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**TRADITIONAL HORSE RACING
AND SPORT GAMES OF KAZAKHS AND KIRGHIZ
IN THE 19TH AND THE BEGINNING OF 20TH CENTURIES**

Article is devoted to traditional horse-racing games of 19th – the beginnings of the 20th centuries which take the important place in national history of the Kazakhs. Among them the military-sport games connected as with military life (wars, attacks, collisions), and with economic activity of society enjoyed special popularity. Such games were sajys, audaryspak, zhamby atu, horse races, etc. Their genesis goes back to antiquity and the Middle Ages and in them such peculiar phenomena as sport, military skills, cult representations and magic actions were reflected, having similarity to similar games of the people of Central Asia, the Caucasus, the Volga region and Altai. In no small measure it was promoted also by that circumstance that many of them have arisen in the nomadic environment and the subject, the place and time of carrying out reflected features of outlook, economic and cultural activity and material culture both nomads cattle-farmers, and settled farmers. At the same time games and entertainments carried out always and public functions, such as educational, military and sports, ritual, spectacular and esthetic, communicative, etc.

Key words: nomads, settled farmers, horse-racing games, sport, competitions, military skills, cult representations, magic actions, national holidays.

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XIX-XX ғасырдың басындағы қазақтардың дәстүрлі ат жарыстары

Мақала қазақ халқының ұлттық тарихында ерекше орын алатын XIX-XX ғғ. басындағы дәстүрлі ат спортына арналады. Осы спорт арасында әскери тұрмысқа қатысты, сонымен қатар қоғамдық шаруашылық қызметке қатысты әскери спорттық ойындар танымал болды (соғыстар, шабуылдар, қақтығыстар). Мұндай ойындардың қатарына сайыс, аударыспак, жамбы ату, бәйге және т.б. ойындар жатады. Бұл ойындардың шығу тегі ежелгі заман мен ортағасырлық кезеңге жатқызылады. Онда спорт, әскери дағды, культтік дүниетаным мен магиялық іс-әрекеттер секілді өзіндік құбылыстар көрініп, Орталық Азия, Кавказ, Еділ бойы және Алтай халықтарының ойындарымен ұқсас келді. Олардың көпшілігі көшпелі ортада пайда болды және олардың тақырыбы, орны мен уақыты дүниетанымның ерекшеліктерін, экономикалық және мәдени іс-әрекеттерін, сондай-ақ көшпелі мал шаруалар мен отырықшы егіншілердің материалдық мәдениетін көрсетеді. Сонымен қатар, ойындар мен ойын-сауықтар әрдайым білім беру, әскери-спорт, салт-дәстүр, ойын-сауық-эстетикалық, коммуникативтік және т.б. сияқты қоғамдық функцияларды орындайды.

Түйін сөздер: көшпенділер, отырықшы егіншілер, ат спорт ойындары, сайыстар, әскери дағдылар, культтік дүниетаным, магиялық іс-әрекеттер, халықтық мейрамдар.

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Традиционные конно-спортивные игры казахов XIX – начала XX века

Статья посвящена традиционным конно-спортивным играм XIX – начала XX вв., которые занимают достойное место в национальной истории казахского народа. Среди них особой популярностью пользовались военно-спортивные игры, связанные как с военным бытом (войной, набегам, столкновениями), так и с хозяйственной деятельностью общества. Такими играми были сайыс, аударыспак, жамбы ату, скачки и др. Генезис их восходит к древности и средним векам и в них отражались такие своеобразные явления как спорт, военные навыки, культовые представления и магические действия, имея сходство с аналогичными играми народов Средней Азии, Кавказа, Поволжья и Алтая. В немалой степени этому способствовало и то обстоятельство, что многие из них возникли в кочевой среде и своей тематикой, местом и временем проведения отражали особенности мировоззрения, хозяйственно-культурной деятельности и материальной культуры как кочевников-скотоводов, так и оседлых земледельцев. Одновременно игры и развлечения выполняли и общественные функции, такие как воспитательные, военно-спортивные, ритуальные, зрелищно-эстетические, коммуникативные и др.

Ключевые слова: кочевники, оседлые земледельцы, конно-спортивные игры, спорт, состязания, военные навыки, культовые представления, магические действия, народные торжества.

