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ROAD TO YAYLAG



In the last days of July, the First National Festival of Nomadic Culture, organized by the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA), the Javadkhan History and Culture Foundation and the Executive Authorities of Gadabay District was held in Azerbaijan's Gadabay District with the information support of Azerbaijan Airlines and IRS magazines.

The festival organizers did not expect such interest from the audience. Already on the first day, at least twenty-five thousand people gathered at the Land of Nomadic Culture ethnographic camp built on the Duzurd-Meskinli yaylag. And not only locals came to the festival. No less guests came from other regions and even from Baku. Delegations from sixteen countries also took part in the festival. The chairman of the World Ethnosport Confederation, Bilal Erdogan, conveyed greetings and good wishes to the festival from Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

The yaylag is a high-mountain pasture, a zone of beautiful alpine meadows, where cattle are driven from valleys in spring. Together with shepherds, their family members also traveled, moving from houses to yurts for



several months. Thus, a special nomadic culture, which was born, according to some estimates, as early as the 4th millennium BC, formed over the centuries. It existed among many peoples and, dictated by the special conditions of business and life, it was distinctive, unique and original.

The culture of the nomads is most fully preserved among the Turkic peoples, and the festival showed it



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in all its splendor and diversity. It was distinguished by three features: entertainment, realistic details and the involvement of the audience in the action unfolding before them. And it was bright and colorful.

First of all, the organizers can be congratulated on the choice of a wonderful place. The emerald-green plain at an altitude of almost two thousand meters, on which white yurts for guests and volunteers, an arena for equestrian performances, a stage, shopping and ex-

hibition rows, stalls for animals, a small zoo, hiking kitchens and shelters for those who wanted to eat and drink tea were installed, was covered by high mountains from two sides. And all the events of the festival took place against their background.

Its program was extensive. It included performances by singers, musicians, dance groups and ashugs. They were replaced by wrestlers then to give way to masters of martial arts. And after them, there were





strong men-pahlavans, who demonstrated miracles of strength and dexterity in exercises with clubs, weights and other sports equipment traditional for zorkhana.

And how accurate the archers from Azerbaijan, Turkey, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan were! They easily hit not only fixed, but also flying targets with arrows. They fired both offhand and from a half-turn position, i.e. the same fighting stance from which the rider fires arrows while getting away from enemies.

But, of course, the riders of the Azerbaijan Equestrian Federation caused the greatest enthusiasm among the audience. The riders on pacing horses were greeted with applause. These amazing horses that never get tired can run tens of kilometers without rest. And what a flurry of cheers broke out when two teams ready to fight in Chovgan appeared on the arena!

Historians believe that this equestrian game, consisting of a series of fast-moving rapid attacks and fierce counterattacks, could only appear in a nomadic people, whose riders were able to skillfully ride a horse - among ancient Turks. Its purpose is to drive the ball into the opponents' goal with the help of a long stick - the chomag. The first Chovgan match recorded in the annals took place in the 12th century in Baghdad. But already at this point Chovgan was a very popular game at the courts



of many Eastern rulers. Its participants were even portrayed in medieval miniatures, and Chovgan itself was repeatedly mentioned in poems and epics.

The sight of riders rushing to the rival's goal is unmatched by its beauty in sports, and the feelings that the fans have at this point cannot be compared with the excitement that overwhelms the fans at huge stadiums.

And at the end of the program, the guests were shown a fantastically beautiful composition "Azerbaijani kalagayi and Karabakh racers". It must be said that along with men, the show was attended by two female riders, who showed such art of horse racing and such fearlessness that their every appearance in the arena caused a storm of delight.

The performances began in the second half of the day, and its first half and evening could be devoted to a detour of the rows where folk craftsmen sat at long tables. A variety of crafts were presented: carpet-weaving and blacksmithing, collection of medicinal herbs and manufacture of dairy products. But the place allocated for cooking nomadic dishes was especially lively. Professional cooks invited to the festival did not confine themselves to a variety of kebabs and vegetables baked on the fire. The menu included dovga, choban, buglama,



pilaf, and dishes made on the saj. And this luxurious meal was washed down with tea on fragrant mountain herbs.

Judging by the fact that even after dark the camp continued to remain crowded, the festival was to everyone's liking. And as promised by the vice-president of the Javadkhan History and Culture Foundation, Muzadil Hasanov, the festival will be held again next year. And it seems that it will bring together even more guests while its program will become even more extensive. 🌟



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THERE IS NO AZERBAIJAN WITHOUT KARABAKH



AZERBAIJANI DISTRICTS

occupied by Armenia
and dates of their occupation

Asgaran – 1991

Khojaly – 26.02.1992

Agdam – 23.07.1993

Gubadli – 31.08.1993

Hadrut – 1991

Shusha – 08.05.1992

Kalbajar – 02.04.1993

Zangilan – 29.10.1993

Khojavand – 1991

Lachin – 18.05.1992

Fuzuli – 23.08.1993

Khankandi – 1991

Agdara – 07.07.1993

Jabrayil – 23.08.1993