

EQUESTRIAN GAMES AND COMPETITIONS IN THE ETHNO-CULTURE OF TURKIC PEOPLES

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1. Introduction

Despite the fact that the article is devoted to the equestrian games and competitions of Turkic peoples in their historical past, we considered it necessary to define the essential understanding of the term *game* to try to reveal its ontology. The definition of *game* in the dictionary has many meanings, but invariant in it is the designation of “activity, spending time in any occupation, serving to fill leisure, entertainment” [1]. A game is a life-affirming form of activity of the whole being – nature and man. As researchers note, games are older than culture, animals did not wait for the appearance of man to teach them to play. Moreover, according to Heisinga [2], “*human civilisation has not added any significant feature to the concept of play in general. Animals play - just as humans do. All the basic features of play are already embodied in animal games. One need only watch puppies frolicking to recognise all these features in their merry fiddling. They induce each other to play through a special kind of ceremonial posture and movements. They observe the rule of not biting each other's ear. They pretend to be extremely angry. And most importantly: all of this they clearly perceive as a highly humorous activity and experience great pleasure in it*”. In this context, the games of other domestic and wild animals, the mating games of birds and insects are also manifested, and the signs/properties of these games are relevant to the present day.

For man, play is first of all the embodiment of his intellectual and spiritual activity, the expression of his physical and biological capabilities, and the disclosure of his emotional and psychological state. A man plays when he is freed from satisfying his needs for food, clothing, housing, i.e. by interrupting the process of providing for his vital needs, a man transgresses the sphere of holiday, cultural leisure, satisfying “the ideals of individual self-expression and social life”. It is known that any game is *played out* in time and space, representing a certain process, the game has its beginning, climax, denouement, participants in the action. Therefore, “*once played, a game remains in the memory as a kind of spiritual creation or spiritual value and is passed from one to another and can be repeated at any time: immediately - as children's games, a game of trictrak, running against the clock - or after a long break*” [2]. Hence the most important property of a game, is its repeatability, fixed in human consciousness through the prism

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of spiritual activity, and transmitted from generation to generation in the historical development of the culture of many peoples of the East and West, including the ethnic culture of Turkic peoples.

In the history of the development of human culture since ancient times, games are associated with the highest piloting of human physical capabilities (*ancient games and competitions, Olympic games, the games of nomads*), rhythm and harmony of movement, the embodiment of the beautiful, therefore, the ontology of the game is also in its aesthetic perception of the physical body, in the implementation of the physical and biological data of man.

A game is an expression of the emotional-psychic state of a person, as they compete; struggle is manifested in the emotional heat that results from the competition, the need to achieve victory, or diversely, tension when there is a negative result - defeat - when the emotional state of the player is off the scale, being in the highest degree of emotional state.

These characteristics are clearly manifested in the equestrian games and competitions of the Turkic peoples, formed historically over centuries and millennia. It is known that in the ethnic culture of Turkic peoples, games were very diverse: intellectual, gambling, children's, youth, sports, but it is the equestrian games and competitions that were deeply symbolic for the nomadic culture of many Turkic peoples. Within this context, the aim of this article is to consider several horse games and competitions, seen as a manifestation of the spiritual culture of Turkic peoples on the basis of written Turkic manuscripts, oral art and the traditions and customs of Turkic peoples. Such games include, first of all, *kokpar* ("goat-dressing"), *shogen* (polo), *zhamby atu* (archery), *baige* (horse racing).

Several studies have been devoted to the study of the game as a spiritual activity, a factor in the cultural life of peoples, including Turkic peoples. Heisinga's concept of treating games as a spiritual activity of man, sees it as independent of morality, and beyond the plane of good and evil, truth and untruth, wisdom and stupidity, in determining the various properties and characteristics of games and that most importantly, a game is a comprehensive expression of human activity, a universal category of human existence, it permeates all forms of Western culture from antiquity to modernity. The author reveals philosophy and poetry, music and jurisprudence, fashion and clothing, modern Western art through the prism of the game [2]. Research by Lipets [3] is devoted to the hero-warriors of the Turkic-Mongolian peoples, and in the context of horsemanship culture the author considers the image of a war horse participating in races and competitions. Omirzakov and Musin [4] study the features of numerous Kyrgyz folk games such as "*at-chabysh*", "*jamba atmay*", "*kuresh*", "*ordo*", "*kyz kuumaï*", etc. Tani-keev [5] reveals the continuity of Kazakh folk games with modern sports competitions. In contrast to the above-mentioned works, the article looks at the historical context of the equestrian games of Turkic peoples, including the Kazakh people (revealed in the material of written texts, as mentioned above) and determines their continuity in the modern ethno-culture of Kazakhs.

