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**RITES OF PASSAGE (DIVINATION)**

**IN THE BASHKIR BOYS’ GAMES**

**Summary.** The Eurasian character of Bashkir boys’ game called alchiks (bones, astragalus, asick) is shown in the article. The semantics of this game is revealed, the connection with ancient magic ritual is tracked, the conclusion about the Neolithic Age of this Game is drawn.

**Key words:** Bashkir games, semantics, ceremony, ritual, magic, game boys, astragalus.

Bashkir ethnic group was formed during the last millennium in the steppes of the Ural and Southern Urals. Ethno genesis processes were extremely complicated, Bashkirs included in its membership ancient Turkic tribes, Finno - Ugric and Iranian-speaking population Sarmatian-Alan. Influenced by the Bulgars and Kipchaks in the XI-XIII centuries formed the language and culture of the ancient Bashkirs.

The main occupation of the population was cattle, bred horses and cattle. It is associated with the breeding of sheep baby dice, called in the literature alchiks. Herself in Bashkir Ashik in the Russian version it is known more as a babki.

The earliest description of it can be found in S.I Rudenko, who writes about the game of dice or grandmother. [7.P.276] Subsequently mentioned about it, but, unfortunately, nothing more, F.Sh. Absalikova [1. P.132] and A.M Suleiman. [9. P.128 -129] A separate chapter devoted to this game by I.M Galyautdinov , who described her ten options , as well as equipment to them and the detailed rules of the [3.P.133].

Source base for the games in alchiks Bashkirian children today presented well and to some extent coincides with the historiographical base of the problem. There are several descriptions of games in the bones of children Bashkir author's personal archive. Existing system allows clearly identify the actual game boy and the game with stones. There will be a speech about the alchiks.

With regard to global and domestic literature, there are a large number of papers devoted to gambling and games especially in bones. Proved religious origin of the game, well described materials of archaeological finds. Much attention is paid to her indianistika as written sources for ancient India left a detailed description of games. There are varying degrees of completeness of these games in the ethnographic literature.

Our material can also identify the characteristics of this game Bashkirian child. We describe the game, relying on the field and published materials. It must be emphasized that the game is now almost forgotten, save only in the memory of the older generation.

Amused by it exclusively boys aged from 5-6 years to 12-13 years .Bashkir children used mainly for her bone cattle. Articular bone thoroughly cleaned, washed, almost polished them. Most often, they were pristine white, but occasionally informants reported coloring bones. What did the colored dice - is not clear. But the main figure - bat - painted black with soot. Her and produced especially by making a small hole in the bone and pouring lead there. Weighted Bit certainly beat out other bones. However, there is evidence that the use of these bones in the game is not always encouraged others. The game comes alchiks was that they go to different sides, each of which has its "value." Referring to published materials I.G Galyautdinova .

«Articular bones of small and large animals in the game had four unequal sides, four positions. Top lateral concave side boy - alsy ( alsy ) , the opposite position of the bones - Sic ( sic ) , the back side of beech (beech ) , the opposite position of the bones , " beech " sunken face " sik " ​​opposite position boy "alsy" side - tui ( tui ) . Regulation «alsy» is considered the most advantageous.

Head (the bones of large animals) have only two sides. If a nickel with babki lie back up, will beech (beech), but if the opposite - Isak (Asak). In some places, their location called «paws» and «lyp." Winning position is the side Asak or lyp." [3.P.12.]

Game options in alchiks were a great set, but several of them can be considered basic. For example, the player took a certain amount of bone, toss them, and those who went to the concave side alsy , took away . Performed the same game as the draw: the game started one who will form the bone position alsy. If there were a few players, between them carried out a replay, and, ultimately, there was only one player. This determines the order of players: first started one who lies in bone alsyposition, the second - the one whose bones lie in position tui, the third - the buoy, the fourth - sik .

