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## **The image of a woman in the Kazakh worldview: philosophical and anthropological analysis**

Attention to the study of the role of women and their image in philosophy is of constant interest, since this issue has both worldview and practical significance. Today, interest in studying the understanding of the image of a woman in the national tradition is acquiring special significance. In the context of constant transformation of the structure of modern society under pressure from various aspects the image of a woman, her function and role in society undergoes changes. First of all, the reasons for the change in the image of a woman are the pragmatization of human relations, a change in value orientations, the complication of the process of gender and national self-identification. The purpose of the research is to identify the specifics of understanding the image of a woman in the Kazakh traditional philosophical worldview. The methodological basis of the research was the systemic and socio-cultural approaches, which made it possible to comprehend the role of the image of a woman in the system of worldview in general and the worldview of the era of poets-improvisers in particular. The scientific significance of the work lies in the development of the concept of the image of a woman, in the identification of its semantic aspects, philosophical foundations and connections in the worldview of the Kazakhs. The practical significance of the work lies in the possibility of its use in the educational process within the framework of courses on the history of philosophy, cultural studies, religious studies, in a special course on Kazakh philosophy.

*Keywords:* image of a woman, history of philosophy, gender, akyny-zhyrau, Kazakh worldview, folklore, woman, men, family, marriage.

### *Introduction*

Discussions about the role and place of women in society originate from antiquity and continue to this day, since gender studies remain one of the most pressing and acute topics of our time. The masculine and feminine principles are the source of the development of life, remaining a vivid personification of the unity and struggle of opposites.

In connection with globalization, which «blurs» the boundaries of national cultures, as well as with the spread of Western values, lifestyles, stereotypes of thinking, the image of a woman in the public consciousness is evolving. Deep transformations in Kazakhstan have led to a breakdown of the old marriage and family foundations and stereotypes — the transformation and practical crisis of the patriarchal family, a change in its traditional functions of reproduction, preservation and transmission of cultural values, a radical transformation of the marriage strategy and the way of family life. Traditional ideas about the distinctive features of a man and a woman are practically broken; the smoothing of the male-female dichotomy in the mind is fraught with a certain threat of loss of social identity. In the 21st century one of the most important and aggravated problems is the identification of a person by gender.

It should be noted that in the 90s in connection with the crisis processes in Kazakhstan and a change in the ideological course society plunges into a state of cultural and value uncertainty, there is a loss of value orientations and ideals. Such a situation of «spiritual vacuum» forces us to rethink the origins of national culture, ethical and philosophical traditions of the past. In this regard, it seems necessary to turn to the cultural heritage of past centuries, when the study of the problem of gender reached a special depth at the intellectual and artistic level.

The study of the philosophical and artistic tradition of past centuries in the characterization and assessment of the image of a woman provides the most important experience for understanding modern gender, anthropological and existential problems.

The image of a woman is an important element of the worldview and cultural identity, expressing the peculiarity of the feminine principle, its essence and mission. The image of a woman is understood in work as a socio-cultural phenomenon, a transpersonal, symbolic representation of a woman, the quintessence of

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her substantial qualities and abilities, prevailing in a particular culture and bearing its characteristics. The content of the image of a woman concept in the context of the Kazakh worldview is revealed through the unity of metaphysical, anthropological, aesthetic, socio-cultural aspects that take their origins in mythological and religious consciousness and receive conceptual and theoretical understanding in philosophy.

The object and subject of the study is the image of a woman in the Kazakh philosophical worldview.

The results of the work can be used in subsequent studies devoted to the issue of gender in Kazakhstan, including those related to the analysis of the understanding of the role of women in the culture of different eras and the present.

#### *Research methods*

The methodological basis of the research was the systemic and socio-cultural approaches, which made it possible to comprehend the role of the image of a woman in the system of worldview in general and the worldview of the era of poets-improvisers in particular. The historical and philosophical method made it possible to systematize and reconstruct the history of the development of Kazakh philosophy. The comparative approach was applied in an analysis of Western European and domestic philosophical traditions of understanding the essence and purpose of women. Interpretation methods, hermeneutics were used to identify philosophical ideas in works of art. The axiological method was applied in the study of the value of a woman, which was substantiated in Kazakh philosophy.

