

## The Customs of Politeness among Russian Kazakhs

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**ABSTRACT** This study examined the materials that preserved the traditions and customs of Kazakhs Omsk region at the present stage. The authors visited 20 villages in the Omsk region of Russia examining the customs and traditions of the local Kazakh population. The distinctive behavior of the locals in the Kazakhs Omsk region of Russia to live in conditions of isolation and compact living among other people of the region, helps to better preserve traditional customs and rituals. The authors found such customs as respect for elders, the traditions of decency and civility, which allow the group to maintain its national Kazakh identity as highlights. These also allow them to adapt well to other ethnic groups in the region - Russian, Germans, Ukrainians and Tatars. In particular, the authors dwell on such characteristics as decency and civility.

### INTRODUCTION

Kazakhs of Russia, the number of which now stands at about one million people, preserve their customs and traditions well, including those of decency and civility and respect for the older generations. This unique phenomenon can be attributed to a number of causes and circumstances which will be mentioned in the other parts of this work. Also, "Ata Zhol" (grandfathers' way) helps to conserve this ancestor worship too (Sarsambekova et al. 2015).

Firstly, for compatriots living in Russia, most of them live in very compact individual settlements - "auls" (villages) - especially in the border areas of Kazakhstan. At the same time, they do not get newspapers and magazines in their native language - Kazakh language. There is also no radio and television in the Kazakh language. Therefore, Russian Kazakhs, isolated from the main ethnic core, try to remain a part of the Kazakhs by preserving their national customs and traditions. They have preserved it better than the natives of the Republic of Kazakhstan.

Secondly, the activities of the representatives of the Muslim clergy among the Russian Kazakhs preaching Islam - Sunni Hanafi maskhaba - contribute to the peaceful co-existence of folk customs and traditions due to the Muslim canons. In Kazakhstan, Spiritual Administration of

Muslims of Kazakhstan are trying to prohibit or restrict the traditional customs and rituals, among Russian Kazakhs, there is no such structure which separates religion from customs and rituals.

Third, among the Russian Kazakhs, autonomous national-cultural associations promote folk customs and rituals and traditional music (Kuznetsova 2007: 127). In particular, in Omsk there are active centers such as "Moldir" (Zhunusova 2007: 632), "Zamandastar", "Ombykazaktary", "Shokan Zholy".

Fourth, among the Kazakhs, Russia bilingual Toastmasters are active, which also promote national traditions. Currently there are Toastmasters, non-Kazakhs who have good knowledge of the Kazakh language and spend their evenings in two languages: Kazakh and Russian and they are very popular among the local people.

Fifth, Kazakhs living in Kazakh auls which are located within the regions of Russia maintain stable relations with neighbouring settlements and large cities, they live and intermingle with representatives of European nationalities. Purely, Kazakh villages are "donors", and transmitters of traditional customs and traditions for the Kazakhs who live in them (Svirkin 1998: 173).

### Objectives

This paper explores the preserved traditions and customs of Kazakhs Omsk region in the

present date on the basis of field data materials. The study of archaic customs and rituals among Russian Kazakhs.

### METHODOLOGY

Some of these traditions, customs, decency, civility and respect for the older generations which the researchers recorded during observations from the field trips are characteristics of the modern Kazakh population of the Omsk region of the Russian Federation. The population of Kazakhs Omsk region is about 100 thousand people, or four percent of the total population of the region (Tursunov 2004: 34). It is predominantly Kazakh Middle Juz divided into clans and tribes: *Kipchaks*, *Atygais and Karauls (Argyns)*, *Uaks and Kireis*. There are a small number of sultans (descendants of Genghis Khan) and Khoja (relatives of the Prophet Muhammad).

In the period from 2011-2015, the researchers visited a number of villages in the southern districts of the Omsk region densely populated with this ethnic group. In the present study, the authors used methods such as observation, conversations, interviews and surveys.

### OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Kazakhs village of the Baydalin Tauride district of Omsk region strictly observe the customs of decency and civility. Certainly, in the first place was the custom of greeting, which is still in the village as follows: Upon meeting, two neighbours greet each other with the younger beginning with the standard words: “*Assalam alaikum*” (“Peace to Your Home”) to the older. The older then takes it upon himself to answer with the words: “*Ualeykum Assalam*” (“and you also”).

