Karakalpak Calendar - Mythological Legends

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Abstract: The article deals with genre peculiarities, ideological-thematic direction of calendar – mythological legends. It also reveals the historical bases of creation of such types of legends. Historical principles of these legends are revealed on the base of rich folk materials in connection with notions (ideas) of the people of primitive society including cults of nature, origin of time accounting, as well as with mythological ideas, popular superstitions (beliefs) and spiritual values of Iranian and Turkic peoples.

The object of the research are legends, widespread among Turkic peoples of Central Asia, myths and legends of Iranians about origin of time accounting, information adduced in ancient written records as well. In the article comparative historical, historical-genetic and structural-typological methods are used.

Keywords: Calendar, time measurement, public holidays, religious holidays, life of people, mythological beliefs, legends.

INTRODUCTION. There are oral folk arts in Karakalpak folklore providing us with certain periods meaning the change of seasons, the origin of the names of the periods related to labour season, also about the origin of months, days and nights and other measurements of time, the dates of ceremonies and festivals related to time, and the origin of folk festivals. In Folklore Studies, they are considered as a kind of legends, and the term Calendar - mythological legends is used to denote them.

METHODOLOGY. Some scientific research has been carried out on Calendar - mythological legends in the field of world Folk Studies. For example, N. B. Braginskii, G.P. Agapkina, G.P. Snesarev, N.P. Lobacheva, G. Gyilmanov, B. Sarimsakhov, M. Juraev, M. Pirmatov, and M. Rizaeva have conducted research work on them.

Oral works with short plots, which are used to explain the mythological beliefs connected to the traditional calendar, the change of seasons, the causes of changes in weather, and give information on the origin of the years, months and days, seasonal celebrations, festivals, and people’s holidays are called mythological works on the Calendar.[1, p.80]

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS. The historical bases of the mythological legends are connected to the surroundings of the ancient people, natural cults and the mythological, imaginary beliefs related to the origin of time measurement.

Ancient calendar myths are used to explain certain periods of time beginning with calendar concepts, such as years, months, days, nights, summers, winters and ending with cosmic time scale, age measurements in the mythological way [1, p.81].

Ancient people used different methods of measuring time. In every day life, when carrying out such seasonal activities as farming, pasturing cattle, hunting, fishing, travelling, they took into consideration the seasonal change of weather conditions, observing the phenomena taking place during the setting of the day and night, especially the movement of the celestial bodies (the moon, the sun, the stars). They believed that certain forces of nature ruled these mythical events.
Proceeding from these beliefs, they created myths about gods holding sway over the time and natural cults. The most ancient types of the calendar legends are of the same root as the myths about natural cults. According to the folklore researcher M. Juraev: in old times, each village had its own counter. They could predict what kind of weather they would have the following month, based on the experience of their ancestors, observing different changes in the nature, the plants, animal behavior and the places of celestial bodies. They could even predict what kind of spring there would be by examining the leaves falling down in autumn, birds migrating to warm countries, and the amount of rainfall. According to the information of the counters, in the past, there were such methods of measuring time, such as “shamsii takhvim”, “khamarei takhvim”, judiz esabi” (star counting), “dikhan esabi” (peasant’s counting) “sharwa esabi” (cattle breeder’s counting), “mushe esabi” (limb counting), “khus esabi” (bird counting) that is “dolgha esabi” (wave counting), “dauis esabi” (voice counting), toghal or tukhush esabi”, “shille esabi” and the stories about their origin are classified as calendar legends.[2, p.5]

Calendar legends, during their mythological and historical process of development, the renewal of the mythical concepts, were also enriched with the new ideas and religious concepts of Zarathustra, Buddha, Christian and Muslim religions born in the different layers of the tribal-feudal, feudal-patriarchal societies, and along with the information on time measurement and dates related to calendar, they also advocated religion, and traditions among people.

Calendar legends are studied divided into two types in, accordance with their ideological and thematic content.[1, p.84]

Calendar – mythological legends on the origin of time measurement (calendar) and the measurements of the seasons, months, days and nights.

