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## THE ROLE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF CRADLE IN KAZAKH AND TURKIC CULTURE

The research article is devoted to historical place, past and present changes of a cradle as a branch of the Kazakh and Turkish woodworking art and a symbol of cultural traditions of these peoples. A cradle as an object of material culture is not only an everyday simple item, but also a symbolic culture that transmits sacred information about worldview and traditions of the people between generations. In the context of globalization and changes in traditional lifestyles, the study of the cradle allows us to preserve historical and cultural data related to it and assess the role of material culture in modern society. This demonstrates the relevance of this research. In this context, the study examines woodworking art and cradle-making of the Kazakh and Turkish peoples in three different aspects: ancient techniques and methods of cradle-making as a branch of woodworking art of the Kazakh and Turkic peoples; features of the Kazakh and Turkish craftsman in decoration techniques and equipment of a cradle; the place of cradle in history and culture of the Kazakh and Turkish peoples: past and present. During the study of these aspects, the ethnographic research method, including content analysis and interview methods, was used. As a result, it was found that although the Kazakh and Turkish peoples were descended from the ancient Turkic culture, the processes of colonization and globalization experienced by them have different effects on preservation of a cradle as a cultural heritage. Scientific significance of the study: Information and analyzed conclusions regarding traditional and modern techniques and methods of making and decorating cradles by Kazakh and Turkic craftsmen, as well as their place in the history and culture of these two peoples are extremely useful for researchers in the field of ethnography and cultural studies. In addition, a content analysis was conducted on peculiarities of making and decorating cradles inherited from the Kazakh and Turkic ancestors, on features of use of Kazakh and Turkish ornaments and semiotic patterns, revealed by the research, and specific practical recommendations have been prepared regarding ornaments to be placed on cradles. These recommendations can be used by modern cradle-making craftsmen as a guide for finishing and decorating cradles. This demonstrates the practical importance of the work.

**Key words:** woodworking art, cradle, ethnographic research, material culture, cultural studies.

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### Қазақ және түркі халықтарының мәдениетіндегі бесіктің рөлі мен маңызы

Зерттеу мақаласы қазақ және түрік халқының ағаш өңдеу өнерінің бір саласы мен осы халықтардың мәдени дәстүрінің символы ретіндегі бесіктің тарихи орны, өткені мен бүгінгі өзгерісіне арналған. Бесік заттық мәдениеттің нысаны ретінде тек күнделікті тұрмыста пайдаланылатын қарапайым бұйым ғана емес, ұрпақтар арасында халықтың дүниетаныма, салт-дәстүріне қатысты сакралды ақпаратты тасымалдайтын символық мәдениет. Жаһандану мен дәстүрлі өмір салтының өзгерісі жағдайында бесікті зерттеу оған қатысты тарихи-мәдени деректерді сақтап, қазіргі қоғамдағы материалдық мәдениеттің рөліне баға беруге мүмкіндік береді. Бұл зерттеудің өзектілігін көрсетеді. Осы тұрғыда зерттеуде қазақ және түрік халықтарының ағаш өңдеу өнері мен бесік жасау ісі келесідей үш түрлі аспектіде қарастырылады: қазақ және түрік халықтарының ағаш өңдеу өнерінің бір саласы ретіндегі бесікті жасаудың байырғы техникалары мен әдістері; қазақ және түрік халықтары қолөнершілерінің бесікті әрлеу техникалары мен жабдықтаудағы ерекшеліктері; бесіктің қазақ және түрік халықтарының тарихы мен мәдениетіндегі орны: өткені мен бүгіні. Осы аспектілерді зерттеу барысында этнографиялық зерттеу әдісі, соның ішінде контент-анализ және әңгімелесу тәсілдері қолданылды. Нәтижесінде қазақ және түрік халықтары көне түркілік мәдениеттен тарағанымен олардың бастан кешірген

үрдістерінің бесіктің мәдени мұра ретінде сақталуына әртүрлі әсер етіп жатқаны анықталды. Екі халықтың ағаш өңдеу өнеріндегі бесіктің жасалу техникасының өткені мен бүгіні салыстырылып, бесікке қатысты мәдени танымның өзгергені анықталды. Зерттеудің ғылыми маңыздылығы: қазақ және түрік халықтары қолөнершілерінің бесікті жасаудың, оны безендірудің байырғы және қазіргі техникалары мен әдістері, сондай-ақ осы екі халықтың тарихы мен мәдениеттегі орнына қатысты анықталған ақпараттар мен талданған тұжырымдар этнография, мәдениеттану саласындағы зерттеушілерге аса пайдалы болуында. Сонымен қатар, зерттеу нәтижесінде анықталған қазақ және түрік халықтарының арғы ата-бабаларынан келе жатқан бесікті жасау және безендіру ерекшеліктері, қазақ, түрік ою-өрнектерінің қолданылу ерекшеліктеріне, семиотикалық заңдылықтарына контент-анализ жүргізіліп, бесікке салынатын ою-өрнектерге қатысты нақты практикалық ұсыныстар дайындалды.

**Түйін сөздер:** ағаш өңдеу өнері, бесік, этнографиялық зерттеу, заттық мәдениет, мәдениеттану.

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### **Роль и значение колыбели в культуре казахского и турецкого народов**

Исследовательская статья посвящена историческому месту колыбели как одного из направлений в ремесле деревообработки казахского и турецкого народов и символа культурных традиций. Колыбель как объект материальной культуры – это не просто утилитарный предмет, используемое в быту, а символ этнокультурной идентичности, передающий сакральную информацию о мировоззрении, традициях и обычаях от поколения к поколению. В этом контексте изготовление колыбели казахского и турецкого народов рассматриваются в трех различных аспектах: древние техники и методы изготовления колыбели как отрасли деревообрабатывающего искусства казахского и турецкого народов; особенности изготовления, оформления и оснащения колыбели ремесленниками; место колыбели в истории и культуре казахского и турецкого народов: прошлое и настоящее. При изучении этих аспектов был использован метод этнографического исследования, в том числе контент-анализ и метод беседы. В результате было установлено, что, хотя казахский и турецкий народы произошли от древнетюркской культуры, пережитые ими процессы колонизации и глобализации по-разному влияют на сохранение колыбели как культурного наследия. Сравнены прошлые и настоящее техники изготовления колыбели в деревообрабатывающем искусстве двух народов и выяснены, что культурное познание колыбели изменилось. Выявленные в ходе исследования коренные и современные техники, методы украшения колыбели ремесленниками казахского и турецкого народов, а также проанализированные выводы, касающиеся истории и места этих двух народов в культуре будут полезными для исследователей в области этнографии, культурологии. Это подчеркивает научную значимость исследования. Также выявленные в исследовании особенности изготовления и оформления колыбели, связанные с мировоззрением предков казахского и турецкого народов, способствуют работе мастеров, желающих применить традиционные ремесленные техники к современным колыбелькам. Это показывает практическую значимость работы.

**Ключевые слова:** искусство деревообработки, колыбель, этнографическое исследование, материальная культура, культурология.

## **Introduction**

Preserving national-cultural and ethnic identity in the age when the process of globalization is rapidly developing every year is one of the main tasks of the field of cultural studies. The ethno-cultural uniqueness of each nation is reflected in its ancestral customs and traditions, oral literature and material culture. In other fields of science, research is being conducted on customs and traditions, oral literature and other topics in order to preserve ethnic identity

and recognize identity of the nation. Research related to woodworking art of Kazakh people has been done, although little (Bekeshov, 2023). However, currently, the art of woodworking, including cradle-making, which conveys sacred information about material culture, namely ancient steppe culture and worldview between nature and man, is not being studied at its full potential. Ethnolinguistic character of ancestors related to cradle in the fields of cognitive linguistics and literature (Ноғайбекқызы & Дәрібаев, 2024) customs and traditions related to

the cradle (Mazhikyzy & Kalshabaeva, 2019, Uali & Shoibekov, 2021), lullaby issues have been studied at the appropriate level. But the cradle is not paid attention to as a cultural heritage and material culture that establishes a connection between generations, reflects worldview and ethnocultural understanding of the people. From this point of view, the main goal of this work is to study role of cradle in culture of Kazakh and Turkish peoples, changes in its making, and its current state.

