

TRADITIONS ASSOCIATED WITH THE BIRTH AND EARLY LIFE STAGES OF A CHILD IN UZBEK FAMILIES: AN ETHNOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract. *The birth of a child and the subsequent early stages of life represent a profound socio-cultural phenomenon in the traditional lifestyle of the Uzbek people. This article provides a comprehensive ethnological analysis of the customs, rituals, and beliefs associated with expecting a child, childbirth, and the initial milestones of a child's life within Uzbek families, with a particular focus on the local characteristics of the southern regions, such as the Surkhan oasis.*

By examining ancient practices—including dietary taboos during pregnancy, the protective period of The birth of a child and the subsequent early stages of life represent a profound socio-cultural phenomenon in the traditional lifestyle of the Uzbek people. This article provides a comprehensive ethnological analysis of the customs, rituals, and beliefs associated with expecting a child, childbirth, and the initial milestones of a child's life within Uzbek families, with a particular focus on the local characteristics of the southern regions, such as the Surkhan oasis. By examining ancient practices—including dietary taboos during pregnancy, the protective period of chilla (forty-day protective period after birth), the ritual of tanglay ko'arish (lifting the palate), the celebration of the ilk qadam (first step), and the muchal (twelve-year animal calendar cycle marking a coming-of-age milestone) transition—this study reveals the deep spiritual, educational, and social mechanisms embedded in these traditions.

Furthermore, the research explores how these ancient customs have transformed during the years of independence (1991–2024) under the influence of modern medicine, globalization, and shifting socio-economic paradigms. The findings demonstrate that while certain superstitious elements have faded, the core values of social integration, kinship solidarity, and the moral upbringing of the younger generation remain highly relevant in contemporary Uzbek society.

Keywords: *Ethnology, chilla (forty-day protective period after birth), muchal (twelve-year animal calendar cycle), tanglay ko'arish (lifting the palate), qovurmoch (roasted wheat snack), social integration, cultural transformation, Uzbek traditions.*

INTRODUCTION

The historical development, spiritual values, and social experiences of any nation find their most vivid expression in its national traditions, customs, and family rituals. Among these cultural phenomena, the rituals associated with the birth and early life stages of a child occupy a central and sacred place in the traditional culture of the Uzbek people. From the earliest stages of human societal development, the continuation of the lineage and the safe integration of a new member into the community have been surrounded by a complex system of beliefs, taboos, and celebratory practices.

These rituals are not merely festive occasions; they serve as vital socio-cultural mechanisms designed to protect the physical and psychological well-being of both the mother and the child, while simultaneously reinforcing the bonds of kinship and community solidarity.

In the context of Central Asia, and specifically within the territory of modern Uzbekistan, family rituals have been shaped by a unique synthesis of ancient pre-Islamic beliefs, Islamic traditions, and the specific ecological and economic conditions of the region. The Surkhan oasis, located in the southern part of Uzbekistan, serves as a particularly rich area for ethnological study.

Historically, this region has been a crossroads of various ethno-cultural layers, resulting in a unique local manifestation of general Uzbek traditions. The specific natural and climatic conditions of the oasis, its cultural ties with neighboring territories, and its historical stages of development have given rise to distinct local features in everyday customs and ceremonies.¹

The process of bringing a child into the world in Uzbek culture is enveloped in a series of sequential rituals that begin long before the actual birth. During pregnancy, the expectant mother is subjected to various behavioral and dietary regulations aimed at ensuring the safe delivery of a healthy child. Following the birth, the highly sensitive period known as *chilla* (forty-day protective period after birth) commences. This period is characterized by strict isolation and protective measures against malevolent forces and illnesses. The conclusion of this period is marked by specific social customs, such as the preparation of *qovurmoch* (roasted wheat snack) and the practice of *chilla qochdi* (escaping the forty-day period), which symbolize the mother and child's safe return to the broader social sphere.²

As the child grows, each significant developmental milestone is acknowledged and celebrated by the community. The ritual of *tanglay ko'arish* (lifting the palate), the *beshik to'yi* (cradle ceremony), the celebration of the first tooth, the *ilk qadam* (first step) ceremony, and eventually the *muchal* (twelve-year animal calendar cycle marking a coming-of-age milestone) celebration all serve to gradually integrate the individual into the socio-cultural fabric of the nation. These ceremonies are accompanied by specific folklore genres, symbolic gestures, and communal feasts that transmit the moral and ethical values of the ancestors to the new generation.