2. Literature Review

In the culture of Turkic peoples the traditions connected with the equestrian culture of the Turks occupy an important place; it is not by chance that researchers note that the Great Steppe gave the world horse breeding and horsemanship culture. In the Late Bronze Age, the Steppe people's stable and herding economy, characteristic of the Andronovo culture, gradually began to change into a nomadic one. Klyashtorny and

Sultanov [6] note that the main breakthrough from the Bronze Age, from the world of the Avestan Aryans, to the Iron Age, the age of the Scytho-Saxon tribes, was a breakthrough in the way of conducting economic activity and, accordingly, the way of life. The sign of the breakthrough was the formation of the nomadic cattle-breeding economy. The transition to nomadism involved the economic turnover of huge interfluvial steppe spaces which had earlier been uninhabited and unused. The change in the type of herd happened in the late Andronovo era, during which cattle were increasingly replaced by *horses*, which did not require daily care and were capable of calving; it also made it possible, in the early 1st millennium B.C. to sharply lengthen the routes of migrations and make them seasonal [6].

The main “figure” in nomadic economic activity was the horse, because in the harsh climate of Steppe Eurasia it could provide its own fodder, known as *tebenovat*, which means to pull out fodder from under the snow with the hoof, and is still done by horses in the steppes of modern Kazakhstan. As researchers note, the Cimmerian and Scythian invasions of the 8th-7th centuries in West Asia and the Black Sea region, the struggle of the Akhmenid kings Cyrus and Darius against the Saks on the territory of the modern Amu-Darya and Syr-Darya became the beginning of the Sak epic. Akishev investigated numerous large and small Saka burial mounds. He discovered and reconstructed the costume of the Issyk golden warrior and believed that the heyday of the Saka culture in Semirechye, South Kazakhstan was observed in the fifth to fourth centuries. [7].

According to ancient scriptures (Herodotus, Strabo, Lucian) and Persian sources and archaeological excavations, the numerous Sako-Scythian tribes of Massagetes, Saki-Tigrahauda, Saki-Khaumavarga, Dakhi, Iscedonians, and Sarmatians were a formidable force for the Achaemenid kings, Sogdiana, the Chinese Empire, and later Alexander the Great, primarily because they were warriors. The Greek poet Lucian transmits Scythian’s words: “*We have constant warriors, we either attack others ourselves, or withstand attacks, or engage in skirmishes over pastures and booty*” [8]. It was in the Saka era that the culture of horsemanship was born, and troops of “horse archers” appeared, who were mobile, agile, travelled quickly over long distances and shot accurately. Herodotus writes of the Massagetae: “*the horses wore copper armour on their chests*” [9].

The Sak culture combines military art with equestrian games and competitions. An ancient source says: “*The Persian king organised equestrian rallies for riders representing different nations. The length of the running track was determined in five stadia. When the race began, a young Sak took the lead and reached the finish line, leaving all the other riders almost halfway down the track. The Persian king offered Sak the kingdom in exchange for a horse, but he refused, saying that he would give the horse only in exchange for the gratitude of a brave man*” [10]. This fragment of the text, on the one hand, testifies to the high ethical standards of the Saku, on the other hand, it emphasizes the origins of Turkic horse racing, dating back to ancient times. Following the Sakas, for the early nomads of Central Asia, for the Jung, Huns, Yuezhi, Usuns, the horse is the main domestic animal in military life and peacetime. Researchers note that at the beginning of the 1st millennium B.C. the tribes inhabiting Central Asia created a nomadic culture of the Scythian type. They mastered bronze and iron metallurgy, metalworking, wheeled carts and horsemanship. Among these tribes, Chinese dynastic sources note their northeastern neighbours, calling them “*horse qiang*”, i.e. “*horse-breeding qiang*” or *zhong*, in multitudes. “*In the course of military encounters the Chinese were more than once convinced of the merits of the barbarian cavalry, and sometimes adopted the dress and arms of their opponents. The ruler of the kingdom of Zhao, Ulin-wan, changing the existing customs, began to wear barbarian clothes, learn riding*

and archery". However, the real opponents of the Chinese Empire, according to Sima Qian, were the strong nomadic tribes of the Huns (Hunnu) and Yuezhi, who had a single ruler, and the fierce struggle with the nomads for Ordos had varying success. Klyash-torny and Sultanov wrote: *"the main type of economic activity of the Huns has always been nomadic cattle breeding, which confirms both the messages of written sources and the results of archaeological excavations. The primary role of the Huns was played by the horse. In extensive cattle breeding, when fodder for cattle was not prepared for the winter, the horse had the advantage of being able to tebeneval, i.e. to be on fodder all the year round, extracting grass from under the shallow snow. Judging by the bones found in the Hun burials, horses were typical Mongolian - small in stature, rough but of muscular build, with a short broad muzzle"* [6].