#### *Results and discussion*

The attitude of society towards women has never been unequivocal. If we turn to ancient sources, we will notice that sometimes questions arose about whether a woman could be considered a human being. Even such representatives of the famous Greek philosophy, where the foundations of humanism were born, as Plato and Aristotle believed that in the social hierarchy, a woman occupies the lower step after a man. For example, Aristotle argued that in the matter of giving birth to a child, a woman plays only a material role, and a man is able to give a child a soul, therefore a man is higher than a woman. In his opinion, a woman also has a soul capable of growth and movement. It is also characterized by rationality, but this rationality is not valid. Reasoning in this vein, Aristotle concludes that a woman lacks the entelechy that gives a soul to a child, therefore a woman's body is only a box where new life is temporarily stored. He is sure that the soul, spirit is an active force, and only the spirit, the masculine principle gives rise to life, so a woman is not able to influence the formation of positive qualities and abilities of a child. This initial imperfection limits the child's opportunities for improvement, and the real level of perfection depends on the child's father and is transmitted to him only from the male parent. According to Aristotle, a woman is a temporary haven for a child on the way of his birth and the predominance of the material in a woman is the reason for his future moral imperfection. Therefore, a woman must obey a man and clearly follow all his instructions. Aristotle does not consider this position of men and women in society to be social inequality, on the contrary, it is a normal state [1; 340].

Even the wise Socrates expounded his understanding of the role of women as follows: «Three things can be considered happiness: that you are not a wild animal, that you are a Greek, not a barbarian, and that you are a man and not a woman». Thus, he demonstrates his dismissive attitude towards women. Such reasoning of ancient philosophers, especially Aristotle, about the role of women in society had a significant impact on the formation of ideas about women in medieval religious philosophers, who viewed women as an imperfect being, as an object of low lust.

René Descartes, the largest representative of the philosophy of modern times, distinguished by advanced views in considering the problem of freedom, putting forward the method of pure thinking, openly noted that this method is also suitable for women (in the sense that women will also understand it). His method consists in the movement of thinking from general to particular universals and is based on pure reason, without the influence of the physical body. Descartes does not deny that a woman has not only a body, but also a mind. But he draws attention to the fact that there are no women among philosophers and concludes that a real philosopher is a person who completely devoted his life to philosophy, such as Socrates, and a woman is not capable of such an act.

A world-class classic who created beautiful female characters in his works, Leo Tolstoy views women as biological beings. In his opinion, civilization has perverted divine truth and human nature, and the metaphysical beginning of such a fall in the world is the vengeful activity of a woman who has become the object

of slavery and pleasure. The fact that men use women as a means of pleasure, Tolstoy considers the main reason for female slavery [2; 129].

A woman seeks to take revenge on men for such an attitude towards herself and tries to enchant them with her sensual nature. Tolstoy considers such sexual love as a sign of human imperfection and believes that it is an obstacle to the development of mankind and its unification on the basis of goodness and love, therefore it must be destroyed. There is no doubt that this idea of Tolstoy pushes to understand the woman and her sensual nature as a certain evil. He writes that millions of men, slaves plow in factories, are victims of monstrous labor only in order to satisfy the whim of women, who, like queens, keep nine-tenths of the human race captive in slavery and hard labor [2, 17].

Modern Europe, considered a symbol of freedom, is also characterized by discrimination against women. Even in the 21st century, one can observe such a paradox: in world political processes they try to do without the active participation of women. In fact, both in terms of physical potential and intellectual development, a woman is in no way inferior to a man, she has every right to engage in intellectual and physical labor. No law of any country should restrict the freedom of women.

