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Abstract: The cultural heritage of the peoples of Central Asia has been shaped by ancient beliefs and customs closely connected with nature. Such rituals were intended to maintain harmony between humans and the natural environment, emphasizing values such as fertility, prosperity, health, and peace. Among the most significant nature-related ceremonies are the celebration of “Navruz,” rain-invoking rituals, the preparation of “Sumalak,” and practices of worshiping water, plants, and the sun. Comparative analysis reveals both common and distinct features among the nations: water rituals among Uzbeks, wind-related traditions among Kazakhs, and plant or sun worship among Tajiks. These rituals serve as symbols of national identity, help form ecological awareness, and preserve cultural continuity. The article explores the historical origins, modern transformation, and ecological-cultural significance of these nature-related rituals in Central Asian societies

Keywords: central asia, ritual, nature, navruz, belief, tradition, ecological culture, comparative analysis, folk customs

Login: Since the most ancient times of human history, the issue of interaction with nature has become an integral part of human life. In particular, in the way of life of the peoples of Central Asia, respect for nature, worship of it, its preservation, and rituals associated with natural phenomena have formed a unique cultural system. These rituals are considered an important cultural phenomenon that expresses the worldview, values, social life, and spiritual needs of the people. The rituals associated with nature of the peoples of Central Asia had not only a religious or mythological basis, but also had ecological and social significance. Rituals associated with nature are the result of the people's life experience, the level of perception of the environment, and the culture of living in harmony with it. For example, the holiday of "Navruz" celebrating the arrival of spring, rituals dedicated to calling for rain or water, prayers and beliefs on the eve of the harvest reflect the worldview of the people directly related to nature.[1] Such rituals were carried out to ensure harmony between man and nature, to wish for fertility, peace and prosperity. Nature rituals among the peoples of Central Asia have their own regional characteristics. For example, while water worship and the preparation of sumalak are

widespread among the Uzbeks, ancient customs dedicated to the wind and sky have been preserved among the Kazakhs, and rituals related to plants and the sun have been preserved among the Tajiks[2]. These similarities and differences were formed under the influence of historical, ethnic, religious and climatic factors, and they reflect the ecological thinking and cultural identity of the people. The relevance of this topic is that in the process of globalization, many national traditions and rituals are losing their significance. Therefore, it is important to study the ancient rituals of the peoples of Central Asia related to nature, analyze them on a scientific basis and revive them in modern cultural life. This is necessary not only to preserve historical memory, but also to instill responsibility for nature and environmental awareness in the younger generation. The purpose of this study is to conduct a comparative analysis of the specific features of nature-related rituals among the peoples of Central Asia, to study their historical roots, semantic content, and transformation in modern society. The study uses ethnographic, historical, and comparative-linguistic analysis methods to identify the commonalities and differences of the rituals.[3] The work also highlights the spiritual, aesthetic, and ecological significance of nature-related rituals in the life of the people. As a result, these rituals are considered an important part of the cultural memory of the people, a symbol of national identity, and a factor in the formation of ecological consciousness.

Research methodology: The methodological basis of this study was formed on the basis of complex, systematic and comparative approaches to the analysis of nature-related rituals of the peoples of Central Asia. To study the interrelationship between nature and ritual, ethnolinguistic, cultural studies, historical-typological and sociopsychological methods were used in harmony[4]. In this way, the study was widely covered not only within the framework of folklore and ritual studies, but also in the context of ecological thinking, religious-mythological worldview and socio-cultural context. The theoretical basis of the study is advanced ideas aimed at studying the relationship between culture and language. From this point of view, the views of such scholars as E. Sapir, B. Whorf, K. Levi-Strauss, M. Eliade, Sh. Rakhmatullayev, T. Nafasov, G. Karimova on the semantics of culture and language, the mythological roots of rituals, and the social function of ancient beliefs formed the scientific and theoretical foundation of the research.[5] Using the ethnographic method, the traditional rituals of the peoples of Central Asia, their territorial characteristics, social function, and ritualistic elements were collected and analyzed. In this process, samples of folk oral art, ancient holidays, folk images and rituals preserved among the people, and religious customs were studied. The information was systematized mainly on the basis of written sources, monographs on folk ethnography, and oral sources. The historical-typological method played an important role in determining the process of formation of rituals and their ancient roots. Through

this approach, the attitude of the peoples of Central Asia to nature was analyzed in relation to ancient Zoroastrianism, egalitarianism, pre-Islamic beliefs, and later Islamic culture. As a result, the semantic layers of rituals — that is, the transformation process of mythological symbols and religious symbols associated with natural phenomena — were revealed on a scientific basis.[6] The comparative-linguistic method was aimed at identifying semantic similarities and differences between the ritual terminology, symbols, and terms of different peoples. Through this approach, the ritual lexicon and nature-related concepts of the Uzbek, Tajik, Kazakh, Kyrgyz, and Turkmen peoples were analyzed, and their common regional cultural roots were identified. Using the sociopsychological method, the social significance of rituals, their role in the formation of collective consciousness and ecological feelings were studied. The transformation of these rituals in modern society — that is, the process of transition from ancient beliefs to ecological consciousness and national identity — was analyzed. The data obtained as a result of the research were processed on the basis of systematic analysis, and the functional, semantic, and structural features of rituals were summarized. At the same time, the research followed the principle of an interdisciplinary approach - that is, the content of the rituals was comprehensively covered on the basis of scientific integration between the disciplines of ethnography, cultural studies, sociology, ecology and linguistics. As a result, the research allows us to evaluate the nature-related rituals of the peoples of Central Asia not only as a historical and cultural phenomenon, but also as a cultural system that expresses ecological thinking and national identity.[7]