**Rationale for choosing the topic.** The main goal of our work is to study the role of cradle in the culture of the Kazakh and Turkish peoples, the changes in its creation, and its current state. There is a specific reason to include Kazakh and Turkish peoples as the subjects of our study. First of all, cradle is an integral part of the life of the Kazakh and Turkish peoples, dating back to the time of nomadic way of life. Secondly, Kazakh and Turkish peoples, living in two different geographical regions, have experienced two different historical and social conditions such as colonization and globalization, as well as political and economic processes such as industrialization. To investigate the impact of such various socio-historical and political conditions on national cultural heritage of the cradle and related cognitive and ethnocultural information in the people's memory is one of the most important and topical issues that have been currently neglected. For this reason, in this research work, we will focus as the object of study on cradle product, which is losing its value in the course of historical, social and economic processes common to the Kazakh and Turkish peoples.

### Materials and methods

A cradle is not just an everyday item, but also a cultural heritage, a sacred relic that transmits ethnic identity and values from generation to generation as an element of material culture. In this research article, we will determine the place of cradle in Kazakh and Turkish culture, and features of its past and present development. In this context, we will consider history and current state of Kazakh and Turkish woodworking art, as well as development changes through the prism of cradle product, which holds an important place in culture of both peoples. Also, to assess place of woodworking art, including cradle item, as a branch of folk crafts, in Kazakh and Turkish culture and the impact of colonization, globalization, industrialization processes on changes of production technology.

To achieve this goal of the research, we will be guided by ethnographic research method. Ethnography is a research method in the field of social sciences. An ethnographic focus is based on study of language and culture, or an individual or subject area related to history (Genzuke, 2003). Ethnographic research method investigates from four different perspectives: 1) historical 2) material; 3) social; 4) cognitive. These types of approaches are inter-related, however, according to the purpose of study, one of them is given a priority, and the others are used in combination (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). In our research, we will follow the second, material approach, studying people through their "material products and production methods, artifacts and works of art, tools and strategies for adapting to the environment" (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010: 54). Accordingly, through the cradle cultural relic common to Kazakh and Turkish peoples, we target worldview of these peoples and its change in accordance with modern trends and socio-historical conditions. In order to study history of cradle as a branch of woodworking art and its place in culture of Kazakh and Turkic peoples, nature of its use, we conducted a content analysis of audio and video recordings, photographs, and ethnographic research about cradle. According to Altheide (1987) ethnographic content analysis is necessary to verify, understand and document the theoretical connection to a particular problem. To identify theoretical connections, "it is necessary to study the text, audio and video materials and code them conceptually" (Altheide, 1987: 67). In our research, we were guided by this scientific opinion and conducted a content analysis of the materials related to cradle-making by Kazakh and Turkish peoples.

Based on the theoretical data collected on these thematic groups, we used observation and interview methods of ethnographic research to assess the current state of woodworking industry and art of cradle-making. Ethnographic research requires direct contact with a group of people. This is because people create, transmit, modify, abandon and renew cultural images of the group to which they belong to (Genzuke, 2003). That is, they can talk while observing the progress of certain activities (LeCompte & Schensul, 2010). In the course of our ethnographic research conducted in Kazakhstan and Turkey, we applied content analysis and interview methods. To be more precise, in the period between 2023-2024, we met with woodworking craftsmen engaged in the cities of Turkey as Ankara and Trabzon, as well as Almaty, Taraz in Kazakhstan, and got acquainted

with modern changes and current state of cradle-making technologies.

Based on the collected data, we studied the impact of historical, social and political-economic conditions such as colonization and globalization, industrialization on the current state of woodworking industry and cradle-making craft. We compared and linked the research findings with the data obtained during content analysis. As a result, we divided the data gathered during the research into the following conceptual thematic groups:

1. Ancient and modern techniques and cradle-making methods as a branch of Kazakh and Turkish woodworking art
2. Features of cradles decorating techniques and equipment of Kazakh and Turkish craftsmen
3. The place of cradle in history and culture of Kazakh and Turkish peoples: past and present

### Discussion and results

Provided that ethnic and cultural identity of each nation is connected with its worldview and environment, the uniqueness of Kazakh and Turkish peoples undoubtedly originates from ancient Turkic era. The centuries-long nomadic lifestyle of the Kazakh and Turkish peoples has been preserved not only in their language, but also in their culture, particularly in their customs and traditions, and their daily lives. Of course, such memories in cultural memory of the people may be developed or degraded depending on historical, social and political circumstances, however, cultural and spiritual core will not be destroyed (Оспанов, n.d.). Woodworking is a craft that has its special place in Kazakh and Turkish culture, has been handed down from generation to generation, and has not still lost its relevance. In general, tree was equated with a “savior”, “helper”, “means of communication” and even a “higher power” depending on its geographical location. “Some came to pray under the tree, while others tied a cloth to the tree and made a wish. And those who equated the tree with a higher power called it the Tree of Life” (Tolun, 2021: 289). Such belief and ease of wood use made it an integral part of everyday life.

Historians claim that Kazakh woodworking art dates back to the Saka-Sarmatian era and that the Besshatyr necropolis of the 5th century is a unique work of ancient architecture and construction art made of wood (Bekeshov, 2021). And Turkish people believe that the origin of their woodworking art dates back to the Hun era, linking it to artifacts found in Pazyryk burial mounds (Maden, 2010).

As can be seen, art of woodworking, which originated in ancient times, has developed and gained importance over time in lives of both peoples. The life of nomads, who moved to pastures in summer and to winter quarters in winter, required development of a rational and convenient model for storing and transporting things. Leather, fabric, felt, and wooden items were widely used in everyday life. Among them, wood was used in manufacture of household goods, from housing to furniture, dishes, musical instruments, and even vehicles and weapons (Primkulova, 2016). The Kazakh call people who make wooden items as “wood craftsmen” or “wood masters”, while Turkish call them “marangozlar”, and representatives of both nations especially respected the masters of this trade.

Folk craftsmen not only made household and everyday items from wood, but also learned how to decorate, embellish, carve exquisitely, hew artistically, cut, and to create intricate patterns on the surface of wood. Kazakh carpenters used poplar, maple, pine, apple, honeysuckle, pear, red birch depending on the geographical conditions. (Аршабеков & Шашенов, 2012). Turkish widely used beech, oak, maple, walnut, cypress, cherry trees (Bilge Yilmaz et al., n.d.). Masters used techniques such as sawing, engraving, carving, decoration (geometric, zoomorphic, plant-based) (Beydiz, 2017), (Бекешов & Бекенжанова, 2021). This craft was passed down from generation to generation in both nations. From father to son, not only the craft of making wooden equipment, but also a unique style and certain secrets of making such equipment were passed down. Among the Kazakhs, people who make some kind of skillful works of art from wood are praised as “able to make knots from wood”, while the status of a master is indicated by the saying “Usta işi her zaman belli olur” by the Turkish.

Traditional handicrafts, such as woodworking, are cultural heritage as a reflection of culture and traditions of the people in a certain region. A master’s work of art retains not only the material or spiritual needs of a person, but also the signs of his personal worldview (Yang et al., 2018). Considering that any person is a part of a large ethnic community, a carrier of its culture and knowledge, it is clear that the study of handicrafts can be a valuable source of information in recognizing the ethnocultural identity of a particular people. However, in today’s era of “industrialization and globalization, lifestyles and necessities have changed, values have changed, and the issue of economic efficiency, focus on quantity rather than quality has come to the



fore". Here, due to global changes, many Kazakh and Turkish handicraft traditions began to lose their sacred meaning. Over time, people are moving away not only from the meaning of individual ritual actions and material things associated with them, but also from understanding the sacredness of connection between nature and human life (Елеманова, 2012). As a result of industrialization, spiritual link between the object and the craftsman in woodworking tradition was broken, and "triumph of number becoming the triumph of uniformity" (Генон, 2011). It is said that from the moment a craftsman ceases to be an Artifex, he ceases to be a keeper and carrier of sacred knowledge and craft, and becomes only a copyist. (Оспанов, n.d.). For this reason, not only woodworking and wood imitation art common to Kazakh and Turkish peoples, but also carpenters and their handicrafts need to be protected and studied as cultural heritage. A cradle is a wooden bed designed to laying a baby in it. It is said "In the beliefs and understanding of the world formed in Turkic traditions, trees have had various meanings, symbolic, and mythological properties, "they associated every stage of human life with trees, "from cradle of willow to cradle of the earth" (Syzdykova & т.б., 2023:151). From this point of view, a cradle is not just a baby's bed, but firstly, it is a testimony of spiritual and cultural values, traditions, and worldview of the people, and secondly, as an integral part of woodworking craft, it can reflect development and change of that industry (Koshenova, 2014; Юмакаева, 2016). In addition, the cradle can be viewed in three different philosophical meanings, beyond its everyday domestic function:

1) *The cradle is the beginning of life.* Considering that the cradle is a child's first home, philosophically it represents the child's birth, safety, and care. The nomadic lifestyle did not allow for the transportation of a child with immature spine on horseback. For this reason, the Kazakh people cradled their children until they were 5 years old, while the Turkish, who had adopted a sedentary lifestyle earlier, cradled them until they were 3 years old. Also, the Kazakh belief that a child *is reborn in the besik 5 times* is probably a description of changes in the child's body (Mussa-Akhunov, 2019). Relatives took care to ensure that these changes would be safe and harmless to the child.

