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**SACRED CONCEPT OF THE KAZAKH PEOPLE:  
ON AN EXAMPLE OF FEMALE HEADDRESSES**

The article discusses the sacred concept of the Kazakh people's female headdresses. In past times headdresses were truly special traditional item in Kazakh people's costumes. As the Kazakh writer M. Auezov mentioned in his works that Borik had many different types of uses and names, we can confirm that headdresses had and still have a strong place in Kazakh traditions. Headgear – Saukele also, is valuable and still one of the most striking ethnic symbols of Kazakhs. In the cultural and historical aspect, his closest analogy is- the high ceremonial helmet of the Saka Prince-leader, whose rich burial was discovered in the Issyk mound in Southern Kazakhstan territory. So, the headdress became a visible symbol of the connection of many generations in the history of Kazakhs. It's an addition to the generally accepted norms associated with the wearing of a headdress particularly a female one. As well as familiarizing the readers with the cult and sacred values of Kazakhs.

**Key words:** sacred, headdress, Borik, Saukele.

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**Қазақ халқының қасиеттілік ұғымы: әйелдер бас киімінің мысалында**

Мақалада қазақ халқының бас киімдерінің қасиетті тұжырымдамасы талқыланады. Өткен жылдары бас киімдер қазақ халқының дәстүрлі киімдерінің ішінде ерекше орын алды. Бас киімдер туралы жұмыстарында қазақ жазушысы М. Әуезов атап өткендей – Бөріктің көптеген қолданысы, түрлері және аттары болды, бас киім қазақ халқының дәстүрлерінде берік орын алған және алады деп айта аламыз. Сәукеле бас киімі бағалы және әлі күнге дейін қазақтардың жарқын этникалық символдарының бірі. Мәдени-тарихи тұрғыдан оның ең жақын ұқсастығы Оңтүстік Қазақстан аумағындағы Есік төбесінде табылған Сақ патшасының салтанатты дулығасы болып табылады. Мәселен, бас киім қазақтардың тарихындағы көптеген ұрпақ байланысының көрсететін символы болды. Осы бас киімнің, әсіресе әйел бас киімінің киюіне қатысты жалпы қабылданған нормаларға қосымша болып табылады. Сондай-ақ, оқырмандарды қазақтардың табынуы және қасиетті құндылықтарымен таныстыру.

**Түйін сөздер:** қасиетті, бас киім, бөрік, сәукеле.

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### Сакральное понятие казахского народа: на примере женского головного убора

В статье обсуждается священная концепция женских головных уборов казахского народа. В прошлые времена головные уборы были поистине особенным традиционным предметом в костюмах казахского народа. Как отметил в своих работах казахский писатель М. Ауэзов, у головного убора – Борик было много разных видов использования и имен, мы можем утверждать, что головные уборы были и остаются в казахских традициях. Головной убор – Саукеле также является ценным и по-прежнему одним из самых ярких этнических символов казахов. В культурном и историческом аспекте его ближайшей аналогией является высокий церемониальный шлем принца Саки, чье богатое захоронение было обнаружено на Иссыкском холме на территории Южного Казахстана. Итак, головной убор стал видимым символом связи многих поколений в истории казахов. Это дополнение к общепринятым нормам, связанным с ношением головного убора, особенно женского. А также ознакомление читателей с культом и святыми ценностями казахов.

**Ключевые слова:** священный, головной убор, борик, саукеле.

#### Introduction

At the present time, there are very few well-researched books and knowledge about the Kazakh National Clothing. The basic information about Kazakh National clothes is found only in the records of travelers, collectors, museum funds, ethnographic literature, as well as in the works of artists. Moreover, there is even less Sacred perception and specialty of the analysis carried out in the field of the concept of the sacredness of the female headdress of the Kazakh people. These are methods of the researching: Comparative-historical method; description and analysis of ethnographic terms; the collection of ethnographic materials;

