

This is a short note by Mr. Masato Tojo in response to my question about Japanese calendar. Dated Jan. 29, 2010

1. Chinese calendar

The traditional Chinese calendar is called Kyūreki 旧曆 (old calendar) and/or Noureki 農曆 (agricultural calendar). Its first day of a year was Winter Solstice in 1700 B. C. It was greatly improved in the time of the Tang dynasty under the influence of Persia and India. The new calendar is called Tai-en-reki 大衍曆. This is the basic form of Kyūreki. Here are its characteristic points:

- (1) Official first day of a year is Risshun 立春 (315 Zodiacal degree). The reason why this day became the first day of a year is for the convenience of agriculture. This is the reason why it is called Noureki (Agricultural calendar).
- (2) Astronomical first day of a year is Spring Equinox (0 Zodiacal degree).
- (3) The center day of a month in Kyūreki (Tai-en-reki) approximately corresponds to the first day of Persian month (Table 1).
- (4) (2) and (3) are developed under the influence of Persian and Indian astronomy and astrology.
- (5) Spring Equinox (Shunbun) is the day when people venerate their ancestors. This tradition is said to be Iranian origin (Farvardin).

Table 1 Kyūreki (Tai-en-reki)

		24 Solar Terms Nijūyon-sekki 二十四節気	
Season 季節	Month 月	Beginning day 節(せつ)	Center day of Month 中(ちゅう)
Spring 春	1 一月	Risshun 立春 Zodiacal degree: 315 Gregorian day: Feb 4th	Usui 雨水 330 Feb 19th
	2 二月	Keichitsu 啓蟄 345 Mar 6th	Shunbun 春分 0 Spring Equinox Mar 21th
	3 三月	Seimei 清明	Koku-u 穀雨

		15 Apr 5th	30 Apr 20 th
Summer 夏	4 四月	Rikka 立夏 45 May 6th	Shōman 小満 60 May 21th
	5 五月	Bōshu 芒種 75 Jun 6th	Geshi 夏至 90 Summer Solstice Jun 21th
	6 六月	Shōsho 小暑 105 Jul 7 th	Taisho 大暑 120 Jul 23th
Autumn 秋	7 七月	Risshū 立秋 135 Aug 7 th	Shosho 処暑 150 Aug 23th
	8 八月	Hakuro 白露 165 Sep 8 th	Shūbun 秋分 180 Sep 23th
	9 九月	Kanro 寒露 195 Oct 8th	Sōkō 霜降 210 Oct 23th
Winter 冬	10 十月	Rittō 立冬 225 Nov 7 th	Shōsetsu 小雪 240 Nov 22th
	11 十一月	Daisetsu 大雪 255 Dec 7th	Tōji 冬至 270 Winter Solstice Dec 22th
	12 十二月	Shōkan 小寒 285 Jan 5th	Daikan 大寒 300 Jan 20th

The time of the Tang 唐(とう) dynasty (618-907) was a golden age of cosmopolitan culture. Not only Confucianism 儒教(じゅきょう) and Taoism 道教(どうきょう), but also Buddhism 仏教(ぶつきょう), Manichaeism 明教(めいきょ

う), Zoroastrianism 祆教(けんきょう), Nestrians 景教(けいきょう) became officially recognized religions, and allowed to do every kind of religious activities freely. The fact that two of the five Tang's official religions are Persian indicates how great the influence and the presence of Persia were. Actually there were many Persian high rank officials in Tang dynasty. An-roku-zan* was such a general who is well known in Chinese history. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tang_Dynasty

*An-roku-zan 安祿山 (705-757): He was a general of Tang dynasty. He is a Sogdian born in Samarkand. Roku-zan 禄山 ("lu-shan" in Chinese pronunciation) is transcription of his Persian original name "Roshn (light)"

2. Japanese Calendar

Tang's calendar was imported to Japan and adopted in 737 and used until 1872. When the Meiji Restoration 明治維新(めいじいしん) started, the new government adopted Gregorian calendar in 1872 December 15th. It was forbidden to use old Chinese calendar by the law. New Year's Day (Nou-roz) was changed to 1st day of January according to the Gregorian calendar. It is also forbidden to celebrate New Year's Day according to the old calendar by the law.

They set its start year on 660 B. C. which is the beginning day of Emperor Jimmu 神武天皇's reign (He is the legendary first emperor of Japan. He is Japanese Jamshid). This calendar system is called Kōki 皇紀. Gregorian 2010 is Kōki 2670.

The first day of a financial year became April 1st in 1877 by adopting English financial year. Ideally it should be Spring Equinox, for the convenience of Gregorian calendar it became April 1st.

Spring Equinox (Shunbun), which is the day when people venerate their ancestors and pray for the harvest in the Shintō shrines, became the day of veneration of Emperor's ancestors and pray for the harvest in 1878.

In early Meiji era, all the junior high schools, high schools, universities began on September according to Western tradition. But they changed its beginning day to April 8th (its financial year begins on April 1st). Thus government offices, agencies, schools and companies begin their year on April 1st (spiritually on Spring Equinox).

After the World War II, the Gregorian calendar became the sole official calendar in Japan. The Kōki calendar was forbidden to use in public by the law. If one print to sell Kōki calendar, he will be punished by the law. The financial year and the other traditions remain untouched except one thing. It is Shunki-Kōreisai 春季皇霊祭. Before the World War II, Spring Equinox Day is an official national holiday and called Shunki-Kōreisai. But after the World War II, it was forced to change its name to Shunbun-no-hi 春分の日 by GHQ, and became a day to spend visiting family graves and holding family reunions. Still Spring Equinox Day and April 1st are important days for official and financial activities in modern Japan.

Note

Among Japanese Shinto-occult groups and right-wing activists and ideologues, the Kōki calendar is still used today.

3. The Starting Year of Calendar

In my opinion, the starting year of calendar should be the spiritual starting point of the people and their culture.

Point 1

For Iranians and the world, their culture before hijrat is too precious to disregard. Even after Islamization, Iranian culture is still living and giving great influence upon it.

Point 2

In a long term view, Mohammedan culture is just a part of Iranian culture.

Therefore people of Iran, whether he/she is Mohammedan, Simorghian or others, should seek their spiritual starting year in the ancient Iran which will release Iranian vast potentials. It seems to me Shah Jamshid the father of civilization is much attractive choice.

これからも、どうぞよろしく願いいたします。

BEHROOZ o PIROOZ bashid.

敬具

東條真人