2) *Intergenerational bonds.* Among both Kazakh and Turkish, the cradle was passed down from father to son as an inheritance. After the child grew up, both peoples hung the cradle on a kerege (yurt's wall) instead of leaving it on the ground.

3) *The cradle is a symbol of upbringing and homeland.* The Kazakh proverb, "*Esik korgendi emes, besik korgendi al*", (Don't marry a woman who has been married before, but a girl who has been educated from her childhood respecting traditional values) refers to the idea that a marriageable young men should marry a girl from a well-educated family. In addition, the sayings "*El ishi – altyn besik*" (The homeland is a golden cradle), "*Aiel bir kolymen besikti, ekinshi kolymen alemdi terbetedi*" (A woman rocks the cradle with one hand, and the world with the other), convey the philosophical knowledge of the Kazakhs. However, we did not find any concepts among the Turkish that associate upbringing or birthplace with the cradle.

The three symbolic meanings of the cradle above correspond to the concepts of Dasein (being) and Sorge (care) in M. Heidegger's (1997) work "Being and Time". In his work, the scientist recognizes that care is not just an emotional or psychological state, but a fundamental part of human existence. That is, a person should take care not only of himself in life, but also of those around him, of their past and future.

The philosophical understanding of the Turkic peoples regarding the cradle also conveys this idea. That is, they take care of a still weak child, by placing him in a cradle, ensuring his health and peaceful sleep.

By hanging a vacant cradle on a kerege, on the one hand, they show respect and care for the ancestors who were using this cradle, and on the other hand, they know that another child will be put in that cradle in the future, and they hang the cradle on an honorable place and take care of it so that it can be safely handed over without breaking the connection between generations.

The cradle is not only used by Kazakh or Turkish peoples, but it has also taken an important place in the daily life of peoples living in different regions of Europe, Asia and America (Akkök, 2018). Certainly, the shape and function of a baby's bed will definitely vary depending on the region and lifestyle of the people. For example, in culture of indigenous Indians of America, special importance is attached to the cradle of a child. According to local beliefs, the cradle was considered not only a household item for placing a child to sleep in, but also an educational tool. Cradles were given symbolic ritual significance to preserve the spiritual and physical well-being of a child, "The Pawnee Indians decorated cradles with images of the morning star, believing that this symbol connected the baby to the universe and protected him during the first year of his life"

(Broughton, 2019: 75). Similarly, the cradle is of great importance in the culture of Turkic peoples, including Kazakhs and Turkish. Kazakh saying “*Tarbie tal besikken*” (Education begins in the (willow) cradle) and Turkish proverb “*Beşiği sallayan el dünyayı sallar*” (The hand that rocks the cradle rocks the world) can serve as evidence of what was mentioned earlier.

Here, the Kazakh proverb “*Tarbie tal besikken*” refers firstly to the need to educate a child from the moment he is placed in Besik (cradle), and secondly, it tells about the type of wood used to make besik. Early nomadic people had a very high level of connection with nature, and objects they used in their daily life were full of semantic meaning. Therefore, the choice of willow wood for making besik is not accidental for Kazakh people. Relying on the willow’s vitality and fast-acclimatizing properties, they considered it as a symbol of increasing wealth and fertility, as well as a protector against evil forces. The Turkish people also had their own beliefs about making cradles. For instance, the juniper tree was often chosen, believing that it has purifying power and as well protects against evil forces. At the same time, judging by abundance of branches of chestnut and juniper trees, there was superstitious belief that a family would have many children. Paying attention to the strength of chestnut wood and the fact that it does not break easily, it was believed that a child would have a strong character and a long life. Birch wood was not used in making cradles because it was believed that it could bring misfortune to the child (Çetin, 2018). In addition, Kazakh and Turkish craftsmen paid much attention to the ornament they used on cradles. As a result of reviewing the research related to cradle product of both nations, we noticed that cradles were decorated with plant-based ornaments. This is due, firstly, to the link between man and nature, and secondly, it is associated with perception of plants as a symbol of youth and growth (Çiller, 2022). That is, in making of a cradle, starting from the material from which it is made to the ornamentation applied to it, semantic value is given, all of this is drawn from the valuable experience of nomads about connection between nature and man. From this perspective, we consider the cradle, common to the Kazakh and Turkish peoples as a harbinger of education and culture passed down from generation to generation, a symbol of ethnic identity, and a valuable artifact, cultural heritage that can provide valuable information about the art of woodworking.

Ancient and modern techniques and methods of cradle-making as a branch of Kazakh and Turkish woodworking art.

For nomadic people, the cradle was a place where the baby could maintain safety, peace, hygiene, and communicate with mother and other family members. In addition, the cradle was tied to the saddle with special strings, allowing a child to go on a long journey without disturbing a baby’s sleep and peace (Юмакаева, 2016). For this reason, the artisans tried to design the structure of a cradle so that nothing could hinder the child, thinking about its convenience. It is made of different types of wood depending on the geographical features of each region of Kazakhstan and Turkey. But in both countries, its main parts have remained unchanged. As well as we found out that there are several types of cradles in both countries. Among the Kazakh people, they are divided into a ground cradle and a wind cradle (Figure 1), and among the Turkish people, they are divided into “suspended, blunt-legged and monolithic” (Çiller, 2022).

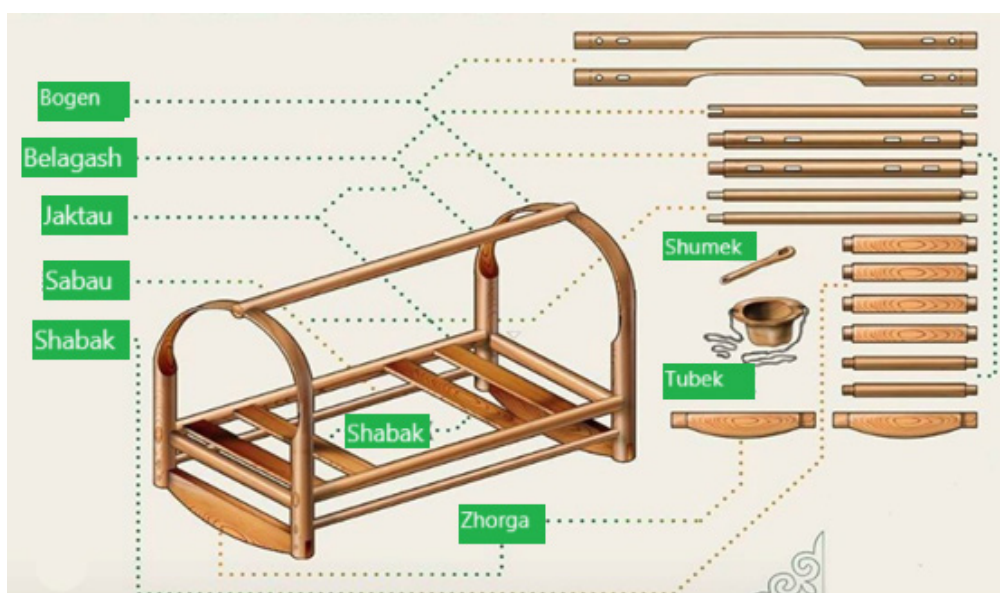
We have distinguished that there is no comprehensive study of Kazakh cradle-making technique compared to the Turkish. All research is only at the level of individual articles or subtopics. We could not find complete monographic works. And among the Turkish people, this issue has been studied quite well, there are several dissertations and large research works on features of cradle-making technology of each region. Policy of colonization experienced by the Kazakh people, along with its history and language, also had an impact on its culture. As a result, the people have forgotten their centuries-old traditions and culture (Teğin, 2024). Under the influence of such historical and social processes, the woodworking art and valuable information related to it were forgotten. However, we believe that it is still possible to update the information about woodworking art, including cradle-making techniques, and its regional features, by conducting an in-depth ethnographic study. We have gathered some information about the peculiarities of Kazakh cradle-making art from available research and from the information obtained through interviews with cradle makers during the ethnographic research.

