

The ritual of “qo‘sh chiqarish” among Uzbeks and its territorial features (on the example of the Fergana Valley)

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Abstract. The settled population of the Fergana Valley is distinguished by a unique agricultural culture. It had a strong influence on the agriculture of the Kyrgyz, Kipchak, Kuramin, Yuzi, and Karakalpaks, who were engaged in cattle breeding in the past. Traditions and rituals associated with agriculture were formed on the basis of belief in the magical power of various agricultural cults. In such rituals as *khudoyi* (sacrifice), *kosh chiqarish* (plowing with an ox-drawn plow), *shokhmoylar* (lubrication of horns), *kosh oshi* (food prepared before plowing with an ox-drawn plow), performed before the start of spring work, ancient agrarian cults were preserved in syncretism with Islamic views.

Keywords: Ferghana, agriculture, peoples, sacrifice, qo‘sh chiqarish, shokhmoylar, qo‘sh oshi.

For citation: Sarimsokov A.A. The ritual of “qo‘sh chiqarish” among Uzbeks and its territorial features (on the example of the Fergana Valley). *Istoricheskaya etnologiya* [Historical Ethnology]. <https://doi.org/10.22378/he.2024-9-2.214-223>

Ритуал кош чикариши у узбеков и его территориальные особенности (на примере Ферганской долины)

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Резюме. Оседлое население Ферганской долины отличается уникальной земледельческой культурой. Оно оказало сильное влияние на земледелие киргизов, кипчаков, кураминцев, юзи, каракалпаков, занимавшихся в прошлом скотоводством. Традиции и обряды, связанные с земледелием, формировались на основе веры в магическую силу разных аграрных культов. В таких ритуалах, как *худойи* (жертвоприношение), *кош чикариши* (пахота плугом, запряженным волами), *шохмойлар* (смазывание рогов), *кош оши* (еда, приготовленная перед началом

пахоты плуг, запряженный быком), выполняемых перед началом весенних работ, древние аграрные культы сохранялись синкретично с исламскими воззрениями.

Ключевые слова: Фергана, земледелие, народы, жертвоприношения, пахота плугом, смазывание рогов, еда.

Для цитирования: Sarimsokov A.A. The ritual of “qo‘sh chiqarish” among Uzbeks and its territorial features (on the example of the Fergana Valley). *Историческая этнология*. 2024. <https://doi.org/10.22378/he.2024-9-2.214-223>

Farming culture was an important factor in the emergence and development of the first centers of human civilization.

The study of the history of farming is very important to scientifically analyse the socio-economic development of nations and the development of manufacturing forces, specific features of farming culture, the stages of formation and development of irrigated farming and the related urbanistic processes at different stages of history.

Ancient farming culture, traditional agriculture and related rituals and agrarian cults have always been one of the most relevant and interesting problems for historians, archaeologists and ethnologists. In particular, the Fergana Valley, one of the ancient agricultural oases of Central Asia, is unique with its characteristic farming culture. The sedentary nations of the Fergana Valley such as Uzbeks, Tajiks and Uyghurs, which have long-standing experience in farming, have always had their influence in the field of farming on semi-sedentary and semi-nomadic nations, such as Kyrgyz, Kipchak, Kurama, Turk, Yuz, Karakalpak, who were engaged in live-stock breeding in the past.

The customs and ceremonies related to this occupation in the nations, who had been engaged in sedentary farming since the ancient times, were formed on the basis of beliefs in the magical power of various agrarian cults. For this reason, many customs and rituals related to farming are based on pre-Islamic deification of natural phenomena and worship of gods of heaven and earth. Historical and ethnographic materials show that the ancient agrarian cults did not completely disappear after the introduction of Islam, but were preserved syncretically with Islamic views and even reached the 20th century over the ages (Ashirov, 2007: 129). The patron saint of farming – the cult of Baba Dekhkan, which appeared on the basis of such thoughts, was widespread among the nations of Central Asia (Basilov, 1970: 144). According to local beliefs, Khizr is also the patron of farming. According to the Islamic views, farming was founded by Adam (Snesarev, 1969: 219). In particular, the Islamic views related to farming are clearly reflected in the “Pamphlet of Farming”.

Like other nations of Central Asia, the Uzbeks of the Fergana Valley also started their spring agricultural work according to the local calendar from the time of the transition from Pisces (Hut) to Aries (Hamal) constellation, that is, simultaneously with Navruz celebrations. According to the current lunar calendar, it includes the period from March 21 to April 21.