On their Mongolian-type horses, the Huns conquered and subdued vast territories and states, reaching the borders of the Roman Empire. The mythical unity of the warrior with the horse, the phenomenal importance of the horse for the Huns was described by a Roman historian: *"... they, i.e. Huns (eponym inserted by the authors), do not act well in foot races, but as if attached to their hardy, but ugly looking horses, sitting on them in a feminine way, they perform on them all their usual activities; on them, each of this tribe sleeps and in daytime, buys and sells, eats and drinks and, ducking to the narrow neck of his horse, falls into a deep sleep"* (the authors have added emphasis) [6]. Later in the epochs of the early and late Middle Ages as well as modern times, in the culture of the Turks, the horse continues to be a symbol of nomadic culture, seen in the art of riding and military power, as evidenced by various Turkic texts written in different scripts: runic, Uigur, Brahmi, Arabic, Latin.

Runic manuscripts depict the picture of the world of the ancient Turks, the epoch of the first (545-630) and second (682-744) Turkic Khaganates, the activity of the ancient Turkic Kagans Bumyn, Istemi, Mukan, Kutluk, Kapagan, Bilge, etc. Orkhon runic texts with historical authenticity present the history of campaigns and battles on the conquest and preservation of the huge territory from the rocky ridges of Khingan in the east to the interfluvium of Volga and Ural in the west, from the Chinese wall in the south to the Sayan ridges in the north; as the chronicler describes *"...the peoples living in all four countries of the world were all their enemies, coming out with an army, they subdued all the peoples living in the four corners and forced them all to peace. Those who had heads, they made bow their heads, those who had knees they made kneel"* [11]. The symbol of the martial art of the ancient Turks is an armed warrior on a war horse such as Kültegin, and all his battles in the text are connected with the description of his horses, *"grey horse Tadykyn - Chor, white stallion from Bayyrku, grey horse Bashgu, Alyp-Shalchy, Azman, brown horse, horse Azov"*: *Kültegin, mounting the white horse Azman, rushed to the attack. Six warriors he stabbed with his spear. In the battle he killed the seventh* [12].

Also, Turkic folk epic tales (*zhyrau*) for centuries, have depicted legendary heroes (*batyrs*) with their famous horses *Taiburyl* - Koblandy batyr, *Bayshubar* - Alpamys batyr, *Ak-Kula* - Manas, *Tarlan* - Er-targyn, *Kulager* - Akhan seri.

In the Kyrgyz epic "Manas", his future faithful companion, the horse Ak-Kula, is born at the same time as the hero. *"Ak-Kula, Manas's horse, has died, and his master believes that everything is over for him - he has lost 'his wings'."* Here the connection between the horse and the rider was so close and inseparable that often the loss of the horse deprived the hero of the power of internal resistance, although initially the life span of a horse is biologically three times shorter than that of a man [3]. All the above is a reason to understand the special status of the horse in nomadic culture and its active use in peacetime, not only for economic needs, but also in traditions and rituals and are either memorial cases in honour of famous personalities (khans biys), or

playthings or toys in family and domestic rituals. On such occasions, as a rule, equestrian games and competitions such as *kokpar* (“goat-dressing”), *shogen* (polo), *zhamby atu* (archery), *baige* (horse racing) were organized. These equestrian games, once played in the distant past, were deposited in the collective consciousness of Turkic peoples and passed from generation to generation as a special cultural artefact.

3. Materials and Methods

Current research has been based on the analysis of texts that are based on the cultural heritage of “Divani lugat-it Turk” by M. Kashgari, “Blessed Knowledge” by J. Balasuguni, the epics “Manas”, “Alpamys”, and ethnic culture materials. Authors analyze the most common horse games recorded in the historical memory of the Turkic peoples: *kokpar* (“goat tearing”), *shogen* (polo), *zhamby atu* (archery), *bayge* (horse races), the origins of which go back to ancient times and are recorded in written Turkic texts and the ethnic culture of the Turkic peoples.

The authors have made an attempt to determine the origins of horse games by considering their main content, the behavioral roles of game participants, revealing the semantic meanings of game lexemes.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. *Kokpar*

Such spectacular equestrian competitions include *kokpar*, a game dating back to antiquity and widespread among the peoples of Central Asia (Figure 1).



Figure 1. Horse riders playing “*kokpar*”.

There are different versions about its origin. A. Kaliuly notes that the origin of *kokpar*

is connected with the military training of nomads. In the era of the ancient Turkic Khaganates, valiant ancient Turkic warriors and batyrs were formed from such military training. Skills acquired in campaigns and battles were continued in equestrian competitions of kokpar [13].

Other researchers associate the origin of kokpar with the cult of the wolf in Central Asia, which is confirmed by some facts. In our opinion, this connection is manifested in the very name of the game kokpar, because the word is certainly a derivative complex formed from the merger of two lexemes *kok* + *par*, and more precisely *kok* + *beri*. The word “*beri*” in Kazakh means “wolf”, and this meaning is preserved in other Turkic languages in various phonetic variants: *böru* Alt.; *bëru* Tuvin; *biori*, *byre*, *bërë* Nogai, Tatar, Bashkir, Uigur languages. As noted by Kazakhologists, the word *buruu* is found in Buryat and Mongolian languages in either the meaning of calf, or in the designation of cubs of wild animals bears, leopards, wolves [14]. Thus, the genesis of *bori* goes back to the Altaic family of languages, expressing various semantic variants.

