



Uzbek Ceremonial Dishes and Traditions of Eating Them

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Abstract

In the article the ceremonial dishes of the Surkhandarya oasis, one of the southern regions of Uzbekistan, and the traditions of eating them, the customs related to dishes are described on the basis of field ethnographic data. Also, the preparation of dishes, the ingredients used in them and the etiquette of serving them, the etiquette, worldview of the population and their attitude to food are revealed. In addition, there given a historical analysis of information not only about the family rituals of the population of the Surkhandarya oasis and the types of food prepared and consumed in them, but also about the dishes particular to holidays, festivals and seasons.

Keywords: *Uzbekistan; Surkhandarya Oasis; Ritual, Dishes; Table Manners; Ethnic Group; Navruz; Sumalak; Farming*

Introduction

The study of customs as a phenomenon of folk culture is one of the urgent tasks of today. Especially, at a time when Uzbekistan pays national attention to national values and spiritual heritage over the country, traditional meals play an important role in people's daily lives and activities. Meals have been an important part of family and calendar ceremonies of different peoples for centuries. As a result, there appeared special ceremonial dishes that are prepared associated with a certain tradition and custom. They have become an object of common eating or an action of witchcraft, an integral part of a ritual that is gradually performed in contrast to everyday meals (Listova: 1983, p. 161).

The ceremonies are aimed at ensuring the longevity of human life, protecting people from various disasters, increasing crop yields, raising livestock and ensuring peace and tranquility in the family. Therefore, the ingredients of the traditional dishes cooked in ceremonies and their content is related to the essence of the ceremony being performed. The following can be included in the ceremonial dishes of the population: sumalak, darveshona, shirbirinch, porridge soup, umoch soup, black soup, hatim osh, annual osh, holvaytar and pastries. It also includes the ceremonial dishes at Navruz and other national holidays, at Eid al-Fitr, Eid al-Adha, cradle weddings, weddings, circumcision feasts, muchal (reckoning)

weddings, prophetic age ceremonies, Mushkulkushod, Bibi Seshanba and Mavlud ceremonies (Ashirov A., p. 197).

In the process of preparation and eating of these ceremonial dishes mutual social relations of the representatives of a certain sexual, social and religious community, community, tribe, ethnos were manifested. In addition, the consumption of ceremonial dishes together led to the intensification of friendship, social partnership and kinship between people, and in some cases, the food itself was the reason for the formation of friendship or kinship relations.

Research Results

In the social life of the population of the Surkhandarya oasis, cooking and the traditions and ceremonies associated with it have their own peculiarities, which are characterized by the ethnic diversity of the composition of the population of the oasis. The division of various ethnic groups living in the oasis into subgroups, villages and settlements, in turn, is reflected in their material culture and daily life, especially in food, its preparation and consumption.

It should be noted here that after the Russian Empire invaded Central Asia and turned it into its own colony, it had an impact on the socio-political and cultural life of the country. In the early years of Soviet government, many holidays of Uzbek people were banned. The fate of Navruz holiday was especially tragic.

In the early 30s of the XX century, the fight against "obsolescence" rose to the level of state policy. The Soviets began to inspect the ancient national, spiritual, cultural heritage, customs, rituals, and holidays. In the 1930-50s, intellectuals who sought to preserve traditional folk customs and festivals were accused of being "alien elements" or "nationalists" against the policies of the Soviet government. During the years of repression, Soviet politicians introduced a holiday called "Kolkhoz wedding" instead of Navruz. But national holidays and ceremonies were held in secret. It is clear that the restriction of these festivities also affected the food prepared in it. In addition, at certain times the preparation and consumption of holiday meals was even forgotten.

In Central Asia, on the day of the ancient national holiday of Navruz, baked bread for the ceremony was served on the table of the ruler's palace. These breads were made from wheat, barley, millet, oats, rice, sesame seed, mung beans and beans (Lobacheva: 1986, p. 15). Seven branches of fruit trees (quince, fig, etc.) are placed next to it, and the words such as fertility, wealth, happiness are written on their leaves. It can be seen that the people who had been engaged in farming had high hopes for the New Year, and it was reflected in their traditional holidays too. The main dish prepared at Navruz is sumalak, it is made from ordinary green wheat or barley grass (Karmisheva: 1986, p. 65).