Traditional “pastoral” greeting unrelated to Islam follow a purely Muslim greeting: local Kazakhs inquire about the status of livestock with the native words: “*Mal-zhanyn, bala-Shaganamanba?*” (Hope your cattle and relatives are alive and healthy)? The beasts are in the first place. Even in a city, they do not change their tradition of welcome (Kabuldinov et al. 2016: 162). When Kazakhs meet the following pleasantries are said: “*Kudayga Shukur, oz mal – zhanyn yz esen be?*” (Thank God, and hope your cattle and family are healthy)? These greetings were mandatory and Kazakh strangers who meet each other outside of the region greet each other with these

words. This procedure is more common among the older generations of the village who are now 50-60 years old. Young people use the short form of the greeting by saying “Salem” as derived from the Muslim greeting “Assalam alaikum”.

A very interesting tradition is the relation of the younger to the older persons. For example, married women of the older generation in the village, Karazyuk Novovarshevsky of Omsk region have special respect for the men and do not call their husband or their husband’s relatives by their names, especially the older age women. Our familiarity with their ancestral “*shezhire*” - genealogical tables - show such a phenomenon, when up to 7 names of the ancestors of the tribe are not repeated. Locals attribute this to the fact that “you cannot call the names of the dead ancestors, not to cause their anger”. While in the neighboring Russian villages sometimes the son and father and grandfather are called by the same name.

Sometimes, household items, food, bear the names of famous ancestors, even feminine. In this case, the residents of the village try not to name them, finding them word-substitutes. For example, in the aforementioned village, Baydalin Tauride district natives do not call the name of a respected woman named Kant, who was a highly respected kind of ruler village in the first half of the XX century. Children of the word “*kant*” (sugar) represent another word “*agargan*” (albescent). This tradition is passed from generation to generation.

Young in the Kazakh villages in the Omsk region refer to their father and mother by using common words “*ata*” (father) and “*ene*” (mother). Women of the older generation in the villages still hide their faces from the older generation of male members. However, this holds true for women who are now over 70 years. They in any case do not call them by name and are patronymic.

In the village, Besagash Russian Polyansky district of the Omsk region, daughter-in-laws call the younger brothers and sisters of their husbands affectionate names: “*Shyrak*”-light, “*Zharkyn*” - shining, the “*Ainum*” - the mirror, “*Baurum*”-relative and so on. Families come up with new and euphonious names. This practice contributes to better and faster adaptation of young brides in the new families. The same tradition exists in other villages of the Omsk region.

In the villages of the Sulu-Terek Bayimbet, Karang Aral Nazyvaevsk and Cascat Isilkul dis-

trict of the same region, Kazakhs do not go in the way of pregnant women and elders. Sister in law does not show her face to the elder brothers of the husband. But this custom is slowly disappearing. Today, this practice can be noticed only in people of the older generation. Apparently, the policy of the Soviet government for leveling minority cultures has led to the fact that these national facilities have now become more relics than everyday life.

In all the villages of the Omsk region, in the absence of any adult male, no one has the right to come into the house, except for close relatives. It was an immutable law of the Kazakh population of the villages of the Omsk region, and other places of compact residence of the Kazakhs. The exceptions were distant relatives of the elderly. Today, this tradition is still alive and in almost all villages of the Omsk region.

In the villages of Baraba, Shahat, Kegentay, Kuduk Chilik in Sherbakulsky district, a man who returns from a trip, traveling, or from the market, bring the neighbors, their friends and relatives various gifts – “*bazarlyk*” (a gift from a trip).

Elders in almost all villages of the area while eating away tidbits treat participants and guests to the family meal. This custom is called - “*asatu*”, who represented himself in the highest degree of hospitality. Currently, this practice is ubiquitous in all the villages in the area. At the end of the meal, the eldest, usually the owner or a representative of the host party transfers more cuts of meat with fat to the young. Earlier the elders passed the cuts of meat with fat and put into the mouth of the participants of the meal. Now they pass it from hand to hand, or place them on the edge of a large-capacity meat (“*tabac*”, “*astau*”) closer to bestow.

