

Gender Upbringing of Children in Traditional Kyrgyz Families (On the Example of South-West of Fergana Valley)

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The study of the issues of children socialization in traditional culture is important for understanding the various mechanisms that ensure the formation of a person as a social personality and a representative of an ethnic group. Gender upbringing of children in traditional Kyrgyz families was an urgent task, to the solution of which the social, economic, and spiritual potentials of the ancestry were directed. Many institutions of the traditional culture of an ethnic group are disappearing, including the institutions of socialization, so first of all, the task of specialists is to fix them.

This article is devoted to identifying and characterizing gender upbringing of children in traditional Kyrgyz families which was a reliable guarantor of the upbringing of the younger generation. The model of socialization developed by generations ensured the readiness of the individual to reproduce the economic and spiritual values of the ethnic group. Gender upbringing of children in traditional Kyrgyz families is closely connected and intertwined with culture, which is the fundamental basis for many relations of ideas and actions in society.

Respectful and diligent attitude towards elders and children, the desire to morally,

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and materially help those in need, mercy in its most diverse manifestations, help and mutual assistance in relation to the ancestry and tribe, the concept of honour and duty, the implementation of certain duties that have been taken on, that is, the blame for this is with skill, diligence and almost everything else – all this should be considered the basis of the culture of gender upbringing of children in traditional Kyrgyz families.

The scope of the study covers mainly the late XIX – early XX centuries. Based on the author's field materials, as well as a wide range of written sources, a reconstruction of the traditional model of raising children among the Kyrgyz is given.

[Gender; Traditions; Upbringing; Morality; Veneration; Culture]

Introduction

Cultural heritage has always served and serves as a foundation for the gender upbringing of children in traditional Kyrgyz families, as well as for the spiritual development of generations. It contains and concentrates those humanistic values that are not subject to ageing. Thanks to the labour and creativity of various peoples, the world's cultural heritage accumulated over the years is bound to have and has an enduring cultural and historical significance. This provision should also apply to the cultural heritage of the Kyrgyz.

Gender upbringing of children in traditional Kyrgyz families is closely connected and intertwined with culture, which is the fundamental basis for many relations of perceptions and actions in society. Respectful and careful attitude to elders and children, eagerness to morally and materially help those in need, mercy in its various manifestations, help and mutual assistance to the clan and tribe, the concept of honour and duty, the implementation of those or other duties that have been undertaken, that is, the guilt of the word, diligence and almost everything else – all this should be considered the basis of the culture of gender upbringing of children.

Transmitted from generation to generation, the world cultural stock is never interrupted in history, so it accumulates evenly.

In our opinion, all this means the essence of the impartial law of historical continuity of culture, as well as education in the as its constituent part. And each generation uses the accumulated experience, learns the merits, and moves forward to create new cultural values. Many institutions of traditional culture of an ethnos are disappearing, including institutions of socialisation, so the main task is first to fix them.

The aim of this study is to characterise the traditional gender upbringing of children in the Kyrgyz. The objectives are to:

- to give an idea of behaviour related to the gender upbringing of children;
- to trace the processes of integrating children into the world of adults, introducing the child to the economic activities of the tribal family and clan;
- to characterise the moral qualities of children as one of the most important elements of folk pedagogy in the spiritual development of the child.

The research is based on the principle of historicism. The study of the peculiarities of gender children's upbringing in the Kyrgyz is based on the study of complexes of social phenomena as part of a single whole – traditional culture.

In addition, the following methodological work was carried out while working on this study:

- survey and conversations-interviews with informants of the older generation;
- analyses of ethnographic materials on traditional gender children's upbringing.

For any clan system, the culture of behaviour and morality is a significant, obligatory moment, in turn leaving the essence of clan production, tribal and family life. The creation of man is formed not only from the physical production of individuals, but also from the material-spiritual and aesthetic criteria of their life and personality. The latter, unlike procreation, can be called the processing of people by people, it has its own stages, nuances, and directions. The material interpretation tells us that man is formed and develops as a subject of labour, industrial and political relations, as a personality of this or that historical era, as an inimitable peculiarity, which was taken in the social aspect in this process. But the place given to the moral formation of the individual cannot be underestimated. A person cannot be constituted on the physical level alone. When someone is reported to be accomplished as a human being, his highest moral qualities are first assumed. Morality, more than any other sphere of a person's inner world, ensures social stability of a person, the strength of his ties with his clan or tribe.

Our article discusses only some aspects of this important and complex problem. Since upbringing in this system is a multifaceted process. Gender upbringing of children in formation of behavioural culture in the traditional Kyrgyz family is studied based on the historical experience of the people.

The well-known researcher M. Muzayev⁷ rightly writes that the education of a perfect personality of a real Kyrgyz required a thoughtful application of a set of means for all-round influence, and folk teachers chose more effective means of influencing the personality. According to the scientist, the more effective means of influencing the consciousness and feelings of children were riddles, proverbs, songs and fairy tales, i.e. oral folk art. The purpose of riddles was intellectual education, proverbs, and songs – moral and aesthetic education. One of the principal tasks was to foster the correct perception of ancestral important values. For this reason, the Kyrgyz strongly condemned idleness, consumerist attitude to the ancestral view, which was of great importance in the Kyrgyz culture. Another task, a commandment of upbringing can be considered the necessity to lay the base, the foundation of directed behaviour already in childhood. Adamdyn bashky mildeti – yymanduuluk, (The main duty of man is morality). Adamdyn zhaman – zhakshysy tuulgandan emes, kɵrgɵn tarbiyasynan, (A good or bad person is not from birth, but from the education received) – said the Kyrgyz.⁸ More necessary commandments were: “do not lie”, “do not kidnap”, “do not offend a loved one”, which were learnt by Kyrgyz children together with their mother’s milk.

