

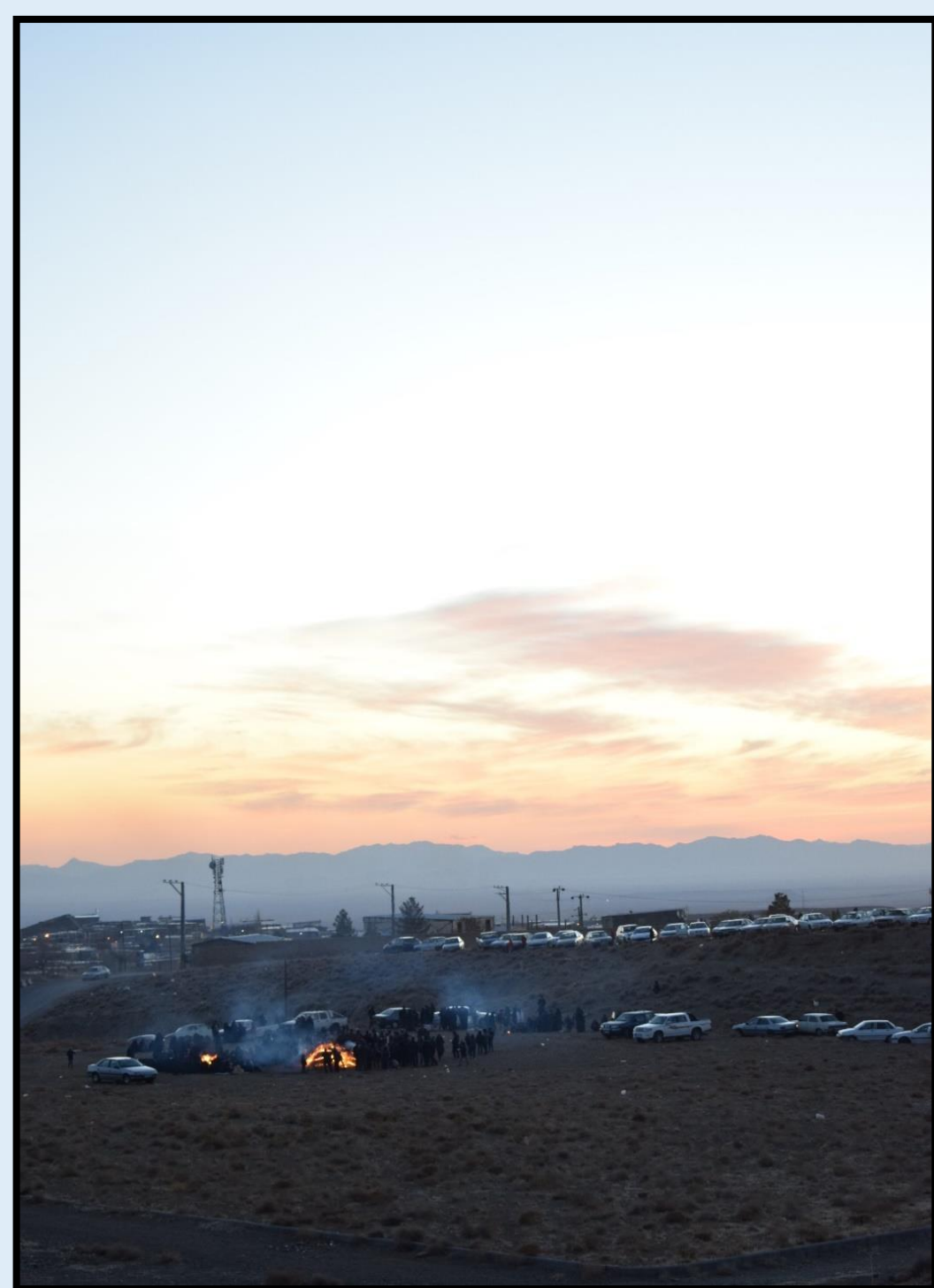
Sedeh ceremony, its notion and functions amongst native people in Pariz southern Iran

Sedeh, History and Name:

(Persian: سده also transliterated as Sade), is an ancient Iranian festival that dates back to the first Persian empire. Sedeh is celebrated 50 days before Nowruz (Persian New Year). Sedeh is one of the most momentous Persian winter festival celebrated by kindling fire across the country and not only by Zoroastrians. It is celebrated every year on or around 30th January if calculated from the modern Solar Hejri calendar. In the very early Islamic texts it has been mentioned that this ceremony is related to the myth of the origins of the humans (First human couple) and to epic hero: Hušang, in memorial of his discovery of fire when he tried to hit a snake with a stone.



