

FOUR TABLES



documentary film
author: Valeriya Kim

LOGLINE

After being deported in 1937 to Kazakhstan, koryo-saram(koreans) dwell far away from the homeland, preserving their ethnicity with following traditions of “four tables” throughout the life.

GENRE: creative documentary film

DURATION: 70 min

SYNOPSIS

The film is a journey into the authentic life of Koreans in Kazakhstan. The main question is what serves as a strong anchor for Koreans to clearly understand their national identity? There is a concept of "four tables" tradition. It characterizes the stages of the life path of every Korean.

During the film we show the ceremonies of every table. The narration starts from "asandi sa" tradition - the celebration of a child's first anniversary.

The child is dressed in the national costume "Hanbok" and brought to the table. Things are placed in front of the birthday person, each of which carries an important symbol. Money - wealth, pen - creative profession, book - curiosity, scissors - ability to apply arts, thread - long life. There are also three bowls on the table: with chaltogi - means a successful life, with beans - work related to agriculture, and with rice - prosperity in the house. Koreans believe: the richer and more crowded the holiday, the brighter and happier the life of the birthday person will be.

The second table "chanchi" (wedding) is an equally important and vibrant holiday. There are many nuances in performing "chanchi" as in all traditions.

When the bride is brought to the groom's house, a bag of rice is placed next to the car and a white silk runner is laid out all the way to the door. The girl must step on the rice and walk across the fabric without leaving marks. After that, the bride and mother-in-law should look in the mirror and smile at each other - as a sign of good relations and mutual understanding.

After this, the main table takes place - a large banquet for family and guests. A boiled rooster with pepper in its beak, decorated with multi-colored ribbons, must be on the table. The bird symbolizes having many children and fidelity, and the pepper brings wealth and good luck.

Hangabi sa - the third table in honor of the 61st anniversary celebration. The 61st anniversary marks the beginning of a new period, and the word "hangabi" means "entering a new cycle." Previously, it took place at home, now - more and more often in restaurants.

The table for guests should be rich, generous, with a predominance of Korean dishes. But, living in Kazakhstan, the koresars began to be served bauyrsaks, plov, beshparmak, kuyrdak, etc.

After death, a Korean receives his last, fourth table - "desa sa". There are many rituals that are performed during farewells and funerals. For example, "honu purunda" - calling the spirit of the deceased, and preparing "myeongjeong" - a passport for the deceased, which he will need when entering another world.

From the moment of death until burial, the deceased is "fed" three times a day. They move a fork or chopsticks from dish to dish, pour vodka and mourn. Three "ter" bows are performed.

The fourth table consists of many strict rules and a clear sequence. Improper execution and neglect are a manifestation of disrespect for the deceased and the reason for his difficult transition to another world. Therefore, all Korean families perform this table with great care, inviting elders and consulting with them.

Four tables clearly define the existence of a Korean, his life path. This is perhaps one of the most important reasons why Koreans have a strong sense of their roots and do not lose their identity. Throughout his life, every Korean performs all four tables: reverently, proudly and diligently. And these four points in the life cycle strengthen his love for roots.

AUTHOR'S VISION

The main method of approaching is poetic observing. In a narrative way I would like to present these four tables as a circle of life of koryo-saram: it starts from childhood and ends with the leaving to the Afterlife World.

Probably, it would be different families, which will be filmed. The main emphasis during the shooting is on traditions, dishes, and relations in the family.

I would like to capture different families: who live in the villages(Ushtobe - the first and main village of koryo-saram in Kazakhstan), the korean villages in Uzbekistan, families from different cities. After research stage it will be more clear what families will be showed in the film and why.

WHY IT IS IMPORTANT?

With every generation koryo-saram people gradually forget traditions, which are fading away in the world of modern trends and modernisation.

So, for me as for author is very important to preserve this traditions, these people for present and future generations. At the same time I would like to make not just grey documentary archives, but beautiful, vivid and inspiring film as a sign of love and respect to my roots.

The traditions are saved because of people who carefully preserved and passed down them to the next generation. I also want to play my role in this fragile thread and capture heritage of my people in a form that is close to my heart - film.

moodboard



TIMELINE

October 2023 - January 2024 - research and pre-production stage, search and approval of heroes

January 2024 - August 2024 - shooting period

September 2024 - November 2023 - editing and color grading stage

December 2023 - the stage of promotion and screenings of the film worldwide

VALERIYA KIM – filmmaker from Almaty, Kazakhstan. Currently based in Europe(Lisbon, Portugal).

Valeriya started her career in 2018 studying filmmaking at the High School of Directors and Screenwriters in St. Petersburg. After the courses, she obtained experience working as a 1AC on feature film sets with prominent Kazakhstani directors.

Simultaneously, she developed her artistic vision and worked on art projects. Thus, her fashion short film **ASAY JUREK** was selected and nominated for different film festivals (Milano FFF, Amsterdam FFF, FFF Kiyv, UK FFF, London FFF, La Jolla IFFF, etc).

She continued studying and finished the New School of Documentary Film by Internews Central Asia in 2021. Within the program, she started research for her new documentary film **JERIM** – about Koreans deported to Kazakhstan in 1937. In March 2022 she was selected by the Noosfera Foundation for Film Industry Program by CinéDOC Tbilisi to develop the film project “Jerim”.

In her works, Valeriya explores life in Central Asia, focusing on a gender perspective, ethnic identification, and social issues of the region.

Since September 2023 Valeriya studies in DocNomads(Erasmus Joint Masters Program), but continues working on her projects.



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