Introduction

It is well-known that games during all periods performed a huge social and ritual significance. Their origin refers to the ancient times and during their development a number of forms have been successively replaced that correspond not only to the natural and climatic conditions, but also to social relations and the economic and cultural activities of a particular group of people. Indisputable is the theory of the origin of games and entertainment from work processes, i.e. from the practical activities of individuals. Often they reflected such peculiar phenomena as sports, physical perfection, military skills, cult representations, magical actions, recreating the reality. Participation in them was a condition for ensuring and achieving a high level of social status, not only in sports, but also in socially significant activities.

Subsequently, part of the traditional games that we studied are disappeared, lost their original essence, during the development and regeneration, preserved in separate games-competitions, as it was during the years of the Soviet totalitarian system. Some of them were banned, others went into «nothingness». Compared with the recent past, the number of equestrian sports has been much reduced, and now it has largely closed up to the so-called «established» species. Significant reduction of equestrian sports in modern conditions is fully justified by history. With the acquisition of state sovereignty, a number of national games, including

equestrian sports, were revived, recreated in a new form and cultivated not only in sports competitions, but also in various festivities.

Certain aspects of the national games we are considering are mentioned in the publications of the ancient written sources (Greek, Roman, Persian, Chinese), as well as medieval oriental (Arab, Persian, Chinese, Turkic) and Western authors. They found sufficient coverage in travel notes, diaries or in the writings of prerevolutionary authors, mainly Russian and European. It is noteworthy that they are written in the framework of certain studies or in journal and newspaper articles. More detailed study of the games is characteristic of the Soviet period, which were investigated by Kazakhstani authors. Among them are the research of M.M. Gunner, M. Rakhimgulov, M.T. Tanikeeva, A. Burkitbaeva, M. Bolgambaev, B.O. Totenaeva and others. During the independent period of Kazakhstan's development, E.S. Sagyndykov, B.M. Plotarayev, S. Taizhanov and others.

In the gaming competitions that are considering in this work, the confrontation was carried out according to established rules, using the only competitive games and methods of play that are specific to the game. At the same time, it is mandatory to have an opponent and determine the future winner. In the team game types, the goal of each fragment of the match is to deliver the object of the match to a specific place on the opponent's site and not to allow it against itself. The mutual relations of the players of one team are determined

by the specifics of specific types of equestrian sports, the structure of competitive gaming activities taking into account the actions of their team and opponents' players. Usually during the team games, the team as a whole wins and loses, and not individual members.

Typology of traditional horse sports is built on specific types of competitions, represented by the following conventional categories: a) jumps (baiga: kunan baiga, donen baiga, alaman baiga, actual baiga); b) martial arts (Sayis, Audaryspak); c) competitions (kokpar tartu, zamby atu, dzhigitovka, kyz kuu), etc.

Therefore, in the process of writing the article, we took into account the existence of systemic competitive structures, which include:

1) functional, taking into consideration the organization, place and order, composition of the participants of the competitions, judging, determination and awarding of the winners;

2) role-playing, based on relationship of «perform», «play», «perform duties», etc. ;

3) subordinate, built on the relationship of leadership, organization, coordination, subordination and other indicators between the players of the team;

4) information, based on obtaining the necessary information about the upcoming rivals in the process of competition;

5) formal rules and regulations governing the duties of participants in the competition, which originate from generally accepted regulations;

6) natural, supplemented by the real situation and factors;

7) collective, practicing outside the competition, mainly in the joint process of preparation for them, etc.

8) procedural, expressed in a specific metric of the adversarial process, i.e. in the calculation of points and time measurement;

9) calendar, timed to one or another public, religious holidays, memorable dates (triad, wake), etc.

The methodological basis for the study of games and competitions is the principles of historicism, systemic nature, social conditioning of cognitive and value phenomena. The same applies to modern scientific ideas about the essence (Gadamer, 1988) and psychology (Elkonin, 1989) games, on phenomenology (Heisinga, 1992) and hermeneutics (Petrov, 1993).) games, on gnoseology (Kulikova, 2000) and practical (Bern, 2001: 247) games, on sociology (Orlov, 2002), ontology and ethics (Retuñskih, 2002) games, on the classification of games based on the theory of ethnic mobility (Pierre Parlebas, 2003), on culturology (Ryumin, 2010) and anthropology (Fink, 2017) games, etc.

