

THE KAZAK WEDDING “BETASHAR”: REGIONAL FEATURES AND RITES*

KAZAK HALKININ EVLENME DÜĞÜNLERİNDEKİ “BETAŞAR”: BÖLGESEL RİTÜELLER VE GELENEKLER

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Abstract

Betashar is the Kazak peoples' traditional folklore heritage, rooted in ancient times. The tradition of betashar (meaning «opening the face of a new bride») is one of the important traditions of wedding ceremonies of the Kazakh people. Betashar is a vivid tradition in all regions of the Kazak land, passing from one generation to the next. This ceremony is performed by a cheerful, silver-tongued, respectable and young poet. A song accompanying the ceremony of removing shawl from the bride's face is the most significant part of the betashar. The Betashar ritual is a tradition maintained within the family with great enthusiasm. The most important goal of the Betasar tradition is to guide the new bride to get used to new family life by the introducing new family members and the ease of getting used to a new family life, with the help of the song «betashar». Presentation of betashar is an extremely solemn and very picturesque event. After betashar, the ritual as a part of which the new daughter in law serve tea to all of the relatives starts. The article highlights the regional variations in the Betashar ritual in Kazak land.

Key words: Kazak wedding party, Betashar attributes, tradition, the Betashar song, bride

Öz

Betaşar cırı, Kazak halkının eski dönemlerden beri yaşatılagelen geleneksel halk mirasıdır. Betaşar (“bet açar” - yeni gelinin yüzünü açma anlamı taşır) geleneği, Kazak halkının evlenme törenlerinin önemli geleneklerinden biridir. Betaşar, Kazak halkının nesilden nesile ulaştırarak yaşatmakta olduğu çok özel bir adettir. Betaşar ritüelini gerçekleştirmek üzere söz ustası, hazırcevap şairlik yeteneğine sahip, halk tarafından tanınan genç ozan davet edilir. Betaşar ritüelinin en önemli parçası, gelinin yüzünü açmak için söylenen Betaşar şarkısının söylendiği kısımdır. Betaşar ritüeli, büyük bir coşkuyla aile arasında gerçekleştirilen bir gelenektir. Betaşar geleneğinin en önemli amacı, “Betaşar Şarkısının” yardımıyla yeni geline yol gösterip, tavsiyelerde bulunmak, yeni aile üyeleriyle tanıştırmak ve böylece yeni kurmakta olduğu aile hayatına alışmasını kolaylaştırmaktır. Betaşar ritüelinden sonra gelin tarafından çay ikram etme ritüeli başlar. Makalede, Betaşar geleneğinin Kazak topraklarındaki bölgesel özellikleri incelenmektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kazak halkının evlenme törenleri, Betaşarın özellikleri, gelenek görenekler, Betaşar şarkısı, gelin

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1. Introduction

Betashar is a folklore legacy of ancient times, transferring orally from one generation to the next. This unwritten tradition survived to our days thanks to oral transmission. The tradition dates back to the XIX century, when Tzarist visitors to the Kazak land - military orientalists, travelers and researchers – recorded ancient versions of the betashar and took their own notes about its performance. These were: Vasili Radlov (Radlov, 1870), Nikolai Grodekov (Grodekov, 1889), Alexander Alektorov (Alektorov, 1888), Abubakir Divayayev (Divayev, 1900), Lubov Poltoraskaya (Poltoraskaya, 1878), and others. Important are the writings by the Kazak illuminer of XIX century Ibrai Altynsarin (Altynsarin, 1870), members of the Kazak elite and Alash-Orda party at the beginning of XX century Akhmet Baitursinov (Baitursinov, 1989), Saken Seifullin (Seifullin, 1964), Mukhtar Auezov (Auezov, 1985) about meaning of this betashar tradition and its ancient samples.

Betashar is, in essence, a ritual of opening bride's face (*bet* – face, *ashu* – to open), constituting the nucleus of the wedding ceremonial. Betashar is the tradition, vivid in all regions of the Kazak land, naturally passing from one generation to the next. This ceremony is conducted by a cheerful silver-tongued guy with good reputation, had great respect in the public and called *betasharshi* (the one who actually opens the bride's face to public). In the Karmakshy district with well developed school of *zhyrau/zhyrshi* (storytellers, improvisers), as well as the popular tradition of throat singing, it is common to invite well-known *zhyrau* people to conduct the betashar ceremony. The primary duty of betashar *zhyrau* is to make bride familiar with her new family and her duties in the household. *Zhyrshy* describes personal traits and distinctive qualities of each new relative.

