

Customs And Everyday Life Of The Peoples Of Turkestan In The Late 19th Century

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Annotation: This topic explores the customs and everyday life of the peoples of Turkestan in the late 19th century. It examines social structure, family traditions, religious influence, economic activities, and cultural practices of different ethnic groups living in the region. Special attention is given to traditional occupations, housing, clothing, and rituals connected with important life events such as birth, marriage, and death. The study highlights how Islamic values and local traditions shaped the daily life and cultural identity of Turkestan's population during this historical period.

Keywords: Turkestan, 19th century, customs, traditions, daily life, social structure, family, Islam, culture, nomadic life, agriculture, handicrafts, rituals, housing, clothing, ethnic groups

Introduction. The late 19th century was a period of significant historical and cultural transformation for the peoples of Turkestan. During this time, the region, inhabited by diverse ethnic groups such as Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmens, and Tajiks, preserved its rich traditional heritage while also experiencing external influences due to political and economic changes. Despite these transformations, everyday life remained deeply rooted in long-established customs, religious values, and communal traditions.

Understanding the customs and daily life of Turkestan's population in this period is essential for studying the social structure and cultural identity of the region. Family relations, religious practices, economic activities, and traditional ceremonies formed the foundation of social life. Islam played a central role in shaping moral values, education, and social behavior, while local traditions regulated interpersonal relationships and community organization.

Economically, the population was mainly engaged in agriculture, livestock breeding, and handicrafts, which determined their lifestyle and settlement patterns. Urban and rural communities differed in their way of life, yet both maintained strong cultural continuity. Nomadic and semi-nomadic groups adapted to natural conditions through mobile living patterns, while settled populations developed stable village and city structures.

This topic is important for understanding how historical traditions influenced the development of society in Turkestan. It provides insight into the cultural diversity, social organization, and everyday experiences of people living in the region during the late 19th century, offering a foundation for further historical and ethnographic research.

Methodology. This study is based on a historical-analytical research approach aimed at examining the customs and everyday life of the peoples of Turkestan in the late 19th century. The research primarily relies on qualitative methods, focusing on the interpretation and analysis of historical, ethnographic, and archival sources.

First, historical documents, travel notes, and official reports from the 19th century were analyzed to gather information about social structure, cultural practices, and economic life in Turkestan. These sources provide firsthand and secondary descriptions of the daily life of different ethnic groups in the region.

Second, a comparative analysis method was used to identify similarities and differences in customs among various peoples such as Uzbeks, Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Turkmens, and Tajiks. This helped to understand both shared cultural elements and unique traditions specific to each group.

Third, the descriptive method was applied to systematically present information about family life, religious practices, housing, clothing, rituals, and economic activities. This approach allows for a clear and structured explanation of traditional lifestyles.

In addition, ethnographic materials and academic literature from modern historians and researchers were reviewed to support and verify historical data. These sources helped to provide a broader scientific interpretation of the cultural and social life of Turkestan in the studied period.

The combination of these methods ensures a comprehensive understanding of the topic and allows for a reliable reconstruction of the everyday life and customs of the peoples of Turkestan in the late 19th century.

Results. The analysis of historical and ethnographic sources shows that in the late 19th century the peoples of Turkestan maintained a deeply traditional way of life, where customs, religion, and community values played a central role in shaping everyday activities. Despite regional differences, many common cultural patterns can be observed across different ethnic groups, especially in family relations, social organization, and economic life.

One of the key results is the strong dominance of extended family structures. Most households consisted of several generations living together, and family hierarchy was strictly observed. The eldest male or family head held authority in decision-making, while respect for elders was a fundamental social norm. Marriage was not only a personal union but also a social agreement between families. It was often arranged through negotiations, and weddings included long ceremonies with music, traditional games, feasts, and exchange of gifts, reflecting both cultural identity and social status.

