



## BAHMANJANA

---

**BAHMANJANA** (Arabicized form of Mid. Pers. Bahmanagān; forms such as Bahmaṇča or Bahmaṇčena are also found). Each day of the thirty-day months of the Zoroastrian calendar had its own name. The second day of the month was named Bahman's day (Bahman-rūz). The eleventh month also bore Bahman's name. Days which had the same name as the month in which they fell were festivals, and the Middle Persian names of these were formed by addition of the suffix *agān* to the day-name. One of them was Bahmanagān, which fell on the second day of the month of Bahman. Bahmanjana is a later modified form of Bahmanagān.

This was one of the Zoroastrian festivals which Muslim Iranians maintained in the Islamic period, right down to the Mongol invasion in 616/1219. Festivities to celebrate the day took place among all classes of the people as well as at royal courts. The author of *Farhang-e Ānandrāj* (I, p. 816) wrongly identified it with Sada, another festival held in the month of Bahman.

Although the description of Bahmanjana by Asadī (*Loġat-e fors*, ed. Dabīrsiāqī, p. 158) implies that it was an obsolete festival at his time (5th/11th century), the poet Anwarī, who lived somewhat more than a century after Asadī (*Majma' al-foṣaḥā'* I, p. 407) speaks of its popularity in his time, i.e., the later part of the 6th/12th century. Given that Asadī compiled his dictionary while in exile in Azarbaijan, it may be that the practice of celebrating this festival was more widespread in eastern than in western Iran.

In Khorasan, according to Bīrūnī (p. 257) and Gardīzī (ed. Ḥabībī, p. 246) an



assortment of meat and all sorts of grain, vegetables, and fruits were cooked together in a pot (*dīg-e Bahmanjana*); people treated each other to the dish thus prepared and which was widely sold in the market. In one of the panegyrics of Manūčehrī (*Majma' al-foṣaḥā'* III, p. 1261) addressed to the Ghaznavid sultan Mas'ūd (r. 421-32/1030-41) on the day of Bahmanjana, the poet mentions the pot and refers to the singing of “Bahman” and “Qayṣarān” songs in the festivities.

It was usual to wear new clothes for this festival and eat flowers of the *bahman* plant, which were sprinkled on food, added to the ingredients in the pot, and also eaten with sugar; they were supposed to strengthen the memory. The *bahman* plant is known to have been the same as the *zardak-e ṣaḥrā'ī* (a wild carrot), which flowers in the month of Bahman (January-February) and has a red or white root. Being counted a medicinal plant, it is mentioned in Arabic texts, whence it passed into Latin and in the form *béhen* into French. Two varieties, *béhen rouge* and *béhen blanc*, are found and still used in medicine. Also eaten on the day were leaves of the wild rue (*sepand*) mixed with milk, likewise for strengthening the memory. According to *Borhān-e qāte'* (ed. Mo'in, I, pp. 328-29) the day was believed to be specially auspicious for digging up medicinal plants and roots and for extracting oils and making perfumes. The day was also recommended for cutting and wearing new clothes, paring the nails, and trimming the hair.

These customs stemmed from beliefs of the Zoroastrians that each of their sacred days had a special character making it appropriate for the performance of a particular task. Today, however, the detailed observances of the festival have lapsed even among Zoroastrians, although the monthly Bahmanrūz continues to be an especially holy day for them (see Boyce, pp. 89-90).

As long as the celebration of Bahmanjana remained customary at royal courts, congratulatory odes for the occasion were addressed to rulers and dignitaries by court poets. The dictionaries cite verses from such poems by Farroḳī, Manūčehrī, 'Oṭmān Moktārī, Anwarī, and other pre-Mongol poets.



---

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

---

Abū Rayḥān Bīrūnī, *al-Taḥḥīm le-awā'el šenā'at al-tanjīm*, 2nd ed., Tehran, n.d.

M. Boyce, *A Persian Stronghold of Zoroastrianism*, Oxford, 1977.

Faḡr-al-Dīn Mobārakšāh Ġaznavī, *Farhang-e Qawwās*, ed. Naḡīr Aḡmad, Tehran, 1353 Š./1974 (where Bahmanjana is wrongly identified with the first day of Bahman; see the editor's notes).

Moḡammad Pādšāh Šād, *Farhang-e Ānandrāj*, ed. M. Dabīrsīāqī, I, Tehran, 1335 Š./1956, p. 816 (Bahmaṇčena).

*Dā'erat al-ma'āraf-e fārsī*, ed. Ġ.-Ḥ. Mošāḡeb, I, Tehran, 1345 Š./1966, p. 480.

*Yašthā*, ed. E. Pūr-Dāwūd, Tehran, 2536 = 1356 Š./1977, pp. 89- 90.

Ḍ. Šafā, *Gāhšomārī o jašnhā-ye mellī-e īrānīān*, Tehran, 1356 Š./1977, pp. 127-28.