2. The Betashar Performance

After fetching bride from her *aul* (a settlement consisting of mobile yurts) to groom's *aul*, the groom would go ahead of the bride's cortege/suite, *kalindik koshi*¹, in order to signal the arrival of his young wife (*kelin*, *kelinshek*). Maidens from groom's aul would meet bride at a distance of 3-4 versts ahead of the aul to accompany her. Maidens help her to dismount her horse and walk with her along the path. Bride rewards them with rings and necklaces.

During the whole trip in bride's cortege and until after the official ceremony of betashar, bride is kept under *shymyldik*² (white baldaquin) in order to hide her face, as required by the Kazak custom.

Her appearance is greeted by *shashu*, candies spread by the clan's high-ranked woman, mother of many children³. According to sources, in ancient times, prior to entering the yurt of her father-in-law, bride touched with her forehead the yurt's lintel

and doors. Similarly, Karakalpak brides bowed to the threshold, touching it with their fingertips; South Macedonian Bulgar brides bowed to the threshold three times⁴ (Toleybayev, 1991: 28). The touch of the yurt door with bride's forehead meant Kazaks that she acquires the patronage of *aruaks* - spirits of groom ancestors from now on. Stepping over the threshold with her right leg, bride bowed three times: the first bow to aruaks, the second and the third bow to father-in-law and mother-in-law respectively.

Disguised from fathers-in-law, bride is brought indoor, and, with help of women, she performs the ritual of pouring the melt sheep tail-fat into the hearth (*otka mai kuyu*) in the honor of ancestors (Altynsarin, 1870: 4-5; Argunbayev, 1996: 194; Grodekov, 1889: 77). The rite is connected to the ancestors' cult and the cult of fire, the symbol of hearth's strength. The latter cult is more ancient than the former cult and initially was connected to the cult of family sanctities and hearth patronesses. This is witnessed by the ritual words: "Ot Ana, Mai Ana, jarulka, i.e., Bless and save, Mother-Fire, Mother-Fat" (Altynsarin, 1870: 4-5; Grodekov, 1889: 65; Velihanov, 1985: 208-210). With many Siberian people, the home hearth is symbolized by the image of "Mother-Fire, Mistress of Fire or Beldam of Fife", to which sacrifice is offered. However, the cult of fire within the wedding ceremony is somewhat different among Turkic people⁵.

During the bride's first visit, father-in-law seats her on a new soft sheep skin by saying: "*Teridei jumsak bol*, i.e., Be nice like this skin" (Velihanov, 1885: 208). Its purpose was to encourage new bride to foster nice attitudes towards her parents-in-law, to ease birth deliveries in the future, and to have many children. Uzbeks and Karakalpaks have similar rites (Snesarev, 1969: 85). Sheep has the totemic meaning among the Central Asian people and Kazaks. Therefore, the sheep skin is not only a symbol of fecundation, but also a watcher totem.



a



Photo 1a, b, c. Fully equipped bride in her father's aul ready to wedding, XIX c.
From the fund of the Central museum of Kazakhstan.

In the past, the bride rested behind the colorful curtain (*shymyldyk*) for three days with maidens of the aul or, if available, groom's younger sisters in order become familiar with the new environment as soon as possible. The *shymyldyk* curtain was made of white material; it was kept intact till the family acquired many children⁶ (Photo 2-3). To protect bride from evil eye, the eagle-owl's feathers (*uki*) was attached to the *shymyldyk* (Photo 2b). In south regions, bride was kept behind the *shymyldyk* for three days. On the other hand, today, *shymyldyk* is made inside the modern premises. The *shymyldyk* tradition is crucial in the Shymkent and Syr regions (Kzylorda).

The "betashar" ceremony is held on the third day (Grodekov, 1889: 77). Keeping bride behind the *shymyldyk* for three days and holding the *betashar* ritual on the third day is encountered, in particular, in the Syr region (Kzylorda).