“Sacred” means revered due to sanctity and is generally the state of being perceived by religious individuals as associated with divinity and considered worthy of spiritual respect or devotion, or inspiring awe or reverence among believers (Blackwood & sons, 1895: 883.) SACRAL (from the Latin – “dedicated to the gods”, “sacred”, “forbidden”, “damned”) is a sacred, valuable, most important worldview category that distinguishes the areas of being and the state of being, perceived by consciousness as fundamentally different from everyday reality and extremely valuable. In many languages, this meaning embedded in the semantic “old” word. In the accepted for the name Sacral from the Latin – *sacer*, the Hebrew – *gadosh* is associated with the meaning of “separation”, “concealment”

and “inviolability”. For the Slavs *svet* -, which goes back to the Indo-European *k’wen* -, values are set to “increase”, “swell”, in a more concrete cultural context – “filled with a blessed inalienable force.” In the picture of the world, Sacral is the role of the structure – forming principle and in accordance with the notions of Sacredness, other fragments of the world picture lined up and their hierarchy formed. In axiology, Sacral defines the vertical of value orientations (Zabiako, 1998: 186.) Moreover, things concerned with the sacred phenomenon, thus gives valuable meanings like protection someone who wears the sacred amulet, totem, earrings, rings, headdresses and other jewels, clothes. “Sacredness” used in relation to objects, places, or happenings. Objects often considered sacred if used for spiritual purposes, such as the worship or service of gods. The property is often ascribed to objects (a “sacred artifact” that is venerated and blessed) (McCann, Catherine, 2008: 42) Furthermore, sacred clothes are intense, valuable and have plenty of traditions on its wearing purposes. Sacred meaning goes to clothes of many nations and of historical people, who wore clothes by its regional purposes to show its nations’ differences. Each part of cloth of historical people was essential and valued, cause it the purpose of its wearing were rich and followed by customs’ use. Though, Headdresses have Sacred meaning by regional futures and its implication.

The Headdress is a term that includes both the methods of the hairstyle itself and the methods of

decoration and covering the head. Both are highly diverse, depending on race, place, age, religion, the degree of culture and mental development. Nevertheless, both the forms of the Dress and their genesis can be reduced to a few forms and reasons. The root motive of worries about the decoration of the head is *utilitarian*. First of all, the hair, falling in disorder on the face, ears, neck, shoulders, not only causes a general unpleasant sensation but interferes with seeing, hearing, eating and indirectly – the correctness of labor, for example, in hunting, fishing, sewing, fighting, sometimes serious danger, for example, when passing through dense thickets, with flight (a classic example of Absalom, entangled in long hair in the branches). That is why, where religious reasons did not interfere with this (hair was cut off or shaved) (Brokgayz and Efron, 1890–1907: 86 т.).

The head is covered not only for fastening hair (frontal bandages, scarves, turbans, bags, nets, purses) but mainly to protect from climatic and atmospheric influences (from heat, cold, rain, wind). Hence, depending on the purpose and places, a variety of forms and materials used headdresses. (Brokgayz and Efron, 1890–1907: 86 т.). Forms were different also for religious purposes and beliefs. But in parallel with the religious factor, the primordial custom of decorating himself with trophies of beasts and killed enemies was also in effect, one of the many results of which were military wigs from the hair of murdered enemies, decoration of the harvest with relics of animals and enemies, teeth, fangs, scalps, emblems from the animal world, etc. From the realm of religious and military, the bizarre collection moved into everyday life, gradually losing its former purpose and becoming the object of decoration. (Brokgayz and Efron, 1890–1907: 86 т.) Decorating Headdresses were an important obligation, especially in women headdresses. Ornamentation, dressing and decorating headdresses with jewels, meaningful symbols and rich materials had the valuable symbolism of the Headdress. (Brokgayz and Efron, 1890–1907: 86 т.) Example, Kazakh people had plenty of ornaments onto the clothes. Thus, Kazakh national ornaments symbolized protection from dark forces brought good luck in cattle breeding and economic activities. (Brokgayz and Efron, 1890–1907: 86 т.) According to the abundance of headdress decorations, it is possible to put our Kazakhs as an example of “Saukele”. However, the headdress of civilized women is often not inferior to the pretentiousness of their sizes and forms of headdresses of the most primitive. In addition to all these motives (utilitarianism, religious

views, military and social customs, instincts of vanity, etc.) were optional. The motives aesthetic, the desire to combine, imitate the beautiful in nature (addiction to feathers, flowers, shiny stones, etc.), motive, who created a piece of jewelry from the headdress. The headdress was finally the subject of special art, and thanks to early specialization, its development of headwear forms even reached the primitive people of the most fanciful sizes. Well, we can see how headdresses determined as Sacred and moreover how its meaning suits in it, also, Headdresses became esteem from ancient times, nowadays though still esteemed.

Not only for thus needing were used headdresses, here also have traditional features which had deeper effected to headdresses and their disposal in historical people. Though headdresses had the Sacred understanding at those times, and today also have Sacredness in keeping the traditions by it.