During the years of Uzbekistan's independence (1991–2024), a significant shift occurred in the societal attitude toward national heritage. While the Soviet era often marginalized these family rituals as secondary or outdated phenomena, the post-independence period witnessed a robust revival of national values. Simultaneously, the rapid advancement of modern medicine, increased access to global information, and changing economic realities have inevitably led to the transformation of these ancient customs. Certain dietary taboos during pregnancy, once strictly adhered to due to ancient magical thinking, are now being re-evaluated through the lens of modern nutritional science.

Therefore, the primary objective of this article is to conduct a deep ethnological analysis of the traditions and ceremonies related to the birth and early life of a child in Uzbek families.

¹Tursunov S.N., Qobilov E.O., Pardayev T.R. Surxondaryo tarix ko'zgasida. – Toshkent: Sharq, 2001.

²Mirzaahmedova D.V. O'zbek oilasida rivojlanishi va bola tug'ilishi bilan bog'liq urf-odatlar // Markaziy Osiyoda an'anaviy va zamonaviy etnomadaniy jarayonlar. 2-qism. – Toshkent, 2005. – B. 112–118.

By examining the historical roots, symbolic meanings, and modern transformations of practices such as *chilla*, *tanglay ko'arish*, and *muchal*, this study aims to highlight the enduring significance of these rituals in maintaining social cohesion and cultural identity in contemporary Uzbekistan. The research seeks to answer how these ancient practices have adapted to the realities of the 21st century while preserving their core pedagogical and social functions.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The study of family rituals, everyday life, and the ethnography of the Uzbek people has a rich historiographical tradition. To fully comprehend the depth and evolution of the customs surrounding childbirth and early childhood, it is essential to rely on a diverse array of historical manuscripts, ethnographic field data, and contemporary scientific literature. The methodological foundation of this research is built upon the works of prominent ethnographers, historians, and cultural anthropologists who have extensively documented the traditional lifestyle of Central Asian populations.

A foundational pillar for understanding the broader context of Uzbek national holidays and rituals is the comprehensive work of the eminent ethnographer U. Qoraboyev. In his extensive research on the holidays of the Uzbek people, Qoraboyev meticulously categorizes family ceremonies and highlights their role in the spiritual life of the society. He provides a detailed analysis of the *muchal* tradition, explaining it not merely as a birthday celebration, but as a profound cyclical calendar event rooted in ancient Eastern philosophy, marking the critical biological and spiritual transition from childhood to youth.³

His works emphasize that such rituals were historically designed to instill a sense of responsibility and communal belonging in the younger generation, acting as a formal rite of passage within the traditional community structure. The specific customs related to the development of the Uzbek family and the birth of a child have been thoroughly investigated by D.V. Mirzaahmedova. Her research delves into the micro-sociology of the Uzbek household, offering valuable insights into the *chilla* period. Mirzaahmedova documents the localized practices of *chilla qochdi* or, as it is known in Tajik-speaking areas of the oasis, *chillaguzoron* (passing of the forty days). She explains how the distribution of *qovurmoch* and the first visits to relatives' homes serve as a psychological release for the mother and a formal social introduction for the infant.⁴

To understand the origins of the various taboos and superstitions surrounding pregnancy and childbirth, the fundamental research of A. Ashirov on the ancient beliefs and superstitions of the Uzbek people is indispensable. Ashirov explores the animistic and totemistic roots of dietary restrictions placed on pregnant women. For instance, the historical prohibition against consuming horse meat, camel meat, rabbit, duck, or fish was deeply tied to ancient magical thinking and concepts of *halol-harom* (permitted and forbidden in a religious or spiritual context). Ashirov's analysis reveals that these dietary restrictions were not merely arbitrary rules but were rooted in

³Qoraboyev U. O'zbekiston bayramlari. – Toshkent: O'qituvchi, 1991. – B. 25–45.