Since ancient times, Kazakh woodworking craftsmen have mastered the ways of woodworking, creating and processing it for their own needs. Woodworkers would prepare materials they needed beforehand, at least six months in advance. A tree was cut in spring or early summer, when the tree

was pliable and juicy. When choosing a willow tree, special attention was paid to its length and thickness. Curved or branched areas were specially polished, smoothed and shaped. “After the wood was selected and cut, it was dried in two different ways: in the shade (mostly used in regions with very hot summers); in the sun (mostly used in northern regions). Specialists used the technology of tying together 20-30 trees at once and drying them by changing their place after a while” (Оспанов, n.d: 114). This allowed the wood to dry and straighten evenly. As for the works of Turkish artisans, we found out that in addition to soaking in water, they are dried in specially controlled areas and in special ovens. The water-soaking method involved soaking the wood in water for several weeks to remove sap and resin, and then pulled from water and dried.

This method increased strength of the wood and prevented it from cracking. In addition, specially controlled drying sheds were built for uniform drying. Later, it was dried in special ovens, which helped to save time (Maden, 2010). The craftsmen highly valued completely dried wood, which was further processed and used as needed. Once the wood was ready, they began making the necessary items. One of them is the cradle product that we took for our research object today.

The cradle is made of different types of wood by Turkish and Kazakh peoples, depending on the region, although its main parts remain unchanged. It is also covered and decorated with various precious stones, depending on the customer's social status. The main components of a “besik” in Kazakh culture are as follows (Figure 1):



**Figure 1** – The main components of a “besik” in Kazakh culture  
(Note: photo taken from vk.com.islam\_kz page)

Here:

1) *Bogtau* (front and bottom) – the two heads of a cradle;

2) *Belagash* (also called *arkalyk*, *arys* in different regions) – a part attached to two heads, 70-75 cm long, designed to lift a cradle or for a nursing mother to lean on;

3) *Jaktau* – four pieces of wood that form the basis of the lower part of a cradle:

4) *Shabak* – four boards, equal to the width of a cradle, connecting the heads;

5) *Sabau* – two timbers connecting the lower parts of the heads;

6) *Zhorga* (foot) – the base that ensures a cradle's swaying, is shaped like a boat:

7) *Tubek* – a container that is easy to remove and ensures the cleanliness of a baby. In the past, it was made in the form of a felt bag, but later, baked clay or glass containers began to be placed in it.

8) *Shumek* – a part made so that a child's excrement does not spread, but flows into the *tubek*. Earlier artisans made it from sheep bone, later from



wood, and nowadays from plastic. In the old days, artisans boiled sheep's long bones lengthily, cleaned the inside and excess meat, and then carved it into shape. The shumek for boys and girls had different shapes (Юмакаева, 2016).

This exact structure of cradles has been preserved to this day. We went to Baraholka bazaar in Almaty and talked to besik makers. Judging by the number of places selling besik in the bazaar, we witnessed that the Kazakhs have preserved the cradle culture to some extent than the Turkish. Cradle sellers said that now there is a demand for besik, and that often the girl's parents buy them as gifts for their nieces and nephews' besik-party. According to the requirements of the current market, the price of besik ranges from 25,000 to 150,000 KZT, or even more expensive. Depending on the price, the material used to make besik also varies. They say that the boards of cheap besik are made of wood types such as chipboard, MDF. The more expensive ones are made of birch and oak. Although chipboard and

MDF materials used in manufacture of besik which are economically efficient, the question arises as to whether they are safe for children. This is because it has been scientifically proven that formaldehyde, which is used to bond wood chips to produce chipboard, releases toxic emissions, which leads to dangerous diseases (Заярова, 2014). When we asked the sellers what kind of material besik are sold more, they said that the cheaper ones sell best. Those who choose cheap besik say that they take it only as a symbolic item, and that the baby will be put in besik during besik ceremony, only to perform a ritual, and afterwards it may not be used as a cradle.

Moreover, as a result of an ethnographic review of Kazakh cradle-making masters, we found out that in response to competitive demands, they have now invented modern, modified cradle types such as "Folding besik" and "Smart besik". One of them is a folding besik, invented by craftsman from Taraz city, Pernebek Akhmetbekov. Mr. Pernebek has now obtained a patent for this besik (Figure 2).



**Figure 2** – Folding besik

(Note: photo taken from the personal collection of P. Akhmetbekov)

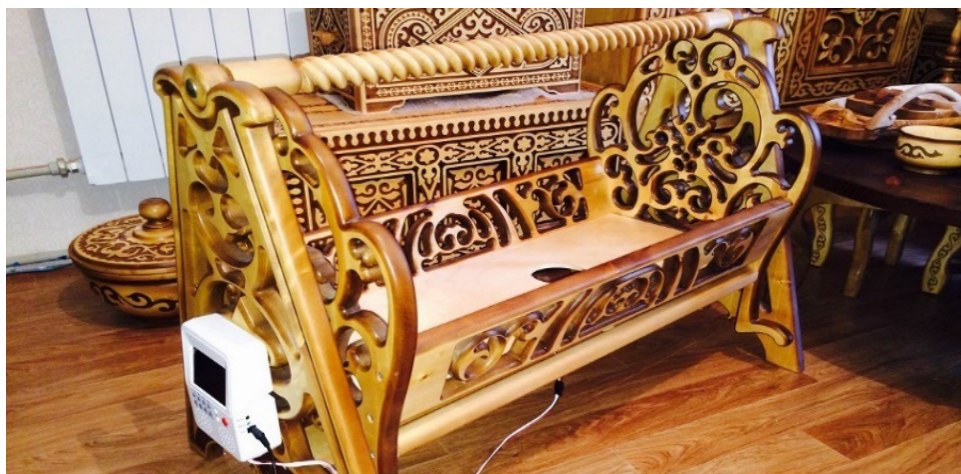
As you can see from Figure 2, besik is very small when folded. The craftsman says that its weight does not exceed 7 kilograms. According to the craftsman, this type of besik is very convenient to carry, and it is also very lightweight. MDF material was used to lighten the weight of the besik. Before using this material, he visited various regulatory bodies and studied its quality and effect on a child. He started to make besik only after receiving a positive decision and permission from the relevant authorities. The craftsman says that there is currently a demand for these besik, but not much. The besik contains all the components inherited from our ancestors.

Besides, there is also another new type of cradle is "Smart besik". As the name suggests, one of the features of these besik is in their integration with a technical solution. That is, the besik rocks the baby on its own and you can also turn on a lullaby using a special device. The inventor of this besik is a man named Serikbol Shaimardan. We did not have the opportunity to speak with Mr. Serikbol while writing our research paper. However, after studying his various interviews about "Smart besik" (inbusiness.kz, azattyq.org, massaget.kz), we identified the following issues. In his interviews, Serikbol Shaymardan mentioned that it took him six years



to create this besik. The besik does not just sway, but also signals a baby's body temperature or crying or defecating. What is more, they say that since the besik operates on a voltage of 36 volts, it won't harm the baby. In this context, it is natural to wonder whether the frequency of the besik's vibration is detrimental to the baby. A lot of research has

been done on this issue by Mr. Serikbol, and finally, according to the research by Japanese scientists, it was determined that the frequency of rocking a baby should not exceed 1.8 vibrations per second. The frequency of "Smart besik" does not exceed the frequency of rocking a baby in a mother's womb (Figure 3).



**Figure 3** – "Smart Besik"  
(Note: photo taken from inbusiness.kz)

Nowadays, cradle manufacturers have further improved and developed the technology of making this smart cradle. We talked to the creators of "Smart besik", a three-in-one device (that is, it can be rocked automatically, it can be rocked manually

and has a device that plays lullabies). They reported that their cradles are in high demand, and that there are as well orders from abroad. The difference with this besik is that it can be rocked either automatically or manually (Figure 4).



