

II. ICH in Kazakhstan

1. ICH of Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan, like any other country of the world, comprises a rich variety of the ICH elements scattered all over its territory and represented among all its ethnic groups, despite the fact that the twentieth century played a catastrophically destructive role to the native cultures of all nations under the Soviet Union, including the tangible or intangible cultural heritage of Kazakh people.

Communist ideas of cultural heritage were rather double-sided and inconsistent. On the one hand, expressions of national (traditional) art, such as folk art, was welcomed, protected, and celebrated as manifestations of the state's cultural diversity; on the other hand, every element representing cultural heritage carried a threat to the existing political system and had to undergo rigid ideological censorship.

Folk art was regarded exclusively as a material for processing, as an impulse for a professional compositional process and artistic creativity. Practically, independent artistic and cultural value of folk traditions and the need to support the representatives and masters of such traditions were regarded more nominally rather than functionally.

Since gaining independence in 1991, the state authorities of Kazakhstan have seriously taken into consideration the importance of reviving ancestral cultural values, traditions, and practices, and later the state transformed these into practical applications.

Thus, for instance, the official celebration of Nauryz was endorsed by the decree of the President of the Kazakh SSR, 'On the National Spring Holiday—Nauryz'. And in 2004, after overcoming certain socio-economic hardships, the government launched a nationwide programme called 'Madeni Mura' (Cultural Heritage). This programme lasted until the end of 2011, and it created a wide public resonance not only in Kazakhstan, but throughout the international community, giving a sense of pride and restitution to the people of Kazakhstan.

The Law on Culture of the Republic of Kazakhstan was introduced by the government in 2006, pinpointing the need for major investment and development in the cultural sector of Kazakhstan.

2. 'Madeni Mura'

State Program on Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage 2004–2011

As mentioned, one of the major achievements of the government, and mainly the Ministry of Culture and Information of the Republic of Kazakhstan, was the 2004 launch of the state programme, 'Madeni Mura' (Cultural Heritage). Work in identifying, researching, reviving, and promoting cultural heritage was initiated since the early days of independence with the support of the President Nursultan Nazarbayev of Kazakhstan.

From our point of view, it is essential to highlight the mechanisms of realisation and the results attained within the state policy on protecting and popularising national cultural heritage since such scrutiny may explain the current situation on the status of ICH in Kazakhstan and its legal protection.

'Madeni Mura' first targeted *tangible* cultural heritage—mainly conserving and protecting architectural, archaeological, and ecological sites and historical masterpieces located within the territory of Kazakhstan.

In 2004, such a nationwide project was unprecedented in the CIS region, and soon it was realised that the initial two-year plan needed to be extended. Thus, two additional implementation stages were developed, the first between 2007 and 2009 and the second between 2009 and 2011.³

Key target areas of 'Madeni Mura' are as follows:

- Reconstructing historical cultural and architectural monuments representing special importance for national culture
- Conducting archeological expeditions and research activities within the territory of Kazakhstan and neighboring states
- Publishing scientific work on the cultural heritage of Kazakhstan
- Accumulating and inventorying the centuries-old experience and knowledge reflected in national literature and publishing expanded

³ Official website of the National Project of Kazakhstan 'Madeni Mura' <http://www.madenimura.kz/en/>

manuscripts and scientific series with their translation from ancient scripts into Kazakh, Russian, and English languages.⁴

Since the start of the program in 2004, restoration work at more than a hundred national historic and cultural monuments have been carried out, but only seventy-three of them were fully completed by the end of 2011. Numerous domestic and international archeological expeditions and field research projects at thirty-nine ancient settlements have been organised and funded by the state. State archives of ancient literature and museums of ancient artifacts have been enriched with thousands of artifacts and manuscripts, thus providing a clear sequence of the history and cultural legacy of the Kazakh people.

In 2008, for the first time since gaining independence, Kazakhstan developed and adopted a large scale national inventory list of cultural heritage within the framework of the programme, and today this list comprises 218 cultural monuments of national significance, 11,277 monuments of regional significance, and 30 works of applied scientific research conducted on architectural monuments and archeological sites of national significance. And, two public museums—Issyk in the Almaty region and Berel in East Kazakhstan region—were opened through ‘Madeni Mura’. Kazakhfilm,⁵ a state film studio, finished shooting a series of ten films on historical and cultural monuments restored as a result of the programme.