The phonetic laws of Turkic languages played their role in the change of the name of the game in the culture of modern Turkic peoples: *këk beri* to *kokpar*. Firstly, the law of progressive assimilation, characteristic of Turkic languages, when in the word-forming act under the influence of the deaf phoneme [k] there is a deafening of the phoneme *b* > *p*. Secondly, the law of syngarmonism of labialised and palatalised vowels in the root morpheme is also historically characteristic of Turkic languages. Thus, Baskakov [15] notes: “*The presence of only two basic phonemes - [u] and [a] is preserved in modern Turkic languages with eight phonemes for the root morpheme, as allophones for [u] - i, u, ü and for [a] - e, o, ö were regulated by the laws of palatalisation and labialisation for the whole word, are characteristic, in fact, of most Turkic languages*” [15]. Thus, in the change of *beri* into *pairs*, the allophone *ö* changes to the allophone *a*, combined with the loss of the palatalised vowel *i* at the end of the word.

The word “*këk*”, in the mentality of Kazakh, Kyrgyz, Nogai and other Turkic nations is multispectral and combines blue and green colours as well as all their shades (despite the fact that there is a separate lexeme for green - *jasyll/jashyl*). “*Këk* means not only blue, the colour of the sky, but also everything that is associated with renewal, freshness, greenery, hence *koktem* “spring”, *këk shykty* “first spring grass”, *këk shai* “green tea”, *këkënis* “fresh vegetables, fruits”.

The next meaning of the word is connected with the image of the wolf *këk beri*, the totem animal of the ancient Turks, the legend (known from Chinese sources) says: the ancestors of the Turks were exterminated by their neighbours and only a nine-year-old survived; the enemies cut off his hands and legs, and threw him into the swamp. There a she-wolf became pregnant. The enemies still killed the boy, and the she-wolf ran away to Altai and there gave birth to ten sons. The clan multiplied, and one of them, named Ashina, became the leader of the confederation “Kok Turk” (blue Turks). The word Ashina means “noble wolf”, “Turk” - “strong, sturdy” [16]. Thus, the meaning of the lexeme “*kok*” is metaphorically comprehended through the meanings of the words “wolf, genetic, Ashina, noble”, and the very combination “*kok Turk*”/“*kok Turki*” means “strong, powerful like wolves, noble” Turks. The image of the wolf is the patron spirit for ancient Turks. On their blue battle banners they had a wolf’s head embroidered with gold threads as a sign of their strength and majesty. Perhaps, the ancient Turks in campaigns and battles, and in equestrian games in peacetime, represented themselves in the image of a wolf. Researchers note that the image of this formidable beast with other predators was found in the ancient barrows of the Altai Mountains on everyday objects, ritual items, jewellery, combat weapons [17]. The beliefs of many Turkic peoples still retain echoes of the cult of the wolf: Kazakhs protect herds by displaying a wolf skull;

Turks have a wolf tooth as an amulet against the evil eye; Uzbeks have a wolf skin as an amulet for a newborn baby [18,19].

Thus, the semantic analysis of the word *kokpar* and the analysis of sources show that the origin of the game is substantiated with the totem of the wolf and its cult, widespread in the culture of Turkic peoples in antiquity. Some researchers also share this position. Karmysheva and Tolstov studied the archaeology and ethnography of Central Asia. They note that in the equestrian competition of nomads “*originally there was no goat-killing, but on the contrary, the wolf was thrown*” [20]. A similar idea is expressed by ethnographer Simakov [21], noting that the Kazakhs in the distant past, in hunting drove the wolf all the way to the village. The original status of the wolf in the game *kokpar* is also based on the realities of the ethnic culture of Turkic peoples. In the deserted steppes and mountains animals grazed in the open air, so very often herds were attacked by wolves. Shepherds armed with *kamcha* and sticks had a hard time fighting them. Courageous *dzhigits* on fast and hardy horses pursued the predators until they drove them half to death. Having killed the wolf with sticks or *kamcha*, they picked up the animal from the ground and rushed back, beating the carcass to and from each other. Thus, the game of *kokpar* was born. Later, with a more settled way of life, the wolf carcass was replaced by a goat carcass. The latter was cut before the game, the entrails taken out and the belly sewn up; the head and hooves were removed, and the winner received it at the end [22].