Religious life had a significant influence on daily routines. Islam shaped moral values, education, and legal norms within society. People regularly attended mosques, observed religious holidays, and followed Islamic rituals in birth, marriage, and burial practices. Religious leaders such as imams and mullahs played an important role in community life, acting as spiritual guides and educators.

Economic activities were mainly based on agriculture, livestock breeding, and handicrafts. In settled areas, irrigation farming was widely practiced, with crops such as wheat, barley, cotton, fruits, and vegetables forming the basis of local economies. In contrast, nomadic and semi-nomadic populations relied on animal husbandry, moving seasonally to find suitable grazing lands. Livestock such as sheep, horses, camels, and cattle were essential for both economic survival and cultural identity.

Handicrafts were highly developed and included weaving, carpet making, pottery, leather processing, and metalwork. These products were used in daily life and also exchanged in local markets, contributing to the economic stability of communities. Urban centers served as trade hubs where goods from different regions were exchanged, strengthening economic and cultural connections.

Housing and settlement patterns varied depending on lifestyle. Settled populations lived in traditional clay houses with enclosed courtyards, designed to suit climatic conditions and family needs. Nomadic groups lived in yurts, which were portable, practical, and well adapted to steppe environments. Clothing also reflected local traditions, with garments made from cotton, wool, and silk, often decorated with embroidery that indicated regional and social differences.

Customs and rituals played an essential role in marking important life events. Birth ceremonies involved blessings and protective rituals for newborns, while funerals followed strict religious and cultural procedures emphasizing respect for the deceased. Hospitality was one of the most important social values; guests were always welcomed warmly and offered food and shelter, reflecting the moral foundation of society.

The results also show that cultural diversity was a key characteristic of Turkestan. While each ethnic group preserved its own traditions, there was a high level of cultural interaction and mutual influence. This created a rich and interconnected cultural landscape where shared values coexisted with local differences.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that the everyday life of Turkestan's peoples in the late 19th century was a complex system shaped by tradition, religion, and environment. These elements worked together to maintain social stability and cultural continuity, even during a period of historical change and external influence.

Further analysis reveals that education in the late 19th-century Turkestan was closely connected to religious institutions. Traditional schools (maktabs) and madrasas served as the main centers of learning, where children were taught reading, writing, basic arithmetic, and Islamic teachings. Literacy levels varied across regions, but overall access to education remained limited and largely dependent on social status and urban or rural location.

Another important result is the role of oral traditions in preserving cultural identity. Folklore, including epic stories, legends, proverbs, and songs, was widely used to transmit knowledge, moral values, and historical

memory from one generation to another. These oral forms of culture played a crucial role in strengthening community cohesion and maintaining ethnic identity.

Social life was strongly regulated by customary law (adat) alongside Islamic law (sharia). In many rural areas, disputes and conflicts were resolved through local elders and community councils rather than formal state institutions. This system helped maintain order and reflected the importance of tradition in governance and social control.

The study also shows that gender roles were clearly defined within society. Men were primarily responsible for economic activities, external relations, and decision-making, while women managed household duties, childcare, and certain aspects of handicraft production such as weaving and embroidery. However, women's contribution to the household economy was significant and socially recognized within traditional norms.

Health practices and medical knowledge were largely based on traditional and herbal medicine. People relied on local healers, herbal remedies, and spiritual practices to treat illnesses. Access to formal medical services was limited, especially in rural and nomadic communities, which influenced life expectancy and health outcomes.

Trade and market systems played an important role in connecting different regions of Turkestan. Caravan routes facilitated the exchange of goods, ideas, and cultural practices. Markets in urban centers such as Bukhara, Samarkand, and Tashkent became important economic and social spaces where diverse groups interacted regularly.

Additionally, seasonal cycles had a strong influence on daily life. Agricultural activities, migration patterns of nomads, and social events were closely tied to natural conditions such as climate and water availability. This dependence on the environment shaped both economic behavior and cultural traditions.