⁴Mirzaahmedova D.V. O'zbek oilasida rivojlanishi va bola tug'ilishi bilan bog'liq urf-odatlar // Markaziy Osiyoda an'anaviy va zamonaviy etnomadaniy jarayonlar. 2-qism. – Toshkent, 2005. – B. 112–118.

the belief that the characteristics of the consumed animal could be transferred to the unborn child, or that certain meats attracted malevolent spirits.⁵

Furthermore, to understand the localized nature of these traditions, particularly in the southern regions of Uzbekistan, the research draws heavily upon the regional studies conducted by scholars such as S. Tursunov, E. Qobilov, and T. Pardayev. Their extensive doctoral dissertations and monographs on the history, agriculture, and ethnography of the Surkhan oasis provide critical data on how geographical isolation and cross-cultural interactions with neighboring ethnic groups have preserved unique variations of these family rituals.⁶

Additionally, the specific ritual of *tanglay ko'arish* and its connection to local toponymy and tribal customs have been explored in the recent works of S.R. Rashidov, providing a micro-level perspective on how individual families execute these ancient practices today.⁷

Finally, M.B. Qurbonova's research on traditional foods offers essential context for understanding the culinary aspects of these rituals, such as the preparation of specific meals during the postpartum period and the symbolic use of food in ceremonies like the *ilk qadam* celebration.⁸

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a multidisciplinary qualitative approach, integrating historical-comparative analysis, descriptive ethnography, and literature review. The primary method involves the systematic analysis of existing ethnographic literature, historical manuscripts, and regional studies to trace the evolution of childbirth and early childhood rituals. The research is grounded in the theoretical frameworks of cultural anthropology, specifically focusing on rites of passage and the functionalist interpretation of family rituals as mechanisms for social cohesion and cultural transmission.

The historical-comparative method is utilized to contrast the traditional practices of the past—particularly those documented in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—with contemporary practices observed during the years of independence (1991–2024). This chronological framework is crucial, as the post-1991 era represents a period of intense national revival, where previously suppressed or marginalized traditions were actively reclaimed and reintegrated into public and private life. By comparing these two distinct historical periods, the study identifies elements of the rituals that have been strictly preserved, those that have been discarded due to modernization, and those that have undergone significant transformation.

The study specifically focuses on the localized expressions of these rituals within the Surkhan oasis, using it as a primary case study to illustrate the broader national trends in cultural preservation and adaptation. Furthermore, the research incorporates a socio-cultural analysis of the psychological and pedagogical functions of these rituals.

⁵Ashirov A. O'zbek xalqining qadimiy e'tiqod va irimlari. – Toshkent: Alisher Navoiy nomidagi O'zbekiston Milliy kutubxonasi nashriyoti, 2007. – B. 84–90.

⁶Pardayev T.R. O'zbekistonning janubiy hududlarida ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy va madaniy hayot (1945–1991). Tarix fanlari doktori (DSc) dissertatsiyasi. – Termiz, 2021.

⁷Rashidov S.R. Kattaqo'rg'on tumanidagi joy nomlari va urug'lar // Journal of Universal Science Research. ISSN (E): 2181-4570, 2023. – B. 20–24.

⁸Qurbonova M.B. Buxoro vohasi o'zbek va tojiklarining an'anaviy taomlari (XIX asr oxiri – XX asr boshi): Nomzodlik dissertatsiyasi. – Toshkent, 1994. – B. 55–60.

By examining the symbolic meanings behind actions such as tying a *belbog* (traditional waist sash) during the first step ceremony or measuring white fabric during the *muchal* celebration, the methodology seeks to decode the underlying educational messages that these rituals convey to the younger generation.

