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HISTORICAL-CULTURAL AND ONOMASTIC FEATURES OF THE HEORTONYMS NAVRUZ AND MEHRJAN IN THE WORK “THE CHRONOLOGY OF ANCIENT NATIONS”

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ABSTRACT: *This article examines the historical-cultural and onomastic features of the heortonyms Navruz and Mehrjan, recorded in the work “The Chronology of Ancient Nations” by the great encyclopedic scholar Abu Rayhan al-Biruni. Based on the information provided in the work concerning the calendars, festivals, customs, and rituals of ancient peoples, the article analyzes the origin, naming, essence, and role of the Navruz and Mehrjan festivals in the life of the people. It also highlights the etymological characteristics of these heortonyms, the forms in which they were used among different peoples and in various regions, and their connection with natural phenomena, seasonal changes, agricultural culture, and ancient worldviews.*

Keywords: *heortonym, Mehrjan, Navruz, onomastic unit, terminological dictionaries, events, festival.*

The work “The Chronology of Ancient Nations” by the great encyclopedic scholar Abu Rayhan al-Biruni, who lived in the 10th–11th centuries, plays an important role in studying the festivals of the peoples inhabiting Central Asia, including the territory of present-day Uzbekistan. “*The Chronology of Ancient Nations*” is one of the unique and ancient written sources that has preserved and transmitted valuable information about the

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history, socio-economic life, political, philosophical, and religious beliefs and practices of ethnic groups that lived and interacted with one another in the past in such regions as Transoxiana, Khorasan, Iran, Arabia, Africa, Azerbaijan, and Europe¹. In this work, Biruni provides invaluable information of historical and cultural significance about notable days, religious festivals, and customs in the calendars of the ancient Iranians, Khwarazmians, Sogdians, Romans, Jews, Syrians, Christians, Indians, and other peoples.

In terminological dictionaries devoted to onomastics, the proper names of various holidays, festivals, commemorative days, as well as ceremonies and events of this kind are referred to as heortonyms (Greek *heortē* — festival + *onoma* — proper name)².

The theory of festivals was first studied in the 1930s by M. M. Bakhtin. In his work “Rabelais and His World: Carnival and the Culture of the Middle Ages”, he formulated the fundamental concepts of the theory of the festival. It should be noted that his views remain an important source for researchers even today.

Abu Rayhan al-Biruni did not state without reason in “*The Chronology of Ancient Nations*”: “Just as the Sun and the heavens have two eyes, Navruz and Mehrjan are the two eyes of time”³. The work contains information about the custom of distributing sugar to one another during the festivals of Navruz and Mehrjan in ancient times:

*According to the account of the Baghdadi Mobad Azarbod, the reason for this was that on the day of **Navruz**, sugarcane appeared in the kingdom of Jamshid, although it had not been known until that time. Jamshid saw juice dripping from a moist reed. He tasted it and discovered that it was pleasantly*

¹ Mirzaxmedova O. “Qadimgi xalqlardan qolgan yodgorliklar” asarida Jamshid mifoantroponimi xususida // Образование наука и инновационные идеи в мире. 2026/1 часть. № 99. – В. 152.

² Бегматов Э., Улуков Н. Ўзбек ономастикаси терминларининг изоҳли луғати. – Наманган: НамДУ нашри, 2006. – Б. 24.

³ Беруний. Танланган асарлар. I том. –Т.: Фан, 1968 . – Б. 255.



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sweet. He then ordered that its juice be extracted and sugar produced from it. The sugar was collected on the fifth day and presented to one another as a congratulatory gift. The same custom was also observed during the festival of Mehrjan ⁴.

Mehrjan, Mehrgan — a festival celebrated in autumn around the autumnal equinox. The name of this festival was derived from the name of the seventh month in the ancient Persian calendar, covering the period from September 23 to October 22⁵. In ancient Khwarazm, Mehrjan was known as Chiriruj, while among the Sogdians it was known as Nimsarda. It was a festival reflecting the autumnal equinox, the completion of the harvest, and preparations for winter. From the 10th to the 15th centuries, it was regarded as the second major festival after Navruz and also served as the midpoint of the year. Biruni gives a detailed account of this heortonym in “*The Chronology of Ancient Nations*. ”

*Mehrmah. Its first day is Hormuz-ruz. This is the second autumn season and, as described above, is a festival for the whole population. The sixteenth day, that is, Mehr-ruz, is a great and glorious feast. It is known as **Mehrjan** and its name corresponds to that of the month. The interpretation of this word is “love of the soul.” Some say that “Mehr” is the name of the Sun, and that the Sun appears in the world on this day, which is why the festival was named after it. Evidence for this is that wearing a crown decorated with an image of the Sun and the chariot in which it travels was one of the ceremonies performed by the Khosrows on this day⁶.*

Thus, the meaning of the word Mehrjan can be interpreted in two ways: first, as “love of the soul,” and second, as “Sun.” Like Navruz, the festival of

⁴ Беруний. Танланган асарлар. I жилд. –Т.: О’zbekiston, 2022. – Б. 253.