Much later, the carcass of the wolf was replaced by the carcass of a goat, lamb, calf, etc., but the name of the game itself remained *kokpar* (as we justified above, derived from *kok bori*). In this context, the notes of the American anthropologist Huntington [23] on the life and social structure of the Kyrgyz, published in the journal “Turkestan Mountains” (1907) are quite remarkable. The researcher notes, “...As we drew nearer, we saw two galloping horsemen who, rushing past us fought over a large black object. It was the carcass of a black calf (added by Authors for emphasis). Three or four men riding behind the leader were trying to lift it. Two grabbed the carcass, twenty or thirty others surrounded them, and all tried to grab the calf and run away with it ... The occasion for such contests could be a wedding, the birth of a son, the installation of a new *kibitka* and a wake. Whatever the origin of the game, it is a wonderful exercise in riding. The Kyrgyz are true nomads and skillfully skilled in horse-riding” [23].

In general, for nomads, *kokpar* was not just a game or a competition, on the contrary, it meant a way to learn the art of war, to educate warriors in courage, agility, perseverance and collective cohesion. *Kokpar*, which has its centuries-old history of playing out, today is one of the favorite national games of modern Turkic peoples - Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Karakalpaks, Nogai, etc., held during holidays and various traditions, rituals, customs [24].

As for any game, the rules and participants, the tension shown in the competition, the place and time, which have come down from ancient times and have been strictly observed for centuries, are important for *kokpar*. The most important rule is throwing a goat into the centre at a distance of 50-60 paces, when on command the participants of the game, usually dozens of strong young riders on horseback, rush to the carcass of the goat. The tension of the game intensifies when the first rider who has lifted the carcass from the ground is attacked by rivals trying to catch up with him to take the carcass away. Sports competitiveness and the riders' emotional tension reaches the highest peak in the struggle for the prey and the fight can last for several hours. It is about such situations that Hoizinga wrote, noting that the tension of the game puts the players' forces to the test: not only their physical strength, perseverance, ingenuity, courage and endurance, but their *spiritual forces* too because driven by the desire to win they are forced to keep within the prescribed limits of the permissible [2]. That is

why the game is not only a manifestation of the physical and emotional-psychic capabilities of a person, but also, above all, of spiritual principles, and the observance of ethical rules and principles. And in *kokpar*, it is the one who, either by force or dexterity and without breaking the rules, is the last to seize the carcass of the animal that wins. Thus the culmination of the game is reached. A man and a horse, participating in the competition *kokpar*, must be - a single whole. The rider must be physically strong, agile, enduring, with excellent riding techniques, and his horse must match him. The player must feel his horse. The unity of the *tulpar* (mythical Turkic horse) and rider is one of the conditions of victory. *Kokpar* requires the subtle, well thought-out tactics and strategy of the players.

4.2. *Shogen*

Another popular type of equestrian sports game among Turkic peoples, including Kazakh people, is "*shogen*" or *polo* as it is named in Europe (Figure 2). Despite the fact that there are many versions about the origins of polo in Europe, one of the main hypotheses is that the game originated in Central Asia, in the culture of nomads, although polo was played by the English aristocracy, nobility and members of the royal family, and was popular in other European countries.



Figure 2. Horse riders playing "*shogen*".

In Atila's time, the game of "*shogen*" was played after a successful military campaign, riders took in their hands not draughts, but long crooked sticks and drove across the field with the head of the enemy wrapped in a leather bag. Today, they do not race after a severed enemy's head, as they used to do, but a wooden ball, according to the same ancient rules [25].

If we are looking at the etymology, the word "*shogen*" goes back to the Old Turkic

lexeme “sök”, which means to break the army [26]. In our opinion, derivatives of “shögen” are derivatives of “shogan”, “shogban”, “chavgon”. Akhmetzhan [27], who researched Kazakh weapons, reveals there are close semantic links between “shogen” and “shokpar”: *Shegen sezi shokparmen tybirlis. If you do not want to use it, you must use it.* The words “shogen” and “shokpar” are homonyms, the single root morpheme expresses the meaning “to beat” (the translation of the sentence from the Kazakh language is by the authors) [27].

Hence the dominant meaning of *shögen* and its derivatives is revealed in the designation to strike, to beat, which is manifested in the ontology of this game. *Shegen* is a popular equestrian game of nomads, played on horseback in a flat open space, in which the ball is moved across the field with the help of a special curved stick. The rider on horseback needs skill, dexterity and ingenuity to take the ball from the opponent and score.

The game seems to have been popular in the culture of Turkic peoples and was reflected in Turkic written documents of the Karakhanid era. Thus, in “*kutadgu bilig*” (“gracious knowledge”) Balasaguni [28] believes that good ambassadors, military leaders and *beks* should play polo well, and also engage in other sports: *Chovgan should know arrow throwing; and know the art of hunting* [28]. Moreover, in the section about ambassadors, the text also describes how the game was popular among the Turkic nobility of that epoch: *Ambassadors, military leaders and beks played chovgan, the game well develops agility, intelligence, wisdom, skill and courage* [29]. Thus Balasaguni appeals to the idea that the game *chovgan / shogen*, not only strengthens a person physically, but also develops his intellectual potential, the world of his spiritual beginnings.

