

## KAZAKH DASTARKHAN IN THE SCOPE OF NATIONAL COMMUNICATIVE BEHAVIOR

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Kazakh society of the 20<sup>th</sup> century underwent great changes conditioned by several factors. Forcible sedentarization of nomads and following collectivization of economy ruined nomadic lifestyle; industrialization and urbanization of Kazakhstan, numerous migrations of the representatives of nationalities of different cultural and linguistic background begot vigorous modernization processes. This consequently changed basic etiquette principles and transformed traditional communicative behavior standards. During the Soviet period, communicative behavior typical for Russian culture penetrated into communicative behavior of the representatives of all the USSR countries.

Communicative behavior research issue received peculiar importance with the collapse of the USSR and intensification of international relations. Growth of national self-consciousness and actualization of the national identity issue found reflection in all the fields and spheres of social life and science. Familiarity with the traditions and norms of behavior and etiquette allow penetrating into the psychology and mentality of Kazakh people and optimize the problems of international communication. From the one hand, compliance with the etiquette allows a person feel comfortable in any situation of everyday communication, and from the other, respect to one's own national norms and standards stipulate tolerance towards a culture of other people. Research of Kazakh communicative behavior will assist optimization of communication between representatives of one nation and international communication, as well.

It is known that traditional and modernized cultures are based on different principles and set different objectives to be achieved. Flexibility and mobility of modernized culture provides its possessors a number of advantages in achieving personal aims and adaptation to changing conditions. While traditional culture presents its representative definite values, behavioral patterns, and introduces order and stability in it, thus, fulfilling value-oriented and protective functions more efficiently. This contributes to succession of generations.

When considering modern Kazakh culture we can say that it is a representation of a unity of modernized and traditional characteristics. On the whole, it is a set of traditions gradually transformed with the influence of modernization processes towards definite unification and simplification. Along with the globalization processes – like transformation of traditional culture, modernization, Europeanization and certain unification of everyday life – are taking place in the cities and urban areas of Kazakhstan. All this find reflection upon the communicative behavior of urban population of Kazakhstan. Democratization of relationships between the representatives of the opposite gender and different age and social groups results in transformation of principles of traditional etiquette. Expressions of greeting, postures and gestures symbolizing respect are simplified, and there appear European behavioral standards regulating communication between a woman and man. For example, in the thirties of the XX century there was a tradition when a Kazakh woman greeted a man with a slight bow, kneeling on her left knee, crossing both hands on her right knee with a slight bow of her head. Today in urban areas of Northern and Eastern Kazakhstan this type of greeting is not used. It preserved in the Southern region of the country as a little imitation of the posture.

Concept of hospitality among nomadic peoples, especially Kazakhs was one of most reliable ways of preserving and strengthening the inner connections of social unity. Forms of greeting, proxemics characteristics depended to a certain degree from socio-demographic, relation degree, residence (close / faraway), gender and age characteristics of the guest.

Traditional hospitality, considered as a concept of hospitality in the modern culture, can be attributed to a number of basic constants defining the essence of Kazakh mentality. The concept of hospitality is based on mythological notion that the forefather of all Kazakhs divided his fortune into four parts – he gave three parts to his three sons. Each son founded a separate zhuz (жүз – clan, kin). He left

the fourth share of his fortune as a common part destined for regalement and guests. It is a great obliquity among Kazakhs when a host does not or does not want to welcome a guest with proper honor. In traditional Kazakh culture any wayfarer, stopped at any house could say: 'Мен Құдай қонақпын' (lit. *I am the guest sent by the Creator*) and the host was obliged to allow the guest their house, food and security.

Hospitality etiquette in the modern Kazakh society underwent considerable transformation. Today, especially in the cities people do not distinguish numerous categories of guests – they are only divided into *invited* and *uninvited* (*sent by the Creator*). A number of traditions preserved in the country is almost extinct in the city. Thus, in the city a stranger can be denied shelter, the guests can be treated tea with sweet, but not a lavish meal. A casual guest does not stay long: in the country today the maximum period one can stay is three days. The aim of the visit is usually asked at once, without biding their time for three days. In urban areas and cities guests usually give advance notice about their visit and sometimes present gifts to hosts. However, some traditions are preserved both in the country as well as in the cities – a guest, for example, cannot leave a house without having tasted the meal – at least one bit.