RESULTS

The ethnological investigation of the traditions surrounding the birth and early life of a child in Uzbek families, particularly within the Surkhan oasis, reveals a highly structured, chronological system of rituals. These practices are deeply synchronized with the biological development of the child and serve as major instruments of social integration.

1. Prenatal Customs and Beliefs

Traditional Uzbek society views a pregnant woman as occupying a liminal, highly vulnerable state, suspended between the spiritual and physical worlds. Consequently, she is considered highly susceptible to *yovuz kuchlar* (evil forces) and *yomon ko'z* (the evil eye). To safeguard her and the unborn child, a strict code of behavior and dietary taboos was historically maintained, many elements of which are still respected today.

Expectant mothers were traditionally forbidden from engaging in strenuous physical labor, walking outside alone after sunset, or visiting places associated with impurity or transition, such as cemeteries, garbage dumps, and slaughterhouses. Stepping over specific domestic items like a broom or a rope was also strictly forbidden, as these actions were symbolically linked to a difficult delivery or umbilical cord complications.

Dietary taboos formed a critical part of prenatal care. In the Surkhan oasis, pregnant women were historically prohibited from consuming horse meat, camel meat, rabbit, duck, and fish. Ethnological analysis reveals that these restrictions were rooted in the belief that the characteristics of the consumed animal could be transferred to the fetus.⁹

However, the period of independence (1991–2024) has witnessed a major transformation in these prenatal beliefs. With the widespread expansion of rural healthcare and modern obstetric education, these ancient taboos have largely been discarded in favor of scientific nutritional guidelines. Today, medical professionals actively encourage the consumption of fish and other protein-rich foods during pregnancy, creating a clear boundary where scientific rationality has superseded magical thinking, even as the emotional support and general protection of the expectant mother remain central to family life.¹⁰

2. The Postpartum Period: Chilla and Social Reintegration

The most critical phase immediately following childbirth is the *chilla* (forty-day protective period after birth). Denoting a period of strict quarantine, the *chilla* serves to protect the highly vulnerable newborn and the recovering mother from external infections and spiritual harm. During these forty days, the mother and child are kept in a semi-isolated room, and access to them is restricted to close female relatives. A light is kept burning in the room all night to prevent the intrusion of darkness, which is symbolically associated with negative spiritual forces.

⁹Ashirov A. O'zbek xalqining qadimiy e'tiqod va irimlari. – Toshkent: Alisher Navoiy nomidagi O'zbekiston Milliy kutubxonasi nashriyoti, 2007. – B. 84–90.

¹⁰Tursunov S.N., Qobilov E.O., Pardayev T.R. Surxondaryo tarix ko'zgisida. – Toshkent: Sharq, 2001.

The conclusion of this isolation is marked by a highly significant social ritual known as *chilla qochdi* (escaping the forty-day period) or, in Tajik-influenced areas, *chillaguzoron* (passing of the forty days). To mark this milestone, the family prepares *qovurmoch* (roasted wheat snack) and distributes it to neighbors and local children. The mother and child then make their first official visit outside their home, typically visiting the maternal grandparents or the household of a highly respected, prosperous elder. This act represents the child's formal introduction to the wider community and the mother's successful reintegration into social life.¹¹

3. Early Infancy Rituals: Suyunchi, Naming, and Tanglay Ko'arish

The announcement of the birth is immediately accompanied by the custom of *suyunchi* (a gift given for bringing good news). The person who first delivers the news of the birth to the extended family is rewarded with gifts or money, establishing a spirit of collective celebration. Shortly after birth, the naming ceremony is conducted. In accordance with Islamic traditions, a local religious figure is invited to recite the *azon* (call to prayer) into the newborn's right ear and the *iqomat* (second call to prayer) into the left ear, followed by the formal pronouncement of the chosen name. The selection of a name is treated with immense responsibility, as Uzbeks believe a person's name directly shapes their destiny.