Analysis and results: The rituals of the peoples of Central Asia related to nature are an integral part of the ancient worldview, beliefs and cultural identity of the people. A study of the content system of these rituals shows that the elements of nature - water, sun, wind, flora and fauna - were interpreted in the imagination of the people not only as a source of life, but also as divine power. Therefore, each ritual contains a symbolic expression of the elements of nature, which express the spiritual, spiritual and ecological values of the people. During the study, it was possible to identify three main functional layers of the rituals of the peoples of Central Asia: ritualistic, cultural-social and ecological-spiritual. The ritualistic layer is the external appearance of the ritual, that is, a system of customs, prayers, songs, symbolic actions. For example, among the Uzbek people, the rituals of preparing sumalak at the beginning of spring, cleaning water sources, “calling for rain” or “throwing water” are based on the people's reverence for water and the belief in wishing for blessings. Kazakhs have the “Jer-su” (Earth-water) ceremony, Tajiks have the “Gul Gardon” or “Navruzi Somon” ceremony, which are the continuation of the cult of plants and the sun. This situation demonstrates the unified, but diverse philosophical attitude of the peoples of the region to nature. The cultural and

social layer expresses the role of ceremonies in the formation of collective consciousness. Through each ceremony, society restores its historical memory, strengthens its values, and ensures cultural continuity.[8] In particular, the holiday of Navruz has been preserved in this respect as a universal socio-cultural phenomenon among all the peoples of Central Asia. Its main idea is renewal, awakening, and living in harmony with nature. The results of the study show that such a social essence of rituals continues to create positive emotional unity between people even in modern times. The ecological-spiritual layer constitutes the deepest semantic basis of the rituals. Worship of the elements of nature, respect for water as a “source of life”, recognition of the tree as sacred, and a loving attitude towards the animal world - all these are expressions of the ancient spiritual system that shapes the ecological consciousness of the people. In the conditions of today's ecological crisis, the study of such rituals is not only of historical interest, but also of important scientific and practical significance for the development of modern ecological culture. Comparative analysis shows that the rituals of the peoples of Central Asia contain many similar semantic nuclei.[9] Most of these are associated with ancient Zoroastrian, egalitarian, and animistic beliefs, which later acquired new spiritual meaning when integrated into Islamic culture. For example, water or sun worship later became a symbol of “blessing” and “purity,” while rituals associated with plants took on a festive form expressing the ideas of “fertility” and “prosperity.” The study also found that some rituals have changed their functional meaning in modern times.[10] For example, the rituals of “calling for rain” or “throwing into water,” which previously had a religious-mythological meaning, are now being reinterpreted more as folk performances or children’s games. This confirms the transformation of rituals, that is, the process of transition from ancient beliefs to cultural-aesthetic forms.

Conclusion: The results of the above research show that the nature-related rituals of the peoples of Central Asia are a complex cultural system that serves to maintain harmony between man and nature, as well as to form the spiritual and ecological thinking of the people. These rituals are inextricably linked with the ancient beliefs, mythological views and religious traditions of the people, through which respect, gratitude and reverence for natural phenomena are expressed. As a result of the comparative analysis, it was found that the rituals of all the peoples of Central Asia are based on common semantic foundations, but each of them is formed differently according to its national, geographical and climatic characteristics. For example, while rituals related to water and fertility prevail among the Uzbeks, the traditions of worshipping the wind and sky are dominant among the Kazakhs, and rituals related to the sun and plants are dominant among the Tajiks. This situation, along with the unity of common values in the perception of nature by the peoples of the region, also reflects their national identity. The results of

the study show that rituals have not lost their relevance in modern times. They continue to exist in various forms in oral folklore, national holidays, environmental events, and social life. Also, the religious and spiritual content of some rituals has become aesthetic or social, which confirms their transformative nature. Based on the research, it can be concluded that the nature-related rituals of the peoples of Central Asia are a complex phenomenon that embodies the philosophy of human life in harmony with the environment, ecological responsibility, and cultural memory. They still remain an important cultural resource for the understanding of the people's identity, strengthening national unity, and developing environmental awareness. Therefore, the scientific study of these rituals, their restoration as a cultural heritage, and their transmission to the younger generation are of strategic importance in maintaining the spiritual stability of the peoples of Central Asia.

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