In Mahmud Kashgari's book "Devonu Lugotit Turk", "suma" is the name of soaked wheat and the barley grown for making juice is also called "suma", and Abu Rayhan Beruni in his "Memoirs of Ancient Peoples" says that people planted barley in bowls or other vessels for blessings. Hence, "suma" is an ancient Turkic word meaning soaked wheat or barley, which originally suggests that sumalak was first made from barley grass, not wheat. Some historians say that "sumalak" is derived from the Persian word "Samoni" - wheat grass, which also means "si malak" (thirty angels). Orientalist O. Buriev quotes the following lines from the book "Treasures of Medicine" by Hussein al-Aqili, written in Persian at the end of the XVIII century: "Samanu is the Persian name of" nayda ". It is called "samanu bavvo" or "samani boyo". It is favorite and popular in many countries. It is a sweet and delicious dish" (Bo'riev: 1990, pp. 50-51).

Folklorshunos M. Juraev linked the origin of sumalak to a popular international legend, saying that when the Prophet's daughter, Hazrat Ali's wife, Bibi Fatima's sons Hasan and Husan, were hungry, she gathered fresh herbs and boiled them in a pot and in the morning the angels' food – sumalak was ready. According to another narration, sumalak is derived from the word "simalak", which means "thirty angels", and when everybody is tired in the morning and falls asleep, the angels add salt to the sumalak and it becomes sweet. Therefore, in Surkhandarya, the sumalak is first licked by the little finger seven times, saying, "Let's have the food of the angels," "Let's taste the food of the Hasan and Husans." Both legends about the origin and preparation of sumalak have the same content, indicating that it was cooked from freshly sprouted wheat or barley grass.

There is a saying among the people that the power of sumalak will last until the next Navruz. It was cooked as a medicine, the beginning of a new season, a New Year, it was prepared with the intention that "we saw the old year off, we came into the New Year". According to legends, there was a 6.5-meter-high statue of Anakhita in the central square of the capital, "Koykirilgan Qala" of the ancient Khorezm state. It was holding a 12-cm-diameter crystal in its hand over a hole in the central fire in such a way that the sunlight falling on the crystal only on March 21st and burned the dry wood that remained inside the hole. This fire was considered sacred and was not extinguished for years. People looked forward to this day and celebrated it as a new day that would bring goodness and purity. The fire, which was used throughout the year, was last used to make sumalak.

Sumalak was cooked by old, well-to-do, wealthy, intelligent, clean mothers who raised many children. Around the sumalak cooked for a day they made fun and joy and also prayers were recited for the souls of the ancestors and blessings were bestowed on their faces, wishing Allah that the year would come well and have a prosperous life.

The process of growing wheat grains also had its own method. Wheat planted in autumn was cleaned, spread at room temperature, and periodically sprinkled with water. Also, it was specially paid attention that the wheat should not grow too much. If it grew too much, the sumalak would become bitter. The grain laid for the sumalak was grown in a shelter so that the eyes of unclean people would not be seen, and only the one who planted the grain would perform ablution and sprinkle water. There was no sumalak in the mourning houses. If a red thorn sprouted up among the grass white thorn sprouted up, sumalak was not made from this grown wheat, because the red thorn was a sign of bad luck and was thought to cause bad fortune [*Field notes. Sherobod, Laylagon 2000.*]. In the villages of Sariosiya district, if red thorns grew out of the grass, a rooster was slaughtered as a sign of bad luck [*Field notes. Sariosiyo district, Telpakchinar village. 2004.*]. As soon as the wheat sprouted and the ends of the grass began to turn green, that is, when the grass was 2-3 cm long, it was crushed between flat stones and the juice was squeezed seven times. The belief in the mystery and divinity of the number seven was so great that the grass juice was squeezed seven times in all regions of Uzbekistan.

Seven stones or nuts were put into the sumalak while cooking. According to reports, childless women threw 3, 5, and 7 nuts into the pot cooking the sumalak with the intention of "having a child till the next year sumalak," and ate the nuts when the sumalak was ready. (Ashirov A., p. 197) Also, the stone thrown into the sumalak was believed to be lucky, and one wish was intended each time in throwing each stone. The sumalak stone was buried under a tree to "make it fertile." In fact, the stones were put into the pot so it would not get burned while the sumalak was being cooked.