The greatest distribution had the following game. Prioritize in the game, agreed on the number of attendants exhibited. They put in one row and at a distance of about half a meter from them draw the line. From this line throw the bat in order to knock down as many alchiks. Statement player takes only those who fall into the position alsy. Then the turn passes to the next player .The player who collects the most wins. Bad throw meant loss and transmission speed.

Another version of the game in the boy guesses knocking them out of the circle, where the bones were concentrated in the center. Unlike the previous example, there is space constraint acts circle, and not touch. But the same semantic load.

The third option is very similar to the modern «whipping ", now played with checkers figures. All players throw up and throw alchiks. The player, who starts the game, threw his bat so that it fell outside the bone. Then this bat had to knock alchiks so that they formed the alsyposition, and then they moved into the property. All of these are listed and other versions of the game were extremely gambling .Sometimes, losing to the nines, the children left with nothing, took the bones in debt, wanting revenge later - all as adult’s gamers.

Many examples where alchiks used as toys, that is, they portrayed animals, people, and then with them could play a variety of role-playing games. However, role play of children in the context of the themes will not be considered, since their variation is infinite.

Ethnographic data on the peoples of Eurasia suggest universal character alchiksgame, not only in the culture of childhood, but also in the culture of adults. Material available on the peoples of Europe and Asia shows her fame in ancient and medieval times with extremely compulsive character. Modern Kalmyk, Kyrgyz, Karakalkaks children we see the transition to a smaller game - in the nursery - age group. But the excitement is quite preserved here. Bashkir informants often report that played, forgetting all; losing completely took the bones borrowed from the more fortunate players, thereby getting in children's version of bondage. Game was stopped at nightfall, but only in order to start it in the morning. It seems that children alchiks were not in favor of adult scold their kids for such a mindless pastime. Maybe we are confronted with signs condemning gambling once existed in adults?

As mentioned above, the dice is known to mankind for at least five millennia. The oldest evidence of the bones, which are prototypes of modern cubes, dates from the third millennium BC and were found in the royal tomb of the Sumerian dynasty of Ur. Twentieth century BC .e .dated to similar findings in the tomb of Ramses II, they are referred to in the «Rig Veda» and «Mahabharata « [4. Pp. 61-62. ]

It is believed that the Greek Palamedes, member of the Trojan War, invented the game of dice, or, in another version, the game of checkers. The same guessing game dropped bones was popular in ancient Rome , Louis de Bek Fouquieres leads to Pliny about sculpture depicting two children playing in the headstock [2 . S. 65]. The ancient Germans of Tacitus tells her. In the middle Ages the church periodically «refreshed" decrees banning the dice not only among the laity but among the monks. The remarkable fact in many ways! In Russia, the Code of 1649, Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich prohibits «lodygi game. »

The same game in the nineteenth century was known German children. Judging by some of the works in the recent past - in the early twentieth century, it has played the children of peasant’s Swiss mountain [11. S.15.]. In the second half of XIX - early XX centuries .description of this kind of games for children Russian, however, varying degrees of completeness, left E.A Pokrovsky and I.P Sugars. Russian children knew her babki called, astragalus, bouncers. There is a whole chapter Pokrovsky "Games with bones» [6.]

As recently as the mid-twentieth century, the game still was recorded among the peoples of the Caucasus, Central Asia, Kazakhstan, the Urals , the Volga region , including the Bashkirs as material from the field experts, and observations of people far from ethnography. One could even argue that the extinction of the game just the Bashkirs and dates from the second half of the twentieth century. We have already dealt with the Kalmyks , Karakalpaks, Kyrgyz .

Now there is no doubt that in the children's play until we reached the ancient ritual of divination. Originally speculated on the bones of sheep and goats, tossing them. Depending on which side of the falls bone depended answer. Guessing made ​​man who knew the procedure, calls the priest.