Simultaneously, the ritual of *tanglay ko'arish* (lifting the palate) is performed. A respected elder or a person displaying exemplary moral character dips their finger into a sweet substance, such as honey or date juice, and gently touches the roof of the infant's mouth. This symbolic act is accompanied by prayers and wishes that the child will grow up to be sweet-spoken, articulate, and successful, effectively transferring the positive traits of the elder to the child.¹²

4. The Beshik To'yi

Following the initial weeks of life, the family organizes the *beshik to'yi* (cradle ceremony).

The *beshik* (traditional wooden cradle) is a vital cultural artifact in Uzbek child-rearing, designed to keep the infant clean, dry, and physically secure. The cradle is traditionally prepared and gifted by the maternal grandmother, along with baby clothing and blankets.

The ceremony of placing the child into the *beshik* for the first time is a festive, female-dominated gathering. The cradle is cleansed by burning *isiriq* (harmala/wild rue) to purify the air and ward off the evil eye. Lullabies, known as *allay* (traditional cradle songs), are sung by the grandmother and other senior women. These songs not only soothe the infant but also serve as the child's first exposure to the language, values, and cultural narrative of their nation.

5. Milestones of Mobility and Maturity: Ilk Qadam and Muchal

The ceremony of *ilk qadam* (first step) is celebrated with great joy. When the child takes their first independent steps, a public gathering is organized. A *belbog'* (traditional waist sash) is symbolically tied around the child's waist to wish them physical strength and resilience. To ensure a life of abundance, sweet breads are distributed, and water is sprinkled on the child's path with

¹¹Mirzaahmedova D.V. O'zbek oilasida rivojlanishi va bola tug'ilishi bilan bog'liq urf-odatlar // Markaziy Osiyoda an'anaviy va zamonaviy etnomadaniy jarayonlar. 2-qism. – Toshkent, 2005. – B. 112–118.

¹²Rashidov S.R. Kattaqo'rg'on tumanidagi joy nomlari va urug'lar // Journal of Universal Science Research. ISSN (E): 2181-4570, 2023. – B. 20–24.

the blessing “may your life be as abundant as water.” Sweets, dried fruits, and coins are showered over the child’s head to attract future wealth and happiness.¹³

The final major childhood milestone is the *muchal* (twelve-year animal calendar cycle marking a coming-of-age milestone) celebration, which occurs around the age of twelve. Rooted in ancient Eastern calendar systems, this transition marks the biological and social boundary between childhood and adolescence. The child is dressed in special white clothing, and a piece of white fabric measured to their height is presented, symbolizing a clean slate and pure intentions.

Elders offer prayers and guide the youth as they step into a period characterized by increased social responsibility and the onset of maturity.¹⁴

DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that the rituals associated with childbirth and early childhood in Uzbek families represent a highly complex, multi-functional system of social and psychological integration. To fully comprehend the ethnological significance of these practices, it is necessary to analyze them through the lens of cultural anthropology, particularly using Arnold van Gennep’s classical tripartite model of rites of passage—comprising separation, liminality, and reintegration. In the traditional Uzbek context, the transition of a child from the womb to the community is not merely a biological event but a carefully managed sociological process.

The postpartum period of *chilla* perfectly illustrates this liminal phase. During these forty days, both the mother and the newborn are suspended in a state of social isolation, removed from the daily activities of the household and community. Ethnological analysis shows that this isolation serves dual purposes: epidemiological protection and psychological stabilization.¹⁵

Physically, it shields the neonate, who has a developing immune system, from external pathogens—a highly effective pre-scientific quarantine mechanism. Psychologically, it protects the new mother from postpartum depression by limiting her physical duties and surrounding her with supportive female elders who transmit maternal wisdom. The ritual of *chilla qochdi* represents the final phase of reintegration. By preparing and sharing *qovurmoch* with neighbors, the family formally announces the child’s successful survival of the most dangerous period of early life. The subsequent visit of the mother and infant to the home of a respected elder signifies their official return to the community. Through this visit, the child is symbolically anchored within the kinship network, establishing social connections that will support their development throughout life. This demonstrates that these practices are not isolated acts of superstition, but are crucial for maintaining the social fabric and reinforcing mutual obligations among extended relatives.¹⁶

¹³Qoraboyev U. O‘zbekiston bayramlari. – Toshkent: O‘qituvchi, 1991. – B. 25–45.

