

Historical Roots of the Sport of Couples

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Abstract. *This article discusses the historical roots of the sport of Kopkari and Kopkari, one of the ancient and traditional sports of the Uzbek people, whose historical roots go back to the culture of the nomadic peoples of Central Asia. This game was mainly closely related to cattle breeding and military training, and tested the courage, agility and team spirit of young men. Kopkari was held in ancient times as part of various ceremonies, weddings and celebrations, in which participants fought for a he-goat (goat or calf) and tried to take it to a designated place. It is argued that this sport has been valued not only as a means of demonstrating physical strength and skill, but also as a means of demonstrating dedication, courage and bravery.*

Key words: *Kazakhstan, Kopkari, Uzbek, Kokbori, Chinese sources, Ashina, Altai, Tashkent, Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya.*

Kopkari is one of the ancient mass, national games of the peoples of Central Asia. It was mainly held on the occasion of victory and harvest holidays, weddings and festivals. In addition to the rulers and various officials, wealthy people, even ordinary people, organized Uloq games. Nowadays, the game of kopkari is considered a national sport widespread in Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan and Afghanistan. This national sport, which tests the strength, riding and agility of men, has been an integral and unique Uzbek horse competition for thousands of years. This game is called “kopkari” or “uloq” in Uzbeks, “kokbo’ru” in Kyrgyz, “kokpar tortu” in Kazakhs, and “bozkashi” in Tajiks and Afghan Uzbeks. Among the Turkic peoples and Kyrgyz in Altai, the riders of this game are called “wolves”, the northern Kyrgyz call this national sport “goat pulling”, and the players are called “goat players”. Sometimes it is also said that its “kokpar” form comes from the “kok pari”. Horse games have long been an integral part of the social life of the Turkic peoples. Experts know from archaeological materials that representatives of the Botai culture found in northern Kazakhstan domesticated wild horses 5.5 thousand years ago. In addition, the “heavenly horses” of the ancient Fergana/Davan state, which attracted the Chinese, are also famous. Among the Turkic peoples, one of the lungs of the national equestrian sport There are other horse games with different names - kiz kumay, yigit kuu, chavgon, enish/oodarish, ot nahi kurash, ukuruk salmaqtuu, oltin qoboq, beyge (poyga), audarispak, tengе alu, jambi atuu, at omiraulastiruu, jorga jaris, kumis aluu or juzuk iluu, tumaq uruu. All of these games were invented after the domestication of horses for entertainment and to prepare soldiers for battle[1; 35].

In fact, the old name of the Uzbek kopkari game can be considered “ko’kbo’ri”, which is an ancient Turkic term. It is well known that the first part of the term “ko’kbo’ri”, which comes from a pair of roots, “ko’k”, actually means “blue color”. In Old Turkic, “kok” directly meant God, that is, Kокtangri was accepted as a common cult in the religious beliefs of the ancient Turkic peoples. Kокtangri was interpreted as the greatest of the gods and the one who brings victory to the Turkic peoples in battles, protects them from disasters, and enthrones the khans and bestows them with “kut” (blessing). The khans were considered representatives of Kокtangri on earth. That is probably why the color that symbolized the Turks has always been blue/blue. The second root is the wolf. As is

known, the sacred animal, that is, the totem of the ancient Turks was the wolf. Since ancient times, the wolf has been accepted by the Turks as a guide, a giver of intelligence and courage, a symbol of freedom and independence. In Chinese sources, the term wolf is understood equally with the Turkish khagan, that is, powerful khagans were evaluated as “a person with the characteristics of a wolf.” There was a reason why the ancient Turks called the wolf, which was their sacred animal, the “blue wolf,” of course. Calling something “blue” to describe it came from the desire to sanctify it even more and associate it with the ancient Turkic deity - God. Ethnographers write that among the Turkic peoples of Altai, when a wolf was killed, the Altaians had a custom of asking God Kurt (wolf) for blessings and food. In particular, the "Oguznoma" says that a "blue-haired, blue-tailed" (divine, holy) wolf showed the way to Oguz Khan. In the "Oguznoma" epic, "the blue wolf was perceived as the legendary Oguz Khan's battle cry - his watchword (password)[5; 173].