In the first month Hamal in farmer's calendar, the days get warm, the grass begin to grow and this month is a time full-scale of farming activities. Therefore, there is a saying “*Hamal kirdi, amal kirdi*” (*Aries arrived, sprouting began*). Farmers, gardeners, and livestock breeders had a wide range of use of these folk beliefs, proverbs, and sayings about the unique climate, weather, and other features of this month, emerged on the basis of long observations and experiences.

In almost all Turkic Muslim nations, before the spring works begin, “*khudoyi*” (sacrifice) is performed near mosques and graves. This ceremony is often held at the beginning of March under the leadership of old farmers and elders. In the past, wheat and food products were collected from each household, but later, a certain amount of money was collected as well. A calf or a sheep was bought with the collected money from the market, it was slaughtered for sacrifice, and cooked *halim* (a dish made out of boiled wheat and meat) from its meat. Halim is a ritual dish cooked mainly in various religious and public ceremonies, in which slaughtered mutton and wheat are put into a pot filled with water and boiled for about a day. Before the meal was ready, the men of the village divided into three or four groups and cleaned the village ditches. At lunch time, when everyone gathered, they ate the food prepared for “*khudoyi*”.

In similar ceremonies held in the first half of the 20th century, if the number of dishes was not sufficient, the workers ate the food on their washed and cleaned hoes. The food was sent to those who could not attend the ceremony. After lunch, the village mullah recited verses of the Holy Qur'an and the elders devoted this divine reward to the pure souls of those who passed away, and prayed the God asking for help to be prosperous and blessed, to get a good harvest in farming and to realise other good intentions.

These activities were usually done before the Navruz holiday. The Navruz holiday, which was rich in various traditions and rituals, ended with the beginning of field works, ploughing in the fields.

It can also be observed in the Fergana Valley that the farmers visit sacred places with their families before starting their farming works and after harvesting.

Particularly, the farmers from Altiariq Region visit Khizr Buwa in Rishtan, and the farmers from Almas Region visit the shrine of Khoja Abdurakhman ibn Awf in Chust and the Sunbul tomb related to it.

The visitation to these sacred places in two seasons of the year, according to its genesis, must be a reflection of the natural cults, i.e. the ancient calendar rituals related to the awakening and sleeping of nature. In general, the ancient Turks mainly held various sacrificial ceremonies in spring and autumn (Traditional worldview..., 1988: 46).

Even in the present day, although the land is ploughed with the help of machinery, on the first working day of the new year, the custom of performing “*khudoyi*” in the fields and in the sacred shrines has been preserved. For example, “Sad piri komil” in Kasansay District of the Fergana Valley, “Buonamozor” in Chust district, “Dosti Khudo” in Altiariq district are among them.

And in tractor parks, sacrifices are made for the sake of Prophet David, who was considered the “Patron saint of Blacksmithing”, for the smooth operation of machinery throughout the year.

The farmers of the Fergana Valley ploughed mainly in autumn. Because if the land is ploughed in spring, it can cause difficulties for the farmers all year round to crush the cuttings of the land. Therefore, there is a folk proverb “If you plough land, plough in autumn, if you don't plough in autumn, plough it hundred times”. Wheat and barley are sown and watered in autumn and brought to a state of lawn. Spring ploughing is for spring crops. The rituals such as “*qo’sh chiqarish*” (ploughing with an ox drawn plough) and “*shokhmoylar*” (horn greasing) were held during the spring ploughing period, and according to archeological data, its historical roots date back to the late 3rd century BC and the early 2nd century BC. In particular, the rock paintings found in Soymalitosh in the Fergana Valley depict the “first ox drawn plough” ceremony. Yu.N. Golendukhin analysed 32 pictures of Soymalitosh paintings depicting a farmer ploughing a field with a pair of oxen, and found that the tribes who left their petroglyphs were mainly engaged in farming. The number of rays in the symbol of the sun reflected on the rock is consistently repeated as 7, 12, 13, 15, 28. This gives reason to conclude that our ancestors, who used the traditional calendar representing the dates of field work, were aware of certain astronomical and mathematical patterns (Golendukhin, 1971: 181-202).

A.I. Bernstam, who described the pictures depicting the situation of ploughing as a “ritual-religious tablet”, also mentioned that the roots of farming culture in Central Asia were deep (Bernstam, 1952: 61).

G.A. Pomaskina, who researched the ancient views related to the cult of the Sun on the basis of Soymalitosh materials, also admitted that these rock paintings depicted the ceremony of ploughing the land and sowing crops in spring. (Pomaskina, 1976: 29).

