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## PROMOTING HERITAGE - AND CULTURE - BASED EXPERIENTIAL TOURISM IN THE BLACK SEA BASIN

Project No BSB-1145



# BERIKAOBA

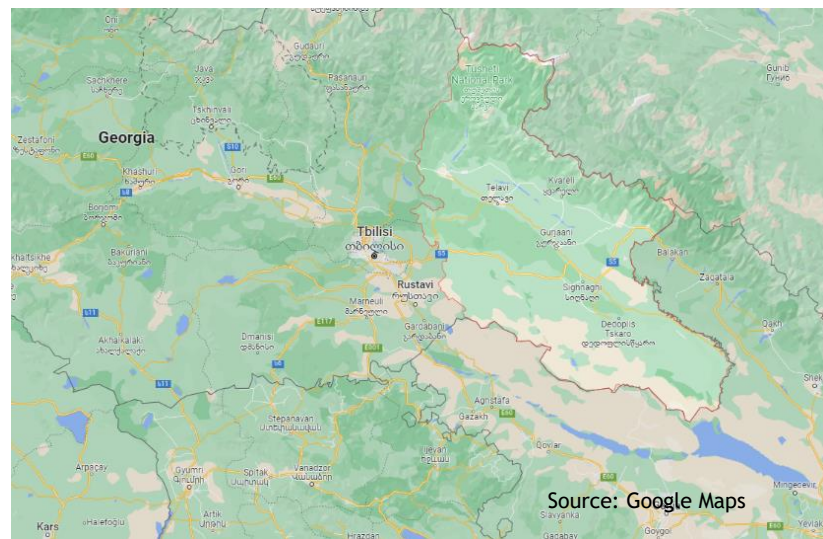
*(Traditions and Events)*

Common borders. Common solutions.

## BASIC INFORMATION

### WHERE:

Berikaoba is held in villages Didi and Patara Chailuri, Sagarejo Municipality, Kakheti region, East Georgia. The villages are located at the height of 700-750 meters above the sea level, at the distance of 64 km from Tbilisi. Earlier, Didi and Patara Chailuri were one village which was divided by River Chailuri into two parts. The population was engaged in farming and cattle breeding.



Source: Google Maps

When Dagestani feudal lords were attacking Kartli and Kakheti regions, the pursuers, especially from Kartli, pursued the enemy to the Chailuri valley to free the captives and stolen goods. If they could not reach them and the raiders had gone beyond the Chailuri ravine, the pursuer returning home would hopelessly say, "We could not do anything. They drank the Chailuri water already." This meant that they would not come back.

A large fortress is erected at the crossing of Kakheti motor road, on the left embankment of Chailuri ravine which is called Niakhura fortress. This fortress represented a military defensive fortress which is assumed to have been built in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. It protected the strategic entrance and represented a defensive structure blocking the road to the enemy approaching Tbilisi. The monument is preserved very well and represents the main historic site of the villages.

## SCHEDULE:

Berikaoba is held annually in the Cheesefare Week (1 week before Easter)



## ORGANIZER AND CONTACT INFORMATION:



Name: Village Chailuri Community



Phone: 577643111 Eka Tchikadze-Veshapidze (Director of the School);

595288884 Lekso Malasidze, Nika Memarnishvili

Email: ekachikadze@gmail.com



Web-site: [www.facebook.com/დედი-ჩაილური-394082011008811/](http://www.facebook.com/დედი-ჩაილური-394082011008811/)

## DESCRIPTION

Berikaoba initially represented an agrarian festival dedicated to fertility and revival. It is also the ancient folk theatre and a carnival. A scenario of the event envisages that the entire population passively participates and is engaged in it, creating a feeling of certain unity.

Berikaoba-Keenoba is a festival which had been held in two forms over

time, but this is an event of one origin and structure. It was held in the village and the city, in

the highlands and the lowlands.

In terms of spectacle, Berikaoba has strong



energy. The first theatre emerged here. Berikaoba-Keenoba is a combination of social, spiritual and public world visions. There is more sarcastic-saturnal in Berikaoba than in Keenoba, because here are more people with masks, while in Keenoba, grotesque is personified. Keenoba gained an urban nature and Berikaoba remained as the festival of the rural population, that's why it is more preserved in the village.

Over time, Berikaoba lost its religious function and became a reflection of the living aspiration of



*Badri Vadachkoria*

working people. Up to 100 scenes of Berikaoba have reached us. Most of them are comical and are mainly based on household topics. By decision of the Georgian National Agency for

Cultural Heritage Preservation, the status of the monument of intangible cultural heritage was assigned to Berikaoba.