1. Calendar-mythological legends on celebrations, traditions related to calendar time;

There are certain days full of weather changes called “ayamauiz” (reckless) which set in just during the period when the winter ends and the spring arrives. In these days, the weather may be cold to a certain degree, a cold wind may blow, and it also may rain or even snow. People describe these days as “Reckless six days, stronger than months of winter” or “Reckless six days, enraged, cold days” and created various legends on why these weather phenomena take place and why these days are called “reckless”. According to those legends, “Once upon a time there lived an old woman called Ayamauiz. She had ninety sons. Before the start of the winter, she called her sons and said: My sons now I am old. Therefore, I cannot afford to freeze the ground by spluttering snowstorms, raising gales. To crown it all, I am too old and cannot run around to spread the frost. Therefore, I will divide the ninety days of the winter among ninety of you. You must spread the cold for ninety days taking turns. You are still young, spread cold winds without stopping. If the hooves of the dear in the mountains do not freeze and the water boiling in the kettle does not turn into ice, I will not be satisfied with you. Now, get down to your work industriously! Then she went down to her underground den in order to go to sleep. Her sons agreed to do what their mother told them and got down to business.

Each of the ninety sons was on duty one day and sent cold, snow, and rains to the surrounding area. However, some of them, sometimes, being busy with games, forgot their duties. As a result, some days were warm in winter. Thus, the ninety days of winter finished. When the days became warmer and grasses started to grow, Ayamauiz came out of her den and saw the spring. There was not any snowstorm. People were busy with sowing seeds. Seeing this Ayamauiz, the old woman, enraged so much that she gathered her ninety sons and said: - ninety of you together could not do what I do alone, I am not satisfied with your finishing the winter like this. Saying this she took out cold winds from her winter sack, ran back and forth, and started the winter again. However, hard she tried, she was able to prolong the winter only for six days. The coming spring did not give in to her. Finally, she was very angry and went back to her den crying. [3, p. 25]

In her article folklorist M. Rizaeva mentioned that the mythological legends were also widely
spread in Uzbek, Tajik, Karachai – Balkar and Lezgin folklore. She also said that some various plots of this legend were found in Samarkand, Bukhara, Khorezm regions, and these seasonal days were called “Kempir kunleri” (old woman days), “aiemi azhuz”, “azhuz”, and quoted opinions of Abu Raikhan Beruni and Nasriddun Burkhaniddin Rabghuzii to explain the reasons why they were called so.

There are some variants of legends in the works by Abu Raikhan Beruni throwing light on why the Ayamauiz days were called “Kempir kunlery (Old woman days). For example, a woman took off her warm cotton clothes feeling the warmth of the air, and died of cold raging those days. Therefore, they were called “kempir kunleri”. According to the scientist, these days fell on 26 Shubat (February).[4, p.298]

Nasriddun Burkhaniddin Rabghuzii mentioned the variants of the Ayamauiz days, which absorbed Islamic religious concepts, in the work “Khisasi Rabghuzii”.

According to its story line, the God got very angry with people called Od living in Arabia for disobeying Him and falling from grace, and decided to kill them by exposing to severe cold. An old woman by the name Miz saw the approaching black clouds before anybody else, made prayers and apologized to the God for his people’s sins. Then the prophet Jabrail ordered the prophets responsible for winds to open the wind sacks as little as the eye of the needle. At the behest of the God there were winds, rain and snow for seven days and nights, and the Od people died out. Only an old woman by the name Miz survived. Therefore, the seven days, which set in during the period when winter turns into spring, are called “aiemi azhuz” that is “kempir kunlery” (old woman days).[5, p.48]

In his book “Esteliker” (Monuments), Abu Raikhan Beruni said that various nations had various beliefs and traditions of defining days, nights and years and cited a few legends relating to them. The seasonal time with changeable weather conditions, which later became “Mina tuni” festival celebrated as a calendar holiday by Khorezmians, is mentioned in the work. In his opinion, Padishah Mina had a wife. One day she came out of her palace in a good mood. It was springtime and she had silk clothes on. Intoxicated by wine, she fell down and went to sleep at once. At night she died because of the cold. Everyone was surprised by the cool spring day killing a woman and celebrated the day as a particular, rare date not happening in a certain time. Ancient Khorezmians called the feast day after that woman “Mina tun” (Mina night). At that night people usually gathered under vapor and smoke smelling the smell of a ready meal. They thought that those activities would drive away evil spirits which brought devils.[6, p.39]

We have other traditions, ceremonies and holidays, which appeared in our culture with the advent of the Islam religion and in accordance to its requirements. These traditions, ceremonies and festivals are held in accordance with the day, night, and month calendar time measurement. There are numerous mythological legends describing the emergence of these dates. For example, the legends about the origin of “Sapar Aiy”, (the second month of the Muslim Lunar Calendar) “Oraza Aiy” (the ninth month of the Muslim Lunar Calendar) “Kurban Hait” festival (Greater Eid), and other traditions and ceremonies. The ceremony of “Kadir Tunin kutiu”, elaborated in accordance with Muslims religion, is celebrated overnight from 27 to 28 of the month of “Oraza Aiy”. According to Muslim religion the holy book Koran fell from sky to prophet Muhammad at that night; therefore, that night is considered holy. People who keep the fast make prayers facing Qibla at that night and get into spiritual contact with the God.

