



THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN THE TRADITIONAL CULTURE OF THE KARAKALPAKS

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Abstract. *The article examines the status of women in traditional society, their participation in family and economic life, as well as their significance in preserving folk traditions and spiritual values. Particular attention is paid to the reflection of women's images in folklore, as well as the role of women in the development of crafts and national decorative and applied arts.*

Keywords: *women's status, Karakalpak culture, preservation of traditions, crafts, folklore.*

INTRODUCTION

The role of women in the history of any nation is undeniable. For centuries, women have been the guardians of the family hearth, traditions, spiritual foundations, and national culture. Among the Karakalpaks, women held a particularly significant position, as it was through the family, child-rearing, folk art, and daily activities that the unique characteristics of culture, language, customs, and the historical memory of the people were transmitted and preserved. Analyzing the status and contribution of Karakalpak women provides a key to a deeper understanding of their society's development, its spirituality, and cultural heritage.

The culture of the Karakalpaks, rooted in centuries-old nomadic and semi-nomadic lifestyles, is distinguished by its originality. Women played a crucial role in its formation and preservation. They were not only guardians of the hearth and educators of children, but also active participants in economic life, artisans, and bearers of traditions. Their craftsmanship was manifested in the creation of household items, weaving, embroidery, sewing national clothing, and making



jewelry. Furthermore, it was women who passed down rich oral folklore, including songs, legends, and rituals, from mouth to mouth.

The image of the woman occupies a special place in Karakalpak folklore and epic works. In the folk epic "Kyryk kyz," female characters are presented as a symbol of courage, devotion to the motherland, strength of spirit, and loyalty to traditions. This demonstrates the high respect for women in the national culture of the Karakalpaks. A woman was perceived not only as a mother and guardian of the hearth but also as an important part of the social and spiritual life of the people.

The purpose of the article is to study the role of Karakalpak women in the history and culture of the people. To achieve the set goal, it is necessary to consider the status of women in traditional society and their participation in cultural and economic life.

Researching this topic helps to better understand the characteristics of Karakalpak culture and the significance of women in its development and preservation.

LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Within the framework of the traditional Karakalpak social structure, a woman held a position of great importance for the family and community. Even under patriarchal conditions, her contribution was not limited to household duties. She acted as a guardian of family traditions, a mentor to children, an active helper in economic activities, and a bearer of the people's spiritual heritage. Honoring one's mother and elderly women was one of the fundamental moral norms of the Karakalpaks.

Significant contributions to the study of traditional life and the status of women are highlighted in the works of T. A. Zhdanko "Essays on the Historical Ethnography of the Karakalpaks" [2], L.S. Tolstov "The Karakalpaks: Traditions and Culture" [3], and N.A. Baskakov "Karakalpak Folklore and Epos" [1].

The traditional lifestyle of the Karakalpaks has been associated with nomadic and semi-nomadic farming for many centuries. Under such conditions, women took an active part in the daily life of the family. They were engaged in cooking, making clothes, processing wool, weaving, embroidering, and caring for children. In



addition, women participated in the installation and decoration of yurts, which required great skill and physical endurance. Many household items were created by women's hands and were part of national decorative and applied arts [2, P..112-115]

The family held a special significance in Karakalpak society. The woman was considered the guardian of the hearth and was responsible for preserving family traditions and raising the younger generation. From an early age, girls were taught respect for elders, household management, folk crafts, and the observance of national customs. Through women, folk songs, legends, proverbs, and elements of oral folk art were transmitted to children. In this way, the continuity of the people's cultural traditions was ensured.[3, P..67-70].

In Karakalpak tradition, the moral qualities of a woman were a subject of special attention and admiration. Hard work, humility, patience, respect for elders, and devotion to family were considered fundamental virtues. The woman played the role of a guardian of peace and harmony, serving as the spiritual core of the family. It is important to note that many women, especially the older generation, enjoyed significant authority in society. Their wise advice and opinions were important in making decisions both at the family level and in a broader social context.

Women also played a significant role in economic activities. In the complex natural climate of the Aral Sea region, women participated alongside men in household management, livestock care, food procurement, and the organization of family life. Women's labor was of great importance for the economic well-being of the family. A woman's ability to create comfort and maintain a traditional lifestyle was considered particularly important.

The image of the woman has found its reflection in Karakalpak folklore and epic works. In folk legends and songs, the woman was depicted as a wise mother, a faithful spouse, and a keeper of national traditions. A special place is occupied by the epic *Kyryk kyz*, in which female characters are presented as symbols of courage, patriotism, and strength of spirit [1, P.143-148]. This shows that in the people's consciousness, a woman was associated not only with the hearth but also with the protection of the native land and the spiritual values of the people.



Thus, the woman in traditional Karakalpak society played an important role not only in family and economic life but also in preserving the spiritual values of the people. The image of the woman has acquired special significance in folk culture, folklore, and national traditions.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Women have always held a special place in Karakalpak folk culture. Through women's images, the people conveyed ideas of beauty, wisdom, morality, family loyalty, and love for the motherland. The woman was the keeper of spiritual traditions, therefore many elements of folklore, folk art, rituals, and oral creativity were closely linked to her image. In Karakalpak culture, a woman was perceived not only as a mother and mistress of the home, but also as a symbol of continuing the lineage, preserving national values, and ensuring the spiritual stability of the people.