In the Jarqurghon district of the oasis, a girl in a red dress started lighting a fire under the sumalak in order to make it red, while in the village of Darband, the sumalak was covered with a red blanket [*Field notes. Jarkurgan city and Boysun district, Darband village. 2002.*]. The Tajiks of Sariosiya district, on the other hand, a red-faced woman set the fire for the sumalak [*Field notes. Sariosiyo district, Shotur mountain people. 2002.*]. After the sumalak was covered, the women took turns guarding during the

night. At that moment, the angels were believed to draw a picture on the surface of the sumalak. In the morning, the sumalak was opened by a woman who had performed ablutions and found happiness in the family.

The ethnographers K. Shoniyozov, N.P. Lobacheva, N.A. Kislyakov, K.L. Zadykhina and N.G. Borozn noted that sumalak was prepared as a sacred ritual food (Kislyakov: 1976, p. 53; Zadixina: 1952, p. 394; Borozna: 1966, p. 120]. Sumalak is not only a ceremonial dish about which we can cite many legends, but also a sacred food that can be a power for people after the winter to survive. The Uzbek people are well aware of the benefits of eating sumalak in the spring, when vegetables and wet fruits are notripen.

It is known that in the Surkhandarya oasis, as in other regions of Uzbekistan, from ancient times farming began in early spring, and various ceremonies were held. One of the ceremonies associated with such farming was the *shokhmoy*, which paved the way for other ceremonies (Sarimsoqov: 1986; Kislyakov: 1965). Each household cooked a variety of dishes as possible as they could and wrapped them in a tablecloth and took them out to the field. After the village elder chief made the prayer of blessing, the prepared food was distributed to the villagers. It should be noted that the main dish prepared at the ceremony differed from the daily meal not only by its magical power, but also in terms of preparation or ingredients. For example, a loaf of bread, which was given to all the elders of the village, was made from the last bunch of wheat harvested during last year's harvest. Since the ceremony belonged to an entire family, the ceremonial bread was also given to the oxen that were being herded to plow a field. Finally, butter or linseed oil was applied to the horns of all the oxen so that they would not be "touched by the evil eyes." In the Pamir Tajiks, *guja* (a kind of hot cereal, usually made from sorghum or wheat) was cooked as a ceremonial dish (Sarimsoqov: 1986, pp. 65-71). The tradition of giving ceremonial food to pets was also practiced in European nations (Listova: 1983, p. 161).

All farming activities are associated with the name of Bobo Dehqan. When the land was plowed, the seeds were sown, the harvest was threshed, and the first bread was eaten, our ancestors consulted and slaughtered a cattle in honour of "Bobo Dehqan", and gave alms and performed the ceremony of "dervishona" (Shoniyozov: 1973, p. 132). The dish was called yorma osh (porridge soup) because it was made from wheat porridge or it was called dervishona because it was prepared in dervishona ceremony. Darvishona meal was made with the participation of the majority, and the meal was prepared only by men. Autumn wheat was used for the meal. Mutton was put into a large pot and boiled, and then the wheat was added and boiled for a long time. In the Tajiks of the Panjab village of the oasis, the porridge was soaked in linseed oil and the head of a slaughtered sheep was put in the pot [*Field notes. Boysun district, Panjab village. 2004.*]. The dish was stirred continuously until it was cooked. The ingredients of the darvishona were distributed to the end as many people because it was made from the collected money, flour, grain from people and as well it was the public ceremonial meal. After the meal, the great-grandfathers prayed saying: "May the year be good, may everyone reach their own intentions, may there be no natural disasters, deaths and diseases, and may the crops we sow be plentiful," and then sowed seeds with good intentions. In the village of Laylagon in the oasis, during the years of low rainfall, darvishona was made during the ceremony of "Sust Khotun" [*Field notes. Sherobod district, Laylagon village. 2000*]. The Darvishona ceremony is still held in the oasis and we also see that it has changed over time. For example, boiled soup or palow is currently being made at this ceremony.

In the villages of the oasis, even after the harvest was gathered, cattle were slaughtered and a "harvest wedding" was held. The harvest wedding was also held in Khorezm, where small loaves of bread, palow, and soup were prepared. In Kazakhs, halim (a dish made out of boiled wheat and meat) was cooked in this ceremony (Karmisheva: 1986, p. 65).