The programme also included the development of a domestic and international tourist cluster (pilgrimages to sacred places; endorsement of the national cultural heritage of Kazakhstan via local and international media; organisation of national, regional, and international archaeological expeditions; and promotion of ecotourism).

As a result of scientific research expeditions to China, Turkey, Mongolia, Russia, Japan, Egypt, United States, and countries of Western Europe, over five thousand valuable archival documents on the history, ethnography, and art of the Kazakh people were retrieved and put into circulation among the state institutes in the education and culture fields. In China alone, nearly 3,500 previously unstudied sources on the history and culture of Kazakhstan were introduced to the public.

⁴ Official website of the National Project of Kazakhstan ‘Madeni Mura’ <http://www.madenimura.kz/en/>

⁵ Kazakhfilm was named after Shaken Aimanov, the first film and documentary studio established in Almaty (Alma-Ata) in 1934.

Among the findings were correspondences of Kazakh khans and sultans with the rulers of China, Kokand⁶, Khiva,⁷ and other neighboring territories. The Kypchak⁸ manuscripts of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were identified and discovered during the expedition in Armenia in cooperation with the research institute named after M. Mashtots, Matenadaran, the National Archive and the Archive of Hypchahavankta Monastery (Kipchak Monastery in the city of Kharichev, Armenia).

An archaeological expedition to Mongolia has allowed the discovery of new burial sites of ancient Turkic tribes. The practical result was issuing copies of the ancient Turkic stone monuments with runic inscriptions dating from the eighth century. Named after L.N. Gumilev of Astana, they are currently installed in the atrium of the Eurasian National University named after L.N. Gumilev.

Hundreds of written records on Kazakh history were found in national libraries and diplomatic archives in Europe. Thus, scientific and exploratory expeditions organised to the British Library; national libraries of Paris, Madrid, Seville, Florence, and Berlin; the Archive of the French Foreign Ministry; and the secret Vatican archives have yielded Kazakhstan with seventy-seven copies of manuscripts and two hundred printed editions. Among them are a letter of Pope Urban IV to Hulagu Khan⁹ and copies of correspondences between the khans of Golden Horde¹⁰ and the Popes of Vatican, such as the manuscript of *Al-Al-sah Tauarih* (World History, 1440), which contains the history of the Turks, Mongols, and Timurids.¹¹ A unique copy of the *Korkyt Dede Kitabi* manuscript (The book of Korkyt, 1585) was purchased by the government,

⁶ Kokand (Kokand khanate)—historic region associated with Ferghana Valley, located in modern Uzbekistan

⁷ Khiva—one of the biggest cities of ancient Khorezm (ancient sultanate located on the western part of Central Asia in modern Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan)

⁸ Kypchak—an ancient semi-nomadic Turkic tribe residing on the vast territory of Eurasia and is now part of Kazakh ethnic composition

⁹ Khulagu Khan—Mongolian military commander and governor; the grandson of Genghis Khan, who ruled in the state he founded in Asia Minor

¹⁰ Golden Horde or Ulus Djuchi—medieval state in Eurasia established under the Mongol empire

¹¹ The dynasty of Timurids—the descendents of Emir Timur, who reigned in Mavveranakhr, Iran, and India between 1370 and 1858

and a wide range of research texts of Omelyan Pritsaka from Karluks¹² to Karahanids¹³ was copied and distributed in Kazakhstan.

The programme operated not merely within the scope of the national level, but in the framework of regional, transboundary, and international cooperation. Thus, a series of reconstruction and preservation work had been carried out under bilateral agreements signed to protect common cultural heritage located outside the country, such as renovating a multi-facility complex consisting of a mausoleum, schools, and archives of Sultan Beibars;¹⁴ the Al-Farabi¹⁵ mausoleum in Damascus, Arab Syrian Republic in 2007; and the mosque of Sultan Az-Zakhir Beibars in Cairo, Egypt.

