



**THE ETHNOGRAPHY OF THE JIZZAKH REGION**

**Kengashev Islom Mamasoli ugli**

Samarkand State Universiteti

Student of Master's degree

at the Department of Archaeology

+998 94 576 98 98

**Abstract**

Like other historical-ethnographic regions of Uzbekistan, the Jizzakh oasis is considered a unique, important micro-ethnographic region, and due to its convenient geographical location and its location at the crossroads of large caravan routes for thousands of years, extremely diverse cultures and traditions. It is said that it can be noted as a place formed by connecting and harmonizing with each other.

**Аннотация**

Как и другие историко-этнографические регионы Узбекистана, Джизакский оазис считается уникальным, важным микроэтнографическим регионом, а благодаря удобному географическому положению и расположению на пересечении крупных караванных путей на протяжении тысячелетий чрезвычайно разнообразны культуры и традиции. Говорят, что его можно отметить как место, образованное путем соединения и гармонизации друг с другом.

**Key words:** Darvishona, palate raising, food, rituals, chillaguzaron, momom oshi, sumalak, Jizzakh oasis, customs, economic traditions, cultural heritage, felting, dry sewing.

**Ключевые слова:** Дарвишона, воспитание вкуса, еда, обряды, чилагузарон, момом оши, сумалак, Джизакский оазис, обычаи, хозяйственные традиции, культурное наследие, валяние, сухое шитье.

The economic life of the Jizzakh oasis extends beyond the fertile fields to vibrant markets that serve as centers of trade and commerce. These markets are not only places of economic exchange, but also centers of cultural cooperation. Every transaction is steeped in tradition, and both buyers and sellers follow established customs. One such tradition is the ceremonial exchange of salt and bread during transactions. This symbolic act represents mutual respect and goodwill between the parties involved. In addition, the markets are decorated with colorful fabrics and traditional crafts, creating an attractive environment that reflects the cultural diversity of the region.





Felting is made from sheep's wool, mainly from young lambs, which is soft. The sheep's wool is thoroughly washed, cleaned, and dyed. When colors are taken, painted after that, all kinds of symbols and pictures were drawn from the sack (kandir) and dyed wool, and boiling salt water was poured into it, and it was folded into a circle with women's wrists and kicked by women and young children. Let the bride and groom marry each other and walk together. In order to have many children, to protect them from all kinds of evil, they sewed a square shape with different colored fabrics.<sup>1</sup> Among the paintings related to marriage preserved among the inhabitants of the Jizzakh oasis, it was noticed that the scope of the researches conducted on the customs of "going to the bride (burundi)", "collecting dowry", "stirring", etc., etc., is not very extensive. Especially among the Uzbeks who speak the Kipchak dialect, some traditions related to family and marriage are somewhat different from the traditions of the majority of the Uzbek population living in our country and neighboring countries. At present, the most common weddings in Uzbeks are held according to the new ceremony, with the consent of the bride and groom, parents, close relatives and friends. In many places, the traditional "fatiha oshi", "send sarpo", "consultation wedding", "god introduction", "haitlik", "girls' party", "padar oshi" and other pictures or pictures are still practiced. After that, customs such as "chimildiq yigdi", "bride's greeting", "bride saw", "challar" or "groom's call" are held. Of course, such weddings require a lot of money. These customary rituals are a heavy burden for families with many children, often leading them to fall into debt. And the "kalin" that has been preserved until now will be burdened with even more costs. It is now presented in a modernized form as a "groom's gift" or "milk fee". In fact, it is one of the common customs among Turkic peoples before Islam. For example, it is mentioned in the Orkhun-Yenisei inscriptions of the VI century, in the works of Mahmud Koshgari. Some researchers say that it is a custom associated with evaluating the value of women in society as a labor force, while others say that it arose with the beginning of their social inequality. In order to justify this, the example of being forced to work or pay in money according to the ancient custom is shown. In some cases, following the custom of exchanging a girl instead of a dowry, i.e., the dowry was not paid. After the advent of Islam, the payment of fat was legalized. This custom is still preserved, and it is considered a big money in South Uzbekistan, Khorezm and Karakalpakstan. The

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<sup>1</sup> Torayev M. "Century tradition of our national culture". "The combination of science and innovation in the scientific study of folklore, language and culture." Collection of scientific and practical conference. Tashkent, 2021, page 501.





customs and traditions related to family and marriage of the peoples living in Central Asia and neighboring regions, especially the Turkic peoples, are similar in many respects.