Oral folk art was of great importance in the culture of the Karakalpaks. In fairy tales, legends, proverbs, and folk songs, we often encounter female characters endowed with positive qualities: wisdom, kindness, patience, and courage. Proverbs emphasized the importance of women in the family and society, their role in raising children and maintaining peace in the home.

The folk epic "Kyryk kyz" holds a special place in Karakalpak culture. This is one of the most famous works of Karakalpak folklore, which tells the story of forty warrior girls who defended their native land from enemies. The protagonist of the epic, Gulayim, is depicted as a courageous, decisive, and just girl possessing leadership qualities and a strong sense of responsibility toward her people. Through this epic, the people's perception of woman as a defender of the motherland and a symbol of spiritual strength is revealed [1, P.152-158].

The female characters in the epic are distinguished not only by their bravery but also by their high moral qualities. The heroines remain loyal to their people, supporting each other and showing selflessness in difficult times. This testifies to the fact that in the Karakalpak people's consciousness, a woman held a high moral authority. The epic "Kyryk kyz" has become a vital part of the national cultural



heritage and still maintains its significance in the spiritual life of the Karakalpak people.

An important element of folk culture was the national clothing of Karakalpak women. Traditional women's costumes were distinguished by their brightness, richness of ornamentation, and variety of ornaments. Clothing reflected a woman's age, marital status, and social status. Special attention was paid to headwear and jewelry, which held not only aesthetic but also symbolic significance. Ornaments on clothing often contained elements of the people's ancient concepts of family protection, well-being, and fertility.

Karakalpak women also played a major role in the development of decorative and applied arts. They engaged in embroidery, weaving, making carpets, jewelry, and household items. Many patterns and ornaments were passed down from generation to generation and were part of the people's cultural memory. Through crafts, women preserved the traditions and national identity of the Karakalpaks [3, P.91-96].

Women held a special place in conducting family and calendar rituals. They led wedding ceremonies, participated in childbirth rituals, holidays, and memorial traditions. It was women who preserved and transmitted ritual songs, traditional elements of folk music, and features of national etiquette. Thanks to their activities, many elements of Karakalpak culture have been preserved to this day.

The image of the woman in Karakalpak culture was manifested not only in folk art and epic works but also in daily labor. It was through crafts and economic activities that women preserved and transmitted the cultural traditions of the people.

The labor of Karakalpak women has held an important place in the life of the people since ancient times. Women's labor was highly valued in society, as it was women who ensured comfort, order, and the preservation of national craftsmanship traditions. One of the main occupations of Karakalpak women was weaving. From the wool of domestic animals, women crafted fabrics, carpets, felt, and various items for the interior of yurts. The process of fabric production required great skill, patience, and artistic taste. Each item was decorated with traditional ornaments that



reflected the people's concepts of nature, family, home protection, and prosperity. Ornaments held not only decorative significance but also served as unique symbols and amulets [2, P.128-133].

Women played a major role in the construction and decoration of yurts—traditional dwellings of nomadic peoples. They were engaged in creating felt covers, weaving decorative ribbons, and decorating the interior of the yurt. Women not only provided the family's living conditions but also created an aesthetic environment that reflected the national culture of the people. The interior of the yurt was distinguished by the harmony of colors, ornaments, and decorative elements, most of which were handmade.

In addition to handicraft activities, women actively participated in the economic life of the family. They were engaged in processing dairy products, preparing food, and caring for children and domestic animals. In the complex natural conditions of the Aral Sea region, women often worked alongside men, helping the family cope with daily hardships. Their labor was necessary to maintain the stability and well-being of the family.

The production of national clothing and jewelry held an important place. Karakalpak women created traditional dresses, headwear, and jewelry that reflected a person's age, social status, and family status. Wedding costumes were especially richly decorated. Many elements of clothing had a symbolic meaning and were used as talismans. Folk artisans preserved ancient technologies for crafting fabrics and jewelry, thanks to which unique examples of Karakalpak decorative and applied arts have survived to the present day.

CONCLUSIONS

The history and culture of the Karakalpak people are inextricably linked to the role of women in society. For many centuries, Karakalpak women have been the guardians of family traditions, spiritual values, and national culture. They played an important role in raising children, managing the household, preserving folk customs, and passing down cultural heritage to future generations.



In traditional Karakalpak society, women held a special place. Despite the difficult living conditions and patriarchal lifestyle, women actively participated in the family's economic activities, engaged in crafts, and created household items, national clothing, and decorative items. Their labor was of great importance for the economic well-being of the family and the preservation of national traditions.

The image of the woman has found a special reflection in the folk culture and folklore of the Karakalpaks. In epic works, legends, songs, and rituals, the woman was depicted as a symbol of wisdom, loyalty, courage, and spiritual strength.

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