We find important information about the game of *shögen* in Kashkari's “Divani lugat-it Turk”, captured in some words and forms of the Dictionary. For example:

- 1) Aktur “to bend” (forms *akturdi, akturur, akturmak*). *Ul zhukan akturdi - He ordered the stick to be bent (for playing horse polo).*
- 2) Atgar “to help a man to get on a horse” (*atgarur, atgarmak*). *Ul mani atgardi - He helped me get on a horse.*
- 3) Argur “to ride”, “to bring to exhaustion” (*argurur, argurmak*). *Ul atin argurdi - He rode his horse.*
- 4) Tasal “a field, a boundary set up for the game of polo”. It is the same as talas: “there is no spread on this land”.
- 5) Zhukan “polo stick” [8].

Thus, these and other words in the document fully disclose the features and rules of the game of *shögen*: the instrument “crooked stick”; the participants, who could be people of different ages; the place “field with delineated boundaries”; the excitement and heat of the game in the highest degree, when the horse under the rider was brought to exhaustion. The rules of *shogen* (polo) have not actually changed until now. According to sources, the game was widespread not only among Turkic peoples, but throughout Central Asia. In the era of Sultan Babur, the Semirechen Mughals captured part of India, and thus the game became popular there and attracted the attention of the British conquerors. Thus, *shogen* (polo) spread to England, Europe, North and South America.

Nowadays the game of polo is widely spread in such countries as Great Britain, Spain, France, Germany, Pakistan, India, United Arab Emirates, Argentina, Mexico, Brazil, USA, Australia. In general, the game of polo is a game of privileged people, aristocratic nobility. Among these countries only in Argentina is polo a national sport in

general. In addition, Argentina has turned polo into a sustainable financial source. It is involved in training horses, making the balls and sticks used during the game, and educating those interested in the game [30].

4.3. *Zhamby atu*

For Turkic peoples the equestrian game of *zhamby atu* (archery) is a traditional one (Figure 3). According to researchers, the origins of the game date back to the fourth and third centuries BC, when the bow was one of the main weapons used in everyday life for hunting, in campaigns and battles for war. A skilful archer was a respected person with a status for tribesmen of the ancient society. It is known that it was in the era of the Huns that warriors-shooters and archers-hunters appeared. In Chinese sources there is information that the ruler of Moda had three thousand military archers.



Figure 3. Horse riders playing “zhamby atu”.

Our study of the etymology of the game of *zhamba/yamba* suggests that the word itself was borrowed by the Turks and Mongols from the Chinese language. As the authors of the etymological Kazakh dictionary write, the Chinese word *yuyaan* meant “coin”, “money”; *bao* meant “valuable”, “expensive”; in Mongolian borrowing these Chineseisms in the forms *yumby (yuamby)* it came to mean “silver equal to 50 lan”, and with a figurative meaning, “degree”, “the art of owning something”. The meaning of the valuable metal, silver, has been preserved in Turkic languages: in Uigur. *yamb, yambu/yamby* is equal to the Chinese 35 grams of silver; in Kyrgyz, *zhamby* means “a piece of silver”, differing in weight and shape and used instead of money [14]. In our opinion, for the name of the game in the Turkic languages the figurative meaning of the word from the Mongolian language was dominant, due to which *yambgu/jamby* came to mean the art of wielding an arrow from a bow.

The art of archery in the culture of Turkic peoples was popular in the early, late

medieval and also later times, which is undoubtedly recorded in documents and in the oral folk art of Turkic peoples. For example, Mahmud Kashkari's "*Divani lugat-at Turk*", as an encyclopaedia of Turkic culture, contains words and forms of words related to the game of *jamba*: *atish* "to compete in shooting, throwing" (forms *atishur*, *atishmak*). *Ul mannik uk atishdi* - He competed with me in shooting (or in throwing); *atum ar* "a person, skilful in shooting, a good marksman"; *atum ar* "a person, skilful in shooting, an apt marksman"; *atishgan* "a man who competes with me in shooting". *Ul mannik birla uk atishgan ul* [8].

In the epic "Alpamys", the contest is interrupted by a competition in *jambas*: ...Suddenly Ultan's loud voice rang out: "Let all shooters move to the right, now on that distant high tree hang *jambas*, whoever hits it, I will give Baibori Karlygash's daughter to him in marriage! The crowd of *dzhigits* rushed for the *jambas*. And again Ultan's voice rang out: "Give, give a turn to the dervish". Alpamys, not hesitating, pushed the crowd, shot and hit the target [31]. As can be seen from the text, not only the game itself, but also its instruments could be called *jamba*, i.e. metonymic transfer of the name of the game and its components.

The game of *jamba* was also widespread in the Mongol era. Thus, in the "Secret Annals" of the Mongols it is written that in 1225 Genghis Khan completely conquered Khorezm and arranged a large toga in "*bugyly-shashak*", where he summoned mounted archers and held a competition. In this competition, the shooter Esei reached the *zhamba* target at a distance of 502 metres [32].