The basis of culture of all peoples is the national character, which is an essential element of national psychology, and without considering this and almost all other reasons it is unrealistic to study economic, financial and political life and manage the main directions of life and activities of these peoples.

The Kyrgyz paid great attention to the moral education of the younger generation. The child first met the accepted tribal norms and rules of behaviour in the family. The example and behaviour of elders played a major role in this. Growing up, children uniformly entered the system of relations that existed in the family, and it became for them an unquestionable law of relations between elders and juniors, rules of behaviour in relation to the clan and tribe, etc.

The tribal norms of behaviour transmitted from generation to generation related to all aspects of social life of the tribe and family: from birth and marriage to labour work, daily communication in family life and

⁷ M. MURZAYEV, *The Role of Socialization of Individuals in Kyrgyz National Pedagogy*, Bishkek 2014, p. 86.

⁸ S. K. OSMONOVA, *Field Materials Notebook*, No. 2, 2019, p. 18.

labour, tribal forms of leisure time, etc. The norms were not regulated in any way. Usually, they were not regulated by any definite legal regulations, but were sometimes more than the latter, being based on public morality and clan opinion.

The whole totality of tribal requirements of behaviour in most peoples is based on the opinions of this people about some positive kind of perfect representative of their own kind at a certain time, in a certain environment and in a certain role. And this collective, historically formed image of a flawless, “ideal man” of this or that tribe seems to be forever recorded in the consciousness of each member of this tribe. Each nation has historically formed and exists its own certain and only inherent ideal of behaviour, and the norms of tribal behaviour prescribe a member of this tribe to follow this model in each certain situation. Of course, in different peoples, as well as in Kyrgyz people, this ideal is different in some ways, arising from the style of life, the prevailing way of life, moral and moral perceptions, notions about the attitude to the opposite sex, elders and juniors, comrades to friends, good and evil, good, and bad, courage, heroism, honesty, etc. Any nation, as it is clear, has historically formed written and unwritten norms of “decent behaviour”, the violation of which is condemned by other members of the family and tribe.

Even though the violation of the requirements of this “impeccable behaviour” or “impeccable model” of behaviour was not formally punished and is not punished directly, they still existed and are stable for long periods of time in one or another ethnic community, being interdependent elements of social, ethnic, and confessional character.

In the Kyrgyz family in the educational process, the value was usually given to the cultivation of such moral qualities as honesty, truthfulness, modesty, politeness, respect for parents and other members of the family and tribe. Simplicity, dignity, sociability, loyalty to relatives and friends were strongly pronounced character traits of the Kyrgyz people. Great importance was attached to the formation of high moral relations and their daily fulfilment. Kyrgyz proverbs noted the following: “Adamdyn kerký – adep, Adamdyn kerký – adiletty – adilettyyylylyktø, zhigittin kerký – adilettylylylyktø, adilettyy kishi – azaptan alys” – “Morality adorns a man”, “justice adorns a man, morality adorns a man”, “A moral man is always in happiness”.

So, what is “Adep-akhlak” (“moral character”) – it is etiquette, norms of behaviour, ethics, aesthetics. “Adep-akhlak” is a whole complex or

a system of ethical requirements.⁹ The Kyrgyz, being in the past a long time a non-written people, made a fascinating, deeply and finely thought out system of unwritten moral standards of behaviour, which concern virtually all aspects of life and activity, which characterise difficult relations in the family, in the household, in the clan and in the tribe. “Adep-akhlak” can be found as a set of etiquette rules of behaviour, which relate to the external manifestation of the attitude to people: dealing with others, forms of address, greetings, behaviour in public places, manners, dress, etc. Etiquette is an integral part of the ‘external culture of the clan’, the culture of behaviour.

The norms of behaviour, etiquette and behavioural culture are part of the world culture. The Kyrgyz have never lived in isolation, without communication with other peoples. Since past times, the Kyrgyz have communicated not only with their nearest neighbours – Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Tajiks, but also with other close and distant peoples. Archaeological materials, written sources, as well as folklore and field ethnographic materials speak about these ties.¹⁰ It is necessary to emphasise such bases of world culture development as mutual enrichment, mutual influence, and interchange. In such variants any nation, also Kyrgyz, accepts and brings into its culture mainly what is close to it in psychology and lifestyle. Of course, we are now turning to the Kyrgyz culture of the past, so it has its own mentality.