Over the years, two cultural heritage monuments of Kazakhstan have been listed as UNESCO World Heritage Sites: the mausoleum of Hodja Akhmed Yassawi¹⁶ and the Tamgaly archaeological complex.¹⁷

Of course, the programme's success is easily explained by the attention the state authorities paid to the nation's cultural sector, providing proper financing and attracting interested scientists, researchers, experts, and specialists to this nationwide project. Previously, most cultural programmes were funded as a residual source. However, since the launch of the programme, public funds are allocated to provide all the necessary conditions to carry out research not only within the Kazakh territory, but in many other countries, such as countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Western Europe as well as China, Japan, Egypt, and even the United States, who all have keys to unlock certain parts of Kazakhstani history.

As a result of the research expeditions conducted within the framework of 'Madeni Mura,' more than 5000 valuable archival documents were returned

¹² Karluk Kaganate – Turkic state entity existing in 8th-9th centuries and encompassing the territory of modern Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, China, Uzbekistan;

¹³ Karakhanids—Turkic dynasty, ruling in Karakhanid Khanate between the ninth and thirteenth centuries

¹⁴ Sultan Beibars—the sultan of Egypt and Syria (1260-1277) who hailed from the territory now located in modern Kazakhstan. He was known for successful wars in Syria and Palestine against Mongol and European crusaders

¹⁵ Al-Farabi (873-950)—renowned philosopher, mathematician, and music theorist of Central Asia

¹⁶ Hodja Akhmed Yassawi (1093-1166)—the founder of Sufi poetry and the spiritual leader of the Muslims of the East;

¹⁷ Tamgaly—petroglyphs within the archaeological landscape of Tamgaly are some of the oldest and most colorful rock art sites of Central Asia, included on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 2004.

from abroad. Archaeological research on thirty-seven settlements, parks, and cemeteries located on Kazakh territory found thousands of artifacts, which contribute to better understanding of the life of ancient nomads. Over one million copies of 442 works on Kazakhstani history and culture have been published and circulated.

Within the scope of the programme, Kazakhstani ICH had also received wide publicity from different projects, such as the project related to the sixty-six volumes of philosophic manuscript *BabalarSozi* (Words of Ancestors), which examines the oral literary works of the Kazakh people of the past.

Kazakhstan has undertaken significant efforts to preserve and promote its ICH within the scope of 'Madeni Mura' programme, such as the ambitious projects called *MangilikSaryn:1000 Traditional Kazakh Kyusand 1000 Traditional Kazakh Songs* (Eternal Melody: 1000 Traditional Kazakh Kyusand 1000 Traditional Kazakh Songs)¹⁸ and *BatylarShyry*,¹⁹ whereas extensive anthology of traditional music and poetic art had previously been published inline with numerous festivals and competitions of traditional arts and crafts.

Such works associated with the oral forms of ICH had been initiated by independent experts and artists fully relying on their enthusiasm, professional approach, and knowledge of the theme. Among such projects and activities is *Kazakh Dombra: History, Music System, and Its Acoustic Features*, which investigates the tradition and manufacturing technologies of *dombra*.²⁰

Another project investigated the cultural life of Kazakh people residing in the Altai region.²¹ Over the course of the expedition, collecting and systematising works in archives, bibliographic data, field research, and museum materials were performed with pragmatic descriptions of the arts and crafts of the region. A collection of articles defining the problems of

¹⁸The state project on the anthology of Kazakh traditional music was launched within the framework of the national programme 'Madeni Mura' comprising 1000 traditional kyus and 1000 traditional songs. It represents mass-scale and unique work on collecting, preparing, processing, restoring, and digitising music data and producing CDs of the traditional Kazakh music recorded in its authentic form.

¹⁹*Batylar Shyry* is state project initiated by the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan as a sequel to *Mangilik Saryn: 1000 Traditional Kazakh Kyus and 1000 Traditional Kazakh Songs*, embodying a collection of epic and lyric works depicting life of the renowned Kazakh *batyrs*, the great warriors of Kazakh steppe.

²⁰*Dombra*—a Kazakh two-stringed musical instrument.

²¹ Geographic region of the Altai Mountains is located on the boundaries of present-day nations of the Russian Federation, Mongolia, China, and Kazakhstan.

preservation and the development of the national culture of the Altai region has been published.

