

Kazakh Children's Play "Asyk" is their Ancestor's Heritage

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ABSTRACT Kazakh children have been playing "asyk" (playing with lamb bone) from ancient times. Currently, the game still retains its value among the Kazakhs, as it is commonly played among the Turkic-Mongolian people in Eurasian Steppe. This paper is based on materials that researchers have received during excavations in East Kazakhstan in 2014. Researchers found about 140 "asyk" that relate to the primitive era. "Asyk" was in a stone bowl, at the feet of the deceased. Some of the "asyks" had drilled holes. The purpose of this paper is to explore the Kazakh children's game "asyk" and to identify common trends in the culture of the Turkic people. Also, this game marked the beginning of some modern gambling (dice). This fact speaks about its connections to all of humanity and as well has some social functions (people used it in resolving disputes).

INTRODUCTION

"Asyk" (playing with lamb bone) is a game commonly played among the Kazakh children since ancient times. Currently, the game still retains its value among the Kazakhs, as it is played most among the Turkic-Mongolian people in Eurasian Steppe. For instance, archaeologists often find "asyk" during the excavations. Researcher Sotnikova found "asyk" as archeological cultures that begin with the primitive era to the era of the Kimaks (later nomads). The archaeologists proved that "asyk" was child's play. According to Sotnikova, nomads put "asyk" into children's burials. Burials of 5 or 6-year-olds had a little "asyk" while 7 to 14-year-olds had many (2001). The researchers discovered that the game "asyk" played a unifying function for the Turkic-Mongolian people in Eurasian Steppe and people played it during different meetings. The purpose of this paper is to explore the Kazakh children's game "asyk" and to identify its common trends in the culture of the Turkic people. The researchers believed that the role of children's toys is very important in the socialization of a child, and this fact has been well mentioned by other researchers (Trawick-Smith et al. 2015; Delvecchio et al. 2015).

METHODOLOGY

This paper is based on materials received by the researchers during excavations in East Kazakhstan in 2014. Researchers found about 140 "asyk" that relate to the primitive era. "Asyk" was in a stone bowl, at the feet of the deceased

while some of them had drilled holes. The researchers discovered that people wore "asyks" on the neck as amulets. The researchers make use of an observation and emic approach method for the study.

OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSION

Relatively, each boy had his own "asyk" and will be buried with him in a special container, whenever he dies. Also, Batbold found "asyk" when examining Huns in Mongolia. Each "asyk" is engraved and had a certain character, the engraved look like petroglyphs, which are located in Mongolia (Eshki Suaty, Ak Su). Engraving and sizes "asyk" species showed the nomads. Similar engraved "asyks" were in jars in the era of the Huns. These engravings help understand the traditions and customs of the Huns like, *asha (aiyr)*, *kun*, and *zharty ai*. Engraved rocks Eshki Suat showed the name and tribe of the engraver (Batbold 2011). This researcher has shown that signs on an "asyk" indicate tribal affiliation rights. In addition, the same engraving was in the era of Saks. This fact is also present in the mounds of the Huns, located on the territory of Mongolia. Nomads used the ground on both sides of the "asyk" in the craft and playing musical instruments.

The researchers want to bring the myth of the Kazakh national instrument "zhetigen" as follows.

"Once upon a time, an old man lived in a strong hunger era. He had seven sons. These children died one after another from hunger. The old man took the tree and made it into a musical

instrument. When one of his sons died, the old man made a string of horsehair. Also, the old man interjected polished "asyk" under each string (it was a reminder of his sons). Thus, each string had the character of a son. When the first son Kania died, the old man wrote "kui" (beautiful melody) "Karagym". He wrote "Kanat Synar" when the second son died, Torealm. After the death of his third son, Zhai Keld, the old man wrote "Kumar". He dedicated "Ot Soner" to his fourth son, Beken. For the fifth son, Hauasu, the old man wrote "Bakhit Koshti." For the sixth son, Zhulzaru, he composed "Kun tutyldy". Also, he wrote "kui" for his youngest son."