Historical people like Kazakh had own customs in wearing Headdresses, keeping them and use for some valuable purposes. (Popova, 2015: 3-4) The traditional costume of any nation is a complex sign system that carries information about the age of its owner, his social and property status, and his place of residence. Especially indicative in this respect is the Headgear, each detail of which was of symbolic significance. To their headdress, Kazakhs treated with special respect, did not remove it in public, protected and did not give. While it is customary for Europeans to leave their headgear at the entrance, the Kazakhs bring a hat to the room and try to put it above, that is, above the head. (Попова, 2015: 3-4). From time immemorial, the attitude towards the headdresses of the Kazakhs was very special. To pull the hat off the head of a man was considered an insult, and to throw casually wherever he was – is tantamount to renouncing personal happiness and good luck. Always and everywhere, the headgear was shot carefully, trying to put or hang them on the dais. Especially jealously watched that the cap did not appear on the floor or on the seat, but otherwise, it was believed that the health and well-being of its owner could suffer. (Казакская традиционная культура в собраниях кунсткамеры, 2008). Particular care was taken not to be on the seat or on the floor. It was believed that the health and well-being of the owner could otherwise suffer. Also, Kazakhs still do not give their own headgear, and they do not allow to wear strangers. This is equivalent to voluntarily renouncing one’s happiness and exposing the head to troubles. As a gift, they present only a new, undecided hat.



**1<sup>st</sup> picture** – An authentic photo of a Kazakh bride in her ceremonial wedding garb complete with head-dress (headgear). circa. 1800's-1900's (Public Historical Documents)  
Date: 1st January, 1800



*Тобегина детская. Южный Казахстан. 1930-е годы. Из собрания РЭМ*

**2<sup>nd</sup> picture** – Children's skullcap.  
Southern Kazakhstan, 1930s. From the REM collection

And this, by the way, is a very valuable gift. In this way, a person, his head is rewarded with honor. In the view of the Kazakh, in the headdress, it seems to be stored a certain code of well-being. Therefore, the wearing cap is not given, but it is inherited, especially if the owner lived it dignified (an example of the Kazakhs *aksakal* (senior of the clan) headed a whole family, was considered honorable), enjoyed honor and respect, did not live in poverty. If for example, a misfortune has occurred to a person, he suddenly died or was killed, then the headgear is not given to anyone. For example, in Koreans, on the contrary, the clothes of the deceased person are distributed to his relatives. Today, perhaps not everyone remembers these customs and rarely wear Kazakh national headgear, except on some special occasion. And yet they are unusually beautiful, even exquisite, original and capable of conveying a lot of information about their owner. Headdress has always played the leading role in the ethnosculpt function of clothing, they can learn the history of culture, see the traces of the influence of other cultures or realize their own identity. In them, the most stable are social, age, territorial differences, the variety of types of Kazakh headdresses, and their role in social hierarchical relations. Interest in the history, ethnography, culture of the Kazakhs is great. This applies to national clothes. And it is the objects of museum collections that become the standard, the standard of taste when creating stylized national clothes, the demand for which is.

It is natural that the collectors of this important sacred element of the Kazakh costume tried to buy for the museum's collection. At the present time (according to 2015) in the Kazakh fund about 130 headdresses – children's, girls', wedding's, men's and women's.

In the traditional Kazakh culture, the child usually received the first headdress after the ritual forty days of "Shilde", which marked his introduction to the world of people. As a rule, various capes were sewed to the cap, which magically served to preserve the life and health of the child, increase his vital energy. A special force was given to the eye-beads "kozmonchak", as well as amulets "tumar" of triangular shape, cloth or metal, often with additional magical means inside: written prayers, grasses, seeds, etc. Also, decorative elements such as tassels and sultans from feathers, motley laces, silk or woolen threads, which expressed the idea of collecting vital energy, also took a prominent place in children's clothing (Попова, 2015: 3-4).

Thus, we see how the Kazakh people protected children from early childhood by awarding the Sacred

Concept in the toe of each element in the headdress. Headgear is an important part of the cult concept, as well as the regional belonging of the people. From ancient times there is respect, awareness, acceptance of sacred importance in wearing both decorative and more material things in the image and veneration of the headdress. As they say, everything that comes from within and from childhood will be preserved for centuries. The storage and collection of these concepts are sacred here.

As the Kazakh collections of SEM shows, boys already in 6-7 years started wearing headgear, similar to the headgear of men. The girls, however, had a specific headgear, which they began to wear when they reached the age of 9-12 – the age considered to be marriageable. The change of the headgear and the attendant change of the hairdo were usually accompanied by a family holiday, the main role in which played an elderly woman, who, it was thought, passed the girl to longevity and well-being. The girl's headdress "Borik" represented a felt hat with a fur band, covered with expensive cloth (silk or velvet) and decorated with a bundle of feathers of an owl. The braids of the girl at the same time were left open, that categorical was forbidden to married women (Popova, 2015: 3-4).

