M. Reiner, *The Life of the Text and the Fate of Tradition, III*

THE LIFE OF THE TEXT AND THE FATE OF TRADITION.

INTERPRETATION OF PRE-ISLAMIC CALENDAR FESTIVALS IN CLASICAL PERSIAN POETRY OF THE 10TH—12TH CENTURIES

*(BY THE EXAMPLE OF NAVRÚZ)*

A special part in the study of any literary tradition plays the investigation of its formation process and the factors, which affected this process. The development of the New Persian language poetry in the 9th—10th centuries is a specific continuation of the Pre-Islamic literary tradition which was affected by the Arabic conquest, without being interrupted. Adopted poetic forms, first of all qūzida, which came to Persian literature from the Arabic, took its roots in the local literary soil and enriched themselves with thematic elements of Old Persian calendar songs. Performing these songs must have been an integral part of the ritual of the two great seasonal festivals — Nowrūz and Mīrghān. 

The beginning of the first was the day of vernal equinox, the latter starts on the autumnal equinox. Numerous historical and literary sources of the Islamic epoch in the Arabic and Persian languages are evidence of a special popularity of calendar songs, their authors and performers in the time of the Iranian Sasanian dynasty (224—651). Many of these songs are known by their names which are mentioned in the works of poets of the classical epoch (10th—15th c.).

In the present article we decided to limit ourselves to spring calendar poetry, which in the classification of genres is referred to as navûzī and navûzī (New Year) or bahārîyī (literary, spring). This choice can be explained not only with the extreme popularity of the spring theme and figuretivity in the classical Persian poetry, not only with an amazing stability of the season festival which lies in its basis, but also with the principal importance of the concept of spring awakening of nature in the literary, musical and graphic layers of the medieval Iranian culture. However, let us get back to the names of the spring songs of the Sasanian time which are mentioned in the 10th—12th century poetry. In the gāndīl a famous court poet Manuchîrî (1000—1040) several names of old melodic can be found which contain words navûzī and spring: *Navûzī,* “Big Navûzī,” “Spring’s Crown,” “Spring’s Green” etc. Two other categories of names contain names of birds and plants. Their belonging to spring calendar songs can be reconstructed through poetical contexts in which they are mentioned in Persian classical lyrical. Let us give a characteristic example from Manuchîrî's poetry:

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The cold went away and, like a peacock, spring came.

Everyone who had been locked up broke out into the garden.

A turtledove sings a melody called “A Slim Cypress” sitting on a slim cypress.

A nightingale sings a melody called “Kalât” sitting on a rosebush.

When a mountain grizzly whistles the song of the “Mountain Grizzly”, it makes tears in the heart. A work replies from a motion of a fortress wall with the “Bell” song [1].

The specifics of the poetic context which mentions the melodies “Slim Cypress” and “Mountain Grizzly” point to the fact that they could be performed when celebrating Nowrūz. The number of such names can be extended with the following ones: “Lark”, “Green Expanses” (literary, green in the green), “A Rose’s Song”, “Cane in Spring”, “Cane near Plane” etc.

In the period when the basic thematic fund of the classical Persian lyrics was formed, the mention of flowers and plants as well as birds becomes an integral part of the spring calendar lyrical. Calendar introductions to panegyrics in the early Persian quaidâs in the quantitative ratio can compete with the love ones. Extreme popularity of formal gândîls with calendar introductions prove the fact to the extent of spreading of Islam in Iran early seasonal festivals were celebrated at the courts of local rulers with the same splendor and pomp as in the Sasanian times. Although the rituals typical of these celebrations lost their immediate religious meaning, connected with Zoroastrianism, they took roots in the court etiquette. On the receptions at Iranian courts in the 10th—11th centuries, the performance of pre-Islamic calendar songs which were part of the so-called “King’s motets” (world-i khânevarwân) must have had a presence in the new poetical practice which gradually replaced the old singing tradition. Court poetry which took the role of accompanying seasonal celebrations which became that belonged to calendar songs, inherited from them not only a number of standard introductions and a set of seasonal words, but also vivid connections with the old ritual—mythological beliefs of the Iranians.

