

KOSHUMCHA AS A TRADITION OF MUTUAL ASSISTANCE IN THE MODERN KYRGYZ SOCIETY

Koshumcha is a traditional form of material assistance among the Kyrgyz, which was provided by relatives to the organizers of ceremonial meals that accompany the life cycle rituals. At present, koshumcha is brought to more types of events, the circle of donators has expanded, and guests usually donate money as koshumcha (instead of livestock, food, clothing). The reciprocity, i. e. the obligation to return the gift in the same amount, is the key feature of koshumcha as a form of gift exchange. The custom of bringing koshumcha creates a community of gift exchange that helps its members to organize the toi (feasts). The amount of koshumcha received by the organizer of a toi compensates for most his expenses, sometimes even exceeds them and thus, being financed by the whole community, the scope of the organized toi surpasses the capabilities of an individual household by several times. At the same time, the obligation to bring koshumcha is a burden to many families, especially to those who have low income. The number of those who oppose this custom is growing in the Kyrgyz society. This trend indicates that koshumcha is no more a way of providing mutual assistance, but rather affects and ruins the poor. It has become a source of enrichment for the organizers of the toi and all the structures that serve the feasts. Among those who criticize the koshumcha there are people who have received a religious Muslim education. These people emphasize that this custom is incompatible with the principle of unpaid help which Islam is calling for. Despite the fact that the power structures, as well as religious and public activists, condemn the growing the expenses caused by the toi and the koshumcha, a refusal to give koshumcha is uncommon and the vast majority of the Kyrgyz society continues to observe this custom.

Author Info: Naumova, Olga B. — Ph. D. in History, Senior Researcher, Institute of Ethnology and Anthropology, Russian Academy of Sciences (Moscow, Russian Federation). E-mail: olganaumova@mail.ru ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1915-3862>

For citation: Naumova, O. B. 2023. Koshumcha as a Tradition of Mutual Assistance in the Modern Kyrgyz Society. *Herald of Anthropology (Vestnik Antropologii)* 1: 42–62.

Funding: The reported study was funded by Russian Foundation for Basic Research, project number № 20–59–22001.

References

- Abashin, S. N. 1999. Vopreki “zdravomu smyslu”? (K voprosu o “ratsional’nosti/irratsional’nosti” ritual’nykh raskhodov v Srednei Azii) [Against “Common Sense”? (On the “Rationality/Irrationality” of Ritual Expenses in Central Asia)]. *Vestnik Evrazii* 1–2 (6–7): 87–107.
- Abashin, S. N. 2015. *Sovetskii kishlak. Mezhdru kolonializmom i modernizatsiei* [Soviet Kishlak. Between Colonialism and Modernization]. Moscow: NLO. 720 p.
- Abramzon, S. M. 1971. *Kirgizy i ikh etnogeneticheskie i istoriko-kul’turnye svyazi* [Kirghiz and their Ethnogenetic, Historical and Cultural Ties]. Leningrad: Nauka. 403 p.
- Andreev, M. S. 1926. *Výrabotka zheleza v doline Vancha (Verkhov’ya Amu-Dar’i). Iz materialov, sobrannykh ekspeditsiei Obshchestva dlya izucheniya Tadzhikistana i Sredazkomstarisa, byvshei v Tadzhikistane letom 1925 g.* [Iron Production in the Vanch Valley (Upper Reachers of the Amu Darya). From the Materials Collected by the Expedition of the Society for the Study of Tadjikistan and Sredazkomstaris, which was in Tadjikistan in the Summes of 1925]. Tashkent: Vostkazgosizdat. 17 p.
- Barsukova, S. Yu. 2004. *Nerynochnye obmeny mezhdru rossiiskimi domokhoziaistvami: teoriia i praktika retsiproknosti* [Non-market Exchanges between Russian Households: Theory and Practice of Reciprocity]. Preprint WP4/2004/02. Moscow: Higher School of Economics State University. 52 p.
- Basilov, V. N. and Dzh. Kh. Karmysheva. 1997. *Islam u kazakhov (do 1917 g.)* [Islam among the Kazakhs (until 1917)]. Moscow: IEA RAS. 161 p.
- Dzhumaeu, A. 2016. Polemika o muzyke, narodnykh razvlecheniyakh (tamasha) i iskusstve v srede musul’manskikh teologov i prosvetitelei-intellektualov Srednei Azii (konets XIX — nachalo XX veka) [Discussion on Music, Folk Entertainment (Tamasha) and Art among Muslim Theologians and Enlighteners-intellectuals of Central Asia (the end of the 19th — the beginning of the 20th century)]. In *Ot religioznogo reformatorstva k evropeizatsii kul’tury musul’man. K 155-letiyu so dnya rozhdeniya Ismaila Gasprinskogo* [From Religious Reformation to Europeanization of Muslim Culture. To the 155th anniversary of the birth of Ismail Gasprinsky], edited by Z. A. Imamutdinova. Moscow: GII. 247–281.
- Fiel’strup, F. A. 2002. *Iz obriadovoi zhizni kirgizov nachala XX veka* [From the Ritual Life of the Kirghiz at the beginning of the 20th century]. Moscow: Nauka. 300 p.
- Grodekov, N. I. 2011. *Kirgizy i karakirgizy Syr-Dar’inskoj oblasti. Yuridicheskii byt* [Kirghiz and Karakirghiz of the Syr-Darya Region. Legal Life]. Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura. 566 p.
- Larina, E. I., 2022. Ritualy, dostoinstvo i uvazhenie v tsentral’noaziatskom obshchestve [Rituals, Dignity and Respect in Central Asian Society]. *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta. Seriya 8. Istorija* 1: 145–165.
- Mauss, M. 2011. *Obshchestva. Obmen. Lichnost’. Trudy po sotsial’noi antropologii* [Societies. Exchange. Personality. Works on Social Anthropology]. Moscow: KDU. 416 p.
- Naumova, O. B. 2019. Pokhishchenie nevesty: traditsiia, lichnost’, povedenie (sovremennyi Kyrgyzstan) [Bride Kidnapping: Tradition, Personality, Behaviour (Modern Kyrgyzstan)]. In *Lichnost’ v kaleidoskope kul’tur* [Personality in Kaleidoscope of Cultures], edited by N. L. Zhukovskaya. Moscow — St. Petersburg: Nestor-Istorija. 367–401.
- Orozbekova, Zh. 2012. Pominki v pogrebal’nom obriade u kyrgyzov Tian’-Shania [Commemoration in the Funeral Rite among the Kyrgyz of the Tien Shan]. *Vestnik Novosibirskogo Gosudarstvennogo Universiteta. Seriya Istorija, filologiya* 11 (5): Arkheologiya i etnografiya, 194–202.
- Popova, L. F. and A. B. Shalmanova. 2021. Traditsionnyi komponent v sisteme svadebnykh podarkov kazakhov Aktiubinskoi oblasti Respubliki Kazakhstan [A Traditional Component in the System of Wedding Gifts of the Kazakhs of the Aktobe Region of the Republic of Kazakhstan]. *Kunstkamera* 4 (14): 141–152. [https://doi.org/0.31250/2618-8619-2021-4\(14\)-141-152](https://doi.org/0.31250/2618-8619-2021-4(14)-141-152)
- Reutova, M. N., E. V. Reutov and I. V. Shavyrina. 2017. Retsiproknost’ v sotsial’nykh otnosheniyakh: nerynochnyi obmen resursami v sovremennoi ekonomicheskoi sisteme [Reciprocity in