Now there is no doubt, that this simple game was once an ancient fortune-telling ritual. At first, people used bones of sheep and goats, tossing them up. The answer depended on the side which the bone lands on. The divination was done by a person that knew the ceremony well - that is, by a priest. The priest was also the one to tell the others the will of the heavens. This is the reason the role of the leader in dice games is so nonstandard. There can be none, but his responsibilities are still carried out in one form or another, for example, by the first player as by one who got the blessing of the heavens during the sortition. He carries out the role of the "priest". In ancient times, the priest was a mediator between the world of the living and the realm of the dead. He was the keeper of knowledge and the one in charge of the ritual, so his role in it was very important. Hence, it's not accidental that he is the one who brings the game to a close (by naming the winner). Interesting examples can be found in literature: while playing "babki", russian and ukrainian children say "To bet on the pope". As is known, the pope is the mediator between the humans and the God, granting forgiveness for our sins on His behalf. In the game that eastern slavs play, the initial meaning of the phrase persisted, and while there sometimes is no priest, his duties are still carried out; the word "priest" was replaced with the word "pope", because people are more used to it. The phrase "to bet on the pope" can also mean trusting someone who has knowledge of other realms and hence can help to win.

In the southern Urals, the bones of animals are often found in ancient graves. These bones were likely of some importance to the ones who were buried there. Doctor of Historical Science Morozov, while analyzing the results of excavations of a necropolis from the times of carcass culture, pays a lot of attention to the astragali found in the graves. "Old-balaklinsky burial ground is the oldest necropolis from the bronze era in bashkir pre-Urals. In the series of bone artifacts are included astragali which were likely used in various games. Within the mound 90, near the vessel by the north-eastern wall, three alchiks were found. In the fifth burial place of the mound 106, astragali were all standing in a row along the southern wall of the graves. In the burial place of the mound 9 5 astragali were found, lying between the vessels by the northern wall. Them being there can be explained by people of that era believing that the one who was working with astragali in life, should do the same in death. In our case, the astragali were also found in three children's burial places".

Folklore materials suggest that the lucky players were "marked by the heavens". For example, bashkirs have a saying that states: "his alchiks are always alsy", which means "he is always lucky".

So, archaeological and folklore materials confirm that the dice games once were of a sacred significance.

Interesting things can be found out by comparing gaming cultures of different countries. Despite having some differencies, the games have a lot of common with each other (like rules, inventory, or the name of the game), which means that the people of Eurasia were all familiar with babki and alchiks. For examples, see table № 1.

In all these examples, the rules are very alike: usual sortition, the goal is to clear the alchiks, mandatory line/circle, the game is mostly played by young people.

*Table № 1*

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **№** | **Ethnos** | **Name of the**  **game** | **Notes** |
| 1. | Ancient Greeks | Babki |  |
| 2. | Ancient Romans | Dice |  |
| 3. | Germans | Babki | In Europe the game was very widespread in the Middle Ages. |
| 4. | British | Babki |  |
| 6. | French | Dice |  |
| 5. | Russian | Babki, ankle, astragali, alchiks | For the game, the bones of sheep and cows were used. In the northern Russia at the end of XIX century the game was played by adult men (!) during the Christmastide – traditional time for fortune-telling. The bones were of different colors – red, black, yellow. The one who lost paid with the bones as well. The meaning of the colors is unclear. We can assume that, as with cards, different colors meant different suits and that some colors were of more value than the others. |
| 6. | Ukrainians | Babki |  |
| 7. | Belarusians | Babki |  |
| 8. | Swiss | Dice | Was played in the middle of ХХ century. |
| 9. | Georgians |  | The bones of sheep and cattle were used to play. |
| 10. | Ossetians | Alchiks |
| 11. | Bashkirs | Ashyk | The bones of sheep and cattle were used to play. |
| 12. | Tatars | Ashyk |
| 13. | Kazakhs | Achik |
| 14. | Kirghiz | Asik |
| 15. | Tuva | Dice | Is played nowadays as well. |
| 16. | Turks | Asik |  |
| 17. | Khakasses | Dice | Is played nowadays as well. |
| 18. | Altai | Babki |  |
| 19. | Tajiks |  |  |
| 20. | Kalmyks |  | Is played nowadays as well. |
| 21. | Buryats |  | Is played nowadays as well. |
| 22. | Nivkhs |  | Used vertebrae of various fish to play (pike, trout). |
| 23. | Nanai | Alchoochi, alchua, alchoachiuri |
| 24. | Ulchi | Alchuka |
| 25. | Sami | Babki | Used bones of deer to play. |
| 26. | Khanty |  |  |
| 27. | Udmurt |  |  |
| 28. | Mari |  |  |
| 29. | Mordovians |  |  |