At the same time, we take into account a number of fundamentally valid directions of equestrian sports, which, firstly, are one of the main elements of military-applied importance in the preparation of an efficient rider and his horse; secondly, an important means of preparing and identifying individual horse abilities in the interests of horse breeding; thirdly, a means of physical and moral education of the individual, including the identification of the necessary indicators of the rider and the horse in cultivated competitions.

Origin of traditional festivals and games

Games and public holidays at all times had a great public importance. Their origin dates back to the ancient times and during their development they underwent a number of successive forms, corresponded to the public relations and business activity of the people. There is an indisputable theory that the games and entertainments have originated from labour processes, i.e.: from practical activity of the people. Often in popular entertainments such special phenomena are reflected as sports, military skills, cultic performances, magic actions, recreating «real life, sometimes existing, sometimes past, and preserved only in some kind of remnants (game-action or game-song)»(Gordlevsky, 1968: 137). In this way, they cover many aspects of labour, spiritual and household activity. It was facilitated, to a large extent, by the fact that many of these customs originated in the nomadic environment, and «by their subject, accessories, time and place of action, by all its systems they reflect the features of world-view and material culture of nomads-farmers» (Simakov, 1980: 109). Over time, with the change of the society material life, the direct form and content of the games have changed.

Games and entertainment are always served the public duties as well; these are educational, military, sport, ritual, entertaining and aesthetic, communicational, etc. For example, through the games, amusements and skills, a young man developed both physical and mental capacity, i.e.: «in a game here, as everywhere, he learned what a modern life would require from him. The same demands were for girls» (Karutts, 1910: 87).

Broader and more universal function was carried out by military sport games related to both the military way of life (war, raids and clashes) and economic activity of the society. These games were «*saiys*», «*audaryspak*», «*jamby atu*», «*altyn kabak*», «*kures*», horseracing, etc.

Some of the games and amusements carried the ritual and ceremonial function as a part of the sys-

tem of both funeral and burial, as well as marriage ceremonies. Many of them later lost their original essence, being developed and reborn. Examples are «*alaman*», «*bayga*», «*kokpar*». Important values (victory, prestige, empathy) reflected the social function of games.

Traditional horseracing and power games

Because of the nomadic lifestyle of the Kazakhs, equestrian contests and various related games on horseback became the most popular, developing strength, agility and courage in people. According to A.U. Toktabay, a qualified specialist in traditional domestic horse breeding, the Kazakhs in the pre-revolutionary period have practiced up to 40 types of such games; of which about ten have survived to the day (Toktabay, 2010: 31). Some of these games are described below.

Alaman bayga – racing on the long and extra long distance (25, 50, 100 km), is one of the oldest and most popular types of contests. It is known by that name among the Uzbeks and Kirghiz. Its origin is associated with the nomadic way of life, i.e. the need to train horses for long passages, especially in the time of war or to steal herds from enemy (*barymta*), as well as to improve horse breed. The term «*alaman*» M.T. Tanikeev (1977) interprets as a raid, robbery, committed by horseback armed force, the same term is applied to such a raider (Sevortyan, 1974). *Alaman bayga* was the first and main type of program of major folk festivals, especially funerals (*as*). Competitions were held in the steppe along a straight line, abundant with natural barriers, without limiting the number and breed of horses (Podvarkov, 1879: 58). To prevent fraud or manipulation with racehorses, organizers arranged special posts, which monitored and provided the fair course of contests.

The tactical skill and mastery of the rider was of great importance here; it was necessary to correctly evaluate the power of the horse, to be able to manage it by adjusting the speed along all the distance. It also happens that during *Alaman bayga* «some horses could not stand such a long distance, they were dying at the goal, and some, in the middle of the race ended up lying with broken legs, together with their riders» (Nazarov, 1968: 25).

In the selection of racehorses, particular attention was paid to the following features: breed, constitution (rangy developed legs, high and strong chest). For example, for *Alaman bayga* horses with the smooth and soft movements were picked, which can sustain long passages without any fatigue, while for ordinary *bayga* – tall and temperamental during the run (Kaller, 1885: 61-62).

