

**OXUNJON SAFAROV'S CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE STUDY OF CHILDREN'S
SEASONAL RITUAL FOLKLORE**

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Annotation: This article discusses the emergence of Uzbek children's ritual folklore and the role of Okhunjon Safarov in its theoretical development. The most ancient and lasting form of folklore is reflected in ritual folklore. It shows the people's lifestyle, traditions, and ethnic history. Therefore, ritual folklore is important in illuminating the origin, traditional culture, and ways of development of each nation.

Key words. Ritual, holiday, custom, calendar, music, word, game, ritual, magic.

A ritual is interpreted as a process consisting of the harmony between action and word. As rightly noted by the researcher of Uzbek ritual folklore B. Sarimsoqov, its organizational function is of particular importance [1, 6]. In this process, ritual participants unite to mark certain turning points in human life. Such moments may manifest in the form of birth, weddings and celebrations, labor activities, or death. In this very process, children also take part—sometimes accidentally, sometimes as participants—accompanying adults. By imitating adults, children begin to conduct rituals within their own world as well. However, this process does not always remain within the boundaries of imitation; rather, it is also manifested through children's own performance and creativity.

In this regard, the opinion of folklorist M. Alaviya is significant: "Among the people, various seasonal activities, rituals, customs, holidays, and songs associated with months and seasons of the year are widespread. Such songs, on the one hand, are closely connected with labor songs, and on the other hand, with children's folklore. Sometimes it is very difficult to determine the difference between them. Therefore, studying them together yields better results" [2, 26].

Thus, there exists a group of children's songs related to seasons and rituals that were originally created by adults and, due to social relations and changes in daily life, gradually passed into the children's repertoire over centuries. Alternatively, these songs influenced children's creative potential, leading to the emergence of new examples of similar types of songs.

According to children's folklore researcher O. Safarov, a unique form of creative collaboration between adults and children has emerged. Consequently, seasonal and ritual songs in children's repertoires should be regarded as products of their joint creativity. Songs such as "Boychechak," "Oppoqjon," "Binafsha," "Chittigul," "Chuchvara qaynaydur-a," and many others underwent a distinctive process of transformation through such creative cooperation and were refined with qualities inherent to the spiritual world of children [4, 48].

At this point, it is appropriate to clarify the concept of children's ritual folklore. Rituals do not fully preserve their original course, actions, and verbal components within children's folklore; rather, they transform into other genre forms. Based on children's imitation of adult rituals, ritual-songs and game-songs may emerge. For example, Ramadan songs associated with children's seasonal rituals appeared as a result of the transfer of the verbal component of rituals that once belonged to the adult repertoire. Similarly, game-songs such as "O'g'oloq" and "Asha bolam" were formed on the basis of the sadr tushish ritual from adults' mourning ceremonies.

It can be concluded that while rituals influence the genesis of certain genres of children's folklore, they do not retain their original essence within these genres. As for the concept of

children's ritual folklore, as correctly interpreted by researcher N. Qurbonova, it is more appropriate to understand it as referring to blessing chants and cradle ceremonies. In this context, the participation and role of adults play a central role. The concept of children's seasonal ritual folklore, however, expresses songs and game-songs associated with the seasons of the year that emerged as a result of various rituals.

Notably, O. Safarov was the first to study children's calendar-related songs as a distinct category. He analyzed works grouped into specific cycles and genres that depict children's perceptions of the seasons, natural phenomena, and various types of relationships from semantic-structural and ideological-artistic perspectives. He substantiated that such works fully reflect children's distinctive everyday life. In addition, the scholar included the genres of yalinchoq (supplicatory chants) and hukmlagich (imperative chants) within this cycle.

In Uzbek folkloristics, calendar-related genres have been classified into several groups. Prominent folklorist M. Jo'rayev, discussing the historical foundations of the folk calendar, lists twelve types of time reckoning previously used by ancestors, including solar, lunar, *dolg'a*, and *to'qush* calculations. He notes that the system of songs, chants, and signs performed during rituals that embody calendar-related beliefs, folk views, and perceptions constitutes "seasonal ritual folklore." He also endorses the following classification of seasonal ritual folklore:

1. Genres related to the lunar calendar;
2. Ritual folklore genres associated with the seasons of the year;
3. Ritual folklore related to the *muchal* (twelve-year cycle) system.

Until the 1980s, no separate study of seasonal ritual songs within children's folklore had been conducted. G. Jahongirov analyzed several folklore samples related to seasons and rituals in the section "Children's Songs" [4, 36]. O. Safarov, however, studied the Uzbek children's calendar in a broader aspect and divided it into the following components:

1. Spring songs;
2. Summer and autumn songs;
3. Winter songs;
4. Supplicatory chants (*yalinchoqlar*);
5. Imperative chants (*hukmlagichlar*).

The scholar's contribution to the study of children's seasonal ritual folklore is particularly noteworthy. It can be stated that serious considerations regarding calendar-related issues in children's folklore are presented in the monograph *Uzbek Children's Poetic Folklore*. In this work, O. Safarov thoroughly investigates the performance context and poetics of songs associated with the seasons. It should also be emphasized that the study of *hukmlagich*, *yalinchoq*, and Ramadan chants within the framework of children's seasonal ritual folklore was substantiated for the first time by this scholar. Evidently, O. Safarov's scholarly legacy has contributed significantly to the enrichment and development of Uzbek children's folklore studies.

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