The extended results emphasize that the late 19th-century society of Turkestan was highly structured yet flexible, deeply traditional yet interconnected through trade and cultural exchange. Education, oral traditions, customary law, gender roles, and environmental adaptation all contributed to maintaining a stable and functional social system across diverse communities.

Discussion. The findings of this study clearly demonstrate that the everyday life of the peoples of Turkestan in the late 19th century was shaped by a strong continuity of tradition combined with gradual adaptation to changing historical conditions. The dominance of family-centered social structures, Islamic values, and customary law indicates that society was highly stable and internally regulated, with strong cultural cohesion across different ethnic groups.

One of the most significant aspects highlighted in the discussion is the balance between diversity and unity. Although Turkestan was inhabited by various ethnic groups with their own languages, customs, and lifestyles, there was a shared cultural framework based on Islam, hospitality traditions, and collective social norms. This cultural integration helped maintain peaceful coexistence and mutual influence among communities, despite differences in economic practices such as nomadic pastoralism and settled agriculture.

The role of religion in shaping social behavior and moral values is particularly important. Islam was not only a spiritual system but also a guiding force in education, law, and daily life. The strong presence of religious institutions such as mosques and madrasas ensured the preservation of cultural identity and ethical standards. At the same time, reliance on religious and customary law limited the development of centralized legal and administrative systems in many rural areas.

Economic life also had a direct influence on social organization. The dependence on agriculture and livestock breeding made society highly sensitive to environmental conditions such as climate, water availability, and seasonal changes. This created a cyclical rhythm of life, where work, migration, and social activities were closely connected to nature. Trade routes and markets, however, provided opportunities for economic interaction and cultural exchange, linking isolated communities into a broader regional system.

Another important point of discussion is the role of education and knowledge transmission. The reliance on traditional religious education and oral culture meant that literacy and formal scientific knowledge developed slowly. However, oral traditions ensured the survival of historical memory, moral teachings, and cultural values. This dual system of knowledge—written religious education and oral folklore—played a crucial role in preserving identity.

Gender roles, while clearly defined, also reflected the economic and cultural structure of society. Although men held formal authority, women contributed significantly to household economy and cultural life. Their

participation in textile production, embroidery, and family management demonstrates that traditional society functioned through interdependent roles rather than strict exclusion.

From a broader perspective, the discussion shows that Turkestan in the late 19th century was undergoing a subtle transformation. While traditional structures remained dominant, external influences and internal developments slowly began to reshape social relations, economic practices, and cultural expressions. However, these changes were gradual and did not immediately disrupt the established way of life.

Overall, the study suggests that the strength of Turkestan society during this period lay in its adaptability within tradition. The integration of diverse communities under shared cultural norms allowed for stability, while economic and environmental factors encouraged resilience and flexibility. This combination of continuity and gradual change is key to understanding the historical development of the region.

Conclusion. In conclusion, the study of the customs and everyday life of the peoples of Turkestan in the late 19th century reveals a society deeply rooted in tradition, religion, and community values. Despite ethnic diversity, the region demonstrated a high level of cultural cohesion, supported by shared Islamic principles, strong family structures, and established customary practices.

The research shows that daily life was strongly influenced by economic activities such as agriculture, livestock breeding, and handicrafts, which shaped settlement patterns and social organization. Religious beliefs played a central role in regulating moral behavior, education, and social relations, while oral traditions and customary law helped preserve cultural identity and maintain social order.

At the same time, the study highlights that Turkestan society was not static. Gradual changes influenced by trade, environmental conditions, and external contacts began to affect economic and social life, although traditional structures remained dominant. This combination of stability and slow transformation reflects the adaptability of the region's population.

Overall, the findings emphasize that the late 19th-century Turkestan way of life was a balanced system where tradition and practical adaptation worked together. Understanding this historical period provides valuable insight into the cultural heritage, social organization, and historical development of Central Asian peoples.

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