On the other hand, the Kazakhs bewared of the evil eye of racers, for this «they did not show racehorses and kept them under the horse blanket, while manes and tails they weaved, fastening owl feathers and talismans against the evil eye at different parts of a horse body» (Ibragimov, 1876: 60). To ease the burden for a horse, 8-14 years old boys were usually chosen as riders. Their distinctive costumes were white or another color shirt and bandanas as head-dress. Sometimes, under the influence of the Russian administration, after roll-call of horses, the names of owners, riders were recorded and the serial numbers were given. To identify the riders as they approach the finish line, they were shouting tribal nicknames (*urany*), according to which the viewers recognized the winners of horse races, giving them names according to ranking: *bas baige*, *ort baiga*, *ayak baige* (first, middle, last) (AEFM, 2012). Depending on the number of riders and material resources of the organizers, prizes were different, from 5 to 15 riders were awarded sometimes. Expensive materials, yurts, cattle, and sometimes money were presented. The biggest prize came to the winner of the race, which sometimes consisted of 100 horses, 30 camels, 30 cows, 500 sheep and red product for 100 rubles (Podvarkov, 1879: 58). Other prizes were smaller.

Bayga was also carried out on all holidays and was available to all interested persons who wanted to participate. According to a pre-revolution witness, «there is no competition among the Kazakhs greater than *bayga*: it accompanies the birth of a baby, the wake for a deceased, as well as meeting the honorable guests» (Shmakov, 1872: 28). It was common to all peoples of Central Asia. For example, the Kirghiz called it «*chabysh*», Uzbeks – «*poyga*». Kazakhs' *bayga* was arranged on a flat terrain along a straight line with a turn or in a closed circle. The competition was conducted at the following distances: from 1.2 to 2 km for horses at least three years old (*kunan bayga*); from 2.4 to 4.8 km for horses younger than four years (*donen bayga*); from 5 to 8 km for horses at age of five or older (actually *bayga*) (Gunner, 1957: 14). This sequence of participation of horses in *bayga* served as preparation for showing good results in the future, in grueling race of *alaman bayga*. Racehorses preparation, awarding of winners were the same as for *alaman bayga*.

Zhorga zharys – horse ambling competition. Distance was set in a straight line naturally from 2 to 10 km. Ambling was hereditary to the natives and horses with natural soft and rhythmic gait were very valuable and expensive. Sometimes a horse had talent of ambling from childhood, so such skill was

further developed. This was done by a special master (*zhorgashy*). The last two types of ambling were especially popular. For example, «*su shaykalmas zhorga*» (racing without water spilling) was carried out even with balancing with a food plate (*tabak tartu*). For the mentioned reasons, not everybody was allowed to participate in competitions. Other nomadic people in the past were familiar with similar types of horseracing (Omurzakov, 1973: 16-18).

Saiys – horsemen combat using pikes, was one of the oldest paramilitary games, arranged only during very large celebrations. It was also common for the Kirghiz. The fighters of a combat were chosen from different tribes or the neighboring nations, such as the Kazakhs and Kirghiz from the south of Kazakhstan. The participants were provided with the necessary equipment, armed with long wooden spears with blunt ends. The purpose of the fight was to knock out an opponent from the saddle or inflict him a heavy blow, so that he could not continue the combat. Death cases were often, and intensity of emotions has led to serious clashes between the tribes (Grodekov, 1889: 255-256). Later, this game was forbidden by tsar administration. In all likelihood, it tried to eliminate this competition, not only because of its applied relevance, but in practical terms – the military, which could contribute to the revival of past military skills of the Kazakh people.

Audaryspak – fight on horseback in order to throw an opponent from the saddle. Only mature men possessing great physical strength, agility, stamina and skilled horse handling have participated. Note that most often the victory has come to those participants, who had sufficiently trained and tall horses. Usually, such masters were nominated for the competition on behalf of a whole aul or a tribe (Kalysh, 2002: 28-29).

Kokpar tartu, known in Russian as «*kozlodranie*» or goat-tearing. The origin of this game seems to have several sources: 1) the players imitate carnivorous steppe wolves preying on flocks of sheep and in this way destroying livestock; 2) it is possible that earlier on, in this way the raiders fleeing with the loot, and also, probably, have saved a wounded *batyr* from captivity 3) connected to a struggle of phratias for a carcass of totem animal (Aitmatov, 1978: 243). This game is also known to other nations of Central Asia and the East (Gedin, 1899: 208).