Many states of the world have achieved positive results in this area. In countries such as America, Germany, France, Spain, women take an active part in government, the same trend can be observed in Kazakhstan. The traditions of famous women of the Kazakh steppe like Tomiris, Aisha Bibi, Domalak Ana, Aiganym find an excellent continuation in the activities of modern Kazakh women, which is confirmed by vivid examples from all spheres of our society. It is enough to recall the 90s, when the main burden of taking care of the family in the conditions of the economic crisis fell on the fragile shoulders of Kazakh women and they coped with such an unusually difficult and difficult task with dignity.

But we must admit that the women's problem has not found its complete solution both at the level of humanity as a whole and in our country; it remains an actual object of philosophical and anthropological analysis. Questions regarding gender studies are still being raised in both Western and domestic philosophy. There are scientists who agree that a woman is an object of philosophy, but do not in any way support the idea of turning her into a subject of philosophy. At a scientific conference in Almaty, a philosopher sounded the thought that the number of women philosophers has sharply increased in our country and this is an absurd phenomenon. In our opinion, such statements, as well as other incorrect reasoning about the role of women in society, are completely unfounded and incorrect. We decided to prove our opinion by studying the image of a woman in the oral folk art of the Kazakh people.

When discussing the role of women in society, we recall the words of Marx that the general culture of a person can be judged on the basis of their ideas about women. Engels echoes him, asserting that the level of woman's emancipation in society is a natural indicator of emancipation in general.

The ideas of the famous Kazakh writer-philosopher Mukhtar Auezov complement the thoughts of the founders of Marxism. Defining the role of men in society, he writes that in any era, for any nation, the most necessary condition for achieving a high level of development on the path to knowledge is the presence of brave husbands. They lead their people along the path of development and without them movement towards the goal is impossible. But he assesses the role of women in the life of the people even higher.

Mukhtar Auezov distinguishes two types of human activity. The first is *Salahiyat*, an activity to achieve profit and praise, the second is *insaniyat*, the path of humanity. A person who has chosen the second path strives only for good, tries to be a source of good. The goal of such a person is to help, if possible, all of humanity. According to Auezov, if you do not take this path, all good will turn into evil. Only a woman will teach a child to choose the path of humanity, only a woman is able to transform him from an animal into a man [3; 327]. Because the upbringing of the child is mainly not for the father, no matter how scientist he is, but the mother, even if she is engaged in simple household chores and the upbringing that she gives to her child will be as solid and strong as a stone.

The role of women in society and the equality of women were among the main social themes that were reflected in the pages of the «Aikap» and «Kazakh» editions, created by the progressive Kazakh intelligentsia. Along with the discussion of issues related to the state, economy, science and education, healthcare and culture they were among the first to raise the problem of the position of Kazakh women. It should be emphasized that such a sensitive topic found a warm response among the people, as evidenced by the flow of letters from readers.

Reading these informative messages, one can once again be convinced that the women's topic was of concern not only to the educated Kazakh intelligentsia. For example, one reader writes: «You teach only boys, claiming that education spoils girls. Can education spoil a person? In fact, it is the girls who need to be

trained, since they will become the mothers of the family in the future. If a mother is uneducated, she will not be able to give a good upbringing» [4; 33].

Famous Kazakh poets-zhyrau in their works considered a woman precisely as a social being. The woman, sung by them, is, first of all, a beautiful woman. Undoubtedly, beauty is a natural property of a woman. As the modern Kazakh philosopher Garifolla Yesim wrote: «The existence of a woman lies in her essential difference from a man. If we talk about where this difference is reflected, we find that it is in the beauty of a woman and in her endless striving to be beautiful. In this she is like a child. A woman who does not strive for beauty is against her nature. There are no ugly women» [5; 76].

This understanding is consonant with the naturalist or biological interpretation of the essence of a woman, which originates in the ancient world. This direction considers a person as a being consisting only of material content and, based on this understanding, claims that the laws of nature apply to everything that exists on earth, therefore, the level of humanity is determined by them. In their opinion, the spiritual qualities of a person depend on sensual qualities, therefore, a woman is primarily an object of beauty, passion and pleasure, and only for this reason a man pays attention to a woman.