In particular, it is interesting that in Khorezm, the Uzbek game of Kokbori was called “kokbori” and was played with a slaughtered, beheaded, and sewn-up animal. In the Northern Khorezm Uzbeks (Gurlan), who remember their clan name well, the winner of the “Kokbori” game took the kokbori, that is, a goat, with him and shared it with their neighbors in the neighborhood, fed a piece of its meat to sick people to cure their ailments, and hung it up as an amulet, tearing off its skin and wool. Therefore, this fact indicates that this game was preserved among the Khorezm Uzbeks as its ancient name “kokbori” until the beginning of the 20th century. Similarly, in the dialects of Northern Khorezm, Khiva and Urgench, the verb “ulakmaq” occurs, which means “to wander, to grope in the right direction”, and in our opinion its root is related to the name of the game “ulaq”. Thus, the old form of the name “kokbori” means “God-bearer” [2; 16]. According to the philosophical and mythological view of the origin of this game among the Turkic peoples living in Altai, the wolf game is an ancient sport that demonstrated the strength and power of its riders and symbolized the spirit of a group of people resembling a pack of wolves. Among the ancient Turks of Altai, the name wolf means “totem/sacred wolf - mother” and also expresses the attitude towards the wolf with a deep philosophical understanding. It is known that the wolf was one of the ancient zootypes and totems in the imagination of Eurasian nomads. Therefore, the image of the wolf can often be found in the art and social life of Eurasian nomads. After the 6th century, in Chinese sources, the Ashina Turks begin to be depicted with a flag with the image of a wolf's head. Thus, the wolf was a symbol of the Ashina Turks, the main clan of the Turkic Khaganate.

There are different opinions about the origin of the game of Kokbori/Kokkari. This game arose as a result of riders attacking a flock of sheep and imitating an unusual form of hunting them, which is why this game was called "kokbori", experts say. There is also a view of the tactics of the game as an ancient battle doctrine. It is also noteworthy that in this game the rider and the horse, understanding each other with unspoken movements, move towards the main goal. Also, according to the ancient Turkic battle traditions, the soldier who brought the body of a dead warrior from battle was given his property. The game was played with the arrival of the spring, a rare example of the fusion of nomadic civilization with sedentary culture, and it can be considered that the ancient Turks, who safely escaped the harsh days of winter and celebrated it together with their closest friends and source of life - horses and donkeys - in honor of the first meeting between man and the most ferocious animal of the great steppe, the sacred wolf [3; 245]. Ethnographers, based on the stories of Kyrgyz elders, emphasize that the formation of this game among the Kyrgyz was influenced by the ancient tradition of wolf hunting. That is, a group of horsemen chased a wolf, chased it in deep snow, killed it with a large pole/stick on the head, and tried to bring it home on their saddles. Other horsemen tried to take the wolf's body from the rider's hands, and in this way, the riders who hunted the wolf passed the wolf's body from hand to hand and returned it home, similar to the game of kobkari, which later became the kokbori game. The "Encyclopedia of National Sports and Folk Games of Uzbekistan" explains that the etymology of the word kobkari is formed from the Turkish words "kob" and the Persian "kor" and means "the work of many". According to the well-known Uzbek folklorist Mamatkul Jo'rayev, kopkari is an ancient game, the beginning of which is associated with the name of Oguz Khan. In those days, this game was called "ko'kbo'ri" [4; 78]. Later, this word was pronounced "kopkari". The Uzbek game of kopkari-uloq is played at weddings and mass folk festivals in almost all regions - Samarkand, Jizzakh, Tashkent, Kashkadarya, Surkhandarya, Navoi and other regions in the

mountainous and steppe zones. In some places of the Tashkent region, Kokand and Fergana Valley, this game is called "tomosha". In neighboring republics - Afghanistan and Tajikistan, this game is also played by people belonging to Uzbek clans. Uzbeks living in Tajikistan and northern Afghanistan also play the game of Uloq, and it is somewhat different. In particular, for the Kurama Uzbeks living in the Asht region of Tajikistan, Uloq is considered an ancient game. Since Uloq is not played in the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan today, many say that the game was not widespread in this region for a long time[6; 342]. Until the beginning of the 20th century, the game "Girl Chase" was played at folk festivals among the Uzbeks living in the north of Khorezm. This game, firstly, shows that girls also participated in horse racing, and secondly, it indicates that horse racing games were also played in the territory of Khorezm. A young man on horseback chases a girl on horseback, and together they show off by chasing horses. In particular, 80-year-old Khasan Jumamuratov, who lived in the "Kommuna" collective farm in the Gurlan district, located in the north of the Khorezm region, writes that the game of chasing girls was played at games near the mosque, that he saw a young man chasing a girl and hugging her, and that this game disappeared when she reached the age of 10-15. There are also memories of the elderly about the game of "golden gourd" being played in Khorezm in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. During the Soviet era in Uzbekistan, horse racing was strictly prohibited as it was ideologically incompatible with the country's policies. Horses were given to the state under the pretext of fulfilling the state's meat plan[7; 98].

Kopkari is a sport that reflects the rich cultural heritage of the Uzbek people, which for centuries has taught the younger generation courage, endurance and teamwork. Even today, kopkari has not lost its historical significance, but lives on as a symbol of preserving national identity and traditions. This game is important in understanding the spirit, customs and history of the people.

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