¹⁴Qurbonova M.B. Buxoro vohasi o‘zbek va tojiklarining an‘anaviy taomlari (XIX asr oxiri – XX asr boshi): Nomzodlik dissertatsiyasi. – Toshkent, 1994. – B. 55–60.

¹⁵Mirzaahmedova D.V. O‘zbek oilasida rivojlanishi va bola tug‘ilishi bilan bog‘liq urf-odatlar // Markaziy Osiyoda an‘anaviy va zamonaviy etnomadaniy jarayonlar. 2-qism. – Toshkent, 2005. – B. 112–118.

¹⁶Ashirov A. O‘zbek xalqining qadimiy e‘tiqod va irimlari. – Toshkent: Alisher Navoiy nomidagi O‘zbekiston Milliy kutubxonasi nashriyoti, 2007. – B. 84–90.

Furthermore, the ritual of *tanglay ko'arish* highlights the traditional pedagogical values of Uzbek society. By choosing a highly respected, articulate, and morally upright elder to touch the infant's palate, the family expresses their aspirations for the child's future character. This act represents the symbolic transfer of social virtues—such as eloquence, wisdom, and kindness—from one generation to the next, emphasizing the community's collective responsibility in child-rearing.

The Impact of Independence (1991–2024) and Cultural Revival

The transformation of childbirth rituals during the years of Uzbekistan's independence (1991–2024) highlights the dynamic relationship between state ideology, modernization, and cultural preservation. During the Soviet period, many traditional family rituals, particularly those with religious or pre-Islamic spiritual undertones, were systematically discouraged or labeled as outdated. Practices such as the *beshik to'yi* or the *muchal* were often marginalized, performed only in private rural spaces to avoid administrative scrutiny.

Following the acquisition of independence in 1991, the state initiated a comprehensive policy aimed at reviving *milliy qadriyatlar* (national values). This political and social shift led to the revitalization of family ceremonies, which were now celebrated openly as symbols of national pride and cultural continuity.¹⁷

Traditional rituals were integrated into the public sphere, often promoted through local neighborhood committees known as *mahalla* (local self-governing community institutions) and state-backed cultural programs. However, this revival has not been a simple return to past practices. Instead, it is characterized by a complex process of hybridization, where ancient traditions are merged with modern values and scientific advancements. For instance, while the *beshik* remains a central cultural symbol, modern pediatricians in Uzbekistan now advise parents on how to use it safely, suggesting that infants should not be bound tightly for prolonged periods to avoid developmental issues. This has led to a modified usage of the cradle, combining traditional comfort with modern orthopedic recommendations.

Similarly, globalization has introduced new elements into early childhood celebrations.

While the *ilk qadam* ceremony is still performed, it is increasingly combined with Western-style birthday parties, complete with professional photography, digital invitations, and elaborate decorations. This hybridization shows that contemporary Uzbek families do not view modernization and tradition as mutually exclusive. Rather, they actively adapt their ancient heritage to fit the aesthetic and social demands of the twenty-first century, ensuring the survival of their cultural identity in a rapidly globalizing world.¹⁸

Local Variations: The Surkhan Oasis Case

The preservation of childbirth and early childhood rituals in the Surkhan oasis displays unique regional characteristics that set it apart from other parts of Uzbekistan. Due to its geographical location—surrounded by mountain ranges and bordered by Tajikistan and

¹⁷Pardayev T.R. O'zbekistonning janubiy hududlarida ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy va madaniy hayot (1945–1991). Tarix fanlari doktori (DSc) dissertatsiyasi. – Termiz, 2021.

¹⁸Rashidov S.R. Kattaqo'rg'on tumanidagi joy nomlari va urug'lar // Journal of Universal Science Research. ISSN (E): 2181-4570, 2023. – B. 20–24.