An analysis of written sources depicting historical information about Kazakh wintering areas, wells, monuments, archaeology, and architecture of Mangistau, Pavlodar, East Kazakhstan, Aktobe, and Kyzylorda regions was conducted in a form of inventorying the equipment and documentaries found.

To broaden the scope and area of research, an exploratory trip to the municipal archives of Orenburg, Russia, was organised by the Ministry of Culture and Information of Kazakhstan. The mission was to overlook and record all the notes of previous expeditions that depict the life on the Kazakh steppe, including folk customs, ethnic studies, archaeological treasures (such as silver coins, brick rubble in the tract of the Kara-Yar²²), and ancient documents and letters issued by the Kazakh nomadic elite.

Survey called 'Expeditionary Ethnographic Study of Commemorative Historical Sites and Monuments of Material Culture' was conducted on archival topographical materials found in East Kazakhstan, Pavlodar, Kyzyl-Orda, Aktobe, and Mangistau regions of the country. This survey on traditional Kazakh culture truly reflects the roots of cultural identity of the nation as well as the intertwined relationship between humanity, society, and nature that exists in a nomadic environment.

In the scope of the programme, aspects of ethno-cultural life, such as the proverbs, old sayings, poems, and folk songs, as well as their use in modern daily life, social function, and significance were investigated for the purpose of their reviving and popularising them on the national level.

The textual study and comparative analysis of manuscripts and written works of prominent figures in Kazakh literature and philosophy, such as Abai Kunanbaev, Turagul Abayuly, Murseit Bikeuly, and Ahat Shakarimuly, are to be endorsed in the national educational curricula.

As an example of scientific and social revival of literary works, a project called *Museum Sources of the Spiritual Culture of the Kazakhs in the Nineteenth and the Beginning of Twentieth Centuries: Publication, Religion, and Education* was launched within a cooperation system among the museums of Kazakhstan.

²² Geographic region in Bashkortostan, Russia

During the years of the programme, six hundred books on the history, archeology, ethnography, and culture of Kazakhstan were published, and interestingly to note, demand for such works was rather high. Among the popular titles were *BabalarSozi*, *Library of World Literature*, *History of Kazakh Literature*, *Philosophic Heritage of Kazakh People from Ancient Times to the Present*, *The World Vision of Cultural Studies*, and *The World Philosophical Heritage*.

In response to the positive feedback, more than twenty documentaries focusing on the Kazakh ICH were filmed and produced at national studios.

Every year, more than two hundred activities aimed at promoting historic and cultural heritage of Kazakhstan and actively engaging professional knowledge and experience of the representatives of academic institutions, libraries, and diplomatic entities along with the creative potential of Kazakhstani youth are organised inside the country and abroad.

Thus, to commemorate The Day of Cultural Heritage, held in the framework of 'Twenty Peaks of Independence',²³ an information portal 'Madeni Mura' (<http://www.madenimura.kz/en/>) was officially launched. The portal contains a wide range of information on cultural heritage of Kazakhstan with more than 70 GB comprising 1 million files, 2,000 images, 360 books, and 50 video materials posted.

Overall, the success of the 'Madeni Mura' programme can be explained by the ideological and financial support of the government and the common understanding of all Kazakhstani people that cultural heritage represents the foundation of the historical memory of the people, without which there can be no true patriotism. 'Madeni Mura' gave a powerful impetus to the revival of the national spirit of Kazakhstan, and moreover, it can serve as a tested ground for developing further policies targeting ICH.

In a summary, considering that the question of safeguarding and promoting Kazakh ICH was seriously raised with the adoption of the National Law 'On Ratification of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003'²⁴ signed by President Nursultan Nazarbayev of the Republic of Kazakhstan in December 21, 2011, there is no doubt that there is a close link and correlation between the tangible and intangible cultural

²³'Twenty Peaks of Independence,' a Kazakh programme on celebrating the twentieth anniversary of gaining independence

²⁴ The Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Ratification of the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, 2003', 21 December 21 2011

heritage. Currently, the idea of extending the 'Madeni Mura' programme towards ICH shall be revised with close consultations of state authorities, experts, and communities involved. However, prior to discussing such possibilities, the conceptual documents on protecting ICH have to be legally processed and a national ICH inventory list has to be drawn up and published.