In the ethnoculture of the Turkic peoples, the game was most often played at large feasts, festivals, memorial asahs, in honour of kagans, khans and other famous personalities of Steppe Eurasia. The rules of the game were preserved in the memory of the people and passed on to subsequent generations. The place where the game took place, the participants, the horse, the equipment, as well as the equal, the final prize - everything was regulated by these rules. Describing the process of the game in Kazakh culture, Dzhelbudin notes: "*The number of participants was not limited. In the past, girls also took part in it. Each participant took part with his horse and bow. A target sewn from cloth, covered with gold or silver was hung to a tree branch at a height of 4-5 metres with a thin hair rope so that the target dangled. Participants shot at the target with a bow three times in a row from a distance of 50-60 paces, and shot not at the target itself, but at the rope to which it was tied. The competitor who managed to shoot down the target, took it with its contents. The game required special marksmanship, and only excellent shooters could knock the target off the tree*" [32]. As recorded in cultural texts the information is confirmed by the ethnic constants of the Turkic people.

4.4. Horse racing - *baige*

Rather interesting, spectacular and emotionally colourful are horse *baige* (horse races), the origins of which go back to ancient times, as noted above, in the era of the Saks and Scythians. The main element in the *baige* is the horse, which is intended only for races, because the time, distance and type of race depends on the parameters of the racehorses, their age and breed (Figure 4). Thus, foals were chosen for *tai baigue*, and 3 to 4-year-old horses for *alaman baigue*. The name of the race is also associated with the horse: "*tai-baige* (for 6-8 km), *kunan-baige* (for 10-15 km), *donen-baige* (for 15-20 km), *at-baige* (for 25-30 km), *alaman baige* (for 40-100 km)" [5].

For thousands of years, a competition was a significant event for nomadic culture, because inter-tribal agreements, successful campaigns and battles, ases and toi, a clan's important exploits, ethnos, state, did not happen without *baige* races. *Alaman baige*, historically popular in the culture of Kazakhs and other Turkic peoples, are

indicative in this context. Roslyakov [34] notes: “*The epoch of military democracy, which emerged at the stage of decomposition of the primitive communal system, is associated with the emergence in the Kazakh steppes of alaman baige, a type of competition used to train a warrior. Alaman is one of the types of warfare, specifically a raid made by a mounted armed detachment. Alaman was also called a warrior as a participant of a raid*” [34]. The origins of *alaman-baige* lie in Alamanism, when horse racing not only served for military purposes, but also the special physical training of both man and horse. *Alaman baige*, as noted above, was a race for extremely long distances. We agree with Tanikeev's statement that nomadic culture required people to be ready for long distant journeys, hence, it was necessary to breed strong hardy horses. This was a test not for the rider, but for the horse and according to the rules, only local breeds of horses could be used. Sometimes the horses were killed by overloading or even collapsed. Riders often braided the tail and mane into plaits and attached bird feathers and various amulets to them to protect the horse from misfortune [5].



Figure 4. Horse riders participating in “baige”.

In Kashkari's “*Divani lugat-at-turk*” [8] the key meanings of *baiga* as an equestrian competition are given. The organisers and participants of the games are revealed: *Ul at yarishti* - He sent a horse to the competition, as well as the conditions for the competition: “*uzush* - assistance in riding, in races”. The Kipchak, Oghuz, and Karakhanid Türks chose the fastest horses for races, such as Arkun, a horse born from a wild stallion and a tame mare. The fastest horse in races. At the same time, attention was paid not only to the horse, but also to the rider, attention is paid to his strength, perseverance, riding technique: *Uzitgan bu ar ul atin uzitgan* - a man on a horse, ahead of all. The text also reveals the rivals: *Ul mannik birla at uzushdiy (uzushur, uzushmak)*. - He competed with me in horse races [8]. *Baige* (horse racing) represents the rich traditions and culture of the Turkic peoples, the tradition of equestrian competitions, when the strongest and toughest horses were chosen for races. The riders also had to be strong, agile, persistent, fast and organised.

5. Conclusions

A game is an activity inherent in the natural world and the human world. For man, a game is an act of spiritual activity, manifested in centuries-old culture and revealing his intellectual potential, physical and biological capabilities and emotional and psychological state. The ontology of the game is fixed in human consciousness as an artefact of culture and once played is passed on to subsequent generations with all its rules, properties, participants and attributes.

In the culture of Turkic peoples, the most relevant equestrian games come from their nomadic culture, the way of life of the peoples, originating from the Saks, Scythians, Huns, ancient Turks, Kypchak and Mongolian epochs; in later times too, the horse and the horse rider as a whole, embodied not only the idea of horsemanship, but also the millennial history of the development of Turkic culture. The nomadic culture of the Turks demanded readiness for long-distance journeys, so breeding strong horses with strong resistance and stamina was essential, and included the training and physical preparation which was carried out in races and other equestrian competitions.