If anyone in the Kazakh Omsk Region becomes the owner of a new thing, then, according to the popular tradition, relatives, friends give him “*Baigazy*” (gift). Today, this practice exists in all the villages and they usually give them money or sheep on the purchase of cars, houses, apartments, expensive clothes, and so on.

After the holidays, women take goodies for the children and relatives back home. This custom still bears the name of “*Sarkyt*” and testifies that people respect the food and partake it with the remaining relatives at home. Children and the remaining houses look forward to “*sarkyt*” a toy, weddings, birthdays and so on. Today, in the villages of Omsk Region under

“*sarkyt*” understand meat “*boursaks*” (doughnuts), alcohol. With the guests with holidays Kazakhs beg “*sarkyt*”.

Among Omsk Kazakhs, the custom of transmission to each other goodies – “*salemdeme*” still persists. Close people (friends, relatives) who have not seen each other for some time pass gifts to each other: In the form of jewelry, souvenirs, food, a piece of textile on the dress or caftan. Person who received “*salemdeme*” give a blessing (“*bata*”). Goodies and gifts, pledged “*salemdeme*” are shared among family members, relatives, friends and neighbors. This custom countersigned and consolidated the unity of the genus, rural population, friends and neighbors. Following was observed in the villages of Koyanbay Tarvicheskyi district and Kuduk Shilik Odessa district:

To announce good news, the inhabitants of the villages of the Omsk region (Basagash, Karatal, Bosa Russkopolyanskyi district) say “*Suyunshi*”! The man who rings the glad tidings say these warm and joyful words. “*Suyunshy*” talk about the birth of children, with the arrival of the army of young people, getting another positive and joyful news.

Since ancient times, it was common among Kazakhs Omsk custom to arrange farewell to villagers, “*kurmaldyk*”. The essence of it was that when the family leaves a village for another place of residence it was required that the whole village gathered and arranged a farewell meal. They left some things “in memory” for their friends, relatives or neighbors. They went to the graves of their ancestors and read verses from the Koran to get their “blessing”. The poorest brethren, fellow villager left sadaqah. To go from the village suddenly, without warning about his move to the members of the genus was considered as an unforgivable step and the fellow villager was condemned by society. The relationship between the families in this case was quenched. Fellow villagers, in turn, wished them a good trip and well-being in a new place. The elders gave baht - farewell and blessing for good adaptation to the new location. Fellow villagers left and in turn invited them to visit, and endowed them with gifts.

“*Kurmaldyks*” are staged on various occasions: when recuperating after an accident, when the youth was seen off by the army, when young people enter prestigious educational institutions,

at the remembrance of their ancestors and relatives (Ahmetova 2002: 355).

Since ancient times, the Kazakhs had a special custom of respect for elders, regardless of clan, tribe and ethnicity. This custom gave the society a significant stability. All generations from the older to younger transferred the accumulated knowledge and skills. The old men were the bearers of historical knowledge, dedication and genealogical tree. It continues to function this way among the Kazakhs Omsk region. For example, in the village in Koyanbay Tauride district, the Council of Elders solves all the daily problems.

Respect for elders is embedded in the consciousness of the Kazakhs Omsk region as the supreme principle, following which it was possible to achieve success and win the credibility of life of the people. Nomads brought this principle to the absolute. Virtually, none of the people of Eurasia could compare with the steppe dwellers in the customs of respect for the older generation.

On all holidays, seniors held the most honorable places. At the meetings, they played a prominent role with their opinion and the youths listened without question. At all important ceremonies like weddings Omsk Kazakhs include people of senior age. When harvesting horse meat for the winter ("*sogym*"), the older generation is invited in the first place. This the researchers have seen in the example of the inhabitants of the villages of Karaman, Zharagach and Alkul Novovarshevsky district Omsk region. The meal is taken to the elders first, they get the best and most delicious part. It then proceeds to others. Violation of this ancient steppe etiquette could lead to serious conflicts.

Younger ones in the villages of the Omsk region without the permission of seniors never sit at the table. At the end of the meal, respected and most of all, the eldest of the guest who is considered to be a messenger of God gives a word of blessing. Juniors never cross this rule. It is an unwritten rule for women and men. At a meeting of elders, young people go to the car, and are the first to greet them. Also, assisting the elders when they leave the car was the direct responsibility of the younger. Among Omsk Kazakhs, the one who is younger is strictly forbidden to raise his voice to seniors. When conversing the younger never interrupts the older. The eldest always starts the conversation. Young

people receives the blessing ("*bata*") from older before going on a long journey, or before the wedding. For the commission of serious offenses and crimes elders could give "*ter's bata*" (the curse) which was considered one of the most terrible forms of punishment. The effect of this custom has been seen in the village of Gorki Belsendy Omsk region.