Let's pay attention to similar views in Kazakh poetry. Almost all Kazakh zhyrau poets glorify female beauty, including such zhyrau as Murat Monkeuly, who sharply raised social issues related to the colonial policy of Russia in his works, Dospambet, Aktamberdy and other zhyrau, who discussed the topic of protecting the country from external threats. There are many examples in the history of Kazakhs when batyrs and khans chose the wives of their enemies as life companions, without thinking about the consequences of such actions. This testifies to the understanding of a woman as a biological being.

But the Kazakh zhyrau were not limited to singing only the beauty of a woman, explained by a purely masculine interest in a woman as an object of pleasure. Zhyrau poets perceived a woman not only as the ideal of beauty and perfection, but also as the keeper of the family hearth, the educator of the future generation of the nation. «In a nomadic society, Kazakh women have had a larger say in family matters than women in traditional sedentary societies, where they were often relegated to enclosed compounds and are rarely seen even outside the home». [6; 24]. The Kazakh people especially appreciated the above-mentioned functions of a woman, perfectly understanding that the future of the nation, mutual understanding between relatives, the unity of the country as a whole depends on their activities. Zhyrau argued that, in essence, women should be dominated by social content, a woman should be an active citizen of society, so her social activities are especially important. «Women were important social and economic partners with their husbands in Kazakh society» [7; 33].

In the understanding of the Kazakhs a woman is primarily a faithful wife and keeper of the hearth. The choice of a life partner, the creation of a family union is a special area of human relations and the Kazakh people attached great importance to this events. That is why the Kazakh zhyrau in their works gave men detailed advice on choosing a future wife. They suggest, first of all, to pay attention to the character of a woman («minezdi» — in Kazakh). In the Kazakh family the responsibilities of the wife and husband are strictly distributed. A man is the head of the family, and a woman is his wise assistant, who supports him with her advice in difficult life twists and turns. A woman with a good character, «minezdi ayel», is just such a wife who understands her place in the family and society. She is a well-mannered, cultured, wise person and tries not to get involved in men's affairs. «Revealing the essence of the concept of happiness, which occupies an important place in the epic heritage of the Kazakh Zhyrau, Kazakh thinkers associate happiness with married life, it is a part of happiness... characteristic of all thinkers of the period» [8, 93].

A Kazakh woman of this type is sung in the works of the successor of the zhyrau traditions, the famous poet Shal akyn. Even the titles of his creations («On Girls», «Characteristics of a Woman», «An Old Man and a Girl», «Two Daughters-in-law») speak for themselves. If you think about the reason for the predominance of female images in his works, then you can understand that this is no coincidence and natural. Shal akyn, born in 1748 in the Kokshetau steppe, lived his life poor. Recalling the well-known Kazakh proverb: «A good wife will ensure honor for her husband, and a bad wife will bring him to the grave», we can assume that the reason for his failures in life was the absence of a good wife, and therefore, dreaming of such a wife, he tried to sing her image in his poems. In our opinion, he perfectly revealed the essence of the Kazakh woman. He uses various methods: this is a calm edification, somewhere bitter irony, but his ultimate goal is to convey to the listener that the choice of a spouse is an extremely responsible step in the life of every person, since the future of each of us and the nation as a whole is in the hands of women.

He perfectly understood that the adornment of the family and the nation is the daughter-in-law, the wife of the son. For Kazakhs, where representatives of several generations live together in the same family, it was

important to bring up a good daughter, someone's future daughter-in-law. In the work «On a Woman», he distinguishes several types of women: «sensitive woman», «woman-craftswoman», «woman-lazy woman» and notes that the unhappy man who united his destiny with a woman from the latter category.

To characterize the qualities of a person, he used the concepts of «good» and «evil». We meet the same concepts when describing the essence of a woman. In his opinion, a good, kind woman is like the earth, just as fertile, solid and strong. She is as fast as her beloved horse, a loyal companion of a Kazakh. A good wife will increase your wealth, greet your guests with a friendly and unforgettable attitude. And the wicked wife constantly interferes in men's affairs, she is like a barking dog, her carriage is constantly at the end of the caravan [9; 126].