Of doubtless representativeness is, from the point of view of the question under consideration, the poetic heritage of Râdkâ (808—911), the first great poet of the “golden age” of Persian literature. Despite the obvious incompletions and scrappiness of works by the “Adam of Persian poets”, we can declare that calendar motifs played a special part in his works. Among Râdkâ’s fully preserved works of special popularity amongst specialists in Persian literature is the qûzida “The Mother of Wine” which is called so by its first two words. This famous text was studied in Iran itself (M. Qazwînî, S. Naﬁsî etc.) as well as in Europe and Russia (E. Denison Ross, E. Brown, E. F. Bertelt, I. S. Braginskî etc.). However, only Bertelt’s paid attention to the fact that in the basis of the introductory part of this quzida lies a mythological construction. Analyzing this key text in his book: ""Vivid and original is Râdkâ’s mythologized (emphasized by me — M. R.) description of making wine, which, at the same time, contains many realistic details as well” [2]. However, the researcher never gets back to this promising observation. Still the introduction of the quzida “The Mother of Wine” can be interpreted as a poetic projection of one of the central agrarian-cultural myths — the myth about the dying and reviving deity. Let us cite the beginning of this text:

The mother of wine must be sacrificed,

Her child should be caught and imprisoned.

But you can’t take a child from her mother.

If before that you don’t shutter her [bonds] and extract her soul,

But it’s not allowed to take away

A baby from her mother’s breast.

Before seven months of breast-feeding pass

From the beginning of the month until the end of the month above.

Until after that according to the laws of religion and justice

Lock the baby up in a dark prison and sacrifice his mother [3].

Most likely, this introduction can be interpreted as a metaphorical description of the young agricultural deity’s descent to the world of the dead, as in many later plots in the basis of which laid old mythological concept of such kind, a prison replaced the other world (see the legend of the Yûsuf (Joseph) the Beautiful). Further in this quzida is a series of images of the child in a gloomy prison (a clay jar) in which it is impossible to distinguish between the motives of physical and spiritual sufferings of a prisoner and the elements of description of the young wine fermentation process.

We possess no direct evidence of the presence of the developed (it can be said) form antecedents of the New Year religious ceremony dating back to the ancient Iran. However, it is obvious that the fact that the poet called the spring month of the Babylonian calendar nîsîn (corresponds to April) a time of opening the jars with the new harvest. Besides, in this quzida there is another, although an indirect one, evidence of this poem’s connection with spring New Year celebrations. Passing from “wine-making” motifs to the description of the feast, Râdkâ says: "A regal feast should be organized [and decorated with] roses, jasmine and bright gillyflowers”. Apart from the fact that listing of flowers’ names is canonical within the genre of bahârîyâ or navûzī, we should also mention that such name as gilyflower (Mâhûdâs) or

The sufferings of the “wine’s child” described by Râdkâ coincide in time not only with the six-month cycle of young wine fermentation, but also with the cycle of the dead and buried vegetative deity in the underworld. In the text of this quzida the description of this phenomenon is manner of Lûnâyîrî’s genre (feast poetry) at the same time is a metaphor of greeting the reviving deity freed from its prison in the month of nîsîn, which is in spring. Here is what Râdkâ says:

When it [wine — M. R.] finally settles, it becomes transparent

And has the colour of scarlet ruby and cornals.

How red it is? — As a Yemeni coral.

How scarlet is it? — As a Bâdshah-rûbin.

When you breathe in its aroma, you think that a scarlet rose

Has given it its smell, and also musk and ambergris with the [oil] of the Egyptian willow.

It radiates in the jar

Until the new spring comes, until the middle of the nîsîn month.

And then, if you open the door to it at midnight,

You will see the spouting source of the sun [5].