The day of the “*qo’sh chiqarish*” was determined by public accountants and village mullahs. Because the first working day was of great importance for the future harvest. Rituals were often held on Wednesdays and Saturdays of the week, which were considered lucky and remarkable.

On the first day of ploughing by an ox driven plough, the local farmers prepared a pair of their best oxen. In the morning on the day of “*qo’sh chiqarish*”, the oxen were fed by soaked straw with a little flour and bran on. An animal, usually a ram, is slaughtered for the sake of Baba Dekhkan, and “*qo’sh oshi*” (a meal cooked before starting to plough with an ox drawn plough), in some areas “*qo’sh go’ja*” (a meal cooked before starting to plough with an ox drawn plough) made from wheat was cooked and served as a ritual meal. Usually, the products for the ritual food were collected from the houses in the neighborhood. Every house tried to make their contribution hoping that the harvest would be plentiful, the life would be good, and the family members would be healthy in the coming year.

In some areas, the ceremonial food was cooked by the villagers at the head of the field. “Khudoyi soup” was cooked in Uychi District of the Fergana Valley while

the Karakalpaks in the Qairogochovul Village of the Mingbulok District an animal (usually a rooster) was slaughtered at the head of the field before sowing the seeds in the ground. They got a single teenager do this work with the intention of having a blessed and fruitful year. Sacrificing a rooster on the day of the “*qo‘sh chiqarish*” also existed in Bulgaria, where the bones of the rooster were buried in the ploughed land and it was believed that it would give power to the ground (Calendar customs..., 1983: 87). Women did not participate in the ceremony.

Until the ceremonial food was ready, the village mullah and senior farmers read the “Pamphlet of Farming” to the participants. According to the pamphlet, farmers should follow seven rules when ploughing the land and sowing seeds:

1. To be fair.
2. To be honest.
3. To be generous.
4. To believe in the unity of God.
5. To be in contact with respectable people.
6. To do what God commanded.
7. Not to try to deceive Allah.

It was believed that farmers who did not follow these rules could not get a good harvest. After that, they started working under the leadership of a senior farmer, asking God for a bountiful harvest and making good intentions.

On the eve of Navruz, on the eve of “*qozon tuldi*” (the pot is full) ceremony, if a delicious dish is prepared by filling the pots and filling all the pots with water, it is believed that the harvest will be plentiful in the coming year, and the pots filled with water will be blessed with God's grace. On this day, some oil, which the fried dough, a symbol of fertility, is fried in, is taken, and later during the ceremony of “*shokhmoylar*” they grease the horns, neck, and yokes of the oxen (Juraev, 2006: 83–90). According to the old people, if this was done, the horns of the oxen would be strong, the neck would not be injured by the yoke, and the oxen themselves would not get tired of work. In Kazakhs, an ox horn was greased in order to protect from an evil (Karmisheva, 1986: 56). Among the Uzbek Mangits in Khorezm, during the first sowing the seeds in spring, the horns of oxen were greased “for the sake of Adam” (Leonid, 1995:22).

Greasing the horns of oxen is probably one of the preserved manifestations of the belief in Central Asia that there is a special magical power in the horns of animals such as goats, rams, and mountain goats.

In all rituals related to farming, one can see that the cults of Baba Dekhkan and Khizr are prevalent. In each village, the oldest and most experienced farmer controlled the ceremonies and customs associated with taking the first plough to the field in spring, dedicating it to the patron of farming.

Among the various ethnic groups living in Central Asia, the first plough was brought by an old, respected elder of the village. What concerns the Caucasian peoples, among the Tabasaran and Lezgins, one person from the community slaughtered the ram and ploughed the land, while others did not interfere. If the harvest was good

that year, the same person would fulfill that work in the following year as well (Ragimova, 1987: 66). This work requires great responsibility from the person.

In general, at the beginning of any work in agriculture, there were old people, symbolised by Baba Dekhkan. The elder ploughed one, three or five times, and generally an odd number of times depending on his strength and then the first day of ploughing was finished in order to prevent the oxen from getting tired. In ancient Egypt, the first plough was driven by a pharaoh, by an emperor in China, and by kings in India. Their ministers sowed the seeds (Chibirov, 1976: 127). According to the ancient Indian epic “Mahabkhorat”, the king of the country took the burden of thousands of insects that died when the land was ploughed and started the first ploughing.