People call these seven "kyu" "Zhetigennin zhetuei" (Toyshauly 2009).

Kazakhs were different from other people, that they called their grandparents or "asyk ata". This fact shows the importance of "asyk" to the Kazakhs. In the south, Kazakhstan has terrain that people called "asyk ata." It received this name in honor of a fortuneteller and storyteller named Sadir. People respected him even after his death and considered him a saint. Older people revealed that Aksak Temir built a mausoleum for "Asyka Ata". This mausoleum was placed on the Syr Darya River until 1960, and then the government moved it to the village of Shu (district Zhetisay), home of the saint (Olzhabay 2013).

"Asyk" was also used by the Holy "Asyka Ata" in their divinations, which shows that it is not only used in game but also in divination. Abramson (1949) also researched similar mausoleum in Kyrgyzstan, in the area of Karasu. Any woman who has no child will be asked to pass the night at the mausoleum. In the next morning, she will put her hands in the spring that appeared near the mausoleum. If the woman pulls a necklace, she will give birth to female child but if she pulls "asyk", she will give birth to a male child.

This shows the relationship between "asyk" and a male child. Also, "asyk" played a significant part among Kazakhs. For instance, guests usually received an "asyk zhilik" (one of the important parts of the carcass sheep). However, young men never received this "asyk zhilik" because it affects their marriage. Another important part of the carcass sheep is "kari zhilik", which is intended for young men (wish a long and happy life), while girls never received this because it carried a bad sense for them (she could remain an unmarried woman and not get married).

Kazakhs men were equated to "asyk Saka" (the main "asyk"), while the girls were equated to "red asyk" (the beautiful "asyk"). Kazakhs have a saying, "If you're hungry, you do not eat the tendon "asyk", and if you are hungry, you do not eat ankle". Kazakhs believed that if the teeth touch the "asyk" then it couldn't be used for divination. Ualihanov (1984) wrote each part of the carcass sheep having magic sense (1984).

Toleubaev (2013) wrote different parts of the carcass sheep having different magical properties for the Kazakhs. For example, "zhauryr" (shoulder) shows the future of man. Therefore, fortune-tellers used it in their work. Some fortune-tellers took information from cooked blades while others took their own from burned blade. Many Kazakhs do not touch the teeth of the blade and radius bar to avoid damaging them. They feared that fortunetellers would not be able to use bone in their work.

Babakumar (2000) researched the lamb shoulder blade. He revealed that the blade could not eat the teeth. Man must cut off the meat knife. He wrote that the strong fortune-tellers received information from the raw sheep's shoulder blade. They did not require boiled blade. He also noted that the iron should not be near the fire, which burned the fortune-tellers' lamb shoulder blade.

Another rite that also applies to "asyk" is that the Kazakhs cut tendon with "asyk" only with a knife and immediately threw up. Hence, if it fell on the edge, it means "joy" but if it fell on its side, it means "risk".

In some regions, Kazakh is referred to as dice "karzhysyp". For instance, Artykbaev (2009) wrote about Meyram from Argyn. Meyram drove horses to the south, and he wanted to save them from the cold winter. Meyram waited in the freezing winter with Aksha Khan. During the stay, Meyram befriended Khan's daughter and she became pregnant. In the spring, when Meyram was going to overtake cattle in the Sary-Arka, he told the girl, "I will come back, if you bear a son. I am old, and you are young. If the child is a male, he shall be named Karzhas." However, Meyram could not go back to the Khan's daughter. He died at the age of 70.

Aksha Khan's daughter had a son and named him Karzhas. Karzhas was born with a plump forehead and large eyes. He fought during the game in "asyk" and he had friends older than himself. One day, he came to her mother when she toast-

ed grain. He took her hand and pressed it to his hot seed. Mother could not stand the pain and begged for forgiveness. He asked her, "Who is my father?"

She answered: "Your father was a Sufi, he lived in the Sary-Arka. Your father was a famous man among the Kazakhs. You have older brothers, named Kuandyk and Suyundik".