Following the description of the wine-making process in Râdkâ’s quzida there is a scene of a feast. There are no direct indications of the season character of the feast in the text, which makes specialists of Râdkâ’s poetry refrain from an interpretation of the fact that the poet called the spring month of the Babylonian calendar nîsîn (corresponds to April) a time of opening the jars with the new harvest. Besides, in this quzida there is another, although an indirect one, evidence of this poem’s connection with spring New Year celebrations. Passing from “wine-making” motifs to the description of the feast, Râdkâ says: "A regal feast should be organized [and decorated with] roses, jasmine and bright gillyflowers”. Apart from the fact that listing of flowers’ names is canonical within the genre of bahârîyâ or navûzī, we should also mention that such name as gilyflower (Mâhûdâs), or
The image contains a page from a document discussing the life of Na'awrūz in Persian poetry. The text is primarily in Persian, with some English translations. The page includes a reference to the celebration of Na'awrūz, a Persian holiday, and mentions the traditions and symbols associated with it. The text also discusses the historical and cultural significance of the holiday, including its origins and how it is celebrated in various contexts.

The page includes a quote from a Persian poet, which is translated into English. The quote discusses the imagery associated with the holiday, including the rose bush, which is a symbol of love and devotion. The text also touches on the cultural importance of the holiday, noting its role in celebrating the arrival of spring and the renewal of life.

Overall, the document provides a detailed exploration of the cultural and literary significance of Na'awrūz, highlighting its enduring relevance in Persian society and its contributions to the rich tapestry of Persian poetry.
A cloud spilling pearls turned the earth into the image of heaven—
In the night with [stellar] light from blossoming tulips.
In the days of the ardhushīya [month] the breeze become for mountains and steps
And the waves drawn by the [icy-cold] wind of the [dry] season.
Narīcī becomes for the world a confusion
Which entrapped the evil done by winter.
If a cloud is black and enveloped with fire like a sinner in hell,
Why did the garden become light due to it as a heavenly creature?
These Reviving flowers which lifted their heads in the garden
Because of its evidence for the Doomsday and the resurrection from the dead.
Blissed be those, whose heart sees what is beheld in the garden.
Herbs tell him about the Last Judgment...
Come to believe in fate, as for your eyes
Narīcī became the fulfillment of herbs' fate.
Look at how the dead herbs revived from the seed,
And those which had no seed fell into oblivion.
[Spiritual] knowledge is people's seed and people exist for the sake of knowledge.
According to this knowledge human goodness and evil are due [23].

Using the tradition of the narīcīya genre which was formed in the court poetry, Naṣīr-i Khusrau creates additional religious meanings of stable figurative clichés. The poet emphasizes direct connection between the Earth and the Heaven in the moment of Narīcī (“A cloud spilling pearls turned the earth into the image of heaven”). Mystical transformation of the habitual earthly space which takes place in the period of the spring awakening of nature lifts the veil of secrecy from the world-created by God. The harmony inherited by the world in the beginning of time is to be reconstructed in the end of time, after the Doomsday, in the moment of resurrection from the dead. The steppe, which was considered a part of the ‘millennium valley of the Eternal Day’, again becomes the paradisial garden. As a result of removal of the border between the steppe and the garden, the Earth and the Heaven in the same time is transformed: it disappears, as when it comes to its cradle it turns into eternity. Thus, traditional formulas of the narīcīya genre, when they get religious-mystical poetry and acquire allegorical meaning, partly regain sacramental functions which they once had in pre-Islamic calendar songs and which were connected with the worship of the dying and resurrecting deities of eternity.

The images of birds which were reininterpreted by correlation with the Qur'anic contexts occupied a special place in the mystical poetry. In Sana‘î’s qasida Taḥṣīl Taqīṣūr (‘Birds’ prayer’), which has already been mentioned above, the “birds” introduces forms the main part of the narrative. Sana‘î presents a detailed illustration to the following ayah: “Hast thou not seen how that whatsoever is in the heavens and in the earths exult God, and the birds spreading their wings? Behold! He knows their prayer and its extolling: and God knows the things they do” [24].

The word jauz in the name of the qasida, which roughly corresponds to “praising in prayer”, constitutes by its root with two verbs used in the abovementioned āyū. The contours of the qasida also points to direct connection with the Qur’ānic contexts, as birds in each manner, praise God (“And each knows their prayer.”), praying His names. We should say that Sana‘î was not the first Persian poet to present birds singing as pronouncing divine names. One of the earliest, already in the 11th century, is a ghazal of Shams al-Dīn Bābā Kūhī al-Shārūnī (11th century) starts his ghazal with the following words:
A sunlighted and a turbulent wave, a grousse and a cuckoo
Learned from the God interpreting [His] names [25].