*Borik* is from lamb's skin sheepskin or from other animal's leather. Besides, it's embroidered with gold thread and its upper side with gold or silver buttons. In many respects in the upper part is made of four or six wedges. The tip of girl's borik decorated with feathers of an owl or different brushes. Depending on the edge, borik is named as beaver, marten, etc. (Alimbai, 2011: 537). And now the Caucasians wear a hat made of wolves during ritual games. It is also similar to the "Kokpar" of Kazakhs. (National sports game, where the dexterity, strength, courage, and daring of the participants of the "kokpar" are tested. In the "kokpar" they compete during solemn events, on holidays, like ayty, that, a popular equestrian game among the Kazakhs, Kirghiz, Tajiks, Uzbeks and other peoples of Central Asia). Borik is considered as a special kind of headdress. A person who experiences joyful feelings, or feels happy from the news he has heard and who feels himself over the moon, so, the people who observed this joy said "Borki took off to the sky" (that is, the Borki here means a person's happy feelings). It also means a joyful return home. Kazakhs believed that when they take off their headgear, the prosperity leaves them, so they put the headdress high, they did not trample down their headdress with feet and never give their headdress to anyone else. Moreover, to

throw the headdress was allowed only in special cases. (Popova, 2015: 3-4).

In ancient times, each "Ru"(clan) had Borik by its type, size and had its own typical ornaments. The peculiarity of Borik's forms was similar to the Karakalpak, Kirghiz, Bashkurt, Tatar, Uighur headgears but the name, meaning, and purpose were different, well we can match ethnocultural similarities here. In the works of M.Auezov, we can notice such types of Boriks as: *Akoyan Borik, barkyt pushpak Borik, kamshat Borik, khasteki Borik, zhumyra Borik, kundyzh Borik, lak teri Borik, nogai Borik, nogaisha Borik, nogaisha kumyra Borik, nogaisha kundyz Borik, pushpak Borik, susar Borik, ukili Borik, ukili kamshat Bork, ukili kundyz Borik, shoshan Borik, borikshi Borik.*

There are summer and winter types of Borik. If the summer Borik was from the animal's skin and was very thin and light, then under the winter was a lining of wool, cotton, velvet or satin. Traditionally young guys, singers, and poets attached to Borik feathers of an owl. The main form of Borik among the Kazakh people was triangular; they usually sewed a triangular shape from the four ends. Then in the beginning of the XIX century, the form became conical, edgy. The top of Borik has four or six sides, each side is attached triangular ends, and the hem usually goes rectangular. Thus, the hem was of heavy material, while between edges were sewed by light material, and the main facial part was covered with beautiful rich material (Alimbai, 2011: 538).

"Shoshak borik" – trimmed with a fur coat of otter, fox or beaver, a warm hat was a complete copy of the male. It was worn by akyns, poets, and writers. However, the girlish "borik" differed in that the fur band was always outside, and did not turn away. Borik of akin (sal) from Tsigeika, as well as on girls' Borik. The beauty of the eagle's feathers in Borik is still hanging. Masters tried not to spoil them. Boriks' wore more Huns. It was the turned out hide of a wolf. Since then, any fur hat is called Türks, Kazakhs "Borik". It is said that the word "wig" – artificial hair – came from him in Europe. The girlish Borik differed from the male one in that the fur band was always outside, and did not turn away. Varieties of this hat are a lamb-zhanatay from lamb skin, kundyz borik, pushpak borik, cara borik, eltiri borik. They differed in material, small details in the cut. These were the usual hats, which were worn even in the summer (Казакская традиционная культура в собраниях кунсткамеры, 2008).

3<sup>rd</sup> picture – the teenage child worn "Zerli Borik" in red velvet, pointed. Screeds are embroidered in grass ornamentation. Between the ornament, there

are yellow bundles. The hem is from muskrat leather. Zerli Borik height 19 cm, cerebral circle 44 cm. Okaly Borik is sewn with a beaver and decorated with red or blue beads. The lines are decorated with gold and silver threads. The girlish Borik's turme (the base) is often flat, up four-pointed, high. It is decorated with gold, silver coins, precious stones and feathers of an owl. Nar Orkesh Borik – the up like a one-horned camel, sewn very straight, the type of Eltiri Borik. Altai Kyzyl Borik – a seasonal headdress made from a fox, a red fox or from her fur. Altai Borik was called that because he was made of the red wool of the Altai fox. And the Kazakhs also used red color to symbolize wealth and prosperity (N. , 2011: 539).