Photo 2 a, b. The bride behind the shymyldyk: a) before and b) after the betashar ceremony (AFM).

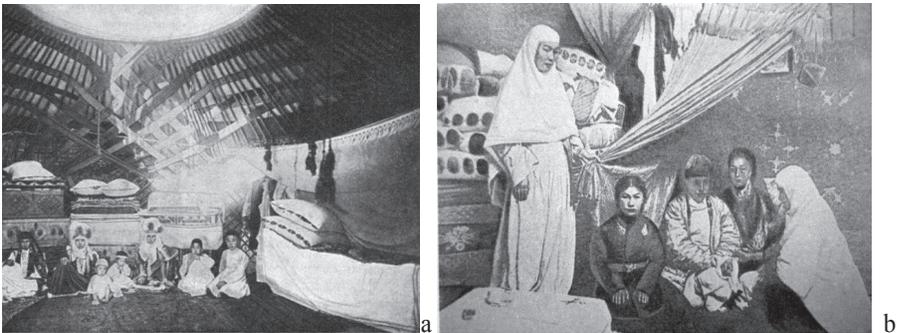


Photo 3a, b. The yurt's interior with the bride's baldaquin, end of XIX c. (Lavrov, 1916; Fund of the Central State Archive of Cinema, Photo Documents and Audio Records of Kazakhstan).

In the central and north regions, the betashar ritual would be held directly in front of the father-in-law's yurt (Argunbayev, 1996: 195). The betashar ceremony is followed by the *kokpar*⁷ game (horsemen's fight for goat's carcass), organized by father-in-law (Grodekov, 1889: 77-78). The sitting behind shymyldyk and the *kokpar* game are preserved today in some traditional auls in the low course of Syr regions (Zhalagash, Terenosek, Shieli, Zhanakurgan).

3. Attributes of Betashar

In the east and south-east parts of Kazak lands, at betashar, a skin of white sheep/goat is laid under bride's feet to assure that their daughter-in-law is easygoing and capable of becoming mother of many children.

At the betashar ceremony, bride appears with her face covered by shawl (*zhaulyk*). In old times, mothers-in-law always kept a big silk shawl (*latteh*) especially for betashars (Photo 3-4). There are regional varieties of the betashar ceremony differing in the ways of bringing bride in front of the public and in the ways of keeping zhaulyk over her head.



Photo 3. d) Zhanaozen, the Aktay region (AFM) .



a



b

Photo 4. Latteh, the silk shawl. The Museum of Syrdariya

In the West Kazakhstan and in the Aral Sea, Kazalinsk and Karmakshy districts of the Kzylorda region along the lower course of the Syrdarya river, the bride's head is covered with white silk shawl, and 2-m long red cloth is attached to it from one side, and zhyrau assistant holds the other end of the red cloth by the "whip handle" (Photo 5).



Photo 5. The betashar ceremony. Aralsk, the Kzylorda region.

At the Terenezek and Karaozek villages at the mouths of the Syrdarya river, the following manner is in practice: the bride's white zhauylk is attached to 2-m long red cloth, the other end of which is tied to a stick from reed (kamis) which is empty inside (Photo 6).



Photo 6. The betashar ceremony. Terenezek, Karaozek villages, the Syrdarya district.

In the surroundings of the Kzylorda city, a stick made of *syr tal*⁸ (local term *shybyk*), a local tree, is used.

In Shieli, Zhanakorgan districts of Kzylorda region and in the Shymkent regions, the white cloth is tied to *oktay*, a wooden rolling pin for dough (Photo 7).



Photo 7. The betashar ceremony. The Shieli, Zhanakorgan and Shymkent region.

Here, the white cloth symbolizes the luminous path, and the red cloth means protection from evil eye. The whip means young wife's dedication to new hearth and to the clan traditions. Syrtal branches and reed mean to the wish that daughter-in-law will have a tender character and that she propagates the clan with many children, similar to the quickness of growth and multiple shoots of the reed. The rolling pin is connected with the wish that bride be housewifely.