Sana‘î, in fact, develops in his qasida the motif which is contained in one bayh of Bābā Kūhī’s ghazal, and uses the complete set of traditional figures of the spring calendar theme which had been developed especially by Persian poets, especially Manṣūrī. Repeating the scheme of the standard development of the narīcīya introduction, Sana‘î attaches distinct religious tonality to this theme. This is noticeable even in the first lines:

The Creator created the world
And named everything in the image of a heavenly garden
He ordered that before the sky makes another turn.
The sun shall run around [its] circle
To decorate this feeble-minded old man
That you may cause to live a goodly youth.
Each day the world becomes prettier, as every night
Rejoin [the guard of paradise — M. R.] opens the gates of the heavenly garden [26].

In Sana‘î’s work we come across the already familiar motifs of the blossoming of the steppe, the act of the God’s creation, and figures of poetry turn not to be added to the Muslim picture of the world. The birds’ choir praising the God constitutes part of this picture and reveals the wisdom of the creative source in the world. The poet sufficiently lists the birds typical for qasidas: while the largest number of birds his predecessor Manṣūrī mentions in one text is nine, Sana‘î mentions thirty one bird. This number, which approximately equals to thirty (the last bird — a rooster — can be excluded from this list as its mention has nothing to do with the calendar theme of the qasida, and only introduces the didactic end of the poem [21]), arouses two associations. The first is the reference to the number of birds in the poet Farīd al-Dīn Āṭṭār (“The Language of Birds” (Mansūrī al-ayyīr) in which birds go to look for their king Simūrgh and only thirty of them, who go the way of self-cognition, reach the aim, as the words al margh (thirty birds) make up the name of their king who is the embodiment of the Divine Truth. The second association brings us back to the pre-Islamic times. In the abovementioned Zoosterocottic monumental code Bandūdštī there some of the distinguished groups of God’s creations (animals, birds, cereals, fruits, etc.) are laid out in a specific way belonging to a group. Let us give an example. The code says:...
each month of the Zoroastrian religious calendar was dedicated, although originally this term referred only to the six main deities formed in the highest circle of the supreme deity - Ahura Mazda. According to A. E. Berzels, in the basis of such "register", in which "three times ten" species of birds was listed, lies the echo of the ancient calendar system tradition [29]. And it is obvious that in each group an object which is responsible for the generic notion, which includes other, specific notions, is distinguished in one word or another. Thus, Simrugh represents the idea of the bird of the whole, the king of all birds, and concrete species are its modifiers.

Naturally, in Sanûr's qâdîa the old scheme of motifs is represented in a re-interpreted form, as birds do not sing old melodies of Rubûl's or Manjû's works, but pray Allah's names, or, in other words, perform a ritual which Sûfis called dîkîr. Sanûr's qâdîa in the birds' mouths contains various themes of all (the Beast, the Armament, the Almighty, the All-powerful etc.), he calls nightingale mjâyâha (performing dîkîr) ritual and, thus, creates in his qâdîa a special atmosphere of mystical experience. And again, like in Naqsh-i Khurshân's qâdîa, spiritual transformation which Sûfî-birds experience when performing dîkîr ritual turns out to be connected with the spring transformation of the world.

Of no lesser interest, in the light of the problem in consideration, is Khajânî's qâdîa which has the same name as the famous poem by "Ajâr - "The Language of Birds" (Mantûl al-mûrû). The name is a direct reference to the text of Qur'ân which says: "And Solomon was their lord, and he taught them the speech of the birds (manû jâl al-târ), and we have given of everything; surely this is the manifest bounty" [30]. Sûfî tradi-
tion chooses the process of their interpretation knowing bird's lan-guage as possessing inmost knowledge. Later, Sûfîs' figu-
rate language was called "the language of birds" (Persian sabûn-müjârûni) [31]. Khajânî's work contains all the thematic clichés: the description of the spring awakening of nature in the images of a blossoming garden and singing birds which contains a great amount of seasonal vocabu-
lar. Like Sanûr's, Khajânî places all the thematic blocks of his work in the system of particularly religious semantic coordinates: his qâdîa contains two introductions, one of them is a description of morning and praise of the main Muslim sanctuary - Karbâ. Only after that he gives a description of a garden which proceeds the argument of birds about the superiority of one flower over another:

Lily, which is sincere [lit. one-flowered] as the writings of the godly [32].