Depiction of Sedeh ceremony from illustrated manuscripts of the Shahnameh.



An overview of Sedeh ceremony in Pariz.



In Sedeh ceremony men and women are welcomed and the preparation of the fire is always done by men.

Field Experience:

In this research I interviewed people from Pariz and few Zoroastrians from Kerman. I had access to the library of the Kerman's Zoroastrians fire Temple or "Atashkadeh" to study some books concerning Sedeh. Interviewing people was not at the first place easy task and reaching them and asking questions was uncomfortable for them. Major questions that were asked: How did you get to know Sedeh? What Sedeh means to you? How do you perceive Sedeh as identity, heritage or tradition? It is, however, clear from the first look that not many in Pariz were aware of the history, meaning and the purpose of the Sedeh beside from what they have been told and what they have been practicing for centuries, and those with a very low amount of knowledge at one point were not either open to talk about their experience with Sedeh ceremony. In spite of some difficulties some interviews were obtained.

Introduction to the Philosophy and Function of Sedeh:

The root or etymology of the word Sedeh is not very known. It has been often referred as a word Saad or one hundred. The most possible reason for the name is that within the five-month period of the "Great Winter," counted from the first day of the month of Persian month Ābān or October until the end of Esfand or March, the festival fell on the 100th day of winter, which is the 10th of Bahman or 30 January. Another explanation that by the historian Biruni has mentioned and also known amongst people in Pariz is that they called this day Sedeh because of the 50 days plus 50 nights that set the Nowruz from the day of Sedeh apart. Most notably this ceremony has changed its function through centuries in Pariz differently from the Sedeh ceremony celebrated by Zoroastrians minorities across the country. In fact Sedeh in Pariz is held every year to pray for "Rain" which is totally has a different purpose from what Zoroastrians practice. My research aims to find out how and why such a ceremony with a same name, procedure and timeframe has ended to have an absolutely different function or meaning? In this research what appeared to be the main reason for the Zoroastrians to conduct this ceremony is to celebrate and commemoration of the discovery of "Fire", in contrast despite the fact that protocols to celebrate or conducting the Sedeh are similar in Pariz with Zoroastrian at least the timeframe, preparation and the name, yet it has a different meaning or purpose for people in Pariz.

Methodology: Interview, Participant observation, Photography and videos.

Research overview:

Why and how Sedeh ceremony has changed its purpose is not clear, according to my interviews with people from Pariz. Although one possibility seems plausible and should be investigated, is that it appears that this ceremony in order to survive or to be kept alive has given another meaning or function so it could survive through centuries and amongst non-Zoroastrians. It seems despite the fact that people somewhat may have forgotten their oral history, and somehow keeping a tradition alive by just simply changing its function was a solution for them to keep their identity or heritage that has been inherited from their ancestors. It is however very conceivable that today new generation at least very few have a different view to Sedeh and some see this ceremony not only a means to pray to God for the rain, rather its been perceived today as a heritage or a means of identity that can connect them to their past history.



At the end of the Sedeh ceremony in Pariz people gather around the fire and pray simultaneously for the Rain.

The main axle of this study:

Changing the meaning or purpose of a tradition is certainly a vast area to be investigated, however, this study is concerning mainly with the anthropology of the tradition and its function and notions. I would compare the Sedeh ceremony, with the one that is held every year in Pariz with the Sedeh ceremony which is held by Zoroastrians in Kerman nearest town to the Pariz with Zoroastrians population. Despite the fact that there are no Zoroastrians in Pariz, the crucial question is that why this ceremony has continued over centuries but it has changed its function or meanings? For this study remains two main question: 1. Why a change or reason somehow occurs and it modifies a concept? 2. What rule a tradition can play as a means of identity or heritage to bring people together?.

Key concepts:

Tradition, History, Identity, Heritage, Change of definition