On the farms, in the ceremonies associated with plowing, dishes such as *hudoyi goja*, *qosh osh*, *guja osh* were cooked (Karmisheva: 1986, p. 65). In the Kazakhs, it is called *qoshgoja* (Isoqov: 2007, pp. 205-211). On the eve of the holiday, our ancestors prepared meal from seven different grains (wheat, barley, peas, oats, rice, mung bean, beans) and distributed them to neighbors and relatives. The numbers 3, 7, and 9 are also considered magical by Europeans on New Year's Eve, there were different dishes of this quantity or dishes made from different products of this quantity on the table (Listova: 1983, p. 161). In addition, the table was decorated with greens grown from the seeds of seven different plants (sib-apple, garlic, vinegar, satortashgul, ink-black bean, sinjid-wild olive, etc.) (Bo`riev: 1990, pp. 50-51). This dish, made from ingredients collected voluntarily from homes, was cooked in a large pot. In the evening, the villagers gathered in the square with their spoons and plates. After praying and blessing Allah for a blessed and fruitful New Year, the pot was opened with the permission of the elders and *goja osh* was distributed. The food of the ceremony was so sacred that even the tablecloth left over from the festival was brought home without stumbling across the fields, and the rest of the food was given to pets and birds. That is, they intended that if they touched the sacred food, the power of productivity would increase. Belief in the magical power of ceremonial food was also common among European peoples, that if the tablecloth was put on a sick person or animal after the ceremony, it would be cured (Listova: 1983, p. 161).

In the Panjab and Sayrab villages in the Surkhandarya oasis where Tajik people lived, a ceremonial dish called *gungunadandon* was cooked [Field notes. Boysun district, Panjab and Sayrab villages. 2004.]. *Gungunadandon* means “gunguna” – fresh, pearl, rice, “dandon” – tooth. The wheat was washed and cooked in water. In the process of cooking, greens such as rice, peas, salt and onion, ipor (*jipor*), roba (*ravoch*, *chukri*) were also added. *Gungunadandon* meal was made when the baby's first teeth appear so that they can erupt easily.

The first spoonful of food cooked for the child was given to the child by his or her Grandmother, and congratulated the child's first teeth and wished him/her good wishes. At the end of the ceremony, *gungunadon* meal was distributed to families with young children near the house. When cooking *gungunadandon*, it was believed that “the wheat cracked in the water, and now the child's teeth will also crack the gums quickly”. In other parts of Uzbekistan, particularly in Nurata district, a child whose teeth appeared was placed in the middle of the circle and cooked peas were sprinkled on the child. The children in the circle picked them up and ate, and this custom was called *Nukhatchashon* (Tolipov: 2002, p. 52). In these ceremonies the choice of wheat or peas was considered a symbol of the abundance of wheat and peas, but also meant that the child would have many children in the future.

The Uzbeks have many traditions associated with wedding ceremonies, which had a certain symbolic meaning. In particular, in the villages of Bandikhan district there was a custom of “anointed mouth” associated with wedding ceremonies [Field notes. Bandikhan district, Gazimulla village. 2000.]. When the matchmakers went to the girl's house for the second or third time, they put burnt butter in front of the matchmakers as a sign of agreement, and the matchmakers had to eat it. This dish was a symbol of kinship on both sides, due to the fact that they gave them their daughter, who was as gentle as butter, and at the same time pointed out that the future life of the two young couples would be as smooth, gentle, and fat as food. Then when the bridegroom's family members returned, they were asked, “How is it? is your mouth anointed?”. If they say “yes”, it means that the girl's family have agreed. The Khorezm Uzbeks, on the other hand, made nine layers of gifts. Acceptance of the gifts indicated that the girl agreed. On the contrary, if they did not agree, eight of the layers and one loaf of bread were returned (Lobacheva: 1960, pp. 39-48; Kislyakov: 1965, p. 19). From the above, it can be seen that the food has a symbolic meaning and they express their thoughts through it. It is characteristic that in the matchmaking ceremonies, food was taboo. For example, in Kashkadarya region, they tried not to put walnuts and peppers in front of the matchmakers. It is said that nuts are “rioter” and peppers are “bitter”. If these foods were put together, there would be a dispute between them (Zununova: 2005, p. 31).

The tradition of treating matchmakers with ceremonial food has been practiced by all the peoples of Central Asia. For example, in Kazakhs and Kyrgyzs, when the matchmakers go to a girl's house, both parties agree on the marriage, and then the traditional ceremonial meal *quyruq bovu* is brought to the table. This meal was considered a condition not to break the agreement between them (Kislyakov: 1965, p. 19). In Turkmen, this ceremony was called "shirini" because relatives come to the groom's house early in the morning to bake halva and take it to the future bride's house. The matchmakers handed out sweets to those they met along the way, wishing themselves success (Kislyakov: 1965, p. 19).