Moral and aesthetic education can be considered a fundamental, significant basis for the formation of character, moral and ethical form of a person throughout his life, his relations with his clan and tribe, it largely determines the present status of a person in the social environment. The Kyrgyz paid great care to the education of children in these moral categories, such as discipline, a sense of collectivism, obedience and reverence to parents and elders, loyalty in friendship, adherence to the clan and tribe, etc. The boys were educated to be disciplined, a sense of collectivism, obedience and reverence to parents and elders, loyalty in friendship, adherence to the clan and tribe, and others. Courage, loyalty, faithfulness, steadfastness, selflessness were brought up in boys, and perseverance, politeness, obedience to elders, and respect for the future spouse were brought up in girls. All this corresponded to the standard of moral and aesthetic dignity

⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

¹⁰ N. P. LOBACHEVA, *Family and family rites at the peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan*, Moscow 1978, pp. 144–175.

of that time, when aspects of upbringing of the younger generation of Kyrgyz were tightly connected with the historical criteria of their life.

One of the weighty and key postulates of patrimonial and tribal upbringing was the development and strengthening of these qualities in children, such as respect for elders, parents, opposite sex, sense of duty and honour, conscientiousness, modesty, self-esteem, etc. The necessary claim was that children should grow up ashamed of their own wrong actions, that they should be conscientious – “namystu”.

At the time we are considering, the Kyrgyz brought up their own children on the moral values of Islam and tried to pass on to them proper domestic and craft skills. Knowledge in general was highly valued, and any opportunity to teach or learn something was never missed. Mature and adult members of the family were responsible for the younger ones, instilling in them the abilities they might need in life.

Our field materials highlight the probability that children learnt the traditions of respectfulness towards parents, relatives, elders and lodgers in their daily interactions with them. It is worth noting that children were usually quite attached to older family members (grandmothers, grandfathers, aunts, etc.). One of the informants told us that in the past children and 70–80-year-olds would go out and sit wherever they felt comfortable in the yard. Adults usually had peaceful conversations among themselves and did not let the children playing in the yard out of their sight. Our informant recalled how he used to listen to the stories and fairy tales of Kalch’s grandfather, who had the talent of a storyteller and was able to interest children.¹¹ Adults and older members of the family were responsible for the younger ones, imparting to them skills that could be useful to them in life.

The Kyrgyz, during historical processes, lost a lot of cultural values about which we know only from traditional legends. The new life made its own adjustments and imposed its own ideology. Regardless of this, in the treasuries of people’s memory there remained deep and delicately considered systems of moral tribal norms concerning all aspects of people’s life and activity.

These clan and tribal norms characterised difficult relations in the family, in the environment and in society. They, as perennial mole towers, keep in their own splendour the beauty and commitment of their own

¹¹ OSMONOVA, p. 20.

contemporaries – our forefathers, who created them. The system of social relations formed in the life of the older generation has developed spiritually, changing, and improving it together.

Most people are included in the contours of social relations developed by the previous development, acquiring the spiritual properties programmed in them, improving them in various spheres of life; when they leave life, they leave for new generations the more elevated degree of moral formation of personality expressed in them.

Regardless of how long the system of social relations protects its own contours and how quickly a new system is distinguished from the past, the process of succession of generations is never interrupted. It is known that the succession of generations is an important condition of social progress, which exists in all spheres of life: industrial and political, financial, legal, moral, aesthetic, tribal relations.

One of the ways of moral education of a child in a Kyrgyz family was approval for a good deed, which always contributed to the development of positive traits in the child's behaviour and awakened in them the desire to behave decently. Praise and expressions of satisfaction with certain actions of a child were often used in upbringing. For their excellent behaviour in the stay of other children praised, put it to them as an example. Encouragement of children's actions not only by parents, but also by neighbours and close people was an effective form of approval. According to our field materials, the most effective form of approval for the children was encouragement of their actions by their father. The relevant features of Kyrgyz family and domestic relations since ancient times are the thorough reverence of children for their parents, respect for elders, generous behaviour towards people around them, regardless of their nationality, gender, education, position in the clan, etc. Traditions encouraged to honour people of old age.

In all cases the elder spoke first, the younger one gave way, listened to his advice and served the food. It was highly obscene to interfere with the conversation of the elders, to sneer loudly in their presence, to say things that were obscene to gender and age, to do any ignorant action in the presence of the elders, at the same time in the presence of parents.

Simple skills were gradually imparted to a child: the ability to address elders, behaviour during a feast, with guests, in the presence of guests, etc. Kyrgyz women were measured and gentle in the family, never spoke in exaggerated tones and did not use formidable punishments towards the child. Babies were accustomed to fulfilling instructions, recommen-

dations, wishes of relatives and elders. According to the custom it was hoped that if a boy sent by his parents on business met an old man in the street and if he asked him to help him in something, the boy would help him first of course, and then he would fulfil the task of his relatives. When meeting with the elders, the younger ones were obliged to approach or approach them as a sign of respect from the left side, from the same side to follow the footsteps with them on the way. The right side was and is honourable, and it is customary to yield it to the elder. If when meeting an elder, the young one was on horseback and the elder was on foot, the young one was obliged to hurry up, approach the elder and offer him his own horse. From an early age the idea was instilled in the children that they owed a debt to their mother, to their parents. "There is no higher debt than duty to one's mother," says a Kyrgyz proverb.

It should be noted that this idea was assertively introduced into the understanding of young people throughout the centuries by the older generation, supporting it with established traditions, which were dictated by the need in conditions when the family did not materially provide for old age, when parents could count only on their children and saw them as the sole support and breadwinners in old age.