Whip, reed, rolling pin, tree branches, attached to zhaulyk, is called *tayak* (stick) and held by groom's unmarried male friend, who receives whip or reed at the end of the ceremony as present with the words: "Wishing you the same". Rolling pin is handed to bride with words: "How it belongs to your house, you are the mistress of its kitchen". Zhaulyk is kept in the family to use in every daughter's-in-law wedding ceremony. During betashar, bride is supported from both sides by two earlier daughters-in-law of the clan - but not precisely of this particular family - women of good conduct and mothers. This is esteem paid to relatives. Mother-in law rewards them with shawls or clothing fabrics. Pieces of fabrics and bride's shawls are given to those relatives, anticipating the daughter's-in-law visit (AFM).

In north regions, two earlier daughters-in-law only keep bride's zhaulyk ends, not touching bride's elbows; during each greeting, other daughters-in-law lift four ends of zhaulyk in solidarity, bride at this moment bows under zhaulyk. The relatives, who receive the bow, declare their presents to zhyrshi, conductor of the betashar ritual (Altynsarin, 1870: 3).

Noteworthy is the vanishing old custom, whereby the second end of the cloth, connected to the bride's zhaulyk, is attached to a rifle (Poltoratskaya, 1878).

Women standing on sides of bride during betashar should not be widows or childless, this is omen of misfortune.

4. Meaning of Betashar

Betashar introduces bride to customs which she must keep in her mind, in order to be respected by people, to build a trusting relationship with parents-in-law, to be polite with relatives, venerate the threshold and shanyrak of the house, do not dishonor them all, be far-sighted, to shape a solid and hospitable family, to protect the ancestral hearth and provide the continuity of the clan.

Abubakir Divayev wrote and published an ancient version of betashar during his expedition to Syrdarya:

"Ayt, kelin, ayt, kelin!	"Tell, good-daughter, tell, good-daughter!
Attyñ basyn tart kelin!	Force back the head of your horse, good-daughter!
Sauyskannan saq kelin!	Good-daughter keen as a piet!
Jumyrtqadan aq kelin!	Good-daughter white as an egg!
Aldyñgy tuyeñ itinşek,	Your front camel is hustling,
Itinşek dep, kelinşek,	Don't beat, good-daughter,
Basqa urma kelinşek!	The pusher in the head!
Artqy tuyen tartynşaq,	Your rear camel is tugging,
Tartynşaq dep, kelinşek	Don't beat, good-daughter,
Kopke urma, kelinşek!	The puller in the back!
Ayran appaq kelinşek,	Good-daughter white as kefir!
Keyingi kelgen, kelinşek,	Young good-daughter!
Yerinşek bolma, kelinşek!	Don't be lazy, good-daughter!
Kei kelinşek koñilşek,	Some daughters-in-law are sentimental,
Koñilşek bolma kelinşek!	Don't be melting, good-daughter!
Kök etigim tozar dep,	Having the leather boots,
Kötere baspa, kelinşek!	Don't walk, lifting your legs high, good-daughter!

Sauyr etigim tozar dep,	Being afraid of wearing out the boots,
Sanay baspa, keliñsek!	Don't go slowly, very slowly, good-daughter!
Qaptyñ auzy bos tur dep,	Knowing the sack is open,
Qurt urlama, keliñsek!	Don't steal cheese, good-daughter!
Özyñ jatup, bayiñdy	When laying down with your husband,
Tur-turlama, keliñsek!	Don't awake him, good-daughter!
Auzy-basyñ suyrendep,	Don't be chatty, don't be flippant, good-daughter!
Osek ayitpa, keliñsek!	Don't gossip, good-daughter!
Dudarday qylyp basyñdy,	As a stone on your pillow,
Tösekte jatpa, keliñsek!..."	Don't sleep much, good-daughter!..."

Thus, he introduces a bride with the family in poetic instructions (Divayev, 1900: 12-13). A similar betashar text was published by Vasilii Radlov and Nikolai Grodekov (Radlov, 1870: 10-11; Grodekov, 1889: see the attachment, 13-15). The first four lines of this ancient text of betashar recorded and published by Divayev, Radlov and Grodekov are still in use without any changes in the west of the country, in the Syrdarya-Aral region, the middle course of Syrdarya. It is an introductory text for the public.