It should be noted that the dishes played an important role in warming the relationship between them, not only when shared together, but also when presented to each other. For example, the ceremony of "ilik toboq" (bone marrow) which is connected with the marriage weddings in the Surkhandarya oasis, was held in the villages of Vakhshivor, Khojasoat, Hayrondara, Lokka of Altynsay district. On the day the blessing was sent to the bride, a sheep was slaughtered, boiled in a pot, and sent to the bride in a plate. The bride and sent back a large marrow with a plate of meat to the groom. This dish is also called "luqma" (a bite) because it is considered a bite of the groom. When the plate arrived, the villagers were called to the bridegroom's and given soup, and then a handkerchief was thrown in the middle of the table. Depending on their opportunity, the guests threw money or something and made their bites pure. The collected money and things were sent to the bride the next day [*Field notes. Oltinsoy district, Khujasoat village. 2004.*]. The purpose of this is to strengthen the relationship between the bride and groom and to strengthen their relationship with each other.

There were ceremonies related to food at weddings among the people of Central Asia. In Turkmenistan, chalpak was cooked at the groom's house before the wedding, and the first and second days were made only for the villagers. Interestingly, while the chalpak is being cooked in the yurt, a man suddenly comes in and takes a few chalpaks and runs away. The women run after him. Then the man throws a few coins to pay the fee. The day before the wedding, the women stopped distributing chalpak and were sent to the bride's wrapped in tablecloths. The bride returned the tablecloths full of meat. This custom was called *sachiq qaytarma* [12].

In the Tajiks of the Zarafshan valley, on the day when the "wedding", was sent to the bride's house, guests were treated with shavla (a dish made of meat, rice and carrots) at the groom's house. After that, a grandmother prayed for the happiness of young couples, laid a supra (a leather mat used for making dough upon) and sifted flour. Other old women also helped her. Then the women knead the dough from that flour made *lochira*. At this time, the host sprinkled dried fruit on the supra (Kislyakov: 1965, p. 19).

In the Surkhandarya oasis, a knucklebone with marrow was given to the groom on his wedding day, when he visited to the bride's house. This ritual was called "Tuqqiz tovoq" (nine plates) (Kislyakov: 1965, p. 19; Abramzon: 1959, p. 35; Ashirov A., p. 197), and various dishes were served on nine plates by the sister-in-laws. Among them, on a separate plate, a knucklebone with marrow and meat was brought to the bridegroom. The groom took one bite of the marrow and passed it to his friends, and all bit one by one and finished eating. At the heart of this rithual there was a good intention that the groom's friends would have such days. In the Kipchaks of the Valley, a nine-plate ceremony dedicated to the groom included a "mother plate" consisting mainly of lamb breast, a dish cooked by the girl's mother. The bridegroom served this dish to his most esteemed guest (Ashirov A., p. 197). In Bogaro, Khojamulki and Karsakli villages of Kumkurgan district, a sheep's head was served to the groom's table. Now, on the contrary, the friends bit one by one and handed it to the groom, and the groom had to eat all the skulls to the end [*Field notes. Kumkurgan district, Bogaro village. 2002.*]. With this, the groom wanted to prove his strength and vigor.

At traditional weddings of marriage, food had not only ceremonial significance, but also performed a number of magical functions. For example, in the villages of Denov district, after the arrival of the bride, a porridge cooked for the bride, with the addition of grape juice was served on the table and the bride was the first to taste it. This dish was made with the intention that "the heart of our bride should be as soft and gentle as this porridge" [*Field notes. Denov district, Hazarbog village. 2000.*]. Although such ceremonies differed in form, they had the same content in terms of purpose and essence. For example, in the Tajiks of Qorategin and Darvaz, *tarhovla* (a thick like a porridge made of flour and oil) was brought at the bride's face opening ceremony. The bride sat without touching it. Then her mother-in-law said, "Here are my gardens for you, and now your life depends on them. Take it and eat it." After that, the bride tasted the food. Of course, the mother-in-law symbolically said this to her daughter-in-law, and the daughter-in-law, in turn, waited for warm words from her mother-in-law in her new home. In this case, the meal served to express the warm relationship between the mother-in-law and the daughter-in-law.