Therefore, upbringing of children from childhood to adulthood did not exclude violence against their will and consciousness.

The older generation was to be respected and honoured, while obedience to the elders was the duty of the young. Proceeding from this, the Kyrgyz have always paid great care to the education of the younger generation respectful attitude to the elders.

Children were introduced to ancestral norms of morality and rules of behaviour first in the family. The key role in this, as mentioned above, was played by the behaviour of elders, their image. The beginning of this system of upbringing was the family, its micro-environment, first the tender attitude of mum to her own kids.

To characterise it, let us cite some folklore works. Here, for example, is a farewell song:

"I wish you a long life,
And strong health!
May the pastures be filled with livestock,
And the granary with harvest.
May your yard be filled with cattle,
And your home with children."

This is one of the main wishes and desires of a child, which is necessary in his life.¹²

In Kyrgyz family children were treated with affection, care, and love, i.e. they paid much attention to them, especially the youngest children were often spoilt. Kyrgyz etiquette and ethics prescribed to treat children gently, patiently and with restraint. They were not angry with children and tried not to shout at them. From an early age, all members of the family tried to instil in children good-naturedness, kindness, respect and reverence for elders, kind attitude to all living things. As children grew up, the emotional tone of their parents' attitude towards them gradually changed: from mild forgiveness in early childhood to exacting strictness in adolescence and friendly guardianship in youth.

A special attitude to the mother was brought up from childhood. Under any circumstances, mother should not be offended, even with bad thoughts, it was impossible to be rude, to increase the eye on her, the key thing in the attitude to mum is commitment, attention to her. Motherhood has always been the central concept of a woman's destiny, in traditional Kyrgyz culture and traditional rituals created unquestionable laws, according to which a girl's childhood was only a preparation for motherhood. In some families, a woman had to patiently bear offences from her spouse and other family members to preserve the family for the sake of the children.

Children consulted with their father in all their actions and received his blessing: "Allaga amanat, Kudai saktasyn" – "God to help, God to keep".

And only in very rare cases the father resorted to the power of curse. According to the Kyrgyz, the father's curse was extremely effective. The Kyrgyz used to say "ata kargyshy – ok", "The father's curse is an arrow".¹³ A person who deserved a curse from his father expected difficult calamities and misfortune for himself. A person cursed by his parents became an outcast, and everyone looked at him as an outcast.

Ethnic morality and the tribal norms of behaviour based on it demanded absolute reverence for parents throughout their lives. Children were obliged to obey their parents in all things and to support them in their old age.

Honouring old age is not just a mark of respect for their years, for their family status. It is honour to their luggage of knowledge, life experience,

¹² Ibid, p. 12.

¹³ Ibid, p. 13.

everything that they have seen and heard, carried worthily through the years and hardships; it is the life they have seen; the songs they have heard; the rituals, ceremonies and customs they have participated in; the hands that have spun, embroidered, caressed grandchildren, baked; welcomed and embraced guests with affection. “Sadaga bolup ketein, baleketindi alayin’ – these expressions have no literal translation into Russian, but they mean women’s sacrifice, readiness to give their lives, their strength, for their children – “That I should take your troubles on my head, that I should die for you”.¹⁴ Such is the meaning of these words.

The religious and moral basis of intergenerational relations in the tribe and family was more clearly manifested in the people’s perception of the meaning of parental blessing and parental curse. The Kyrgyz believed that the highest moral properties were predestined to people by God. It was faithful and ethical if a son followed his father’s precepts; disobedient children were regarded as ungrateful and were a punishment for parents. “Abiyr tapsa balasy, atasyna bak konot”, “If the son is conscientious, the father is happy”. Moral, moral attitudes were modified, adapting to new conditions, continued their life.

It is known that Muslim culture is syncretic by nature: difficult circumstances of economy, small land, not always smooth relations with neighbours and many other things gave reason for manifestation of character. The whole system of clan and tribal upbringing was oriented to contain it to a significant extent.

The peculiarities of Kyrgyz moral education were manifested in relations between women and men, adults and children, elders, and juniors everywhere, in any environment – indoors, outdoors, in the household, in clan and tribal spaces, on the road, etc.

The interests of the family in the clan and tribe were represented by the father of the family, the eldest of the men.¹⁵

Other issues of daily life were jointly decided by the parents. All family members, who jointly owned joint property, depending on their abilities, skills, and abilities, were engaged in cattle breeding and farming, and partly in hunting.

They produced everything necessary for life in their households by handicrafts. The family had to process the diverse products of animal

¹⁴ Ibid, p. 14.

¹⁵ S. M. ABRAMZON, *The Kirghiz and their ethnogenetic and historical-cultural ties*, Frunze 1990, p. 261.

husbandry and farming in time and completely, prepare them for use or storage, on which their well-being depended to no small extent. And this work mainly fell on women's shoulders. Many authors have drawn attention to the constant employment of Kyrgyz women in the household, interpreting it as slave dependence on their husbands. But playing a major role in the production of material goods for the family, women had freedom of action and autonomy in the household.