An old betashar text was published in 1905 in "The Turgaiskaya gazeta" by incognito undersigned as "W", and the other text in 1878 in "The Russkii Vestnik" by another incognito undersigned as "P" (Poltoratskaya, 1878; W, 1905; *Kazak Halkunun Dasturleri men Adet-Guruptari*, 2006: 212-215).

Kazaks know that the introductory text for the public given below was transmitted from generation to generation:

"Bet aşayin bisimilla,	"Bismillah, I start the betashar,
Jaña tüsken jas kelin...,	By opening the face of the young good-daughter...,
"Kelin, kelin kelip tur,	"Good-daughter, good-daughter comes,
Kelin uige enip tur,	By stepping over the house threshold;
Kayin jurty, halqına	To her husband's kins
Iyilip salem berip tur"	Bows down the good-daughter"

Whatever variant is the ancient betashar text, its foremost purpose is relation between bride and new kins (Seifullin, 1964: 123; Baitursinov, 2003: 63-64; Karataş, 1994: 77; Biray, 2002: 3). The image and name of bride are not conveyed with literal wording but metaphors like: *tal sibiktai buralgan* (flexible like a willow wicker) and *appak juzin ainadai* (your mirror-like white countenance).

The acquaintance is started with father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother-in-law, sister-in-law and guests respectively. The mission of *betasharshi* is not only to make bride familiar with the new relatives but also to describe their best traits in front of the present society by improvising the betashar texts.

At betashar, after each poetic greeting, groom`s friend lifts the stick giving a sign, and bride and women on her flanks bow to the guest, addressed in zhyrshi`s greeting. Young good-daughter should "navigate" well in the clanic vertical and horizontal ties, knowing each relative`s place in the network, and from the betashar onwards she must be able to spot each one from the thick of a crowd. This is deemed to be the chief sign of good-daughter`s courtesy (Auezov, 1985: 58-60). The essence of the betashar ritual is described by the following Kazakh saying: "Balani jastan, kelindi bastan", that is "educate child from birth, educate bride from beginning" (AFM). After greetings, mother-in-law and daughters-in-law present silver rings, wraps. Unmarried ladies come to betashar with wives of their elder brothers.

According to elders, in the Soviet period, when girls were kidnapped by guys in some villages, followed by spontaneous wedding ceremony, there was no zhyrau or dombra player in the village; in this circumstances, people simply recited the following poem:

Kelinşek betin aşayın,	By opening the bride`s face,
Aşpay neden sasayın.	I don`t hesitate, I will not get lost.
Qalyñ topty qaq jaryp,	My song will break the gathering
Aqqan suday tasayın	As the falling water of Niagara

So, man performs the ceremony, holds the stick and lifts the shawl. At the present time, particularly in Semirechie, in the east, south-east and north of the country, men who perform the betashar ceremony do not lift the zhaulyk with the stick nor make any signs.

According to elders, the custom, when all named kins leave money on a tray during the betashar ceremony, originates from the late 1960s and early 1970s.

According to sources, in old times, women who were revered by bows of daughter-in-law in return gave to *zhirshy* their massive and smaller rings, shawls, traditional skull-caps (AFM), and the conductor who praised well the clan elders received some livestock (depending on richness, a horse, a camel, sheep) and a luxurious robe. Poltoratskaya recorded the following betashar saga fragments from the Semei kazaks:

Kelin keldi, köriñiz,	The bride arrived, look,
Körimdigin beriñiz,	give presents for the show,

Nar berseñiz maya ber,	If you give a nar, then only maya,
Üstine kilem jaya ber,	Maya with carpet-cloth,
Jilqi bersen biyeden,	If you give a horse, then only mare,
Kem bolmasyn tüyeden,	Mare is not worse than a camel.
Sıyır berseñ, qyzıldan,	If you give a cow, then only red cow
Şubalañ quyiriyiq uzynnan,	with lengthy tails.
Qoy berseñ, ülken ağynan,	If you give sheep, then only white sheep
Egiz bolsın qozysy,	With twin lambs...