Karzhas learnt the truth about his father and his relatives and went to Sary-Arka. He asked people the way to the aul Meiram Sufi. He was informed that Meyram had died, but his sons Kuandyk and Suyundik were alive. The information about the boy was brought to the village by the shepherds who saw the boy sleeping soundly with his posture showing that he is the owner of the area, and his forehead glowed. Kuandyk and Suyundik ran to the shepherds to look at the boy.

They woke him up and asked his name. The boy told them the whole truth about himself. His older brothers began to fight him over the territory. Meiram's senior wife calmed her children and ordered to throw gold "asyk" of Meiram. The eldest son Kuandyk claimed that all four sides "asyk" belong to him by right of seniority, due to this, the second son, Suyundik, started weeping. The mother calmed him and told him, "If you're lucky, "asyk" fall on ompy". Then the senior wife threw the gold "asyk" of Meiram and it stood on ompy. Hence, Suyundik was favored and then adopted Karzhas (2009).

This case showed that each Kazakh clan had its golden "asyk", which helped resolve disputes in society. Also, this myth shows how important was "asyk" among Kazakhs. Kazakh folklore has many expressions, proverbs, and phrases using "asyk". For instance, "Altyn asyk", "Alshi kidy", "Asigi alshisinan tusti", "Asyk utys", "Bieni bugimen-tuyeni tugimen zhutti", "Buk tusip zhatyp kaldy", "Bukir bel", "Buken kakty", "Omaka asty", "Omaka asty", "Sadakay say tur", "Sary tis saka aygir", "Tauekel".

"Koy asygy demey ak

(Do not tell mutton asyk)

Kolyna tolsa, saka tut

(Hands are full, "asyk" is used)

Zhasy kishi demey ak

(Do not tell the young)

Akyly assa, aga tut"

(If a person is the smartest, respect him as a senior)

Kazakhs called thin people "asyk that dog gnawing".

Abai Kunanbayev called man in a beautiful headdress "tymakty alshysynan kidirgendey" (dressed with taste), and Kazakh's song "Zhiyrma bes" calls a beautiful girl "kyzyl asyk" (beautiful asyk). Kazakhs use the expression "buge-shuge-sine tysyndirip ait" если в речи сообщającego хотят услышать только правду. Kazakhs have many kinds of games with "asyk": "Kylga aty", "Sasur", "Bes asyk", "Kymar", "Kakpalyk", "Han", "Hantalapay" "Han atu".

The researchers would like to explore the "Khan" (king) game. The participants of the game, "Khan" (king) can be both children and adults. Players throw "asyk" and collect points. The player who has the most points takes "asyk" in her hands. Then he throws them. If "saka" (the main "asyk") will fall on its side, then the other players dismantle their "asyk". Players rejoice, as they maintained their "asyk". "Saka" (the main "asyk") is the Khan (king), and the others "asyks" are people.

The researchers believed that "asyk" was gambling among Kazakhs. For instance, Kazakhs have the expression "Saik oinagan asar, dop oinagan tosar, barinen de koi zhaip kurik zhegen osar" (The man who plays "asyk" loses weight. A person who plays the ball weakens. All overtake the man who keeps the sheep and rump. Currently, residents of different countries played with blocks, which are derived from the ancient game "asyk". Sided die have identical edges "asyk". The researchers absolutely agree with other researchers (Trawick-Smith et al. 2015; Delvecchio et al. 2015) that the role of the children game and toys is the significant factor in socialization of child.

CONCLUSION

Thus, the Kazakh children's game "asyk" has ancient roots. This game is common for Turkic and Mongolian people. Also, this game marked the beginning of some modern gambling (dice). This fact speaks about the connections of all mankind and also "asyk" had social functions (people used it in resolving disputes).

RECOMMENDATIONS

The researchers have explored the role of children's games and toys among Kazakhs. They also learned the value of "Asyka" in different areas of Kazakh life (divination, litigation). Fu-

ture researchers need to look at the role of "Asyka" in traditional cultures of other Eurasian nomads. They should also pay attention to the length of the existence of this tradition in art.

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