

CULTURE OF KAZAKHSTAN

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INTRODUCTION

The Kazakh people are rich in traditions. From birth through old age and death, every step of their lives has historically been marked with celebration. Even their funeral ceremonies have their own special symbolism.



KAZAKH YURT

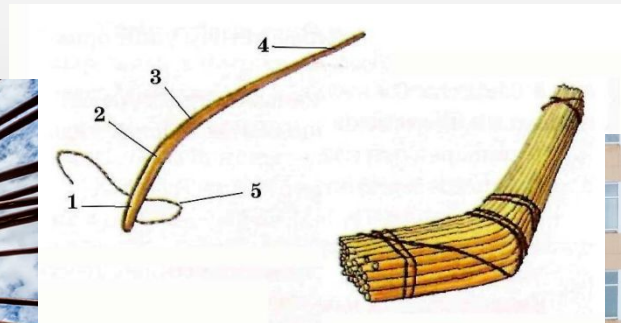
Kazakh yurt is a product of traditional Kazakhstan culture based on the ecological balance and sustainability, a product of a culture that does not seek to dominate and change the nature, but seeks to learn its laws and follow them in daily life. Perceiving the nature as a natural shelter, nomads created their house by the own laws of the nature.



CONSTRUCTION OF A YURT

Yurt is a round-shaped, sophisticated construction with a dome. If explain its structure in simple words, it consists of three main parts and many other smaller parts.

Three main parts include Shanyrak – top of the Yurt. Kerege – walls carcass and Uwyk – a carcass part from Kerege to the Shanyrak. The carcass is usually covered with pieces of felt from outside and decorated with carpets from inside.



KAZAKH CUISINE



Interesting facts about Kazakh cuisine:

Main ingredients in traditional Kazakh cuisine are meat, flour and milk products, though nowadays many other ingredients are common in the cuisine

Kazakhs are believed to be among the top countries in tea consumption, almost every meal is followed by tea in Kazakh families.

Kazakh cuisine is usually not spicy.

There are many high calorie dishes in the traditional Kazakh cuisine.



BESBARMAK

The main dish of Kazakh cuisine, with which owners welcome their guests is besbarmak. Name of this dish is translated from Kazakh as “five fingers” because of a manner to eat the dish by hand.



Besbarmak’s main ingredients are: meat (lamb or horse meat), pasta (it is cut into small squares), as well as herbs (dill, parsley, cilantro, etc.)



KAZAKH NATIONAL CLOTHES



For centuries, Kazakh national clothes were simple and rational. It was characterized by common forms for all segments of the population, but with a certain social and age regulations. Elegance and beautiful elements to dresses were given by fur trim, embroidery, jewelry. Traditional materials for the clothes were leather, fur, thin felt, cloth, which was produced by the local population. Clothes sewn from imported materials - silk, brocade, velvet, were a kind of measure of wealthiness of their owners. Cotton was also widely used.



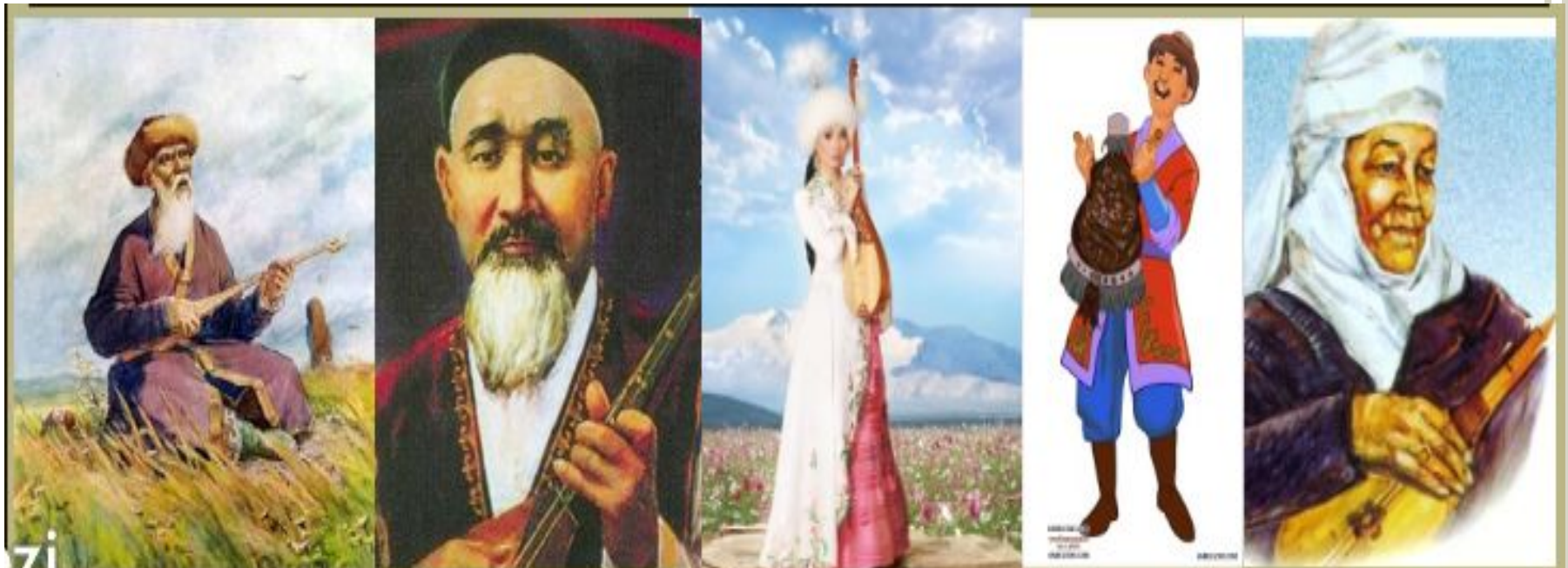
A Kazakh woman traditionally wore a dress with a waistcoat. Generally, outerwear of women was similar to that of men: similar jackets, waistcoats, gowns, wide leather belts, it differed from men's only in colours and some decoration details.