- Social Relations: Non-market Exchange of Resources in the Modern Economic System]. *Vestnik Belgorodskogo Gosudarstvennogo Tehnologicheskogo Universiteta im. V. G. Shukhova* 7: 202–206. https://doi.org/10.12737/article_5940f01b71aaa2.44953122
- Sahlins, M. 1999. *Ekonomika kamennogo veka* [Stone Age Economics]. Moscow: OGI. 296 p.
- Shadmanova, S. B. 2009. Svadebnye tseremonii v Turkestane na stranitsakh periodicheskoi pechati kontsa XIX — nachala XX v. [Wedding ceremonies in Turkestan on the pages of the periodical press of the late 19th — early 20th centuries]. *Mir Islama. Pax Islamica* 2 (3): 146–157. <https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/235977878.pdf>
- Suraganova, Z. K. 2009. *Obmen darami v kazakhskoi traditsionnoi kul'ture* [Gift Exchange in Kazakh Traditional Culture]. Astana. 192 p.
- Sukhareva, O. A. 1976. *Kvartal'naia obshchina podnefeodel'nogo goroda Bukhary (v sviazi s istoriei kvartalov)* [Quarter Community of the Late Feudal City of Bukhara (in Connection with the History of Quarters)]. Moscow: Vostochnaya literatura. 366 p.
- Tursunova, G. N. 2014. Teoreticheskie i prikladnye vidy arkhaiskogo obmena (v svete vozzrenii klassikov politekonomii i traditsii, bytovavshikh u tadjikov i drugikh narodov Tsentral'noi Azii) [Theoretical and Applied Types of Archaic Exchange (in the Light of the Views of the Classics of Political Economy and Traditions that Existed among the Tajiks and Other Peoples of Central Asia)]. *Regional'nye problemy preobrazovaniia ekonomiki* 8: 204–210.
- Yudakhin, K. K. (ed.). 1965. *Kirgizsko-russkii slovar'* [Kyrgyz-Russian Dictionary]. Moscow: Sovetskaya entsiklopediya. 973 p.
- Yudin, G. B., P. V. Vrublevskaia, N. N. Emel'ianov, I. V. Zabaev, Iu. A. Koloshenko, D. A. Oreshina and A. V. Zueva. 2020. *Zhizn' v dolg: Moral'naia ekonomika dolgovykh praktik v zhizni soobshchestv v Rossii* [Living in Debt: The Moral Economics of Debt Practices in the Life of Communities in Russia]. Moscow: Izdatel'stvo PSTGU. 232 p.
- Zagryazhskii, G. 1873. Kirgizskie ocherki. Ash ili trizna po umershim [Kyrgyz Essays. Ash or Feast for the Dead]. *Turkestanskii vedomosti* 1.