At the same time, S. M. Abramzon and A. Dzhumagulov, getting acquainted with the life of the Kyrgyz, saw only its external side and underestimated the role of male labour in household management. While women's labour was necessary for daily household chores, men's labour was used in seasonal work where physical strength was needed. Men's duties included: choosing pastures and places for migrating, caring for cattle and training horses for riding, setting up yurts and building pens for cattle.

Thus, male and female labour was equivalent in the economy of the Kyrgyz family as an independent economic unit of society based on private production and individual consumption.

The clan and tribal norms of child rearing were greatly influenced by general Muslim traditions and values. Most of them did not contradict this folk culture and were freely grafted onto the behavioural culture of the Kyrgyz. The Arabic language became the linguistic shell of Muslim etiquette, and after that of Kyrgyz etiquette, which was replenished every day with borrowings from communication with the outside world, with neighbours. People accepted these new generic generally recognised norms and criteria, adapting this new one to their own specific peculiar national conditions.

Ancestral and tribal upbringing – the splendour of manners, customs, tales, stories, bylinas – all this people managed to carry through the centuries to preserve and pass on to the next generations. And here it should be noted that beauty, health, knowledge were inextricably linked in people's lives. According to folk beliefs, by preserving the qualities of morality, a person gained external beauty and long life. A young man – “zhigit” – was obliged to stand respectfully in the doorway during the conversation of elders or during a feast (toi), ready to serve them, to bring a horse, to see them off, to greet those who arrived. He was at all times near, not participating in the conversation, was there, listening, noting, memorising. Tact, honour, a worthy place in the future – these are links of one chain, which in the future is called “tarbiyaluu zhigit” (well-mannered guy).

In this way children were taught not only manners, not only beautiful communication and behaviour, but also care for their elders.

The Kyrgyz tribal norms of behaviour and morality, as well as faith, demanded and still demand unconditional respect for parents throughout their lives. Clan or tribal opinion strongly condemned and condemns persons who showed disrespectful attitude towards people of older age.

According to the Kyrgyz worldview, the religious and moral basis of intergenerational relations in the family was quite clearly manifested in ideas about the meaning of parental blessing or curse, and especially of paternal blessing. The Kyrgyz attached great importance to the blessing and prayer of parents. Parents blessed their children before marriage, before travelling on a long journey or before embarking on important undertakings: “Zholun shydir, zholdoshun kyzyr bolsun” [“May your path be smooth, and your companion (friend) be your guide”], “Baktyлуу bala-chakaluu bolgula” (“Be happy with your children”), “Ishin ilgeri bolsun, zharatkan ɵzy koldosun” (“May you have success in your endeavors, and may Allah bless you”).¹⁶ Numerous other wishes related to blessing were also used. There were special “ayats” (“verse”) of the Koran, which were read, and even now are read by mothers and older people when their children leave home.

In accordance with the ancestral generally recognized norms of Kyrgyz moral culture, not only parents and relatives of older age, but all elders in general were worthy of veneration and respect. Young children helped the guest to enter the house, tethered the horse, fed him, asked him about important things – health, the way and those who are dear to a person (his relatives). The first greeting of the Kyrgyz begins with the phrase: “Are your cattle and your family healthy?” Characterizing the life and customs of the Kyrgyz, Ch. Valikhanov noted that Kyrgyz “eats and drinks and dresses with cattle, for him cattle are more valuable than his peace of mind”.¹⁷

At the age of 15, a young man was ready for many things: he took part in his father’s household chores, harvesting, haymaking, came to help each other (‘ashar’), and could already start his own family.

The Kyrgyz had a large number of strict rules, which stemmed from the honouring of the eldest person. The custom unconditionally demanded respect from all the younger to all the older and regulated its requirement

¹⁶ OSMONOVA, p. 15.

¹⁷ Ch. Ch. VALIKHANOV, *Notes on the Kirghiz Collected Works*, Alma-Ata 1961, Vol. I, p. 301.

in the following way: the elder could sit wherever necessary, and the younger stood until invited to sit down; when there were many people in the house, the elderly sat in the order of seniority, and the young had to stand at the threshold. One of the important and obligatory moments of honouring elders was to stand up whenever they appeared. Every self-respecting person considered himself obliged to stand up, otherwise he would show his ill-manneredness. According to Kyrgyz custom, if one of the elders stood up at home, all those who were younger than him in age had to get up from their seats and stand until he sat down again or said the word *sit*.¹⁸

According to generally recognised tribal norms, young people, including a son or daughter, even those who had long since become parents themselves, had no right to sit down in the presence of their father without his invitation. In the presence of the elderly, one had to stand, and certain rules were also observed: one had to stand at a certain distance from the elder, or behind him, etc. Young or middle-aged people, who could honour their elders, did not sit down immediately, even when the elder asked him to do so, and not close and not next to him. It was not allowed to sit in front of the elders, with legs spread, etc. When walking together with elders, one was not supposed to be the first to enter a room or cross the path of an elder. The Kyrgyz condemned the verbosity of young people, especially in the presence of their elders. They do not talk about love, about women, or even about their children in the presence of their fathers, or elders in general. In cases when men and women had to go somewhere together, regardless of age, the woman walked necessarily a few steps behind the man. Parents and other family members created, i.e. fostered in the family respectful, friendly relations towards each other.