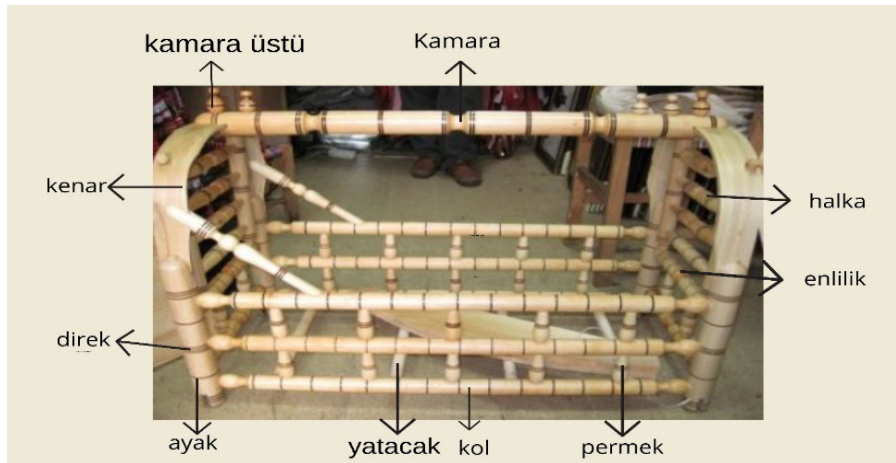
**Figure 4** – Three in one "Smart besik"  
(Note: photo taken from the personal collection of the creators of Three in one "Smart besik")

The cradle, which can rock a baby for up to 90 minutes without stopping, functions at five different speeds, from slow to fast. According to craftsmen, besik, which is made monolithically from oak

and birch, is decorated in various designs according to the customer's wishes. This will be discussed in the next section. The types of cradles we mentioned above, such as "Folding besik" and "Smart besik"

are certainly, products modified to meet modern requirements. But the question arises as to how much these types of besik preserve the ethno-cultural information about the cradles left by our ancestors as a relic that occupies a prominent place in Kazakh culture. We are to analyze this issue by comparing it with the place of cradle in Turkish culture and its current state.

The components of the cradle of Turkish people are similar to those of Kazakh people (Figure 5). They are 4 direk, 6 kol, 1 kamara, 4 enlilik, 2 alka, 20 permek, 5 yatacak, 2 kenar, 2 ayak, 5 kamara üstlüğü (Yıldırımış, 2017). Only cradles of Turkish people have a high frame (kol). In the Kazakh besik, the bogen is a whole, while of the Turkish, it consists of kenar and direk.



**Figure 5** – The main components of a cradle in Turkish culture  
(Note: photo taken in the “Güvenilir Marangoz” workshop in Ankara)

Nowadays, Kazakh and Turkish craftsmen try to preserve this structure of the cradle. Along with the culture of putting a baby in a cradle by the Turkish, the cradle itself is disappearing, and the demand is decreasing. Information we received during conversations with Turkish carpenters and research articles on this topic are a testament to it (Koshenova, 2014; Yıldırımış, 2017; Çetin, 2018). In the course of ethnographic research, we visited workshops “Çakırlar

marganoz”, “Güvenilir Marangoz” in the city of Ankara and met with the carpenters there. Craftsmen in Ankara said that there is currently no demand for cradles in urban areas. They emphasized that there would be one or two orders for a gift or a museum. In addition, they say there is currently an increased demand for small toy cradles for young children (Figure 6). They are also sold as souvenirs in places visited by foreign tourists.



**Figure 6** – Small toy cradles sold as souvenirs for young children and tourists  
(Note: the photo on the left was taken at the “Çakırlar marganoz” workshop in Ankara, the photo on the right is from the personal collection of a craftsman named Osman at this workshop)



We visited “Trabzon Marangozlar Ve Mobilyacılar çarşısı” (Trabzon market of woodworkers and furniture manufacturers) in the city of Trabzon and talked to the woodworkers there. Carpenters in Trabzon also reported that there is very low demand for cradles. According to Rasim Dogan, a

craftsman who works in one of the woodworking workshops, cradles are mostly purchased by villagers. We witnessed that mostly modern child beds are sold in cradle selling markets (Figure 7). And we saw that there are very few places that sell ordinary cradles.



**Figure 7** – A cradle selling market in Trabzon  
(Note: collected by the author of the article during ethnographic research)

Cradle makers said that in big cities, along with the cradle product itself, tradition of placing a baby in a cradle is disappearing. At present, the custom of placing a baby in a cradle is mostly practiced only in rural areas. Most of those who order cradles are people who respect national culture, says the master. In addition, Rasim Dogan expressed the opinion that woodworking is a business inherited from his great-grandfather, and that they will do their best to preserve the cradles that tell the history of the nation.

*Cradle decoration techniques and equipping features by Kazakh and Turkish craftsmen*

In general, the Turkic people believed that ev-

erything has a symbolic meaning. For example, although decoration of a cradle was at the discretion of each master, there was an unwritten law that was observed according to the worldview and beliefs of each nation. For instance, each Kazakh ornament had a specific purpose. They even divided into ornaments for men, women, or children, to be placed on hats and hems of clothing (Болатбек, 2020). Probably due to the belief associated with the nomadic way of life, a baby’s cradle is often decorated with plant-based motifs (Figure 8). Which in turn related to the belief that a child placed in the cradle will grow and prosper (Бесік жасау өнері, 2015).



**Figure 8** – Turkish (left) and Kazakh (right) cradles with plant-based ornaments and patterns  
(Note: photos taken from [ozeldekorasyon.com](http://ozeldekorasyon.com), [massaget.kz](http://massaget.kz))

Although modern cradles still retain such plant-based ornaments, we have noticed that the authors give free rein to their ideas and imagination and decorate them in various designs. As known, in Kazakh cognition, each ornament has specific use (Ерманова & Кәкімова, 2024), (Қожабаев, 2015). According to researchers, every Kazakh ornament has its place. There are even ornaments that are applied to items for men and women, girls and boys, as well as ornaments that are placed below or above the waist. Nowadays, these ornaments are being used inappropriately. For example, “ornaments to be worn on hats are placed on trouser legs or boots”. The so-called “it kuiryk (dog tail)” pattern has never been used on hats. Behind this lies the superstition that “do not let the enemy be above your chest”. This pattern “was often embroidered on the hem of men’s trousers with intention of “let your enemy be humbled” (Қожабаев, 2015: 23). At the same time, the author notes that there is an ornament and a pattern, and that ornament is a reflection of thinking, and by looking at it one can tell your origin or tribe. And they claim that a pattern is used for decorative purposes. Based on the author’s opinion, we found

out that modern cradles have more patterns that are purely decorative than meaningful ornaments. By Pernebek Akhmetbekov from Taraz, who was interviewed during the ethnographic research, he said that he had not studied meaning of ornaments and patterns placed on the cradle. The craftsman said that he adds various large carvings to lighten the weight of a cradle. The cradle sellers at Barakholka bazaar also said that they do not pay attention to this issue and mostly focus on its beauty and wishes of customers. From this, we can see that our ornaments are losing their original place and sacred meaning, valuable information power that conveys the worldview of our ancestors. Various technically advanced machines used in the decoration of modern cradles give the author creative freedom. Craftsmen used to apply chisels and sharp knives, and carving wood was a very complicated job (Ахмет, 2024). Modern technological solutions have alleviated this problem. Probably this is the reason, why modern cradles are decorated with patterns of flags, baiterek (“Tree of Life”), shanyrak (main backbone part of the yurt that resembles a blue sky), various wishes and name inscriptions of a baby (Figure 9).



**Figure 9** – The type of patterns used on modern cradles

(Note: the first photo on the left is from P. Akhmetbekov, the middle and third photos are from the personal collection of the creators of three in one “Smart besik”)

There is no dedicated research identifying the ornamental patterns related to cradles, which has led to the improper use of certain ornaments. Through a review of works on Kazakh ornamentation, we identified the following patterns suitable for children’s items:

“*Qoshqar Muyiz*” (*Ram’s Horn*) is one of the most commonly used ornament types. It symbolizes prosperity, strength, and power. In the worldview of Turkic peoples, the ram’s horn also has protective qualities against the evil eye. “The graphic arche-

type of the ram’s horn represents strength, divine gift, masculinity (including fertility), and, simultaneously, the mark of a warrior. It is mostly associated with the masculine principle...” (Шайгозова және Наурызбаева, 2003: 134). Based on this perspective, it is most appropriate to decorate besik for boys with the qoshqar muyiz (ram’s horn) motif. For girls’ besik, the “double horn” variant is recommended. This is because the double horn flower pattern symbolizes the peaceful and harmonious state of the earth (Шайгозова және Наурызбаева, 2003:



134). This aligns with the Turkic understanding of women as the cornerstone of the family.