(Poltoratskaya, 1878; *Kazak Halkunun Dasturleri men Adet-Guruptari*, 2006: 56)

In the Kyzylzhar region, the ancient text contains direct indication of awarding the zhyrshy service with livestock:

Aldyndagy atasy,	Father-in-law, standing in front of me,
Bes-alty qoydy artyq ber,	Give me five-six sheep more,
Qonagyna soyğanday,	As if presenting to your guests
Qonaqqa soyğan toqtyğa,	A sheep for your guests
Auyl jany toyğanday,	It'll satisfy the whole aul,
Anau turğan qayn ağa,	Brother-in-law, standing in front of me,
Bere tuğyn suyir ma?	...Are you preparing a cow for me?
Jalgiz syir qiyn ba?... Is it so hard to give a cow away?
Ala-qula demenyz,	... Don't say it is of strange colour,
Tusin aytyp qoyıñız... Say its precise colour...

(W, 1095; *Kazak Halkunun Dasturleri men Adet-Guruptari*, 2006:213).

Bride shall bow down from her first appearance in the husband's house. The first bow is addressed to the ancestors and the ceiling (*shanyrak*). Actually, the husband's relatives should be bowed down yet from the betashar procedure. Beside the esteem of new kins, the greeting at betashar is the sign of bride's compliance, her agreement with the new rules. From betashar's start, bride seeing a husband's relative and bowing down, says "Salem berdik" ("our greeting to you"), which is answered "Kop zhasa" ("live long"). Not mentioning names of husband's relatives but inventing new names by bride herself – this is an integral part of her life as good-daughter. In 1915, a turcologist Alexander Samoilovich wrote, following the words of Mustafa Chokai: "A good wife, still being a bride, out of pudency, should not address by name the husband's relatives, all his generation, including that kinship level, which allows marriages, she should call them by generic designation" (Samoilovich, 1915: 161-162).

There are differences in the way of lifting shawl to show bride's face. In the south and west, the shawl is opened by the eldest woman of the clan; she kisses bride's forehead. In Semirechie, in the east, south-east and north, after betashar, the man who performs this ceremony gently removes the shawl with a whip or neck of dombra. For example, he can address groom's friend who is looking forward to his own marriage: "There she is, the bride, look at her radiant face, give your korimdik for seeing the bride, nurture and take care of her, now she is a member of your village". The conductor receives *korimdik* – a present for showing bride's face by groom's parents and other relatives. Mother-in-law, or other equally entitled woman kisses bride's forehead and puts a ring on her finger, father-in-law and mother-in-law give their blessings at length. After betashar, all gather to taste a cup of tea (*kelin shai*), served by new daughter-in-law, and the respective presents for the first tea ceremony follow.

After betashar, one of the next rites dedicated to bride is "*betashar tabak*" (Betashar dish), i.e., sharing food. The rite is conducted by an elderly woman, mother of many children. She blesses the dish with words: Give birth to a boy, be dedicated to your new kins (literally "jump for them into water and fire"), honestly serve them", and puts the sheep stomach and brisket meat on the dish. Good-daughter gets the dish to spread the meat among the elderly women, with greetings, and returns the empty dish.

5. Conclusion

Summing up, the "betashar" ceremony and the "betashar" saga is considered to be the most praised Kazak custom, particularly in case of son. It is an extremely solemn and very colorful presentation.

The Kazak betashar saga pursues two aims. The first is to introduce young wife to her new role under accompaniment of good wishes. Another aim is moral teachings presented in a humorous way and familiarizing the bride with every family member, and bride's adaptation to new surroundings. The betashar song discharges an important function for many family concerns. It includes several paths, hence, it influences how zhyrshy starts the saga, then he introduces every member of new household individually, then makes conclusion by teaching their traditions to bride and gradually introduces her into the actual environment. The Kazak betashar tradition serves the need of bride becoming a respected good-daughter, preparing to motherhood, educating her to be an exemplary wife of kin's brother. The betashar saga goes in length about duties of good-daughter.

When comparing the ancient text of the betashar song with its contemporary version, we would find the common features and some discrepancies. The modern text, sang in front of the public, preserved the ancient structure and introduction, while changing the main part with description of new family according to individual improviser (zhyrshy)'s taste. The common is the prior agreement between the event

owner and zhyrshi about list of the invited members and the acquaintance of zhyrshi with them. Otherwise, all ritual survived without changes.