The well-known zhyrau Mailykozha correctly emphasizes that the economic state of the family primarily depends on the keeper of the hearth, «she will also keep last year's needle that you gave her,» he says figuratively [10; 38]. «The Kazakhs consider that it is the woman whom the future of the family and the solvency of the spouse depends on» [11; 10].

It should be emphasized that the Kazakhs have a special, reverent attitude towards their daughters. «Kazakh people treated girls with great care and love. Girls in auls (villages) were under the protection of the young men, who were forbidden from insulting or offending them. Girls were also taught self respect, how not to get lost, and how to stand up for themselves» [12; 17]. Observing the principles of strict upbringing of a daughter («Forty prohibitions for a girl,» says a Kazakh proverb), Kazakhs at the same time showed great honors to their daughters both before marriage and after she becomes a member of another family. For example, the Kazakhs have a custom «turkindep kelu». This is the name of the custom when a girl who has crossed the threshold of another house comes home specially. Both sides are carefully preparing for this important event. The girl, already a young daughter-in-law of a different kind and her new relatives are preparing valuable gifts, and the girl's parents and relatives will do everything to make the girl feel great in the circle of her loved ones, literally carry her in her arms, so that she will again remember her wonderful and carefree childhood.

The reverent attitude towards a woman is also expressed in one of the best wishes for any Kazakh — «So that you grow old together with your wife». In difficult times, the zhyrau warriors, first of all, grieved for their wives, for their lonely fate in the event of the death of their husbands. The famous warrior Dospambet, the loyal adviser of Tauke-khan Bukhar-zhyrau, in his works argues that life and death with his beloved wife is one of the highest meanings of human life.

### *Conclusions*

In the process of colonization, both the Kazakh society itself and the social role of the Kazakh woman changed. Of course, it would be a mistake to argue that the negative traits of the Kazakh women appeared in them only as a result of the colonial policy of Russia. Still, it cannot be denied that they have intensified with changes in the way of life and the way of economy.

In the Kazakh worldview the main functions of a woman: creativity, procreation, guardian of the tribe, etc. The book of the Russian ethnographer I.V. Stasevich «The social status of women from Kazakhs: traditions and modernity» is devoted to the study of the position of the Kazakh woman in traditional and modern culture. The attention of the author is focused on changes in the social status of the Kazakh woman that have occurred over the past 200 years and are associated with the cardinal transformation of the traditional nomadic society. His conclusions about the specifics of the social status of women confirm the arguments about the role of women in the rituals of the life cycle. I.V. Stasevich believes that «traditionally Kazakh women are the guardians of the family traditions and values of Kazakh ethnos... Respect for a woman is present in each Kazakh national tradition or ceremony» [13; 2409].

The research scientist A.K. Gaines (1897) writes: «A Kyrgyz woman plays an important role not only as a complete mistress of the family but also as a member of society. At the meetings of the kyrgyz, women voice on a par with men, especially on matters relating to public needs. Sometimes even the opinion of women has some advantage over the opinion of a man» [14; 87].

Russian missionaries who were active in the Kazakh steppe in the 19th century drew attention to the fact that the Kazakh woman plays a special, sometimes even decisive role in the family. Given all these circumstances, they promoted a policy of creating mixed marriages. Their foresight was that a child raised by a Russian wife would forget their language, Kazakh customs and traditions, and a different mentality would be formed in them. In order to preserve the integrity of the nation the Kazakh zhyrau during this period of development of the Kazakh society sharply discussed the women's issues.

It is safe to say that the study of women's themes in the work of Kazakh poets-zhyrau is of great importance for modern Kazakh society. The works of zhyrau clearly reflect the high social status of the Kazakh woman as a keeper of the hearth, a model of upbringing, a wise adviser to the head of the family and an invaluable property of the nation and country. The last definition is not accidental. If we turn to the history of mankind, we can see that the society is happy when the woman is happy. This truth is well understood by our people. He always guarded his fair half and managed to turn this humanistic understanding of the role of women in society into an unshakable element of national identity. A Kazakh woman is worthy of all praise. She does not require special labor to provide her with freedom and rights, she herself is able to master them. It is enough to strengthen support from the state and it is possible to achieve the triumph of democratic values in society as a whole.