After the verses quoted above there follow another three where the partridge praises green grass, a parrot praises yellow and a hoopoe praises fruits. Later in the text the author mentions three more birds which do not par-ticipate in the argument: a grousse (another species), a crow and a eagle. Apart from it this list we should name a mythical king-bird "Anâqí". On the whole twelve birds are mentioned, which is much less than in Sanûr's qâdîa, but which comprises the number of birds in the "Anâqâ" poem which has the same name, although the latter declares that there were thirty birds that reached Simrugh's kingdom. What is common for all the three works is that there is a certain group of phenomena belonging to one class. In the same way Khânjî's qâdîa treats groups of flowers and plants. These are the same "registers" of God's creations which again bring us back to the Bundahîshn code. The Bird's argument can only be solved in the sphere of the absolute, which is on the level of divine reality, and not earthly. That is why the arbitrate in their argument is "Anâqâ" - the calf of birds, the judge, and the absolute monarch", an analogue of "Ajâr's Simrugh. "Anâqâ" ad-
judges superiority to the rose, justifying his choice in the following way:

The "Anâqâ" bird raised his head and said: "In this family One [bird] has her hands dyed with henna, another dyed her locks with balsam. All these young plants are children of the inalien Houris Who taste milk and wine from [paradise] sources. Although they all are charming, the rose is the prettiest. As she is the symbol of the Prophet's root, and others [growth] from earth and water [33]."

This fragment gives the key to the hidden mystical meaning of Khânjî's qâdîa expressing the idea of superi-
ority of the unity over plurality, as the word gul in Persian means not only "rose", but also "flower", i.e. it denotes not only specific, but also general notion, just like Simrugh in "Ajâr's poem denotes all birds. But to under-
stand what birds argue about, what meanings are hidden behind the names of flowers and plants, we should first of all compare Khânjî's and Sanûr's qâdîas and what we know about birds in Qur'ân. Most likely, in both qâdîas the birds pray divine names (azmâ) and attributes (qadâjâ). This is proved not only by the Qur'anic context, but also by the Sîfî tradition of Qur'ân interpretation represented by such authors as Al-Qarâ (1615-1666) [16]. In one chap-
ter of the tractate of the "Gems of Wisdom" (Faiqî al-hikam) dedicated to Salâmân's wisdom it says:

"The only aim we pursue is to point to and to tell about the two favours mentioned by Salâmân in the two names which in the language of the Arabs are the Graceous and the Merciful" [34].

So, the Qur'ânic Salâmân who was taught the lan-
guage of birds brought to the world the tradition of pro-
nouncing the following formula "In the name of the Allah the Graceous and the Merciful". Then Ibn al'-Arabi talks about the order of the divine names:

"So Salâmân brought two favours: the favour of giving (rubûl al-îmânîn) and the favour of obligation (rubûl al-îmânîn). They are the Graceous, the Merciful: his gift was in the [name] the Graceous, the obligation he established with the [name] the Merciful. Obligation is inferred from giving and the [name] the Merciful is included in the [name] the Graceous, as it is contained in it" [35].

Here of prime importance is admitting that one divine name contains the other just like the name of the rose con-
tains the name of any of the flower. The same philosopher "Dive-

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in their primacy, but they are all nothing but God himself".

However neither the Qur'anic contexts, nor the Sîfî context question the answer why in Khânjî's qâdîa the rose is called the flower of the Prophet. Of course it is impos-
sible not to assume that the author used a specific poetic technique to pass those praises to Muhammad which finishes the qâdîa. In fact, no indication of Muhammad is some-
how connected with any flower has been found in the Arabi-

Here, we will take the liberty of stating that here we come across not just the author's technique of poetic justification of panegyric to Muhammad, but the latest mysticisation of the Prophet's image on the Iranian