Young people name their children after famous ancestors. Thereby, they express their respect for them. The members of the family and the village do not name the names of their revered ancestors in daily use. For the names of the older generations, Kazakhs Omsk region use the suffix "*ake*" or "*eke*" for example, Kazbek - Kaseke, Sabyrzhan - Sake, Kayrat - Kayreke. For older people, even strangers are treated with the words "*aga*" (brother), "*apa*" (sister), "*ata*" (grandfather), "*azhe*" (grandmother). Also older people, of distinguished and good character and good temper cut the shackles of children.

Omsk Kazakhs form a unit exhortations for the education of their children. They are passed from generation to generation. Proverbs and sayings are still prevailing among the Omsk Kazakhs: "Clever old man like a Flowing Water", "Wisdom which was said by senior, is never wrong", "If the village has an elder, this is equivalent to saying that there is a book of wisdom", "Old age is wealth", "Respect for elders is a respect for the young" played a huge role in instilling respect for their elders.

Respect for elders is found everywhere. So, the young hunters hunt with blessings of the elders and give them a part of the hunt. This custom was fixed on the example of the inhabitants of the village of Segizbaev Azov district.

The custom of honoring the senior continues to have a positive impact on multi-ethnic, urbanized population of the Omsk region at the beginning of the third millennium.

All these customs of decency and civility, respect for elders pooled from residents of Kazakh villages of Omsk region create a very warm relationship which markedly improve morale (Tomilov 2013: 336-337). In this regard, the Kazakhs in the region compares favorably to the other people living in the Omsk region.

The researchers' observations and surveys of residents of Russian Kazakh villages showed that a significant part of these customs and traditions are still functioning in Kazakh villages and in the city of Omsk, where Kazakhs live with

other ethnic groups: Russian, Germans, Ukrainians and Tatars. Of course, the unity and consolidation among local Kazakhs make them respected among the other ethnic area (Kabuldinov 2007: 817).

According to the researchers' observations, the Kazakhs Omsk region have preserved customs and traditions much better than their compatriots in Kazakhstan. This tend to be explained by the fact that the Kazakhs in Kazakhstan have undergone a series of mass starvation of the last century, when much of the Kazakh people died, some migrated to other regions. Secondly, during the virgin epic Kazakhstan has undergone massive relocation of virgin soil, when one after another Kazakh schools began to disappear, followed by the small Kazakh village. The indigenous population then moved into the virgin state and collective farms and large towns and cities where they were a minority. Some blurring national features of Kazakhs in Kazakhstan contributed to the margin and deportation of the entire ethnic group representatives. It neutralizes their traditional practices and the impact of the media with the Soviet "shade".

And the Kazakhs of Russia, including the Omsk region without schools, theaters, newspapers and magazines, radio and television in their own language; has been forced to maintain their traditional customs and rituals, without exposing them to the gradual and orderly "blurring" by the regional authorities and the media. It was a way to preserve their self-identity in order not to dissolve into another ethnic environment. Compact resettlement of Kazakhs Omsk in Omsk region is preserved to this day (Kazakhs of the Omsk Irtysh 2015: 88).

### CONCLUSION

The authors of this research during the fieldwork identified a number of specific practices and traditions of the Kazakhs Omsk region, which at its best represent our fellow Kazakhs in another ethnic environment. They help local Kazakhs

self-identify, and does not dissolve in the Russian-speaking environment. The collapse of the collective and state farms; has caused a massive outflow of the local population into the large settlements, Omsk city and neighboring Kazakhstan. Apparently, in the future, some of these traditions and customs would disappear.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

The next research is needed because this group of Kazakhs maintained its traditions and customs. The researchers consider it necessary to send from Kazakhstan historical and ethnological expedition in collaboration with scientists from Russia. Their results will help to identify the best aspects of the traditions and customs of Kazakhs who were not preserved or poorly preserved in the Republic of Kazakhstan.

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