As we have already noted above, in order to properly educate the younger generation, it was believed that parents should be an example for their children. In this regard, the people say such proverbs: “Uyadan emneni kōrsōh, uchkanda oshonu alasyh”, “What you see in your nest, you get in flight from it”, etc.¹⁹

In the Kyrgyz culture, strict upbringing was associated with certain prohibitions. And these prohibitions were not discussed or disputed by anyone. The word of an elder, wise in experience, vital knowledge, a great baggage of interpersonal communication, respected by all, was immutable. The spoken word of the elder was the law.

¹⁸ OSMONOVA, p. 18.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

Kyrgyz proverbs, sayings, fairy tales, legends and their content serve as good didactic material that reveals such concepts as the role of elders in the formation of moral foundations in the family and in the tribe. The images of older people were valued as bearers of goodness and wisdom: they gave advice to the young in difficult situations, provided the necessary help.

The life experience of the people, its wisdom was vividly embodied in a variety of proverbs and sayings. Like any folk sayings, Kyrgyz proverbs and sayings in a very figurative and lucid form inculcate love for the motherland and the people, cultivate a sense of courage, censure vices, condemn evil. They used to be closely connected with the cattle-breeding and partly with the military nomadic life of the people. On the basis of this genre of oral folk art, independent works specific to Kyrgyz folklore have grown up, which are moral songs and poems. They consist of popular proverbs (often in verse form) and rhymed aphorisms. Such poems are called *sanat* (edification, or an example worthy of imitation). Proverbs are selected either on a single theme, or are diverse in subject matter, but in general act as poetic moral teachings.²⁰

Proverbs and proverbs inculcated reverence for elders, for the elderly, for mothers, for the younger in the family: “Ata-enyendin ak sөzүн kulagynндan uchurba”, “Don’t let the sincere word of parents fly out of your ears”, “Ene syllagan, elge zhagat”, “Who respects his mother, the people like him”, “Atadan – akyl, apadan – tarbiya”, “From the father – intelligence, from the mother – upbringing”, and others.

Lullaby songs also reflect the reflection of everyday life, traditions, psychology and didactic norms of the family.

Here is a lullaby song for a girl:

“My daughter so dear,
Born from your mother, hold her near,
Like a valley, with love clear,
Divided by rays, bright and sheer.
May your hands be strong, without fear,
And wisdom fill your heart, my dear.”

In the upbringing of a daughter, a special role was given to her preservation of her natural beauty. And that she should be a splendid master of women’s work; this role belonged mainly to mothers and aunts – sisters of the mother and father.

²⁰ ABRAMZON, p. 357.

And here is a lullaby song for a boy:

“Dear my precious one,
Born from your mother, like the morning sun,
A valley of care, where love’s begun,
Divided by light, each day’s begun.
May your hands be strong, your spirit spun,
Filled with wisdom, my darling one.”

It says here that their foal should be industrious, that he should be a master of his trade.²¹

Proverbs and proverbs, as we have already said many times, instilled reverence for the elders, the old, the mother, the younger in the family. Lullaby songs trace the reflection of everyday life, traditions, psychology and didactic norms of the family. Of the folklore genres, children earlier than others encountered songs, primarily lullabies, which, as a rule, were often considered improvisations. Kyrgyz verbal art was and is considered to be a school of education for family members, an important spiritual and artistic environment where a person was formed. It had a huge educational and cognitive meaning. Through works of oral folk art the world, nature, people, good and evil, the surrounding environment, etc. were and are learnt.

And also one of the generally recognised tribal norms of moral behaviour in the Kyrgyz tribe was the observance of avoidance customs. Usually the action of prohibitions began already from the time of matchmaking of young people. It was from that moment that their behaviour was controlled and meetings were strictly limited. The bride and groom had to avoid each other and not show themselves in society. This prohibition, slightly changed, continued after the wedding: the young people had no right to communicate and talk to each other in front of strangers. Often this prohibition lasted until the newlyweds reached adulthood, or until they separated from their parents and began to run their own separate household.

Until then, the young people communicated through intermediaries, usually younger members of the family. It should be emphasised that these prohibitions were mutual; the spouses never addressed each other by name. The young wife called her husband “atasy” (father of children), he called his wife “enesi” (mother of children). But even such an address was not allowed if the newlyweds stayed with their parents.

²¹ OSMONOVA, p. 25.

The customs of prohibition and avoidance instilled in young people restraint, calmness, patience, and restraint of feelings. Spouses were not allowed to show any feelings for each other openly, in public: love, attention, affection. It was not allowed to go somewhere together (according to custom, a wife with children always walked 5–6 steps behind her husband), it was also forbidden to sit or even to be near each other in public places.²² It was forbidden to express parental feelings towards their children in public. Relationships between spouses only warmed slightly with age.

According to N. A. Kislyakov, a researcher of family and marital relations of the peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan, the prohibition between husband and wife to call each other by name was found almost in all Central Asian peoples.²³ Such family-marital relations were preserved among the inhabitants of the region under study for the whole life.

Not only the young, but also the husband's parents had to observe some prohibitions and avoidances with regard to their daughters-in-law. In the studied region, according to the folk adat, there were prohibitions both temporary and lifelong.