Note

11. Ibid., p. 331.
12. Sh. Shukorov, "'Odoh za smyrõbkî u 'ikrasîvõ imârân' ("'Hunting for meaning in the art of Iran'") (Sad omdo krovok (Mos-
20. Parvânî, op. cit., p. 78.
PRESENTING THE COLLECTION

E. Rezvav, A. Teryakov

NICHOLAS OF RUSSIA TRAVELS TO THE EAST. I: CHINESE WATERCOLOURS ON PITH

In 1896, Nicholas, future Nicholas II of Russia, sets off on a Grand Tour. Before him the Orient, a land of miracles and mystery. Visiting Greece, Egypt, India, Ceylon, Singapore, Java, Siam, China and Japan, travelling back through Siberia, Nicholas brought from each land rich gifts, commemorative items and works of art.

Most of what he brought back, including both official gifts and personal acquisitions, is now in Peter the Great Museum of Anthropology and Ethnography Russian Academy of Sciences. Taken together, this fascinating collection presents a picture of the last Russian Emperor totally different from and yet complementary to the romantic view created by a series of books and films over the course of the 20th century. It reveals his personal outlook, his tastes and preferences, his strengths and his numerous weaknesses.

Nicholas's Tour

For the first time since 1837 the heir to the throne of Russia—the world's largest country — set off on an extensive international tour. His status was such that much intense diplomatic effort was put into drawing up the itinerary. Like Peter the Great's "Great Embassy" of 1697–8, when the monarch travelled across Northern Europe meeting kings and gaining hands-on experience of many skills vital to his country, the aim of the tour was to strengthen contacts between Russia and foreign lands; except that now the object of attention was the mysterious Orient.

Yet it all grew out of a purely Russian enterprise, a desire to familiarise Nicholas with the Far Eastern parts of his future territories. In 1890 his father, Alexander III, approved construction of the Great Siberian Railway and ordered Nicholas to represent him in Vladivostok at the ceremonial launch of works and symbolically push the first wheelbarrow.

The Crown Prince set off on 23 October 1890 and returned nearly ten months later on 4 August 1891. By then he had travelled 54,500 km, 16,000 of them by railway, 5,300 by carriage, 9,700 by river and 23,400 by sea.

Travelling from Russia to Trieste, Nicholas moved on to Greece and through the Mediterranean to Port-Said in Egypt. While the ships sailed along the Suez Canal, Nicholas and his companions — by now including Prince George of Greece — travelled along the Nile and back to view Egypt's great monuments. From the Suez Canal the Russian ships moved on to Bombay via Aden.

In India, Nicholas and Prince George set off overland: Bombay — Agra — Labrador — Amritsar — Benares — Calcutta — Bombay — Madras and then by sea to Colombo (Ceylon). They admired the temple cut into a rock on Elephant Island, the Golden Temple of the Sikhs in Amritsar, and they met local rulers and hunted. In addition to their numerous purchases, they also received an abundance of presents — marvelously ornamented fabrics, silk shawls, weapons, miniatures with Indian landscapes and portraits of historical figures [1].

From Ceylon, the Russian ships with Nicholas and his suite on board sailed to Bangkok via Singapore and Batavia (Java). For a week Nicholas was the guest of King Rama V Chulalongkorn of Siam, a reformer whose role in Siam's history is often compared to that of Peter I in Russia. Nicholas and Rama V became firm friends: the Russian prince was awarded the highest Siamese order and given personal presents by the king. In 1897, Chulalongkorn was to visit St. Petersburg where one of his sons attended the elite school for boys, the Corps de Pages, and married a Russian girl. Russia also served as an intermediary in relations between Siam and France and it was thanks to Nicholas' intervention that Siam preserved its independence. From that time on the parade uniforms of officers in the Thai army were modelled on Russian uniforms of the early 20th century.

Thence Nicholas moved on to Nanjing via Singapore, Batavia (Java), Saigon and Hong Kong, sailing the Yangtze River on a ship of the Russian voluntary fleet, Vladivostok, to the town of Hangzhou. This was the site of a large tea-house belonging to Russia's biggest supplier of Chinese tea. Amongst the gifts Nicholas received there were different devices for tea-making and samples of all sorts of tea. This collection survives today, being preserved by keepers at the Kunstkamera throughout the terrible 900-day Siege of
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