There are works of soviet and russian archaeologists concerning this topic, but it should be noted that there were no special monographic studies analyzing alchiks and dice found in burial grounds. Some information about such findings can be found in articles; the ones of interest are those written by Sanzharov and Hudyakov.

The article written by Sanzharov, published in "Soviet Archaeology", contains a lot of information. The author chooses to analyze six burial grounds containing 15 dice from the times of catacomb culture (XVIII century BC). Information on the culture of ancient East, provided by various sources, led him to the conclusion that the game had a sacred meaning and was connected to the duties of the priest. [8. Page 140-158]

Another work describes dice that were found in a grave and were used in games played by adult men. Those are not typical for tashtyk culture (IV-VI century) children's toys, but painted astragali of horses. Hudyakov wasn't able to determine the meaning and/or role of those atypical for this culture painted bones. He suggested that bones of different colors/shapes were of different value, but couldn't say anything specific about the game itself. [10. Page 109-111]

Languages contain many allusions to the once sacred role of those games. In russian, many phraseological units allude to the original meaning of them. We've already talked about such phrases as, for example, "to bet on the pope". Also, there's such a phrase as "to throw a lot", which basically means "to surrender yourself to the will of the gods", where your lot depends on the side which the dice/coin lands on. Especially interesting is the phrase "let's throw the bones", which means "let's read our fortune (using bones)". We don't use the bones to tell fortunes anymore, and most of the times there's even no association left, yet we still continue to use those phrases without understanding their real meaning. The game like "heads or tails" also comes to mind here. Those are all remnants of the old dice games.

We cannot tell for certain when this cult existed, we can only make assumptions. However, we should pay attention to those facts: people used the bones of animals tamed during Neolithic age; the sacred nature of those games remained during the times of proto-state cultures - archaeological cultures which existed around 2000 years BC. The ritual became a game fairly early afterwards, though - as we can see, in, for example, Egypt it happened somewhere around 3000 years BC. So, if 5000 years ago it was called a game, it must mean that the times when it was a sacred ritual were even earlier than that - around 5000-4000 years BC, during the Neolithic age. But, such toys could also be made out of bones of wild animals...

The game was very widespread: frontal and central Asia, Europe, Siberia, Far East, Caucasus. There are also some pieces of information coming from Africa, and American Indians played a similiar game using sticks and stones. We can assume that the ritual was born in Frontal Asia, where the Neolitic Revolution happened, and where sheep were tamed. Afterwards it spreaded throughout the whole Eurasia. The game did not disappear - now it exists in form of card games, fortune telling and such.

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**Шагапова Г.Р. Обряди переходу (ворожіння) в іграх башкирських хлопчиків. - Стаття.**

**Анотація.** У статті на прикладі башкирської гри альчики (кістки, астрагали, Ашик) показаний євразійський характер ігор. Виявляється їх семантика, зв'язок з найдавнішими магічним ритуалом ворожіння, робиться висновок про неолитичний вік гри.

**Ключові слова:** башкирські ігри, семантика, обряд, ритуал, магія, ігри хлопчиків, астрагали.

**Аннотация.** В статье на примере башкирской игры альчики (кости, астрагалы, ашик) показан евразийский характер игр. Выявляется их семантика, связь с древнейшими магическим ритуалом гадания, делается вывод о неолитическом возрасте игры

**Ключевые слова.** Башкирские игры, семантика, обряд, ритуал, магия, игры мальчиков, астрагалы.