This is confirmed by various rituals and traditions preserved in the Uzbek, Kazakh, Kyrgyz and Tajik families of the Jizzakh oasis. In the process of getting acquainted with the weddings held in the settlements of the Jizzakh oasis, in particular, one can come across many pictures and customs related to the bride and groom. Most of the traditions and ceremonies related to marriage and marriage are almost the same in the oasis as in other regions of our country. Especially in matchmaking, betrothal, wedding, etc. Since practices such as matchmaking, engagement, wedding ceremonies, and so on are relatively well-studied due to their common occurrence, and the traditions related to in-laws and the like are more familiar, we find it necessary to focus on customs and traditions that are less commonly encountered in our country.<sup>2</sup>

This tradition is found among some Turkic peoples, particularly among the Karakalpaks, in the forms of "murindiq," "murindiq ata," and "murindiq ana," meaning "to spiritually and symbolically act as a father and mother for a newly formed family, to be a guardian." Among the Bashkirs, the words morondoq (or murundiq) are used to refer to "a surrogate father / mother / daughter," signifying the role of a person taking on a parental or guardian-like role in the family. This custom is widespread in Bashkir families.

According to this tradition, when a bride joins her new family, a number of specific rituals are performed. Special attention is given to the bride by other women, especially the new bride's relatives and other significant female figures from the family. One of these women is chosen to be the "murindiq" or "surrogate mother," who, as a second mother to the bridegroom, is tasked with guiding the newlyweds through the secrets of married life. This practice is an ancient and beautiful tradition aimed at educating young people about family life. In old Turkic, the word burundiq (similar to murindiq) was used to mean "bridle" or "rein," symbolizing guidance and control.

There are certain conditions for assigning a "burundiq" or "surrogate father and mother," such as selecting relatively younger couples, preferably from the groom's close relatives or respected figures in the community. These individuals must have good character, a good reputation, and be known for their exemplary behavior and

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<sup>2</sup> Abdurahmonov Q.X., Abduramanov X.X. "Demografiya" — Noshir, Tashkent, 2011, p. 246.





manners.

The development of national ceremonies is greatly influenced by material and spiritual culture, natural environment, and economic relations. Over time, these customs have become more firmly established, passed down from generation to generation, ensuring their continuity. For example, in the oasis, eating horse or camel meat is forbidden for pregnant women, as it was believed to delay childbirth. Such beliefs were common among the peoples of Central Asia. It was long thought that consuming horse, camel, rabbit, duck, or fish meat, or eating certain foods like the head and bones of animals during pregnancy, could result in physical defects in the unborn child. Furthermore, it was believed that fish meat was so pure that even a woman who had just given birth was not allowed to eat it for forty days, as she was considered impure during this period. However, nowadays, it is common for pregnant women to be fed fish, as it is thought to be beneficial for strength.

Farmers in the region revered Bobodehqon as the patron saint of agriculture, while Khojai Khizr was considered the guardian of agricultural abundance. Hazrati Sulaymon Ota was honored as the protector of water and agriculture. In addition, various rituals, including offerings and prayers to ancestors, were performed to ensure a bountiful harvest of wheat, the main crop for farmers.

One of the beautiful traditions among our people is the "Tanglay Ko'tarish" ceremony, performed to pray for a newborn's future well-being. During this ritual, a date fruit is used to touch the infant's palate with a sweet treat, symbolizing a blessing for a long, prosperous life.<sup>3</sup>

Muslims from Madinah would often bring their newborn children to the presence of our Prophet (PBUH). The Prophet would take them in His arms, kiss them, bless them, raise them up, and pray for them.

In general, in the region, several rituals are performed related to the healthy birth and growth of children. Among the people, wheat is often symbolized as a sign of prosperity and fertility, and one such traditional dish made from wheat is called qovurmoch (in the local Khangir dialect, it is called qo'rmoch). This dish is very old, made by soaking wheat in salty water, then boiling and frying it in a pot. This tradition has remained preserved in the region up until today. Especially when a new child is born into a family, after the end of the chilla (the forty-day post-birth period) and when both the baby and the mother have safely passed through this time, the family prepares

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<sup>3</sup> Rashidov S.R. "Kattaqo'rg'on tumanidagi joy nomlari va urug'lar". *Journal of Universal Science Research*, ISSN (E): 2181-4570, 2023.





govurmoch from wheat. This dish is distributed to neighbors and children, and then the family visits the home of the mother or a close relative, or even the home of a respected elder or spiritual leader in the community. At the very least, the family will visit their neighbors. This custom of visiting is referred to as Chilla qochdi in Uzbek and Chillaguzoron in Tajik.