It is necessary to emphasise the prohibition of “terөө” – to call a daughter-in-law by his name, both in his presence and absence. The daughter-in-law had to replace the names of animals or objects consonant with his name with other words. According to tradition, the following prohibitions were constantly preserved in everyday life: a daughter-in-law was not allowed to appear in front of her father-in-law with uncovered legs, arms, head, with open breasts when feeding a child; it was forbidden to sit with her back to her father-in-law, sit with him at the same *das-torkon*, or sit on his seat; at his appearance she had to get up. If a “kelin” had to mend her father-in-law's clothes, she asked others for help to take his clothes out of the chest.

According to informants, these prohibitions, which, according to them, manifested themselves most fully in relations between a daughter-in-law and her husband's father, were characterised by the fact that they were reciprocal.

²² S. K. OSMONOVA, *Traditional wedding rituals of the Kyrgyz people in the southwest of the Fergana Valley (late 19th – early 20th centuries)*, Osh 2015, p. 118.

²³ H. A. KISLYAKOV, *Essays on the history of family and marriage among the peoples of Central Asia and Kazakhstan*, Leningrad 1969, p. 163.

The father-in-law was also subject to certain restrictions: he could not leave parts of his body uncovered, he could not undress in the presence of his daughter-in-law; he was not allowed to touch her or sit next to her. Jokes and laughter, and even more so swearing and obscene language, were not allowed in their relationship. If the father-in-law had to make a remark to his daughter-in-law, he addressed his wife or daughter so that they could be heard by the “kelin”. It is not without reason that Kyrgyz people have a saying: “Kyzim, saga aytam, kelinim, sen uk!” (Daughter, I am telling you, daughter-in-law, you listen!).²⁴

The daughter-in-law observed temporary prohibitions until her father-in-law gave official permission. But it happened that she received such permission after 3, 5 and more years, and sometimes she did not receive it at all. The permission to lift the ban was given to the daughter-in-law by her mother-in-law or her husband’s elder aunt. After that, in accordance with the tradition, the “kelin” bowed to her father-in-law and from now on could freely enter the common room, clean, bring water to her father-in-law, etc., but communication between them was minimal, the “kelin” always answered her father-in-law quietly and shyly.

According to the custom, prohibitions for “kelin” in relation to mother-in-law were short, although in their strictness they were not inferior to the prohibitions in relation to father-in-law, which was explained, first of all, by economic necessity. In a large family all women were obliged to obey the orders of their elders unconditionally, performing all household chores, which limited the range of their interests. In such conditions, it was especially difficult for the “kelin”, for she was entrusted with almost all household duties immediately after marriage. The fulfilment of various household tasks by the daughter-in-law predetermined the short duration of bans, which were terminated by the mother-in-law herself. But normal relations between them were not soon established.

In the region under consideration there were traditional forms of special address of “kelin” to her husband’s parents. Instead of the words “kayin atam”, she, according to custom, pronounced terms meaning father and mother – “atam” (my father-in-law), “enem” (my mother-in-law), thus confirming the kinship of relations, and they, in turn, addressed her with the word “balam” (my child).

The daughter-in-law strictly observed certain prohibitions not only with regard to her husband’s parents, but also with regard to his older

²⁴ OSMONOVA, *Traditional Wedding*, p. 119.

relatives. It should be noted that certain groups of husband's relatives adhered to the custom of avoidance: firstly, "kayyn jur̄t" – avoidance of older male relatives of the husband by the daughter-in-law; secondly, avoidance of the young daughter-in-law by them – "kelin".

N. P. Dyrenkova, a researcher of family-marital prohibitions and avoidances in the Turkic peoples of Central Asia, proposed to consider this custom in the following groups: in relation to the older male relatives of the husband or wife, the older female relatives; and also in relation to the younger male and younger female relatives.²⁵

It should be emphasised that while with regard to the older male relatives of the husband ("kayin"), the daughter-in-law was obliged to observe the custom of avoidance for some time, there were no prohibitions for her with regard to the younger relatives and female relatives from the husband's and his mother's family.

According to informants' reports, married women in the region in question usually adhered strictly to certain norms of behaviour, which included a number of prohibitions that can be grouped as follows: excessive meetings on any occasion, direct address to and gazing at her husband's older relatives, appearance with naked parts of the body and uncovered head were prohibited. A daughter-in-law was not allowed to sit with her leg outstretched and in case of men in the room, or with them at the same dastorkon, to talk loudly and disrespectfully, to walk barefoot and enter the men's half of the yurt.

So, "kelin" never stayed alone with her husband's elder relatives, always greeted them first with a nod of the head; when they appeared in the house, she quickly got up from her seat and, pulling her handkerchief over her eyes and lowering her head, silently left the room; and in case of an accidental direct meeting with them, she immediately passed by with her head lowered, letting the elder one pass ahead; she immediately fulfilled all the requests of "kainag" (her husband's elder brothers), whom "kelin" honoured as well as his parents. A daughter-in-law did not dare to eat and drink in their presence, to feed her children, to do household chores, for she had to give them all kinds of honours and signs of attention. She answered the questions of older relatives with the help of an intermediary, usually involving her children or younger brothers and sisters of her husband.