Men's clothing consisted of the following components: Double under vest (zheyde), lower pants - made of light fabric and the upper - of cloth, suede, sheepskin or thick cotton fabric. The main type of outer clothing was shapan, a kind of robe.

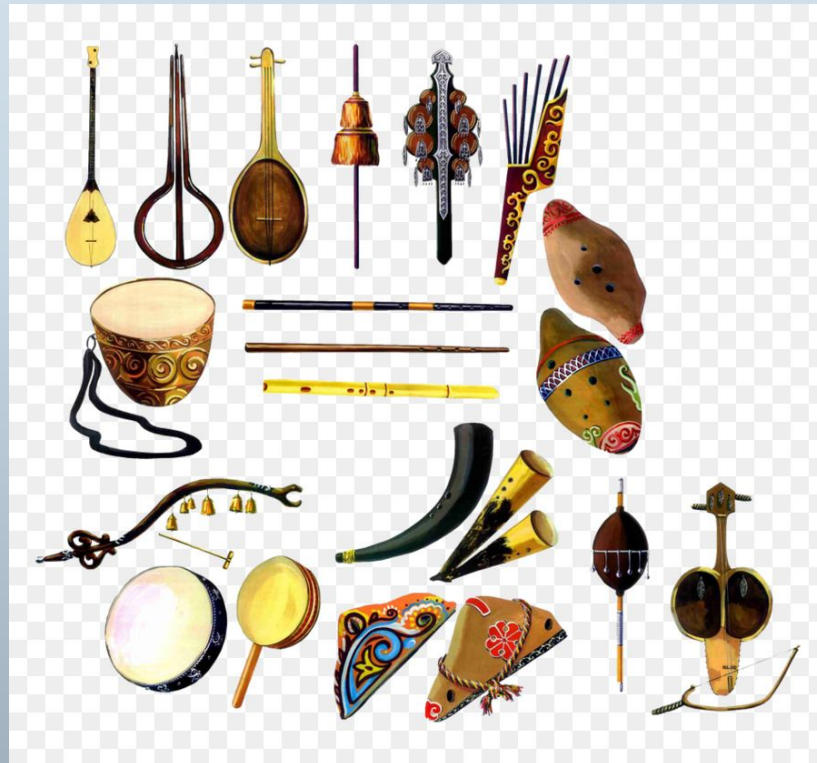
KAZAKH MUSIC

Kazakh national music has a long and rich history and traditions. We can distinguish an akyn (a bard), a zhirau (an epos-teller), an anshi (a singer), a kuyshi (an instrumentalist), an artekshi (a fairy-story-teller) and a ku (a humorist) among the Kazakh national musicians.



MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS

In traditional Kazakh musical and material culture a significant place are taken by musical instruments. They are cultural heritage which is transferred from generation to generation and which came till our days.





Dombra is probably the most popular Kazakh musical instrument. Its gentle, soft and velvety melodious sound is produced by only two strings.

Nowadays some dombra kuys are arranged and performed in rock or modern pop style, e.g. by Ulytau, Asylbek Ensepov, and even classical music is performed by traditional Kazakh instruments, which give them new sounding.



According to archeologists, along with dombra, a kobyz was also one of the most common musical instruments of early nomads.



Kobyz served as a means of communication with the spirits. Imitation of nature sounds are characteristic to kobyz kuys, e.g. howling of wolves, cry of swans, running horse, the sound of a released arrow.

Kazakh traditional sports are still practiced in Kazakhstan during national celebrations. And even if they have no practical effect nowadays, Kazakh sports are integral parts of national culture.



The name of the sport comes from Kazakh words and means "a grey wolf." Kokpar is considered to be a kind of polo. This is a very popular masculine sport where two teams (from five to ten persons in each) of horse riders grapple over a decapitated goat, which they try to deposit in the opponent's goal. The distance between two goalposts is 300-400 metres. It lasts 15 minutes. In case of a draw, horsemen have the second round. If there is no result again, a competition between two players is organised.



Asyk atu — a popular Kazakh national game which meaning is to beat out with one's own asyk (a bone of a knee sheep joint) one or several asyks from a row at a certain distance, which become the property of a player.



The main tradition of Kazakhs, which eventually transformed into a feature of national character, is hospitality. In the Kazakh society, there is an unofficial law voiced in ancient times, which says “Meet a guest as the God's messenger”. Hospitality is considered a sacred duty in the Kazakh society. At all times, the steppe inhabitants did their best to please their guest. Therefore, each traveller knew that he or she would be welcomed anywhere in the Kazakh land.



NATIONAL HOLIDAYS

Nauryz (Islamic New Year) is one of the biggest holidays in Central Asia. In Kazakhstan it is celebrated on the day of the spring equinox, March 22. On that day, the streets of villages and towns are transformed. Guests are hosted in beautiful yurts with the traditional Nauryz kozhe dish made of seven traditional ingredients. People respecting this nearly month-long holiday forgive each others' debts and offences.





– “Our culture will sound on all continents and in all the major languages of the world. The world should recognize Kazakhstan not only by oil resources and major foreign policy initiatives, but also by cultural achievements. ”

N. A. Nazarbaev



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