“*Qusmoyin*” (*Bird’s Neck*) is a type of ornament often applied to the edges of items or clothing. It carries its own unique meaning and semiotics. “In general Turkic mythopoetics, the bird symbolizes freedom, happiness, and represents benevolent forces” (Шайғозова және Наурызбаева, 2003: 138).

“*Asha Tuyak*” and “*Attaban*” (*Split Hoof and Horse’s Hoof*) are patterns associated with masculine elements and carry symbolic meanings. Since ancient times, the horse has symbolized the sun and life. Researchers note that “the perception of the horse as a solar symbol is vividly reflected in the headdress of the Saka warrior (Issyk burial mound)” (Шайғозова және Наурызбаева, 2003: 138). Ornaments related to horses, such as “horse hoof” or “split hoof”, signify wealth and material well-being. From this perspective, such ornaments are deemed more appropriate for decorating boys’ besik.

“*Ai Gul*” and “*Aishyk Gul*” (*Moon Flower and crescent flower*) are ancient ornamental patterns associated with Tengriism. They reflect beauty and aesthetics in the people’s worldview. Nomads worshipped the moon and performed various rituals related to it. Researchers state that the moon “is connected with femininity” (Шайғозова және Наурызбаева, 2003: 126) citing examples of female names derived from the moon. However, we believe such distinctions are irrelevant. In both Kazakh and Turkish cultures, the moon holds symbolic significance. There are names inspired by the moon for both girls and boys. For instance, the name of Abulkhair Khan’s son, Ayshuak Khan, as well as names like Aysultan and Aytuar for boys, support this claim.

“*Zhuldyz*” (*Star*) ornament symbolizes light, eternity, and aspiration. In the nomadic worldview and daily life, celestial bodies, including stars, served as guides and navigational aids. Among the most commonly referenced are the North Star (Temirkazyk) and the Morning Star (Sholpan). Additionally, in folk beliefs, stars are thought to bring happiness and good fortune. Therefore, patterns related to stars can be applied to a child’s besik with the intention of wishing them luck, good fortune, and a clear path in life.

“*Tumarsha*” (*Amulet*) is considered a protective talisman that shields against the evil eye, malevolent forces, and ensures open paths. This triangular design is deeply symbolic: “An upward-pointing triangle often represents masculine energy, while a downward-pointing triangle symbolizes femi-

nine energy” (Шайғозова және Наурызбаева, 2003: 130). This pattern can be applied to cradles or items used by children as a blessing for protection and well-being.

“*Shynzhyr*” (*Chain*) is a motif with positive symbolism. In traditional beliefs, the chain symbolizes unity in life, kinship, and the bond of a married couple (Тоғанбек, 2008). Incorporating this pattern into a cradle’s design expresses a wish for the child raised in a besik to grow up connected to their family, to live in harmony and unity, and to maintain close, caring relationships with siblings and relatives.

Other ornamental patterns like “*Qusmurin*” (Bird’s Beak), “*Su*” (Water), “*Tau*” (Mountain), “*Balykkoz*” (Fish Eye), “*Kyzgaldak*” (Tulip), “*Shenber*” (Circle), and “*Shyrmauyk*” (Vine) are also appropriate. Each Kazakh ornament carries symbolic meaning, but not all are suitable for children’s cradles.

For instance, ornamental patterns such as “*Itquiryq*” (dog’s tail) or “*Segizdik*” (infinity), often applied to the edges of clothing or items. In Kazakh culture, the dog cult is seen as a mediator between the dead and the living, as researchers Шайғозова және Наурызбаева (2003), Кажгали улы, (2004) state. Additionally, according to Qojabaev (2015), this ornament is only applied to the hem of slit pants. In this regard, it can be observed that the today’s use of the “*Itquiryq*” (dog’s tail) pattern on besik is inappropriate. The Synar muyiz (single horn) ornament also has negative symbolism, as horns usually grow in pairs. A single horn signifies loneliness. Kazhgali uly (2004) links this with the aforementioned segizdik (infinity). Ornamental patterns like the Zhylanbas (snakehead), Qarga tuiaq (crow’s claw) and Ormekshi (spider) also carry negative symbolism, as they are believed to be associated with the world of the dead and the living. Another point worth mentioning is the frequent depiction of butterflies on besik covers for girls today. Aytbaeva (2006), who studied the ethnolinguistic features of cradle songs, notes that Kazakh people never equated their children with short-lived creatures like butterflies. In nature, butterflies live only up to two weeks, and some species only live for two or three days. From this perspective, it is considered inappropriate to use butterfly images on cradle covers for decorative purposes today.

The Turkish culture also features cradle decoration patterns tied to ancient worldviews. These decoration patterns are predominantly geometric patterns:

*Göz (Eye)* – The Turkish believe this pattern protects against evil intentions. “It is depicted as a triangle, rhombus, rectangle, cross, or star, with the rhombus being the most common form” (Erbek, 2002: 128).

*Daire (Circle)* – symbolizes infinity. It represents universal order and the unity of living and non-living beings. Additionally, “placing a triangle or square inside a circle signifies time and motion” (Çaycı, 2017: 61).

*Üçgen (Triangle)* – this motif is formed by connecting straight lines into a triangle. Researchers interpret it as representing human consciousness. Its wide base narrowing upward symbolizes resilience, balance, and lofty aspirations (Çaycı, 2017).

*Kare (Square)* – “the four corners of the square symbolize the four primary elements of nature—fire, air, water, and earth – as well as the four cardinal directions – east, west, north, and south” (Çaycı, 2017: 68).

*Zikzak (Zigzag)* – Made up of broken line systems, the zigzag pattern is often used to decorate cradle edges and frames. It symbolizes the coexistence of good and evil in life and conveys the message of resilience and determination in overcoming challenges (Çaycı, 2017).

*Küpe (Earring)* – a significant accessory for Anatolian women. “It is derived from the Latin word meaning “small mouth”. Earrings are associated with motifs related to childbirth and reproduction. Young girls who wish to marry used to wear earrings to express their desires” (Erbek, 2002: 70), as researchers state. From this perspective, these motifs would likely be used on cradles made specifically for girls upon special order. This is because researchers as Erbek (2002) say that cradles with this motif are very rare.

*“X” Motifi (“X” Motif)* – Created by intersecting two diagonal lines, this pattern is used in Anatolia, Azerbaijan, Central Asia, and Eastern Siberia as a talisman against the evil eye (Qurbanov, 2013: 30).

We also discovered that Turkish artisans no longer strictly adhere to traditional motifs in cradle-making. Instead, they commonly incorporate elements from the Turkish Republic’s flag or Quranic verses.

In addition, in regions where the use of cradles has been preserved, plant patterns are still carved. When we visited the city of Trabzon for ethnographic research, we witnessed the process of making a cradle on special order. Craftsmen placed the flag of Turkey on one end of the cradle, prayer on the other

end, and inscription “Bisimillah” on the back. In the decoration of this cradle, patterns of plant origin were used. As a result, a pretty cradle was created from the fusion of past and present cultural knowledge. Rasim Dogan noted that such cradles are often made only to order for gifting. The master expressed his confidence that as long as there are people who understand the value of the cradle, cradle culture will not disappear completely (Figure 10).

