

Traditional clothes of Kazakhs for different age

In N. Shakhanova's monograph [1] "The world of traditional culture of Kazakhs (ethnographic sketches)" in the section "Clothes as sign" special attention is paid to the ideological representations connected to clothes, i.e. system "the person and clothes". Author believes that the numerous representations and prohibitions expressing, apparently, an idea of communication of the newborn with the beginning of new life are connected to the period of infancy.

Right after the birth of the child, he wrapped in a piece of old, but pure fabric or in pure, but old clothes of the elderly, successful, healthy person, for example, trousers of the grandfather or a hem of a dress of the grandmother. The child was put at the base of the bakan (a pole with a fork which used to open felt in the upper part of a yurt). If in a family children often died, then it was preferable to swaddle the child in an old dress of the child from the big family. The child would be kept in such dress until his/ her umbilical cord would be disappeared, it is approximately three days. Later the child would be dressed in the special sewed clothes (a shirt and headdress like a cap; trousers were not used within the forty days since the birth).

The first shirt/dress of the child used to called "itkoilek", which literally means "a dog shirt". It was sewed from the different colored fabrics; the form of it is — tunic-shaped, with direct sewn in sleeves and a vertical section in front. Before dressing child in such dress, it was put on the head of a puppy or dog. If in a family children often died, the first clothes of the child sewed from seven piece of fabric received from seven differed houses (in Kazakh language: "жеті жерден жеті кыпак"). Distinctive feature of this suit is not only an archaic cut, but also that a hem and edges of sleeves were not sewed [1].

Usually "itkoilek" was sewed by the mothers to the children. It was not passed to others, even within one big family. There was a belief: If to hide the dress in an armpit on a way to a lawsuit, then you will win it. Such dress usually had no charms and jewelry. The headdress in the form of a cap (two rectangular piece of fabric sewed at right angle) from white fabric was sewed along with this dress. The dress could be worn by children only from one mother.

In Kazakh tradition children's clothes repeats adults in a reduced form, according with height and age of the child. Apparently it connected to aspiration of everyone to see their children grown up. "Kazakhs get used to add ages to their children to shown they proud and joy that they grow up so fast" — noticed Polish revolutionary A. Yanushkevich, who visited Kazakhstan last century [2]. Exception was "itkoilek" which sewed for the newborn from an integral piece of cotton fabric (chintz, coarse calico) a little oblong, without shoulder seams and edgings. Young men 14-16 years are called "zhigit", girls 13-15 years — "boi

zhetken kyz”, which means that they reached marriageable age. Unmarried young men are called “boydak zhigit”. The first sexual socialization is appeared from this age. In clothes (suits) there are elements that mark belonging to an age category of youth that reached marriageable age. For girls they are jewelry, semantics of which correlates with ideas of “love magic” and female fertility.

According to the researchers, at the age 15-16, on holiday girls put on a complete set of silver jewelry: hair jewelry, earrings, breast jewelry, bracelets and rings” [3]. Jewelry for braids was a detail of a maiden suit; young women wear them under a headdress for a little while after marriage, but then they remove it. Some of them gave such jewelry to their younger sisters or their sisters-in-law, during their wedding ceremony, or stored for their growing-up daughters.

The following age level (the early period of marriage) married men and married women till 25-30 years (kelinshek) were integrated in one group. Changes in a social status when the woman became married are marked by change of the hair dress, headdress and jewelry.

The maiden headdress “boric” (the hat edged by fur of an otter with pens of an eagle owl on the top) is replaced by wedding headdress called “saukele” — the high cap in the form of a truncated cone decorated by silver, pearls, cowry shells, etc.

There is a special ceremony before putting saukele for the first time. The headdress of the bride is put on by any woman goes to the groom to receive a gift — a dressing gown or a shirt, for a concession of this attire to the bride. This type of wedding repayment was called “saukelenin baygazysy”, which literary means “repayment for showing the headdress”. A young woman wears this headdress not only on the wedding day, but also till the birth of the first child (during reception of guests, during the movement, etc.)

Daily headdress of the young married woman was “zhelek” — a shawl. These headdresses (saukele and zhelek) were attributes of a suit of the young married woman, symbolizing a transient period in the woman's life — from girlhood to motherhood.

There is a ceremony when a woman during her first months of pregnancy began to wear “kimeshek”. “Kimeshek” — the headdress of the married woman, the details of which gradually changed depending on age. Usually it consisted of two parts: the lower part is the kimeshek itself and upper is the turban. Both parts were sewed from white fabric. According to the researchers the Kazakh suits, the most elegant kimeshek was the one which put on to the young woman for the first time after wedding. Front notch was decorated with embroidery, silver plaques, a coral, beads, etc. The ceremony was arranged by her mother-in-law, elderly women from the husband’s village were invited, and one of them put kimeshek on bride and received a gift from the mother-in-law [4].

Newly married woman should feel shy of her new status in front of her blood relatives (“torkin”). Young men from her husband side, forced to put her kimeshek, and asked from her relatives to payment. The ceremony had character of comic fight between contemporaries, young men and newly married woman.

This age period is characterized with fertility, ability to a child-bearing and the beginning of the reproductive period. Red color was popular among young women. There is a Kazakh proverb “Kyzdyn kozy kyzylda” (“Girl’s eyes are directed on red”).

In Kazakh women’s suit jewelry of silver and semiprecious stones (turquoise, corals, a cornelian etc.) is used for protection function. There was a strict prohibition to exchange clothes or to put on clothes of not given birth or infertile woman. Such women were not allowed to be around the bed of newly married couple or touch children’ clothes, etc. On the contrary, childless women asked any clothes (“kiim alu”) from the woman, who have many children, hoping thus to receive ability to a child-bearing.

The following age category of men and women from 30 to 45-50 is integrated into one group. Lowering of fertility is observed in this category. In Kazakh tradition after thirty red colors became less popular.

In some regions of Kazakhstan, preferentially in southern, the small holiday marked also the first putting on “belshalgysh” — the skirt which is not sewed in front being clothes only of married women.

The woman who gave birth to three or four children put it on for the first time. The special ceremony was organized for this honor. If woman herself could not organize the ceremony, the wife of her brother-in-law or close relative takes organization of this ceremony, as it was compulsory[4].

According to the researchers of the Kazakh clothes, belshalgysh is the attribute of the women who reached a certain age.

As researchers of the Kazakh suit marked, белшалғыш is attribute of the women who reached a certain age. Ceremony of putting on a belshalgysh is organized by the woman herself, to compare the ceremony of putting on a first kimeshek which is organize her mother-in-law.

The next age category integrated men and women elder than 50-55. In the women’s costume there is an element of termination of fertility. Women wear less jewelry. Jewelry from front notch of kimeshek is removed and silver accessories are distributed among relatives. Based on tradition, bracelets would be given to the

oldest daughter. The color of a suit will be changed. White color for a headdress and quiet monophonic tone for a suit is prevailed.

Literature:

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