

Traditions related to yurt (traditional dwelling of Central Asian nomads)

Double-natured principle of nomadic life can be observed in the process of yurt making. Thus, according to Kazakh tradition, yurt of newly-married was prepared by relatives of bride. However, door jambs, shanyrak (upper element of yurt) and half of felt mats were brought by bridegroom.

The following stage of the development of space - putting up of yurt – was also divided into male and female functions. Male function was to mount shanyrak; the rest of work was done by women. When skeleton of yurt was destroyed people could replace almost all elements except shanyrak; it was transmitted from generation to generation.

Focus on fertility, prolificacy, and so on, in symbolism of yurt was reflected in colors of interior. In Kazakh yurt, like in dwelling of most Turkic nomadic nations, red color associated with the idea of growth and reproduction predominate in ornaments of woven carpets, curtains, and to name but a few.

Special sacral nature was observed in attitude of Kazakhs towards objects related to bed. Infertile women were not allowed to come close to bed of newly-married; for the first time bed for just married couples was prepared by woman who had many children was healthy and happy in her family life.

Division into male and female side of yurt was strictly observed in traditional life of nomads [1].

Right (male) side (on zhak) was the most sacred part of yurt. It was the place for traditional ceremonies which marked the most significant stages of nomadic life cycle. Symbolic nature of yurt related to socialization of its inhabitants was extremely rich. Right side of yurt was connected with the idea of ritual transition. Thus, the childbirth took place there, on this side of yurt bride sat during wedding ceremonies, newly-married experienced there Muslim ceremony of marriage, on that side body of the dead was washed. “Private yurt for bridegroom was placed in bride’s aul (village). There was a special place for him – “on zhak”. This side was his own place in future” [2]. Bride took off her dress on the right side of yurt as well; at the same time, she imitated some resistance [3].

In addition, the right side in Kazakh yurt was the place for adult daughter who became ready for marrying. Probably, before those ages her place was on female (left) side of yurt, near her mother. But after the young person reaches the minimum age for marriage and before the ceremony she lived on the right side of yurt.

Etiquette norms of traditional nomadic society, including Kazaks, did not allow riding fast or running to aul or yurt as it was considered as a sign of somebody’s death.

References:

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2. Mukanov M.S. *Kazakhskaya yurta*. Alma-Ata, 1981, pp. 27, 40 (Rus)
3. Yesbergenov Kh., Atamuratov T. *Traditsii i ikh preobrazovaniye v gorodskom bytu karakalpakov*. Nukus, 1975, p. 82.

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