⁵ Саримсаков А. Ўзбекларнинг тақвимий маросимлари. – Т.: “Янги нашр”, 2014 – Б. 79.

⁶ Беруний. Танланган асарлар. I том. –Т.: Фан, 1968. – Б. 261.



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Mehrjan is an ancient celebration. The work contains passages indicating that it was celebrated during the time of Zoroaster, had a long history, and that its name was associated with the Sun and the Moon.

*It is also said that God created the Moon as a dark, lightless sphere. Then, on that very day, He bestowed beauty upon it and illuminated it with His own light. Therefore, it is said that “the Moon is more honored than the Sun on **Mehrjan**,” and the happiest hours of Mehrjan are the hours of the Moon.*

*Zoroaster ordered that the celebration of **Mehrjan** and Ramruz should be equally honored, and these two days were made into joint festivals. This continued until Hormuz, son of Shapur, united the two days, just as he had connected the two **Navruz** festivals, and turned the intervening days into holidays as well⁷.*

Nizam al-Mulk’s “Siyasatnama” (The Book of Government) contains information that during the days of Navruz and Mehrjan, kings personally received ordinary people who came to them with petitions and made appropriate decisions concerning their requests. It is also reported that during these days all people enjoyed equal rights⁸.

According to another researcher, Adam Metz, Mehrjan was celebrated with great festivities at the end of September, much like the New Year festival. During this festival, people, as on Navruz, presented various gifts to one another. During these days, people also replaced a large portion of the carpets, household utensils, and clothing in their homes.

According to the information provided in the work, while the natural world began to awaken on the day of Navruz, on the day of Mehrjan growing things reached the limits of their growth, the substances responsible for growth became detached from them, and animals ceased reproducing. Following the

⁷ O’sha asar, 262 b.

⁸ Низомулмулк. Сийсатнома ёки сиярул-мулк. – Т., 1997. – Б. 48.

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Mehrjan festival, people began preparing for winter. On this day, the rulers of Khorasan traditionally provided their mounted soldiers with autumn and winter clothing. The Sogdians also celebrated such a festival on a large scale. However, they called the first day “nim sarda,” meaning “half of the year.” The second day was a feast called “Mnidxvora.” On this day, people gathered at fire temples and ate food prepared from roasted flour, oil, and sugar.

The Khwarazmians, for their part, celebrated this festival on the twelfth day of the month of Umri under the name “Chiri-ruj.” In the pre-Christian era, local festivals were held in the territory of present-day Uzbekistan when grapes ripened. It may be assumed that the festivals of Dionysus or Bacchus were introduced to Central Asia with the invasion of Alexander the Great. However, according to the information provided by Academician S. P. Tolstov and other researchers, as well as archaeological sources discovered in the vicinity of Khwarazm and Termez, there is evidence that festivals dedicated to viticulture had existed in these areas since ancient times.

A festival is a unique phenomenon in terms of its culturally determined function. The boundlessness and diversity of the social phenomena and processes embodied in festivals have also been reflected in scholarly literature. These festivals, which have been passed down as an invaluable heritage from century to century and from generation to generation and have become deeply integrated into everyday life, have not disappeared completely because they are based on respect for nature and the glorification of labor. Therefore, it can be argued that they continue to fully correspond to the requirements of the modern era.

A festival helps people comprehend the surrounding world, the world of things, other people, and their own “self.” It teaches them to create their environment according to the principles of beauty and justice. Involving young people in festivals is an important means of their spiritual development.

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In conclusion, Biruni's "The Chronology of Ancient Nations" serves as an important source for studying ancient peoples, including the Uzbek people, as well as their ancient culture, language, and ethnography. In particular, the study of Biruni's "The Chronology of Ancient Nations" within the framework of Uzbek onomastics remains one of the relevant and practically significant areas of research.

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