There are also customs related to the head and bones of sheep that have remained preserved among the people. For example, if a person develops a wound on the upper part of the neck, the head of a sheep is carefully cleaned, cooked, and after the elders offer prayers for healing, the meat is consumed by the person who is unwell. When a Quran recitation is held for the deceased, a dish made from the head and bones of a slaughtered sheep is placed before the men, and everyone must taste the dish. The eyes of the sheep's head are not given to young children or to people who still have parents, as both eyes are seen as symbolic of the father and mother. These eyes are instead given to orphans or elderly individuals as a sign of respect. The tongue of the sheep is considered the sweetest part, and it is given to children, so they may speak well in the future.

When a sheep is slaughtered, pieces of its lungs, liver, and other parts are distributed to the family members based on traditional beliefs. For example, it is thought that the liver should be given to those who are sick, as it is believed to help with healing. Similarly, the lungs are given with the belief that they will enhance eyesight, and the hair of the younger members is shared to promote growth. The leftover ribs are often given to orphans, as it is believed that consuming these will benefit the orphan.

Among the people of the Jizzakh oasis, one of the most famous pre-birth rituals is the momolar oshi (the grandmothers' soup). This ritual is believed to help ensure that the pregnant woman's path is cleared and that the child will be born healthy. This is a ritual performed by the mother-in-law during the pregnant woman's term. During the momolar oshi ceremony, the oldest grandmothers of the neighborhood or village are invited, and a special dish made from flour is prepared for them. The preparation of this dish resembles a thick yogurt soup, where onions are fried in oil, then water is added. Next, yogurt is mixed in to make a creamy soup. Instead of rice, dough is used in the soup, and salt is added to taste. For the final touch, qayla (a special type of sauce) is prepared by heating yellow oil and adding minced meat, which is then poured over the soup. Apart from this dish, pilaf and cho'zma (a type of bread) are also prepared during the ceremony. The qayla soup, in particular, is widely prepared in households during the evening prayer (iftar) during Ramadan, as it is light on the





stomach after fasting, but also nourishing.

This dish is believed to be very beneficial due to its rich, oily content and because it is easy to digest after a long day of fasting. The meat and the fried yellow oil are believed to provide great nutritional benefits.<sup>4</sup>

Thanks to independence, our national and religious holidays were restored. During the Navruz holiday, traditional dishes such as sumalak and halim began to be prepared once again. It is noteworthy that Navruz and sumalak are both prepared specifically in the spring season. After winter, during the transition to the warmth of spring, various medicinal herbs grow, and dishes are made from different plants. During this period, people's bodies crave vitamin-rich foods.

Sumalak is particularly beneficial for improving the digestive system and strengthening the immune system. This dish, with a history spanning over three thousand years, is made from sprouted wheat and barley grass. The name sumalak comes from the old Turkic term meaning sprouted wheat or barley. Some historians believe the name sumalak originated from the Persian word samani (wheat sprouts), while others suggest it refers to sumalak meaning "thirty angels." According to a popular legend, the daughters of our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and the wife of Hazrat Ali, Bibi Fatima, once found themselves starving. They placed various herbs in a pot to boil, and when they checked it in the morning, the dish was transformed into sumalak, a divine meal. Another version of the story suggests that sumalak comes from the word simalak, meaning "thirty angels." It is said that when everyone else was sleeping at dawn, the angels would add salt to the sumalak, making it sweet.

There is also a belief among the people that the power of sumalak lasts until the next Navruz. It is considered a symbol of health, the new season, and the arrival of a new year. Traditionally, preparing sumalak is not something just anyone would do. It was usually prepared by older, wise, and experienced women who had raised many children and had a pure heart. The preparation of sumalak was accompanied by joy and celebration, with prayers offered for the souls of ancestors, asking for blessings for a prosperous year.

Before making sumalak, women would prepare qatlama (a type of flatbread) and cho'zma (a stretched dough) to release steam. Special prayers and blessings would be recited, and women would say, "It is not my hand, but Bibi Fatima's hand," while starting the preparation. The process of sprouting the wheat was carefully done. The wheat, sown in the fall, would be cleaned, spread out at home, and watered regularly.

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<sup>4</sup> Toshtemirov N. B. "Jizzax xalq qo'shiqchiligida folklor" Toshkent 1993-yil. P. 122





The sprouting process had to be done with clean hands and in a state of ritual purity. If the wheat grew too much, the sumalak would turn bitter. Therefore, the wheat used for making sumalak was grown in a clean place to avoid contamination, ensuring that no impure or unclean person's eyes would fall upon it.

In conclusion, the customs and rituals related to marriage and family formation in the Jizzakh oasis reflect a deep connection with our ancestors' traditions. These customs continue to play an important role today, helping to strengthen family bonds and maintain close kinship ties. The history and traditions of wedding ceremonies in the region hold a unique place and continue to be a vital part of the cultural heritage.

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