held in spring and autumn during special events: holidays, weddings, etc. Uzbekistan, once located on the crossroad of the Great Silk Road, attracts the world with its very colorful legends, ancient traditions, various beliefs, rich cultures and hospitable nation!

Beshik tuyi (Cradle ceremony)

And here is a joyous and important event – a new person has appeared! In the Uzbek family, the appearance of the baby is accompanied by the ancient ritual celebration “Besik Tuyi” – “Cradle ceremony”. This rite is usually performed on the seventh, ninth, eleventh, or fortieth day of the child's birth. On the day of the ceremony relatives of the wife bring a richly decorated cradle and necessary accessories for the child, as well as many different sweets, traditional Uzbek pies and baby toys, which wrap in tablecloth. Sounds of black, trumpet and tambourine announce the beginning of the rite. The house gathers a large number of guests who spend at the festive table, which is made with a rich meal. And while the guests are enjoying themselves, enjoying the game of musicians, celebrating and

having fun, the elderly women in the nursery perform the rite of the first hugging of the baby and putting it in the cradle. At the end of the ceremony, the child's eyes are traditionally arranged. Guests enter the children's room, admire the toddler and sprinkle the cradle with candies like "parvardi", crystalized sugar – "navat" and other sweets. According to the rite, people do it so that the life of the child was joyful and safe.

Fotikha tuyi / Engagement

A son has grown up, matured, reached the age of majority – it's time to start his own family. Mostly by tradition, parents themselves choose a bride for their son, matchmakers help them in this. The choice of the bride is taken with all responsibility, asking in detail about her family, getting to know the girl's relatives. All! The day of the engagement is coming – "Fotikha tuyi". On this day, guests gather in the house of the betrothed girl, among who are venerable old people and the chairman of the community. Matchmakers set out the purpose of their visit, after which the ritual "non sindirish" / "bread breaking" takes place, literally translated, this means "breaking the cake". After completing this interesting ancient rite, the young are considered engaged, and they fix a wedding day. The relatives of the bride generously present the relatives of the groom and matchmakers – they give each a "dasturkhon" (tablecloth) with two cakes and sweets, and also give gifts to the groom and his parents. From the moment of engagement, preparations for the wedding begin.

Uzbek wedding

In Uzbek society weddings are extremely significant events. The wedding consists of sub-events. First of all, the wedding day begins with a morning pilaf/plov arranged in the houses of the bride and groom, and pilaf/plov for the bride's house is prepared in the groom's house. The marriage in the registry office takes place after the imam of the local mosque reads the wedding prayer and declares them husband and wife in front of God. The key event of the wedding is the ceremony of farewell to parents, which takes place before the bride, accompanied by her friends, leaves her father's house and goes to the groom's

house. As soon as the bride crosses the threshold of the groom's house, the wedding celebration begins. Numerous guests gather at the festive table. Four or even five hundred guests at a traditional Uzbek wedding is quite common. The celebration is fun, bright, and incendiary. At the end of the wedding, another ancient ceremony is held – the ransom of the bride, which takes place in a room specially designated for the young. The groom escorts the bride to the door of the room, where she is usually met by a close family friend – “yanga”. In the room, the bride changes clothes and hides behind a special “gushanga” curtain. Accompanied by friends, the groom enters the room, where he is offered to give a ransom for the bride. Bargaining begins, as a result of which the groom symbolically redeems the bride from the “yanga”. At the end of this ceremony, the bride and groom remain alone in the room for the whole night. The next morning, the ceremony “Kelin salom” / “Bride's greeting” takes place. This ceremony means accepting the bride into a new family. Parents, relatives and friends of the groom gather in the yard, present gifts to the bride and bless her. The bride, in turn, greets everyone by bowing low. From this moment, a new family life begins.

Uzbek morning pilaf/plov

At what time is pilaf cooked in the morning? The ancient ritual of morning pilaf is not only a festive but also a memorial pilaf. Only men attend to it. The preparation of morning pilaf begins in the evening of the previous day, with the rite of shredding carrots – “sabzi tughrar”. The morning pilaf itself is prepared by the end of the morning prayer – “bomdod namozi”. It is the participants in the prayer who become the first to taste the freshly prepared morning pilaf. The beginning of the morning pilaf is announced by the sounds of “karnays” and “surnays” musical instruments. The guests sit down at the tables and, having completed the rite of wish – “fotikha”, proceed to the meal. First, they serve cakes and tea on the table, then pilaf in large plates, one plate is for two people. At the end of the meal, they make “fotikha” rite again. At the end of the morning pilaf, hosts present guests of honor with national men's dressing gowns –

“chapan”s. Cultural customs are important because they help define a society's identity, provide a sense of belonging and continuity, foster social cohesion, transmit values and beliefs across generations, and promote understanding and respect among different communities. They also add richness and diversity to human experiences, celebrating unique traditions and practices.

CONCLUSION

Uzbek cultural traditions and customs play a vital role in shaping the identity and cohesion of the Uzbek society. From vibrant celebrations like Navruz to intricate crafts like suzani embroidery, these customs reflect the rich history, values, and beliefs of the Uzbek people. Moreover, they serve as a bridge between generations, ensuring the transmission of cultural heritage and fostering a sense of belonging among community members. By preserving and celebrating these traditions, Uzbekistan not only honors its past but also enriches its present and future with the beauty and diversity of its cultural heritage. From the colorful festivals and ceremonies that mark significant milestones to the intricate rituals woven into everyday life, these customs provide a window into the soul of Uzbekistan. They serve as a source of pride and identity for Uzbek people, connecting them to their ancestors and uniting them in shared values and beliefs. Beyond their symbolic significance, Uzbek customs also play a practical role in fostering social cohesion and harmony. They provide a framework for interpersonal relationships, guiding interactions between individuals and communities. Whether it's the hospitality shown to guests or the respect accorded to elders, these customs promote mutual understanding and respect, strengthening the fabric of Uzbek society. Furthermore, Uzbek cultural traditions serve as a source of inspiration and creativity, fueling artistic expression and innovation. From the intricate designs of traditional textiles to the melodies of classical music, these customs have inspired generations of artists and artisans, shaping the cultural landscape of Uzbekistan and beyond. In an increasingly globalized world, preserving and celebrating Uzbek cultural traditions is more important than ever. They not only enrich the lives of Uzbek people but also contribute to the diversity

and richness of global culture. By embracing their cultural heritage with pride and enthusiasm, Uzbekistan ensures that its traditions will continue to thrive for generations to come.

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