Noticeably from these data, we see how carefully the valuable part and the use of the headdresses were treated and honored. Also, decoration took an integral semantic and decorative role. As we can note the scenery was not only as an ornament of this product, decorations played an important role as a kind of amulet and showed the regional belonging, in addition, it was in female headdresses showed the willingness of a young girl for marriage. The feathers on the girl's cap were one of the signs of her coming into the marriage. In this regard, we should pay attention to such subjects of the folklore of the Turkic people, in which the stories of the awakening love of a young man and a girl are built through the images of birds of prey metaphorical. A similar motif appears in the allegorical formulas of Kazakh matchmakers: "You have a falcon, we have a gyrfalcon." It is noteworthy that in this text we have in mind *lashyn* – the peregrine falcon and *the sunkar* – the falcon, which, according to popular beliefs, can enter into a marriage relationship. The Kazakh tradition still retains the old term "yki tary" – feathers of an owl in the name of the ritual of matchmaking. A bundle of feathers received by the bride's side from the matchmakers and pinned to the girl's headdress was evidence of the marital collusion (Popova, 2015: 3-4). The main headdress of the wedding ceremony of the Kazakhs is – Saukele.

*Saukele* – the high, cone-shaped, ritual bride's headdress, having special material value. Saukele – resembles to cone-shaped headdresses of the Saka-tigrohauds. The basis of saukele is sewn of thin white felt, covered by red cloth, edged by expensive fur. The sharp end of the crown is decorated with feathers of an eagle owl. A frontal part holds the thin cape-veil. The basic parts of *saukele* – *tazh* ("crown"), *tobe* (top), *kulak bau* (ear blades) and *artky bau* (back blades). A separate internal hollow part of the saukele, dressed together with it, is

named *zere*. In earlier times, the armor of the warrior which was worn above one layer of cloth is also referred *zere*. Sarzhan the brother of Kenesary khan, has estimated in 500 young mares the price of the saukele of Baisakal's daughter, a wealthy person of the Junior Horde, Kenesary's matchmaker, who lived in first half of XIX century (M. Zh. Kopeev) (Fergus and Jandosova, 2003: 216)

Headdress Saukele published attracts the attention of researchers with its unusual effective form, as well as a complex system of expensive silver and gilded ornaments, combined with details from corals, carnelian, turquoise, pearls, and gold embroidery.



3<sup>rd</sup> picture – The girl in Borik.  
Expedition of S.M. Dudin, 1899.  
From Kunstkammer Fund (1707-55)



4th picture – “Zerli Borik”.  
ҚР МОМ қорындағы (КП 3423)

Saukele is still one of the most striking ethnic symbols of Kazakhs. In the cultural and historical aspect, his closest analogy is the high ceremonial helmet of the Saka Prince-leader, whose rich burial was discovered in the Issyk mound in the territory of Southern Kazakhstan. So the headdress became a visible symbol of the connection of many generations in the history of the Kazakh people. The girl's family ordered a saukele from the master long before the wedding, since the whole year was spent on making

this dress. Only after Saukele was ready to set the day for the bride's wifes, and also the day before, the senior daughter-in-law wore Saukele ready with all the honors and ridden the horse across the whole aul to a celebration. The bride wore this garment at the culmination moment of the wedding celebrations – during the bride's departure to the aul of her future husband. The very name Saukele meant that the bride got unharmed to her future home and became the keeper of the hearth. Subsequently, the young woman wore him on solemn occasions before the birth of the first child, after which she changed her headdress to female. Saukele was kept in the family and always remained the property of a woman. As a rule, she passed it on to her eldest daughter. If a woman died childlessly, then the headpiece returned to the parents. Among the common wedding elements of the wedding headdress and the attributes of the ruler was a head diadem – a crown symbolizing the special status of its bearer. Diadem Saukele had several tiers, recruited from gilt plaques with stakes from stones. In the center of the diadem, the figure of the multi-armed goddess-mother, the patroness of marriage and childbearing, was often highlighted.

### Conclusion

Today, Kazakh people kept traditions and Sacredness of these clothes, and supplements the generally accepted norms associated with the wearing of a headdress, particularly a female one. The purpose is to acquaint readers with the cult and sacred values of the Kazakh people.

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