Image Sources: Village Chailuri Community

## KEY MESSAGE

Berikaoba allows visitors to participate in the ancient theatrical performance and its main message is promising a high-yield year. This requires participation in the festival and certain masqueraded rituals.

The main idea of Berikaoba is a popularization of traditional Georgian rituals, their preservation and raising awareness of the festival culture.

## KEY ACTIVITIES

Preparation for the festival begins much earlier. Masks and costumes are sewn. Products are supplied. "Qada" are baked.

According to the tradition, on the day of the festival, an army of Berikas wearing costumes and masks will stop at all gates of the village. The host should give them gifts, mainly in the form of products in order to have a high yield that year. There are moments when the procession performs in one location during the festival - various comical scenes are played. Certain historic figures are mocked in the so-called folk theatrical performances.

The culmination of the festival - wrestling - is also held in the village square. A sheep is given to the winner. Swing, a so-called "kachaya" is installed on the village square. According to the tradition, a woman in love is placed on the swing and not allowed to go off the swing until she says yes to her beloved person. "Kachaya" should be dismantled within 10 days after Berikaoba. Otherwise, according to the legend, hail will destroy the crops.

At the same time, the wine festival "Mama-Papuri" is held where local peasant and factory wines are presented. Furthermore, the event support certificates are given to the participants. In addition, a concert of folk dances and songs is held and it is possible to taste local wine and dishes.

The festival ends with the "feast of Berikas"; the feast is organized using common expenses and the collected products. The "supper of Berikas" is followed by improvised verses, songs, dance, games and round dance.

## EXPERIENTIAL AND INTERACTIVE ACTIVITIES

Tourists can participate in preparation for the festival. The local population offers them to join in sewing masks and baking "Qada" (traditional Georgian pastry).

The festival guests follow the army of Berikas, visit the village together with them and collect gifts from the population. By the end of the day, they are invited to the feast.

## INNOVATIVE ELEMENTS

Berikaoba is held in a traditional format and artistic innovations are less presented there; however, the festival has a huge potential of using such approaches.

## MAIN FEATURES AND SERVICES THAT ATTRACT PUBLIC

Berikaoba has the status of the monument of intangible cultural heritage; therefore, holding the festival of Berikaoba is very important for preserving the tradition and transmitting it to the next generations.

The event has a creative and marketing importance - the first Georgian theatre emerged at the festival of Berikaoba.

At the same time, the necessity of celebration of Berikaoba is preserved in the memory of the population, making them arrive to their native village and participate in the festival annually.

## KEY PARTNERS AND SUPPORTERS

The main organizers of Berikaoba in village Didi Chailuri are the local community, the school and the schoolchildren.

A concert and a contest in Georgian wrestling are held in the open air in village Patara Chailuri for invited guests and the local population with the support of a non-entrepreneurial (non-commercial) legal entity - Association of Cultural Sites of Sagarejo and Sagarejo Municipality City Hall.

The partners directly participating in the festival include the local community, schoolchildren, small peasant wine-cellars.

#### **PARTICIPANTS, LOCAL COMMUNITY AND CUSTOMER SEGMENT**

The festival participants are residents of Didi and Patara Chailuri, their relatives and friends from the cities. Tourists arrive to Chailuri by recommendation of their friends who have already attended Berikaoba or read Internet articles about this festival.

#### **COMMUNICATION AND DISSEMINATION CHANNELS**

The primary source for dissemination of information about Berikaoba is the word-of-mouth recommendations (from friends and relatives). Information is also spread via the Internet, TV shows and various printed media. The so-called Berikaoba event is announced on Facebook and videos are uploaded on YouTube. The international online platform "Atlas Obscura" assisted the organizers of Berikaoba in attracting foreign tourists.

### ***SPECIFIC ELEMENTS AND FEATURES***

#### **ACCESSIBILITY**

The guests arrive in Chailuri mostly by their own vehicles; however, it is also possible to come there by minibus.

#### **LIAISON WITH OTHER ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS OF THE BLACK SEA BASIN REGION**

Masqueraded festivals as the mechanism of revival and preservation of local traditions are popular in the countries selected within the Black Sea Basin project framework. Therefore, the inclusion of the event in the cultural route will contribute to its popularization.



The editor of the material: Georgian Arts and Culture Center

Address: Georgia, 0108 Tbilisi, 7 Niko Nikoladze str.

Phone: +995 5995 06448

E-mail: [maka@gaccgeorgia.org](mailto:maka@gaccgeorgia.org)

Website: [www.gaccgeorgia.org](http://www.gaccgeorgia.org)

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