Unfortunately, in modern literature and art a tendency gradually prevails characterizing a Kazakh woman as weak, stupid, uneducated, inhuman, pursuing only material values. There is no need to prove that we have already reached the samples of universal debauchery. But we can safely oppose the misinterpretations of the essence of a Kazakh woman with wonderful examples of her best images, sung in the works of Kazakh poets-zhyrau, and these examples find their continuation in the modern real life of Kazakh society.

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### **Қазақ дүниетанымындағы әйел бейнесі: философиялық-антропологиялық талдау**

Әйелдің қоғамдағы рөлі мен бейнесінің философияда зерттелуі үнемі қызығушылық тудырады, себебі бұл мәселенің дүниетанымдық және практикалық маңыздылығы бар. Ұлттық дәстүрдегі әйел бейнесін түсінуді зерттеуге назар аудару бүгінгі таңда ерекше маңызға ие. Қазіргі қоғам құрылымының үнемі трансформациясы жағдайында әйел бейнесі, оның қоғамдағы қызметі мен рөлі туралы түсініктер әртүрлі жақтардың көзқарасымен өзгеруде. Мұның себептері — ең алдымен адамдар арасындағы қатынастардың прагматизациясы, құндылық бағдарларының өзгеруі, гендерлік процестің және ұлттық өзін-өзі бірегейлендіруінің күрделенуі. Зерттеудің мақсаты — қазақтың дәстүрлі философиялық дүниетанымындағы әйел бейнесін түсінудің ерекшеліктерін анықтау. Зерттеудің әдіснамалық негізі — жүйелік және әлеуметтік-мәдени тәсілдер. Аталған тәсілдер әйел бейнесінің жалпы дүниетаным құрылымындағы рөлін, әсіресе ақын-жыраулардың дүниетанымын түсінуге мүмкіндік береді. Жұмыстың ғылыми мәні — әйел бейнесі туралы ұғымды дамыту, оның мағыналық аспектілерін, қазақтардың дүниетанымындағы философиялық негіздері мен байланыстарын анықтау. Жұмыстың практикалық маңыздылығы мынада: философия тарихы, мәдениеттану, дінтану курстары аясында және қазақ философиясы бойынша арнайы курстарды оқыту кезінде пайдалануға болады.

*Кілт сөздер:* әйел бейнесі, философия тарихы, гендер, ақын-жыраулар, қазақтың дүниетанымы, халық ауыз әдебиеті, әйел, еркек, отбасы, некесі.

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## Образ женщины в казахском мировоззрении: философско-антропологический анализ

Внимание к изучению роли женщины и ее образа в философии вызывает неизменный интерес, поскольку эта проблема имеет как мировоззренческое, так и практическое значение. Сегодня интерес к изучению понимания образа женщины в отечественной традиции обретает особую значимость. В условиях постоянной трансформации структуры современного общества под давлением различных аспектов претерпевают изменения представления об образе женщины, ее функциях и роли в социуме. Прежде всего причинами таких изменений становятся прагматизация человеческих отношений, смена ценностных ориентаций, усложнение процесса гендерной и национальной самоидентификации. Цель научного исследования состоит в выявлении специфики понимания образа женщины в казахском традиционном философском мировоззрении. Методологической базой исследования явились системный и социокультурный подходы, которые позволили осмыслить роль образа женщины в системе мировоззрения в целом и миропонимания эпохи поэтов-импровизаторов в особенности. Научная значимость работы заключается в разработке понятия образа женщины, в выявлении его смысловых аспектов, философских оснований и связей в мировоззрении казахов. Практическая значимость работы заключается в возможности их использования в учебном процессе в рамках курсов по истории философии, культурологии, религиоведению, в специальном курсе по казахской философии.

*Ключевые слова:* образ женщины, история философии, гендер, акыны-жырау, казахское мировоззрение, устное народное творчество, женщина, мужчина, семья, брак.

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