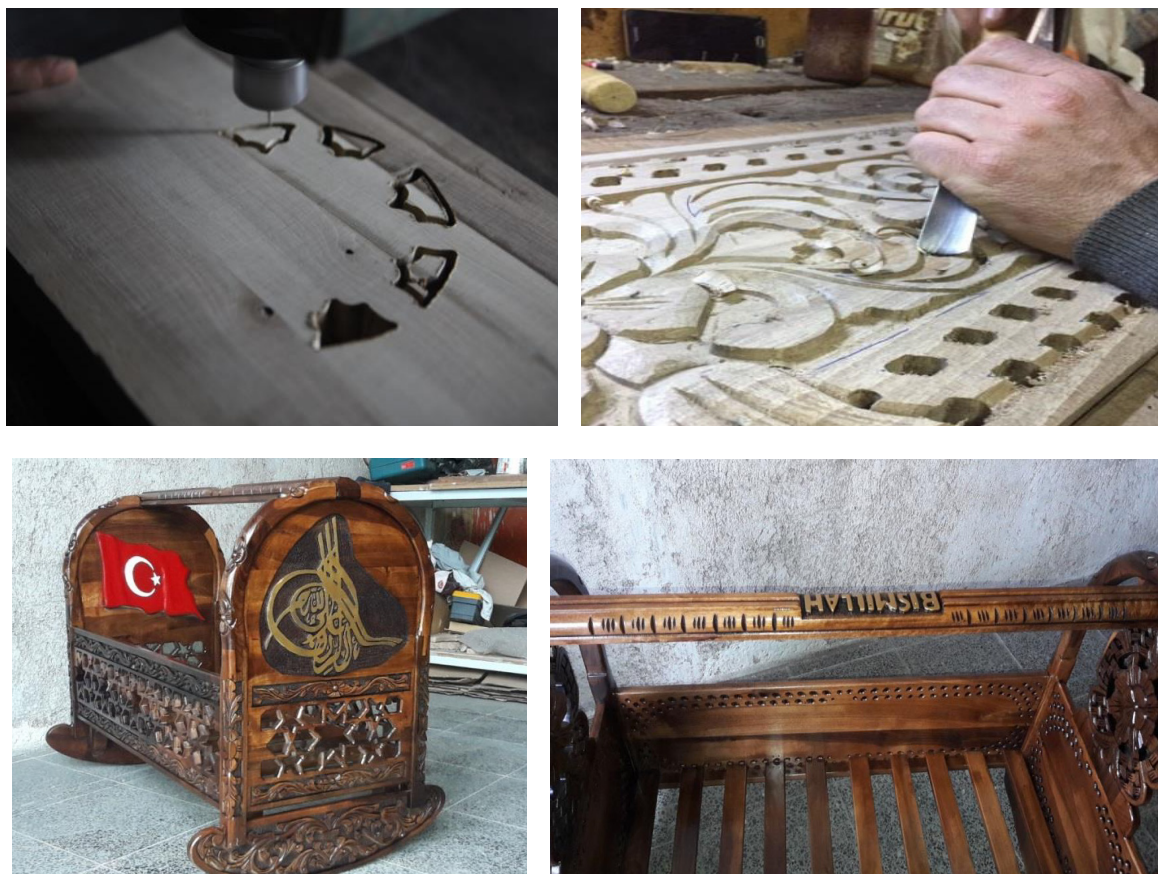
In addition, earlier craftsmen tried to use more natural dyes when painting the wood of a cradle. Kazakh besik makers used plant roots and ochre to paint wood, while Turkish people obtained natural dyes by boiling oak resin and plant extracts (Yıldırımış, 2017). Nowadays, natural dyes are not used at all. No one is checking the quality of paints used on children’s furniture, including cradles. There are countless scientific studies around the world on how harmful the paints used on children’s furniture can be (Madsen et al., 2008; (Senitkova, 2017). It is also possible to use low-quality paints to reduce the price of cradles. We believe that this problem should be the subject of separate research.

*The place of cradle in history and culture of the Kazakh and Turkish peoples: past and present*

The cradle is a symbol of national history, traditions, and the worldview associated with the environment. Ricoeur (2015), in his work studying the relationship between memory, history, and forgetting, discusses both individual and collective memory. He argues that collective memory, along with various artifacts and traditions, helps preserve collective culture under the conditions of historical changes. In this sense, material culture is analyzed as the primary form of our acceptance, preservation, or forgetting of history and traditions. Ricoeur (2015) states that memory is not an individual process; it is connected to the social and cultural context and related to various forms of material culture. Material culture can include monuments, books, and architecture, or any form that transmits knowledge and values from generation to generation. When oral traditions are forgotten or altered, material culture becomes an important means of preserving collective memory. These objects not only serve as repositories of information but also connect a particular cultural community to its history and culture. From this perspective, the cradle in Kazakh and Turkish culture is a cultural heritage that has preserved the information in the collective memory of ancient nomads and transmitted it to the present day. When the cradle object is preserved, the cultural knowledge of

the Kazakh and Turkic peoples related to it is also preserved. For instance, by preserving and protecting the cradle as a cultural artifact, beyond the information about woodworking and the craftsmanship of cradle making, we preserve these nations'

philosophical understanding of the cradle, lullabies, ethnocultural linguistic units within them, rituals, and customs related to putting a child in the cradle, and all the traditions associated with it, which can be passed on to future generations.



**Figure 10** – The process of cradle-making on order by Turkish craftsmen  
(Note: photos taken from [ozeldekorasyon.com](http://ozeldekorasyon.com))

In this regard, it is important to note that the Kazakh people never gave away three items, even during difficult times as long periods of war, nor left them behind in abandoned settlements; if they became too old, they would burn them. Even the ashes weren't thrown anywhere. These three items were: the besik, the black cauldron (Qara Qazan), (main backbone part of the yurt that resembles a blue sky) (Shanyraq) (Малибаева & Екимбаева 2021; Исмаилова және т.б. 2022). The inclusion of the besik among these holy items demonstrates its sacredness in Kazakh culture. Ismailova et al. (2022) refer to a statement by A. Abubakir regarding the besik: "The besik is not just the symbol of a single household but the united well-being, aspirations,

and future of the entire nation. There is a strong belief in that, as long as there is a besik, the prosperity of its descendants and the bright future of the nation are guaranteed". This statement indicates that the besik is not only a symbol of one family but has reached a symbolic level representing the future of the entire nation.

Because of that, by the ancient cognition of the Kazakh and Turkish, the cradle is considered as a sacred relic of every family, which is passed down from father to child, connecting generations. "People considered the cradle to be a sacred place that protects from mythological dangers such as devils, albasty-demons, ubbe-water elf etc. in their own concepts and beliefs" (Ноғайбекқызы



& Дәрібаев, 2024: 175). That is why our people paid special attention to placing a baby in a besik and held a special besik ceremony. In the past, with the belief that a baby can be cast an evil spell, besik party was celebrated only among the villagers, with the bride's relatives. In this regard, N. Uali (2021, p. 35) comments that "If toy-tomalak (party – feast) is a collective name for general parties, then tomalak toy (feast) refers to shildekhana (marking the birth of a baby by holding festivity three days after the delivery), besik toy, a child riding on ashamai (a special child saddle, providing safe riding), sundet (circumcision) toy, kelin (bride) toy, celebrated by families within the village or among villages". Nowadays, we can see that culture of celebrating besik toy has also changed. A besik toy is now marked with participation of 200-

300 guests. Moreover, the early nomadic people had many other beliefs regarding the cradle. For example, according to the Kazakh, "one should not rock an empty cradle", "do not let the besik stay outside as dusk falls", "do not step on besik", "do not light it on fire", and even hang the very old besik in shanyrak (main backbone part of the yurt that resembles a blue sky) and did not throw it in the trash. Within the underlying meaning of each of these prohibitions lies a great philosophy intertwined with the worldview of the people. For example, it was believed that if you rock an empty besik, if you set it on fire, you will be childless. Today, we seem to have lost the cult meaning associated with besik along with it, as there is a lot of information about cradles lying in the garbage on the media pages (Figure 11).



