

Kazakh traditions and customs

Kyz aittyru

Parents were always occupied with their son's marriage. They were searching for a future fiancée for him long before he attained his majority. A competent family of good, distinguished and respected people was requested. If there were unhealthy relatives in a girl's kinfolk (the genetic inheritance), she was never sought in marriage. Parents made special visits to people worthy to their mind, in order to discuss their children's future and to express their wish to become the matchmakers (relatives-in-law).

There are different kinds of "kyz aittyru". If children (a boy and a girl) are still babies or even unborn yet, but both parties agree to become the relatives-in-law in future, it means that these people know each other very well and are close family friends. Before babies are born (of course, if one of them is a boy and another is a girl), the parents reach an accord to become the relatives-in-law ("atastyru"). The above-mentioned woo is called "bel kuda" (before the birth of children) and if children are planned to be married since their birth – "besik kuda" (besik means a cradle). Sometimes a person who arranged the marriage of his son and his matchmaker's daughter, agrees that his daughter should be married to his matchmaker's son and in this case both matchmakers are called "karsy kuda" (mutual matchmaker). People who continued their matchmaking (i.e. who became the matchmakers again) are called "suyek zhangyrtu". The grown-up children's marriage is completed after "kuda tusu" (the matchmaking).

Relations between relatives generally observed until the seventh generation. Thus declares an old custom prohibiting the marriage between men and women of one and the same bloodline. According to the matrimonial rules, a woman must not be more than eight years older than a man and a man must not be more than twenty five years older than a woman. No permission is given for an unequal marriage.

"Kyz aittyru" serves a certain foundation for a new steady and exemplary family.

Kyz koru

The bride-show. "Kyz koru" was sometimes called "kyz tandau". Traditionally, children of famous people or just artful young men arranged bride-shows for someone's marriage. Having heard that in some distant aul (village) there lived a good, beautiful girl, young men with their friends moved out to choose spouse for themselves. The Kazakh proverb "kyzdy kim kormeidi, kymyzdy kim ishpeidi" –

“he who does not drink kumys (mare’s milk) cannot seek the hand of a girl” clears all the ways before young men.

Young men seeking to get married were not prohibited to have a look at girls. People tried to meet them with respect. Brave and independent girls of the village, who reached the age for marriage, manifested their will with the words: “kыз koretin zhigitti biz korelik” – “shows like this we would like to arrange too” and began competitions in the arts. They looked at young men appraisingly and overtly expressed their opinion. At the meetings like that young men and girls often performed aitys (competition in song improvisation). After that the boy and the girl who liked each other, came to terms, made their love confessions to each other and young man send his matchmakers to the girl’s parents.

But young people often were forbidden to find a partner by themselves. It usually was permitted to children of distinguished parents or to famous young men. The custom “kыз koru” is described in details in the novel “Kыз korelik” by T.Zhomatrbayev.

Kuda tusu

The matchmaking. It is an obligatory, remembered, existed since ancient times tradition of Kazakh nation.

A young man’s father with close relatives goes to seek a girl’s hand (matchmakers may go without young man’s father). The procedure of matchmaking was rather complicated and entertaining. The arrival of matchmakers is called “kuda tuser”.

A girl’s father advised on matchmakers’ visit beforehand, next notifies his relatives and friends. Matchmakers are received solemnly. After the girl’s father gives his consent, the both parties give each other presents required by the tradition: kuda attanar, kuda tartu, at bailar, kuiryk0bauyr, etc. the head representative of the matchmakers is called “bas kuda” (“bas” means head, leading), the fiancé’s and fiancée’s fathers are called bauyzdau kuda, i.e. the closest.

Bas kuda (the head matchmaker) traditionally takes care of a girl after the wedding too. She calls him agateke (uncle) and he will always be responsible for her.

Kuda tusu is a mostly honored and significant toi (feast, holiday) bearing the specific color of this national tradition.