Uzbek-Karlucs also made “is” (*the ritual in which people cook and give away the food in order to please the spirits of jinn and for the sake of the deceased*) before ploughing the field for the first time in early spring. They fried the doughnuts in the hot oil in the pot. The spirits of deceased ancestors would enjoy the “is” during this process and would wish good luck to their loved ones. Neighbors and close relatives ate the doughnut together, and they even gave a little doughnut to the oxen. Then they greased the horns of the oxen with the oil and put on amulets. According to the custom, the first ploughing was started by one of the elders of the village (Shaniyazov, 1964: 51).

This ritual was divided into three stages among the Kipchaks of Kosonsoy district of the Namangan Region:

1. *Dastlov* (Preparation) – on the first day yokes were placed on the oxen, and the ceremonies such as “Shokhmoylar”, “Khudoyi” were held and the elders started the work.

2. *Kashlov* (Scratch) – the second day.

3. *Boshlov* (Starting) – on the third day, more land than the previous days was ploughed and the oxen were adapted to the work. After the ceremony, all the farmers led their oxen and returned to their homes and continued the celebration. In some regions, at the end of the ceremony, water was sprinkled on the ploughed land in intention of having abundance of water throughout the year. Such customs date back to the Zoroastrian era and are associated with the cult of fertility.

The first ploughing ceremony is called “Saban wedding” in Tatars and Bashkirds (Gareeva, 2012: 27; Sinitskaya, 2014: 106–110; Urazmanova, 1977: 94–100; Sharafutdinov, 1997). Saban means a double ox, ploughing the land with oxen (Makhmud, 2005: 379).

Among the Tatars “Saban wedding” has its own characteristics, in the past it was held in spring with the participation of relatives, but at present it is celebrated in summer state-wide as a multi-staged holiday (Rakaeva, 2018: 158–166).

Formerly, in “qo‘sh chiqarish” ceremonies Patir (*a big loaf of tandoor bread*) and Kulchas (*a small loaf of tandoor bread*) made from “Mother wheat”, which was collected from the wheat harvest of the previous year, were distributed to the participants. Oxen were also given some of these loaves of bread and fumigate with wild

ru. The seed grain was also mixed with “mother wheat” grain. If this was done, it was believed that it would be possible to get a bountiful harvest in the future. In many nations of the world, there were customs such as mixing nuts and eggshells with seeds, sowing the seeds when the moon was full, and placing an ax in the seeds in order to protect them from worms (Pirkulieva, 1975: 159; Sokolova, 1979: 148).

Sowing the seeds was entrusted to an experienced farmer. The farmer brought a handful of grain close to his mouth and said: “*Bismillahir Rahmanir Rahim! May Baba Dekhkan help us!*”, “*For the bird, the worm, the ants*”, “*For the orphans and the widows, the rest is mine*”, “*Give to the many, give to me among the many*”, “*Let one be a hundred, and a hundred be a thousand*” and then began sowing.

According to ancient views, the ox is a symbol of the man and the land is the symbol of the woman, and ploughing the land with an ox is considered as their mutual marriage (Tolstov, 1947: 282–341; Sharafutdinov, 2005: 42). It is said in “Avesta” about that: “If a farmer ploughs the land that has not been ploughed for a long time, this land will be satisfied with the farmer. It is like a pretty, young woman was yearning for an offspring and she reached her goal becoming pregnant from the man she desired.” (Avesta..., 2007: 22). Comparison of the land to the woman and the image of it as “mother land” can be seen in other nations as well (Tsybikov, 1981: 170).

In general, the ceremonies called by the names “qo‘sh chiqarish”, “shokhmoylar”, “qo‘sh oshi” were the first working day of the farmers in the new year, and they tried to welcome it as joyfully as possible. This is a view of the ancient peoples that the way the New Year is greeted, the same mood will accompany the whole year.

In conclusion it can be pointed out that the traditional farming rituals of the Uzbeks of the Fergana Valley are one of the oldest and most stable forms of folk traditions in terms of their appearance and existence. In the folk traditions related to farming, not only farming traditions and rich agrotechnical experiments, but also the traditional way of life of the people, ethnic history, traditions, religious views, in short, its past are reflected entirely. In addition, during the ethnological analysis of customs and ceremonies related to farming, it can be noticed that many aspects of farming culture have been preserved from ancestors to generations in the form of various customs and ceremonies.

Конфликт интересов

Автор заявляет об отсутствии конфликта интересов.

Conflict of interests

The author declares no relevant conflict of interests.

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Поступила в редакцию / Received 28.03.2024

Доработана после рецензирования / Revised 15.04.2024

Принята к публикации / Accepted 22.04.2024