Folklorist M. Juraev considers that the month of Sapar (the second month of the Muslim Lunar Calendar) appeared during hegira calendar, and speaks about various Uzbek beliefs and traditions relating to this month.[2, p.259]

Nauryz festival is also a ceremony, a folk festival associated with the calendar time measurement system. Nauryz festival’s origin is also connected to our ancestors’ polytheistic beliefs. It evidently, it appeared on the basis of their beliefs in the sky, the sun, and the earth. They understood that without warmth and light, the whole universe would be covered with pitch
darkness and there would be no existence. Therefore, they looked forward to spring during frosty winter days. In accordance with their understanding, they held ceremonies dedicated to the sun, the great power, the source of existence, light and warmth.

Based on this, the religion of Mithraism (worshipping the sun), and on its basis the fire worshipping religions came into existence. It is known that Nauryz festival has been celebrated in Khorezm provinces since three and half – four thousand centuries ago. The origin of this festival is related to the mythological views peculiar to the periods preceding the Zoroastrian religion. However, the Zoroastrian religion paid much attention to this festival. According to its canons the world was divided into two parts and night was opposed to day while the sky to the earth. These opposite sides cannot live without each other. They understood the Sun as the source of existence of all living beings, while they considered the earth as the mother who receives sunrays and gives fruit to man. The fire was regarded as the Sun’s child on the earth and they made fires to drive away the frost of the winter.

Our people have kept numerous legends, which give information on the origin of Nauryz festival. In one of the legends about Padishah Suleiman kept by Karakalpak people, the Padishah loses his wonderworking ring called Angushtar, which led to his loss of his kingship. However, one day he found his ring, and it enabled him to regain his authority and return to the throne. After that, his subjects started to celebrate that day as a festival naming it “A New Day, A New Era”. This day means “Nauryz” that is a new day. [6, p.39]

Other legends associate the origin of this festival with the origin of fire. According to one of them, one day when Jamshid was hunting for hares in the Mazandaran forests, a miraculous snake fell into his trap. Seeing it, Jamshid shot it at once with his bow, but the snake went under the earth. The arrow hit a stone and a spark from the strike hit the dry grass causing a large fire. Up to that time, people did not know what the fire was and how it was made. Therefore, the crowd of people who saw the fire were astonished by the magnificent phenomenon, and started to worship it.

From then on, people thought the fire to be an invaluable thing, and tried not to put it out. The day on which Jamshid created the fire was called “Nauryz”, (a new day) and people started to celebrate it every year.

In Halim Termezi’z book “Nauryznama” (A Book about Nauryz) the description of what will happen in the nature and people’s lives, and what kind of harvest will be in the vegetable fields and orchards if Nauryz Festival falls on a certain day of the week, is given. If Nauryz falls on Friday, it will be connected to the star of “Zukhra” (Venus). Consequently, happiness and prosperity will be that year. There will be frequent rains; the winter will be long and bitterly cold. Prices will be low, but they will be soaring at the end of the year. Our ancestors carried out their farming activities according to this kind of predictions.

In his book “Nauryznama” Omar Haiam wrote “the cause of the origin of Nauryz is related to the two cycles of the environment. First of them is as follows: The sun in the one fourth of every 365 day and night comes back to its original place when it passes 1 minute of the month of Hamal (March). Having understood it, Jamshid called the day Nauryz and set up a tradition to celebrate it as a holiday”.

Overall, the information on the origin of Nauryz Festival has undergone different changes and reached our era as the legends.

CONCLUSION. In conclusion, calendar-mythological legends originated due to our ancestors’ mythological beliefs in measuring time, and thanks to their astronomical knowledge acquired after observing changes in the weather conditions, movements of celestial bodies and life experience. Legends of this type have been heard since the time immemorial to give information on certain dates on which the change of seasons take place, and to explain the origins of the names of the periods related to labour, the different methods of time measurement, such as months, days, nights etc, and the origin of ceremonies, holidays, and folk festivals.
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