The betashar rites are connected tightly to ancient Turkic traditions and pre-Islamic relics of the Kazak Steppes. Greeting the house entrance and the house saint spirits, pouring fat into hearth, attaching the owl feathers to bride's curtains and the kokpar game – all show the remaining influence of prehistoric animist, zoroastrian, and shamanic traditions. All these rituals were assimilated by Islam. Today, great importance is assigned to rituals of acquiring good-daughter (*kelin tusiru*), veneration of ancestors (*ata-baba*), the fire cult, and the cult of hearth (*shanyrak*). Some regional variations to the betashar ritual can be explained by geographic extensions, environmental settings, and spacious distance between the nearest Kazak aul settlements, and the Kazak preference for staying apart from each other. These regional variations however serve the same purpose of the ritual, which is the maintenance of people's fertility.

End Notes

¹ Kalindik kosi/kis koshi: sending bride to her groom's aul in the most luxurious way of old times, when bride was mounting a horse (Photo 8), and her dowry was uploaded on camels.

Photo 8. Bride's farewell, XIX c. From the fund of the Central museum of Kazakhstan.



Bride was accompanied by her mother and sisters-in-law. They would hand over the dowry to bride's parents-in-law. The following words were said about the bride's rich caravan in the "Kyz-Zhibek" lyric epos "Qalindi q kösi":

...Seksen nardy toltyryp jasau artyp,
Toğyz jorğa at jabdyktap Jibek üşyn,
Qayın yenesy qasyna erdi deydi...

...Seksen tuye üstinde,
altyndı jağdan ornağan...

... Eighty camels were packed with the dowry
To accompany Kyz-Zhibek.

Mother prepared the inhering to be carried by nine horses

(*Babalar Sözü*, 2009: 173).

... Eighty camels were
to carry golden chests...
(*Babalar Sözü*, 2009: 101).

² "Koshuge" was the naming by early Turkic tribes for the *shymyldyk*. The Altaic people call this wedding curtain, which was hiding bride during her entrance in-house, "köjögö" (Tadisheva, 2015: 136).

³ One of widely spread wedding rites, influenced by the fertility cult, is *shashu*, performed at each wedding stage: on the very first arrival of groom to bride's aul; when erecting the yurt for new couple ("otau"); when preparing the newlyweds' bed; on arrival of bride to groom's aul; on the first visit to father-in-law's. Since antique times, home-made dry food was used for *shashu*: kurt, irimshik, candies (sugar), dry fruits (raisins, etc) and nuts. In modernity, confectionaries are used for strewing. Like in old times, it is done by elderly woman and mother of many children at the same time.

⁴ The bowing ritual and the pouring of fat into hearth was also implemented by groom on his visit to bride's father.

⁵ The Altaic people have in their wedding tradition the fire veneration rites: groom's uncle from his mother line called *taaiy* blesses the young couple's hearth and feeds the fire with archyn (a tree).

⁶ White colour is a symbol of purity, the colour of sacred heavenly bodies (Moon, Sun, stars), and the colour of happiness and joy.

⁷ On the second day of the wedding feast, "*kökpar*", "*kökböri*", and other games for horse riders are played (Divayev, 1900: 19; Grodekov, 1889: 67). Among Kyrgyz people it was common when girl's father organized *baigeh* (horse race) or *kökböri* (Grodekov, 1889: 73). According to the game conditions, in its end, horsemen bring the torn-out goat carcass in front of a well-off respectable kazak house. It is a sign of respect to the house. The house master pays homage to the gamers. The gamers also do it in front of houses with daughter-in-law that is in wait of child's birth and by crying there "*kogert, kogert!*" ("to raise new generations"), they express their wishes for the house to propagate (Alektorov, 1888: 12). Among Turkmen people, there is a game when young husband with friends fight for sheep or goat seized and put in front of the saddle, and it is the same *kökpar* game. This information indicates that there are similarities and differences in rules of the *kökpar* game which is common to all Turkic peoples.

⁸ The wedding cult of trees is also encountered with Altaic people. The morning of the wedding day, groom's uncle from the mother line *taaiy* goes to fetch stems of two 2-3m tall young birch trees, with a single top (not double). The stems were attached the *köjögö* wedding curtain. The birch branches were placed outdoors and kept there until their complete deterioration (Tadisheva, 2015: 136).

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AFM – author's field materials.

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