

TRADITIONAL CONCEPTIONS ABOUT GENDER AND AGE STRATIFICATION IN CONTEMPORARY KAZAKH CULTURE (THE CASE OF WESTERN KAZAKHSTAN)

Issues related to the traditional gender and age stratification in a society have been repeatedly raised by researchers in the context of a general study of the age structures of the Central Asian peoples. In recent decades, however, the topic of the gender and age structure of Kazakh society, especially the topic of contemporary Kazakh conceptions of traditional age communities, has not been the focus of research. The main aim of this article is to introduce the dominant ways in which conceptions of traditional gender and age stratification are adapted in contemporary Kazakh society. Do these conceptions remain relevant, or are they gradually losing their significance in everyday life, dissolving in the modern information space, and becoming part of the historical memory? The article is based on field ethnographic research conducted by the author in Western Kazakhstan. The article uses historical, cultural and ethnographic methods. The functional significance of age communities in contemporary Kazakh culture is greatly reduced in comparison with traditional culture. It seems more appropriate to talk about the preservation of conceptions of the gender and age stratification in the society, rather than about clearly formed and rigid age classes. However, belonging to a certain age group determines a person's basic rights and responsibilities, his or her social status, stable behavioral patterns, place and role in the ritual system. The general attitude towards the biosocial rhythms of society and human life is preserved and appears to be a living functioning system. This allows us to conclude that ideas about the gradation of society according to gender and age still play a significant role in the lives of contemporary Kazakhs.

Keywords: *Kazakh culture, gender and age stratification, age symbolism, behavioral patterns, adaptation of tradition*

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