Afghanistan—the oasis has historically maintained a degree of cultural isolation. This isolation, combined with a rich history of semi-nomadic and settled agricultural lifestyles, has allowed for the preservation of highly archaic forms of family rituals.

In the Surkhan oasis, the performance of the *allay* (traditional cradle songs) during the *beshik to 'yi* often retains distinct linguistic and melodic structures that reflect the region's ancient pastoral heritage. Furthermore, the ingredients used in the preparation of *qovurmoch* during the *chilla qochdi* ceremony are deeply tied to local agricultural cycles, emphasizing the historical bond between the community's economic activities and its spiritual practices.¹⁹

Moreover, the *muchal* transition is celebrated with specific local nuances in Surkhan, where the role of the maternal uncle in presenting the white clothing is highly emphasized. This matrilineal element, often traced back to ancient pre-Islamic kinship systems, has survived more robustly in the southern oasis than in the heavily urbanized centers of Tashkent or Samarkand.

This regional variation underscores the importance of conducting localized ethnological studies to avoid oversimplifying the complex tapestry of Uzbek national culture.²⁰

CONCLUSION

The ethnological study of childbirth and early childhood rituals in Uzbek families, particularly in the Surkhan oasis, demonstrates that these traditions are vital components of national identity. From the dietary taboos of pregnancy to the transition marked by the *muchal*, each practice serves to protect the individual and integrate them into the collective social body.

Over the period of independence (1991–2024), these rituals have proven to be highly resilient, successfully adapting to the demands of modern medicine, state ideology, and globalization.

The ethnological preservation of early childhood rituals is further reinforced by the unique structural features of Uzbek social life, particularly the institution of the *mahalla* (local self-governing community institutions). The *mahalla* serves as an extended kinship network where private family milestones are instantly elevated to public events. When a family organizes a *beshik to 'yi* or prepares *qovurmoch* for *chilla qochdi*, they are not acting in isolation; they are supported, monitored, and validated by their neighbors. This public validation is critical for the child's development, as it establishes a strong sense of security, belonging, and communal accountability from the earliest days of life.²¹

Additionally, this study highlights the central role of women as the primary guardians of intangible cultural heritage in Uzbek society. While religious naming ceremonies may involve male figures, the daily execution of prenatal taboos, the preservation of postpartum hygienic practices, the singing of *allay*, and the organizing of infant milestones are almost entirely managed by women. Senior female relatives, such as the maternal grandmother and elderly aunts, act as living repositories of cultural wisdom.

¹⁹Tursunov S.N., Qobilov E.O., Pardayev T.R. Surxondaryo tarix ko'zgasida. – Toshkent: Sharq, 2001.

²⁰Qurbonova M.B. Buxoro vohasi o'zbek va tojiklarining an'anaviy taomlari (XIX asr oxiri – XX asr boshi): Nomzodlik dissertatsiyasi. – Toshkent, 1994. – B. 55–60.

²¹Pardayev T.R. O'zbekistonning janubiy hududlarida ijtimoiy-iqtisodiy va madaniy hayot (1945–1991). Tarix fanlari doktori (DSc) dissertatsiyasi. – Termiz, 2021.

Through these rituals, they pass down essential life skills, linguistic patterns, and moral values to the new generation, ensuring that national identity is preserved within the domestic sphere.²²

Ultimately, the transformation of childbirth rituals during the post-independence era (1991–2024) shows that tradition is a living, adaptive process. While the archaic magical beliefs behind prenatal dietary taboos have faded under the influence of modern education and healthcare, the core social and pedagogical functions of the rituals have survived.

Uzbek family customs have successfully accommodated modern science and globalization without losing their emotional and spiritual depth. These rituals continue to serve as highly effective mechanisms for reinforcing family solidarity, fostering generational respect, and preserving the cultural heritage of the Uzbek people in the modern world.

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²²Qurbonova M.B. Buxoro vohasi o‘zbek va tojiklarining an‘anaviy taomlari (XIX asr oxiri – XX asr boshi): Nomzodlik dissertatsiyasi. – Toshkent, 1994. – B. 55–60.

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