There were two versions of the game. In the first case, two riders entered the fight, in the other – two teams representing different tribes or *auls*. The goal is to bring first a goat carcass to a destination place. On a judge's signal, everyone tried to grab the carcass, the rest rushed in pursuit, to snatch the prey. Therefore a rider, who grabbed the carcass, tried to

hold it tight in the saddle, clench it between a leg and horse side or throw it over from one side to the other, keeping it from the pursuing rivals, and break away from his pursuers.

Zhamby atu (Altyn kabak) – target practice (archery or gun-work) at full gallop. Similar competitions are common to many nations, «*zhamby atuu*» in Kirghiz, «*altyn kabak*» in Uzbeks, «*kabak*» Tajiks, «*kabahi*» Georgians, etc. Its origin is connected with the military and applied art that has survived until the 18th – beginning of 19th centuries. For the competition a high pole was set, at the end of which *zhamby* (silver ingot) was suspended, it served as a target. A galloping equestrian using the weapon had to break the strap and thereby take *zhamby*. There were other ways of hitting the target: sitting on a horse or standing on the ground (Bekishev, 1905: 390).

Kymis alu or *dzhigitovka* (fancy/trick riding), one of the original national sports, which is found among the people of Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Caucasus, required from participants to have high dexterity, skilful and courageous horse management. The meaning of the game is that a rider at full gallop should pick up a coin lying on the ground, sometimes several coins set at equal distances (Kittary, 1849). Sometimes during the competition, some performers showed their prowess, standing on their saddles or taking off each other from saddles, and the most daring quickly jumped off to the ground and jumped back in the saddle, doing brave pirouettes under the horse (Bronevsky, 1830: 229).

Youth games

Among the spectacular games, where communicative functions are well pronounced, a variety of youth games and entertainment should be mentioned. **Kyz kuu** (catch the girl) – horse-riding game originated from ancient times, when the girls were warriors and rider. They were demanding a number of conditions to their chosen ones, including competition in the races. In case of victory, a warrior had the right to marry her, in case of defeat – the right to ask her hand (Tanikeev, 1977: 143). Some variations of this game, conducted during wedding and other feasts, in the changed forms still exist to this day. For example, there is a game between bride and groom, bridesmaids and *dzhigits*, accompanying the groom etc., dressed in traditional costumes (in their best turn-outs) (Divaev, 1907).

The game was conducted in an open field at a certain distance. At the end of the field the controlling pivotal pole or a goal was installed. According to the game rules, the girl must hit the *dzhigit* with a whip and gallop in order to first reach the goal (piv-

otal pole), while *dzhigit* had to catch up with her. If the equestrian overtook the girl before the pivotal pole, then, as the winner, he had the right to hug and kiss the girl. Usually, easier and more often those were honoured, who she liked. If the *dzhigit* did not catch up with the girl, then on the way back, instigated by spectators, she was catching up with an awkward equestrian and inflicted him numerous whiplashes. Such failures laid shame to the rider, a long time was needed to forget about this mishap (Ermolov, 1845: 26-27).

Conclusion

Overall, we see that the traditional Kazakh folk games and competitions have been an integral part of social, family and other celebrations and were very popular among the people. The festivities and games described in concise form, had a long tradition, reflected reality, directly connected with the nomadic or settled-agricultural economic lifestyle and environment. For example, horse-riding performances contributed to gain and reinforcement of physical, labour and other skills, especially among

the younger generation, while a complex of other games additionally brought in the practical knowledge for the perception of the environment. Because of their practical and ethno-functional significance, most of them are common in Kazakhstan and nowadays many of them are parallel to other ethnic groups of the Eurasian continent.

The types of considering equestrian sports were popular not only because of their prestige, but also because the maintenance of expensive and high-breed horses, as well as the participation or holding of such games, was beyond the power of ordinary workers. The latter were only available to wealthy people and tribal or tribal elite, which is nobility. It was they who aspired to win only their own people in the competition, thereby demonstrating to the masses their power and greatness, and on the other hand – to increase wealth at the expense of valuable prizes, which sometimes amounted to whole herds. Everyone knew that the prize won in such competitions was never awarded to the winner, but was awarded to the head of the family, since all costs related to the selection, preparation of the horse, training, equipment, etc. were provided by the latter.

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