²⁵ N. P. DYRENKOVA, Marriage, Kinship Terms, and Mental Taboos among the Kyrgyz, in: V. G. BOGORAZ-TAN (ed.), *Collection of Ethnographic Materials*, Leningrad 1927, No. 2, pp. 16–21.

Through them, the “kelin” also conveyed her requests. The prohibition to avoid older male relatives of the husband lasted for quite a long time and was usually lifted with the birth of the first child, accompanied by the induction of the young into the household of each of the relatives.

Of course, the older in-laws in the family, who had already grown up children, felt freer than the younger ones. In order not to violate the customs of the prohibition, young daughters-in-law often had to be inventive and use various tricks. Thus, one of the informants said: Once one of the “kelins”, while managing the household, could not hold the cow to milk it. At that time, everyone was absent from the house, except for her husband’s older brother. Naturally, the daughter-in-law, who observed the prohibition of avoiding older relatives, could not address him directly. In order not to break the custom, she had to shout quietly to the neighbouring children who were in the house. But her husband’s elder brother, having heard the shouting and understood the request, came out into the yard and helped the “kelin” to hold the cow.²⁶

Prohibitions on bodily contact with the husband’s male relatives were considered lifelong for daughters-in-law. On the contrary, hugging and kissing her husband’s female relatives was approved. But “kelin” were forbidden to speak with older female relatives of the husband for some time. They lifted this prohibition themselves, accompanying it with an obligatory gift in gratitude for the respect shown to them. But even after that, the daughter-in-law in conversation with them was very courteous, extremely respectful, always affectionate and accommodating. Thus, if a senior relative of her husband entered the house, the “kelin” had to meet her immediately, without delay, treat her to tea, and, if possible, provide comfort and cosiness for her rest. And in the absence of other relatives, the young daughter-in-law was obliged to leave all her affairs and give the guest as much attention as possible.²⁷

The daughter-in-law’s relations with the “kainiler” (her husband’s younger brothers) and “kayin sindiler” (his sisters) were more free: they joked, talked about various topics, but did not go beyond what was allowed. The daughter-in-law also fulfilled the requests and errands of her minor relatives quickly, willingly and unconditionally. The “kelin” also behaved modestly and respectfully with other relatives of her husband.

²⁶ OSMONOVA, *Traditional Wedding*, p. 118.

²⁷ *Ibid.*

The custom of avoidance of male relatives of the husband by the daughter-in-law until a certain time has its roots in deep antiquity.

There are several theories on the origin of the custom of avoidance. The first theory belongs to the ethnographer M. O. Kosven.²⁸ He defines avoidance as a forbidden mechanism that emerged in the transition period from group to individual marriage. Representatives of the second theory²⁹ consider avoidance as a relic of orders in the transition from matrilocality to patrilocality. The third theory can be called psychological. Its supporter N. A. Kislyakov³⁰ believes that the custom of avoidance performs not only social functions, but also functions of psychological protective nature caused by the change of marriage localisation. It is not excluded that modesty, respect are reflected in this social context, so the custom of avoidance is a peculiar manifestation of etiquette.

Conclusion

Thus socialisation as a process in the course of which people assimilate social norms peculiar to a particular socio-cultural environment, provides not only the transmission of culture of a given society from generation to generation, but also makes possible the very existence of society. An individual's assimilation of the cultural experience accumulated by a given society begins at an early age and takes place directly through the institutions of socialisation: family, tribe, clan, i.e. peer society, which usually has no rigid organisation, close relatives (uncles, aunts, grandfathers, and grandmothers), etc. The family and tribe with its specific educational environment bear the main burden of socialisation of the child. It is in the family as a micro-model of society that the child acquires the first skills of social interaction, gets acquainted with the basic orders accepted in a given tribe or clan, which regulate interpersonal and intergroup relations.

The power of example played a huge role in the upbringing of the clan and tribe system. Therefore, parents and elders in general had to behave in accordance with the norms of behaviour that they wanted to develop in the younger generation. The elders tried to be attentive to the younger ones, brought up courage, firmness and endurance in them.

²⁸ M. O. KOSVEN, *Ethnography and History of the Caucasus*, Moscow 1961, p. 120.

²⁹ DYRENKOVA, p. 16.

³⁰ Ibid.

Of the moral qualities instilled in children, special importance was attached to the cultivation of a sense of duty and kinship solidarity, discipline and politeness, awareness of male dignity and female honour. A man from a good family, tribe or clan was not conceivable without knowledge of generally accepted norms and rules of behaviour. Besides thorough knowledge of the norms of relations between elders and juniors in the family, children had to learn the norms of behaviour in the tribe or clan. They were supposed to remember all the signs of attention given by a man to a woman and by a woman to a man. They had to learn perfectly the laws of hospitality and its rules, etc. Children who successfully coped with the requirements of the tutors were encouraged in every possible way. In general, encouragement took a great place in the Kyrgyz upbringing process. They tried to influence children not so much by threats and punishments as by persuasion and, above all, by good example.

Family and clan education was supplemented by even broader tribal and clan education. Not a single person from a given tribe or clan remained indifferent to a child's misbehaviour and, depending on the degree of guilt, made a remark. And since the life of children, and even more so of adolescents, took place not only at home, but also in the streets, at ceremonial gatherings, etc., the role of tribe and clan in the formation of the younger generation was very noticeable.