The ceremonies performed with food at the weddings of marriage were different, which were held for the bride and groom to have many children. For example, eggs were used more as a symbol of fertility. The Uzbeks have long been known to use eggs as a symbol of fertility and germination (Snesarev: 1969, p. 241). In particular, in the villages of Oltinsoy and Kumkurgan districts of the oasis, ten eggs were placed in the groom's lap so that the bride and groom could have a good time when they entered the bed curtain (screening nuptial chamber). In the Kungirats of Denov district, both the bride and groom are given a pair of eggs, and they are required to eat the eggs that night. In Laylagon village, a woman brings boiled eggs and rolled them from the bride's skirt to the table [*Field notes. Sherobod district, Laylagan village. 2001.*]. Although there is a difference in the performance of egg-related actions, the expected result of all is the same, that is, to have many children.

In the Surkhandarya oasis, the ceremonies at circumcision weddings were held in a variety of ways, and many of them were associated with food. Examples include the Khatmu Qur'an, the laying supra (a leather mat used for making dough upon), the cutting of carrots, the making of palow, the baking of bread, and the baking of halva. In the village of Panjob in Boysun district, the circumcision ceremony lasted for three days, on the first day it was called 'shirinmiyon' and each of the wedding guests was given a bowl of jam. A special cook was appointed and cooked carrot jam in a large 200-liter pot [*Field notes. Boysun district, Panjob village. 2004.*]. Firstly, the sweets are distributed because the child is sweet, secondly, let his future life be as sweet as this jam.

In the Tajiks of the oasis, a supra was laid to bake bread during the circumcision ceremony "supra yazdi" and a large amount of flour was sifted. Flour sifting was first started by a woman with many children, who was happy in life, while in Upper Zarafshan Tajiks four women started sifting flour and applauded the owner of the wedding, saying "happy wedding" and sweets were given by the owner of the wedding. This is called "safedi," meaning "whiteness" (Xamidjanova: 1981, p. 96). The color white symbolized that the child's future life should be white, bright, and not see the dark days. All the neighbour women came to the house where the wedding was taking place and baked bread in an oven turn. All the relatives deliberately went to the place where the bread was being baked and the baked bread was distributed rapidly. In exchange for bread, money or a piece of cloth was given (Snesarev: 1971, pp. 258-259).

In Tajiks of Upper Zarafshan, bread was baked in two ovens at a time. It was called 'koshtandir' and they didn't manage to bake so much bread in one oven. Because the bread was only baked in the house where the wedding was taking place and not made in another house. The baking ceremony was called "nonpazon" in Tajik [23]. A number of rituals related to circumcision of the child were also performed at this wedding. For example, during the circumcision, bread was bitten so that his daily subsistence would be blessing. Outside, the boy's mother kept her little finger in flour. In the valley and in

Khorezm, when a child was circumcised, his mother dipped one finger in flour and the other in oil, hoping that he would be as lovely as oil and his table would be full (Berdiev: 1990, p. 194; Xabiba Fatxi, pp. 13-24). With such a magical act, the mother allegedly helped to alleviate the pain in her child.

One of the traditions deeply rooted in the life of the people of the Surkhandarya oasis is cooking and giving away hot food in order to please the spirits or jinn. Every Thursday evening, that is, on Friday evening, that ritual was held until the forty days of the deceased. Muslim religious holidays, Ramadan and Eid al-Adha, there was a custom of cooking and giving away hot food in order to please the spirits or jinn dedicated to the spirits of the deceased. In order to get rid of misfortunes, illnesses and other similar ailments in the family and bad dreams, as well as before the start of big weddings, when farming begins, or before doing a good deed, such as building a new house, a pregnant woman holds a healthy baby this ritual was held to get salvation and help from the saints.

It is noteworthy that ceremonial food was often consumed not as a means of satisfying human biological needs, but as a food to protect against calamities (Ashirov A., p. 197).