The equestrian games, *kokpar* ("goat-dressing"), *shogen* (polo), *zhambi atu* (archery), *baige* (horse racing) have revealed themselves to be the most popular, fixed in the genetic memory of the Turkic peoples, and therefore their origins are deeply rooted in antiquity and are recorded in the Turkic written documents and ethnic culture of the Turkic peoples. Each of the mentioned games reveals their origins, reflected in the written texts, rules and properties of the games.

The equestrian games of Turkic peoples, including the Kazakh people, found continuity in the ethnic culture of modern Turkic peoples, preserving the basic rules used by the Kazakhs, Kyrgyz, Nogai and others. At festivals, different types of *kokpar* are played; *shogen* became popular especially after the celebration of the 550th anniversary of the Kazakh Khanate, and in Kazakhstan they created the Federation of polo ("shogen"); *jamba* was revived as a historical artefact of ethnic culture; *baige* is still an emotionally spectacular game during weddings, sundet-toys, and anniversary events.

The "World Nomad Games" an international sports competition held in Turkic-speaking countries are also relevant today and considered an analogue of the Olympic Games for Turkic-speaking peoples, where the palette of national sports is revealed, and in which the true spiritual values of the nomadic peoples are preserved, and genetic memory and common historical consciousness are revived, bringing the peoples of the Turkic world closer together.

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Summary

The article is devoted to the games and competitions of Turkic peoples, which have developed historically over many centuries. Games are activities inherent in the world of nature and man. For man, a game is an expression of his spiritual activity, his intellectual potential, emotional and psychological state and physical and biological capabilities. Human freedom and its ethnic-cultural features are revealed in the equestrian games and competitions of Turkic peoples, considered through the prism of horsemanship culture, when, starting from the Saks, Scythians, Huns, ancient Turks and subsequent eras, a warrior on a warhorse was a symbol of mobility, masculinity, military might, freedom of spirit of the peoples of the Eurasian Steppe. The article analyses equestrian games such as *kokpar* ("goat-dressing"), *shogen* (polo), *zhamby atu* (archery), and *bayge* (horse racing), the latter found to be the most widespread and fixed in the genetic memory of Turkic peoples, the origins of which go back to deep antiquity

and are recorded in Turkic written documents and in the ethnic culture of Turkic peoples. Using the texts "Divani Lugat-it Turk" by M. Kashgari, "Graceful Knowledge" by J. Balasuguni, the epics "Manas", "Alpamys" and other materials from ethnic culture, the authors have tried to determine the origins of horse games, and consider their main content, the behavioural roles of game participants, and reveal the semantic meanings of game lexemes. Equestrian games have a continuity in the culture of modern Turkic peoples and have preserved the basic historical rules through the years. Today they are still played and are spectacular events performed during the ethnic festivals of the Turkic world.

Riassunto

L'articolo è dedicato ai giochi e alle competizioni dei popoli turchi, che si sono sviluppati storicamente nel corso di molti secoli. I giochi sono attività inerenti al mondo della natura e dell'uomo. Per l'uomo, un gioco è un'espressione della sua attività spirituale, del suo potenziale intellettuale, del suo stato emotivo e psicologico e delle sue capacità fisiche e biologiche. La libertà umana e le sue caratteristiche etnico-culturali si rivelano nei giochi e nelle competizioni equestri turche, considerati attraverso il prisma della cultura dell'equitazione, quando, a partire dai Saks, dagli Sciti, dagli Unni, dagli antichi Turchi e dalle epoche successive, un guerriero su un cavallo da guerra era simbolo di mobilità, mascolinità, potenza militare, e libertà di spirito per i popoli della steppa eurasiatica. L'articolo analizza i giochi equestri come *kokpar* ("acchiappa la capra"), *shogen* (polo), *zhamby atu* (tiro con l'arco) e *bayge* (corse di cavalli), questi ultimi risultati essere i più diffusi e fissati nella memoria genetica dei popoli turchi, le cui origini risalgono a una profonda antichità e sono registrate nei documenti scritti turchi e nella loro cultura etnica. Utilizzando i testi "Divani Lugat-it Turk" di M. Kashgari, "Graceful Knowledge" di J. Balasuguni, i poemi epici "Manas", "Alpamys" e altri materiali della cultura etnica, gli autori hanno cercato di determinare le origini dei giochi ippici, e considerare il loro contenuto principale, i ruoli comportamentali dei partecipanti al gioco, e rivelare i significati semantici dei lessemi di gioco. I giochi equestri hanno una continuità nella cultura dei turchi moderni e hanno conservato le regole storiche di base nel corso degli anni. Oggi vengono ancora eseguiti e sono eventi spettacolari che si svolgono durante le feste etniche.