**Figure 11** – Photo of cradles lying in the garbage taken from the media  
(Note: photos taken from syrboyi.kz, vk.com)

It is a big problem for Kazakhs that besik which used to be hanging at the honorable place or shanyrak, now lying in the garbage. This is probably due to the fact that besik is recognized as a must-have item for a besik toy. P. Akhmetbek, who was interviewed during ethnographic research, told the following story. A family bought a besik from a craftsman and called him back to return the besik after two or three days under the pretense that "our daughter does not need it, as she said she is not going to put her baby in a besik". Then Mr. Pernebek expressed his resentment by saying that the besik was only used to show off during the besik toy as a gift from the bride's family, performed a ritual, and returned it after the besik toy was over. The concept of the Kazakhs that "the great grandchild is lying in the besik which was of his great grandfather's" allows

to sort out many issues. It is a proof that the modern tradition that a baby's mother's relatives should supply with besik is a fabrication. The researchers wonder, "How reasonable is it for the Kazaks to wait for the besik of their offspring from others, to look forward to "what will the bride's relatives bring?" (Ноғайбекқызы & Дәрібаев, 2024: 178). The cradle used to be inherited and passed down from ancestor to the next generation. The modern tradition of giving besik is only a way to show off wealth and socioeconomic status. Along with the tradition of presenting the besik, we see a change in attitude towards its accessories. Because in the past, Kazakhs "When a newborn was first placed in a besik, they would put a hat so that he would be respected by the people, chapana (a coat worn over clothes) so that he would be a hero, a whip, a spear, a sword and



bridle so that he would be a skillful man to defend his country (Mazhikyzy & Kalshabaeva, 2019). As well as they would cover the chapman of the sleepest person in the village so that the child would sleep peacefully (Ноғайбекқызы & Дәрібаев, 2024). That is, every equipment of besik had a symbolic meaning and connotation. Nowadays, besik is readily equipped, which you can choose according to your budget. In this regard, we can see that not only the besik itself, but other ethnocultural knowledge related to it is being forgotten.

A besik is a place where mother and baby can bond, listen to lullabies and can be educated through. The “Smart besik”, which has become a current fad, breaks that bond between mother and child. A baby needs to hear a lullaby from his mother’s lips, not from a special device. Researchers note that “A child who feels that his mother is next to him is less afraid of anything, and falls into a carefree sweet sleep (Ноғайбекқызы & Дәрібаев, 2024: 180). In other words, a baby feels the kindness and warmth of his mother’s lullaby.

We have also observed a change of cultural understanding regarding the cradle in the lives of the Turkish people. As we mentioned above, wooden cradles (*aḥşap beşik*, *tahta beşik*) were highly valued in Turkish culture. The Turkish proverbs “Beşiği sallayan eli öper”, “Güzele bakmak sevaptır, beşiğine bakmak da” show the unique place of the cradle in Turkish culture. However, our ethnographic research conducted in Turkey showed that among some young people today, a stereotype is formed that only families with poor economic conditions buy baby cradles. For instance, Rasim Dogan, a craftsman from Trabzon, mentioned that people’s attitudes towards the use of old cradles have changed. That is, they say old wooden cradles are often purchased by people from low-income, rural areas. We also noticed a similar fact in a website ([media4democracy.org](https://media4democracy.org)) post by Çiller Kardaş, a graduate student of the Faculty of Literature, Department of Art History, who is conducting research on the place and use of the cradle in Turkish culture. In his ethnographic study of 50 villages, he said that only 65 families used cradles, which he argued was too few. Some of them are said to have not used the cradle and have simply kept it in the attic of their house. He commented that by doing so, they expressed their respect for history and culture of the people. However, according to Çiller Kardaş, it is disappointing that it is now seen as a property of economically disadvantaged families rather than a herald of culture. Therefore, if the cradle is not taken seriously and

measures are not taken to protect it right now, the researcher says, in a few years the cradle may completely disappear as a cultural heritage. The fact that the cradle, once a family heirloom, is now limited in its scope of use to a child’s toy, a souvenir sold at tourist attractions, or a custom-made item is clearly saying a lot. Of course, based on these viewpoints, we cannot say that the cradle has disappeared as a cultural heritage throughout Turkey. There are villages and families that have preserved their material culture and related customs and traditions that reflect their ethnic identity. To identify them, it is necessary to conduct a large-scale ethnographic study at the state level or at the level of a single region. The cradle connects us to steppe culture, helping us to respect and preserve our traditions, ethnocultural identity.

## Conclusion

Cradle, as a branch of the woodworking art of Kazakh and Turkic peoples, is a relic that conveys not only ethnocultural information related to the woodworking culture of folk lore, but also knowledge and understanding of our ancestors who lived at that time and steppe culture connected with the nomadic way of life. In our study, we examined the cradle as a branch of Kazakh and Turkic woodworking art and considered it in three different aspects: 1) ancient and modern techniques and methods of cradle-making as a branch of Kazakh and Turkic woodworking art; 2) the peculiarities of cradle decoration techniques and equipment by Kazakh and Turkic craftsmen; 3) the place of the cradle in history and culture of Kazakh and Turkic peoples: past and present. For this purpose, in our research, we used the ethnographic research method, including content analysis and interview methods. Using the method of content analysis, we reviewed ancient techniques and methods of cradle-making as a branch of ancient Kazakh and Turkic woodworking art, from various ethnographic works and dissertations, and research articles. In addition, we had a free-form conversation with Kazakh and Turkic woodworkers, including cradle makers. As a result, we found out that the culture of cradle-making is relatively well preserved among the Kazakh people compared to the Turkic people. In the cities of Ankara and Trabzon, where we conducted ethnographic research, we distinguished that there is a low demand for cradles, for this reason, they are made only to order, and instead of ordinary cradles, they are made as toys and souvenir cradles that are sold at tourist areas. Noting

that, in addition to ordinary *besik*, Kazakh people have developed such types as “Folding *besik*” and “Smart *Besik*”, we interviewed the craftsmen who make them. We focused on the features of their production. When it comes to the peculiarities of cradle decoration techniques and equipment by Kazakh and Turkish craftspeople, we have discovered that decoration of cradles has undergone some changes in line with the times. For example, we have identified that modern Kazakh artisans decorate *besik* not with meaningful ornamental carvings inherited from our ancestors, but with patterns that are applied for decorative beauty. It turned out that even if they used carvings, they did not pay much attention to their meaning and appropriacy of applying. For example, the author of “Folding *besik*” expressed the opinion that he made the carvings to lighten the weight of *besik*. *Besik* sellers in Almaty’s Baraholka bazaar also said that they would make any ornament according to the customer’s request. This is a manifestation of gradual separation from the sacredness of ornaments, which express the Kazakh worldview connected with the early nomadic lifestyle and steppe culture. We have identified that in cradle decoration by Turkish people, plant motifs left over from the old Turkic culture have been preserved to some certain extent. However, it should not go unmentioned that there is some innovation in the design of Turkish cradles. Some Turkish cradles are engraved with prayers, *surahs*, and the Turkish flag, in the belief that they would protect the baby from evil eye and spoilage. In the section entitled *The Place of Cradle in History and Culture of the Kazakh and Turkic Peoples: Past and Present*, we focused primarily on the place of cradles in modern society. We determined that while Kazakh people have always cherished *besik* and hung it in a very honorable place or *shanyrak*, now some *besik* are thrown away. This was attributed to the lack of understanding and appreciation of dignity of *besik* by representatives of modern society. At the same time, we explained that the modern custom of “presenting the cradle” did not exist in the past, and is now used to express wealth and economic status. Kazakh saying that “the great grandchild is lying in the *besik* which was of his great grandfather’s” sorts out the

whole issue. We discussed how modern “Smart *Besik*” cradles, which rock themselves and allow the baby to listen to lullabies from a special device, are detracting from the cradle’s significance as a sacred place where mother and baby can bond, and where the mother can have a therapeutic and educational effect on a newborn by reciting lullabies with her own voice. As a result of such modern solutions, it became clear that not only structure of a cradle, but also other traditions related to it have changed, and old ones have begun to be forgotten. And we have determined that the cradle, which occupies a large place in Turkish culture, is losing its significance nowadays. Young mothers choose modern baby beds instead of wooden cradles. In addition, we found out that the cradle is perceived as a property used in low-income, rural areas, and a stereotypical attitude has been formed. We have cited evidence from research on this issue and the stories of cradle masters to support this opinion. The fact that the cradle, once a family heirloom, is now limited in its scope to a child’s toy, a souvenir sold at tourist attractions, or a custom-made item is clearly saying a lot.

In general, through this study, we tried to draw attention to the cradle as a branch of the woodworking industry, as a sacred cultural heritage that conveys the ethno-cultural knowledge of the people and has a strong informational and cognitive power. There is quite a bit of research on woodworking art and cradles of the Turkish. But it turned out that Kazakh scientists have done very little research on woodworking, including traditional techniques and methods for making cradles. This problem requires scientists’ attention in future. Moreover, there is very little information available regarding the regional differences in the making of cradles. In the future, we believe that a separate ethnographic study is necessary to explore the unique characteristics of cradle construction and decoration in different regions. A cradle is a sacred relic that is handed down from ancestor to offspring in every family. It connects us with steppe culture and helps us respect and preserve our national values and traditions. Respecting the cradle means respecting our past and future.

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