One of the traditional ceremonial dishes prepared in the oasis is holvaytar (sweet pudding made from oil or fat mixed with flour, water, and sugar). The encyclopedic scholar of Central Asia, Abu Rayhan Beruni, said that Holvaytar was an ancient dish, and that it was cooked mainly in condolence ceremonies. K. Shoniyozov and B.H. Karmisheva also noted about it (Karmisheva: 1986, p. 65; Qurbonova: 2007, pp. 214-217). Holvaytar is prepared in all settlements of Central Asia, and its name is derived from the Persian-Tajik language, meaning "liquid halva" or "wet halva", writes K. Mahmudov. Just as mourning ceremonies in the Surkhandarya oasis were not held without holvaytar, neither were Navruz, Ramadan and Eid al-Adha holidays.

The first of the dishes to be prepared for the mourning ceremony was holvaytar, which had to be cooked in silence by a woman who had seen many of them, because at that time the soul of the deceased was ready for questioning. It is said that in the afterlife, Muslims have to cross a bridge to go to heaven. That is, they can only pass if they are pure and cleansed from sins. This sacred food, which is being cooked, helps the soul of the deceased to pass the test (Arifxanova: 2007, pp. 45-57; Zununova: 2005, p. 31). In the valley, holvaytar was distributed only to women during the mourning ceremonies.

There are also a number of traditions related to food in the mourning ceremonies of Surkhandarya oasis. Soup is made on the funeral day of old men who grew up and died. This dish is called black soup in the northern districts of the oasis because it is made at a mourning ceremony. B.K. Karmisheva and M. Berdiev inform about it that in Karakalpak, Kyrgyz, Uzbek, Tajiks it is called "kara asi", "kara ash", "kara osh", "oshi siyoh". The black soup is cooked in a neighboring house, and given after the deceased is placed in its place (graveyard) and is considered a blessing to eat until the end. In ancient times, black soup was not made from onions and peppers. Black soup itself is a spicy dish, it is forbidden to add more bitterness to it (Berdiev: 1990, p. 194). If the deceased is young, no black soup is made, no food is cooked for three days, and the pots were overturned. This situation is explained by the fact that the remnants of Zoroastrianism are still preserved in our people. That is, fire is considered sacred and it is not allowed to light a fire in a mourning house [7]. However, the ban on cooking hot food for three days in the house of the deceased cannot be interpreted as a ritual associated completely with Zoroastrianism. Because it is spiritually difficult to prepare food for the closest people of the deceased who lost their loved ones these days. Neighbors and close relatives come to the house of the deceased to cook rice and soup. It is customary according to Islamic Sunnah to bring food to a distressed home. When Ja'far ibn Abi Talib, Hz. Ali's brother, was martyred in the battle of Mu'tah, his family mourned. The Messenger of Allah, may Allah bless upon him and grant him peace, said to those around him, "O neighbors, bring food to Ja'far's family, for they have such a calamity that they cannot think of food." The Uzbeks of the Fergana Valley it is forbidden for the relatives to eat meat until three days after the death of the deceased (Ashirov A., p.

197). On the night before the fourth day, a special dish called “andom” is prepared from the seven parts of the sheep slaughtered for the mourning ceremony.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the ceremonial dishes that take place in the social life of the people of the oasis are diverse and are closely connected with the customs and traditions of the people that have been practiced for centuries. Traditional ceremonial dishes reflect the socio-economic, spiritual image, rich cultural heritage, lifestyle and religious beliefs of the people of the oasis over several thousand years of history. Although the ceremonial meals of the inhabitants of the oasis are similar to the ones of other provinces, states and peoples, depending on their conduct, it can be observed that they have their own local characteristics.

The diversity of ceremonial dishes and the traditions and customs associated with them, their geographical, socio-economic differences, the specificity of their conduct (dervish, anointed mouth, bone marrow, sweet potato, gungunadandon, etc.) and it can also be seen that they have been studied scientifically and have undergone certain innovative changes over time. The study of kitchen utensils and ceremonial dishes, making scientific conclusions and recommendations, plays an important role in the enrichment of ethnology and educating the younger generation in the spirit of respect for the traditions and values of the past.

In general, the ceremonial dishes associated with marriage, which are part of the social life of the population of the Surkhandarya oasis, eating them are diverse and closely connected with the customs and traditions that have been followed for centuries. The traditional ceremonial food of marriage is significant in that it reflects the socio-economic, spiritual image, rich cultural heritage, lifestyle, religious beliefs of the people of the oasis for thousands of years.

It should be noted that in the study of ceremonial dishes and their consumption in the Surkhandarya oasis, the study of the factors that led to the origin of sacred food, by using local life experience, has an educational effect on educating young people in the spirit of respect to the traditions of their ancestors.

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