As there is no reference to communicant's autonomy and personal zone Kazaks usually do not avoid making effect on their communicant. This refers to requests and imperatives. When inviting somebody to their place Kazakh people usually point out their own interest in it (e.g. they say *Келіңіз, сізді қуана-қуана күтеміз* – lit. *We'll be happy to welcome you again*). And invitation to their place plays a great role for Kazakh people, because this reflects the general attitude to guests and national hospitality. Kazakhs are always ready to welcome guests, and there were cases when the host slaughtered his last sheep for a guest. This was also conditioned historically – the conditions of living implied long distances and spaces between one aul (аул – lit. settlement, village) and another, and when a person was coming from the neighboring aul that meant that he was hungry and thirsty after a long way. That is why Kazakh people treated guests with special respect and honor and put on dastarkhan (lit. – table) the best food they had. And usually the guest was telling the news from the place he was coming. Dastarkhan for Kazakh people was more than a table and food consuming – it imposed communication and information exchange between people. The primary function of dastarkhan still remains unchanged – today Kazakhs get together to exchange news about certain social medium like relatives, friends, fellow-countrymen, fellow-townsmen or fellow-villagers. It also is accepted as a means for building closer and better relationships and enlivening sibling connections. Now among the representatives of the middle generation of Kazakhs show great interest towards national customs and traditions. This bears return and revival of Kazakh national traditions in the modern Kazakh society.

Along with hospitality etiquette attitude towards elder people in Kazakh society also plays a great role. Kazakhs tend to comply to politeness etiquette when communicating with elderly people. Using positive politeness strategies (Brown and Levinson 1978; 1987) Kazakh people tend to shorten the distance between communicants by expressing their sympathy, benevolence, disposition and solidarity towards the communicant.

However, this refers to steadfast law of Kazakh life. An elderly person is a source of wisdom. Elderly Kazakhs were more experienced, had wider outlook, and were able to help finding a solution from any situation. Elderly people were obliged to help the younger generation. Younger people were viewed as their traces left after them. Younger people were supposed to help elder in petty life problems. There is a saying *Ағасы бардың жағасы бар, інісі бардың тынысы бар* (*If one has an elder brother they have a person caring for them, if one has a younger brother they will not have minor problems – their life will be calm*). The tradition is preserved in the modern Kazakh society, but not demonstrated in official communication. This expressed in communication in the following ways: a younger person is first to greet the older one, when greeting the younger person stands up when greeting the older. The older is the first to start the meal and the talk.

When dividing prey (Kz – ойда) – elderly people were the first to take their share; when entering a house – elderly people were always given turn to enter first, and when seating the most respected place in the house – топ – was given to the eldest and thus the most respected guest; when starting the celebrations the eldest person was suggested to start singing and took the present (Kz – тойбасрап); when having a meal the head of the slaughtered animal – the most delicious part – was offered to the eldest person; and the right to give their blessing (Kz – бата).

Today the *principle of seniority* retained in all the communicative situations (except for the prey, of course). There still exist special ways of expressing respect towards elderly people in the society like the ways of greeting, the ways of addressing, etc., prescribed by etiquette. In any situation youth have to render attention and ability to be helpful. When talking to the elder person younger people must not be

holding their hands in their pockets, chewing a gum, smoking a cigarette or drinking a spirit. When talking the elder person is listened to very attentively. The speech and laughter of younger people in the presence of an elderly person must not be very loud, and the questions of the elder person should be answered modestly.

The respect to the elderly people can be noticed in their spatial place (in the center of the room, higher, further from the entrance, etc.). As it has been mentioned above, the most respected place – top – is usually offered to the eldest member of the family and the younger members cannot pretend to that place.

Usage of negative politeness strategies (Brown and Levinsson, 1978; 1987) is very rare among Kazakhs, because it refers to communicant's autonomy and inviolability of personal independence zone. These are on the stage of development in Kazakh society that is why there is no need in it. This happens mostly because in Kazakh society communication and solidarity are valued and paid more attention.

The knowledge of one's pedigree was the guarantee of their life in steppe. When travelling it helped to communicate with the people met, to get a shelter in auls and to feel at ease and comfortable anywhere a person was. There was always a possibility that someone they met could be their relative, close or distant, by any branch or generation. The people in the steppe were not afraid of strangers, and every person was treated like a brother, like a blood relative. Otherwise, it would be impossible to inhabit, survive and prosper on the colossal area Kazakhs inhabited. That is why the saying 'Қапра тамырлы қазақ' ('All Kazakhs are the pulli of one nest') was very popular throughout centuries. The knowledge of kindred relations among Kazakhs was worldly norm, gradually grew into moral-ethnic criterion. Nomadic habitat bore unique mechanism providing ethno-biological and ethno-cultural unity – knowledge of ancestors to the seventh generation ('Жеті Ата' – lit. 'Seven Grandfathers').

Genealogy for a Kazakh is not only the list of names on a family-tree. Historic concept of oral genealogies reflects abundant spectrum of relational interconnections in the aggregate of general national solidarity. This is a one more institute of nomadic lifestyle, invaluable achievement of the ethnos cumulated throughout centuries. The pedigree concentrates philosophical, economic, esthetic behavioristic, sacral motives and norms of human communication. All the material and spiritual aspects of life are governed by etiquette of inter-relational connections. Thus, the structure can be considered as a unique phenomenon of nomadic civilization.

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#### Түйін

Мақала авторы қазақ дастарханы мәселесін талқылайды, концептінің ұлттық ерекшеліктері, тарихи алғышарттары және ұлттық коммуникативті мінез-құлқындағы шағысысын қарайды.