



Annex 8

Current Situations of ICH Bearers in Western Mongolia (Khovdand Uvs Aimag)

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Mongolians are the people with rich and unique traditional cultures suites to their lifestyles. Due to intensive urbanization from pastoral nomadism and globalization in education development and technological breakthroughs prevailed in XX-XXI century, the subsequent civilization changes and emerging new lifestyle in the Mongolian society have been pushing traditional intangible culture heritage – which is closely linked with traditional lifestyle – from the daily life little by little.

Eventually, nowadays many kinds of cultural heritage have been disappeared, while still some more are in danger of disappearing. Particularly, in 1980s many features of the Mongolian traditional cultural heritage started to disappear drastically, as examples of many oral literature traditions have already indicated. Many people are aware that current situations of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage are raising serious concerns at all levels.

However, the team appointed by the Mongolian National Commission for UNESCO has worked in Khovd and Uvs aimags on 15-29 November, 2008 in order to reveal the actual current situations while identifying, registering and documenting cultural heritage bearers, in particular practitioners of *tsuur* (flute), *huumii* (throat-singing), *tuuli* (ballade, epic) and *bii bielgee* (National folk dance of the body). The field team covered routes of about 2,000 km within territories of the two aimags and interviewed over 50 heritage bearers aged 12-83 years old.

Looking back to reports by exploration teams worked in 1960-1970s from then Institute of Language and Literature, at a time they used to meet and interview over 100 individuals during their field trips and documented oral literature traditions and intangible cultural evidence. However, nowadays the number of intangible cultural heritage bearers is reducing intensely and thus distribution of existing intangible cultural heritage becomes very sparse and difficult to find so.

Within the field preparation, we in advance talked with officials from local authority and culture institutions to request for information on whereabouts of local folklore artists and talent-bearers within the respective community. Moreover, we contacted local volunteers who care for traditional cultural heritage. The team first carefully reviewed reports of previous exploration teams and individuals' information before choosing to meet potential heritage bearers.

Main criteria of choosing heritage bearers may include the following requirements:

- a. Source and specific kinds of traditions that heritage bearers practice;
- b. Heritage bearers' skills and performance level;
- c. Heritage bearers' efforts and activities to preserve given heritage elements;
- d. Genuine integrity of cultural elements demonstrated by heritage bearers if they are considered as cultural heritage or not.

Consequently, the following 19 individuals have been considered as possible heritage bearers based on initial criteria and decisions:

Bii bielgee	Tsuur (flute)	Huumii (throat-singing)	Tuuli (ballade)
a. Zakhchin bielgee • T.Khorloo • N. Battulga • A. Enkhtaivan	• B. Naranbat • N. Buyandelger	• R. Davaajav • N. Sengedorj • A. Lkhagva	• A. Baldandorj • A. Dorjpalam • N. Damdindorj • H. Seseer
b. Torguud bielg • T. Tsembel • D. Usnee • Ts. Urjinbadam			
c. Uriankhai bielgee • Ch. Dorj			
d. Durvud bielge • A. Chuluun			
e. Bayad bielgee • M. Jalkh			

The above mentioned individuals have attracted considerable attentions. Normally, Khovd and Uvs aimag are considered to have preserved intangible cultural heritage more intact in comparison with other regions, yet the situations in those two aimags also raise concerns at present. From four selected performing arts, tsuur and tuuli are on the edge of disappearing and thus we further looked indepth concerning the latter two.

Tsuur

In terms of origins of tsuur, it is said that tsuur is invented by Uriankhai people. The uriankhai people used to live by highlands of Khovd, Uvs and Bayan-Ulgii aimags in Western Mongolia and thus they are the one who preserved and maintained tsuur-making technology, tsuur-playing methods and its unique melody types.

At present, there are very few such people with kinship relationships who live in Tsengel, Buyant (Bayan-Ulgii aimag) and Duut (Khovd aimag) soums. Tracking their origins back, there was a famous tsuur-player named Narantsogt (a.k.a. Chukhaa) who lived in Duut soum of Khovd aimag in 1980s.

Importantly, Mr. Narantsogt has paid significant consideration to preserve and maintain tsuur-making technology, tsuur-playing methods and its unique melody types, while teaching and transmitting his skills and talents to his son, relatives and grandchildren so that this cultural heritage has not been extinct up to date. He even requested then soum authority to provide assistance in transmitting tsuur related heritage to other local people, but that did not work.

Most of some remaining few tsuur players are those who learned tsuur from Mr. Narantsogt or his kinship relatives. At present, TSUUR is definitely to be considered as one of disappearing cultural heritage kinds.

Tuuli

Western Mongolians, such as bayad, durvud, uriankhai, oold, zakhchin and torguud ethnic people – had preserved and maintained rich tuuli (traditional epical ballades) related traditions by 1970s. These ethnic groups used to practice tuuli containing cycle epics with thousands line rhymes that can normally be considered the peak of its classical forms evolved ever. For instance, famous heritage bearers may include bayad ballade artists P. Lkhagva, Ch. Khartsaga, h. Zambal, G. Khanzan and durvud ballade artists U. Bataa and Ts. Zodov.

We arrived in Malchin soum on 27 November, 2008. The famous tuuli artist RENCHINII LKHAGVA lives in this soum. Notably, some major tuulis such as ‘Khuleg-Erdene – Son of Tusheet Khaan’, ‘Dani Khurel – Son of Dalai Khaan’ and ‘Khan Kharangui’ were recorded from Mr. Lkhagva by an exploration team in July, 1967. For example, ‘Khuleg-Erdene’ lasts about 4 hours. Nevertheless, we met one tuuli artist named TSEGEEN in Malchin soum. Mr. Tsegeen is now 65 years old and said “I sing the tuuli ‘Khuleg-Erdene’, yet it lasts only 5 minutes. I have recorded the tuuli from Mr. Lkhagva in 1982 and then learned it from the tape recorded. Originally, it lasts over 20 minutes, but the theatre employees said that it is too long and then I made it only for 5 minutes”. We recorded the 5-minute performance from Mr. Tsegeen. The main theme of the tuuli is about a hero from his childhood and to grown up hero who goes to war and defeats his enemies as well as his marriage that consists of 3,000 line rhymes and lasts over 4 hours. However, Mr. Tsegeen abridged all those events and shortened to little less than 100 line rhymes, including only the beginning and ending parts. Basically, that is not a tuuli in real terms.

The tuuli is not only literature art, but combined complex of lyrics, melody and music arts. Ancient tuuli types do not undermine either lyrics or melody reversely, but compliment one another in a balanced way that both music and lyrics are clearly heard or sensed. However, Mr. Tsegeen’s morin khuur is too loud and so undermines lyrics to make them unclear.

In Naranbulag soum we met N. ANKHBAYAR (male, 34 years old) and NAMSRAI (male, 18 years old) who performed two tuulis - ‘Dani Khurel’ and ‘Uridyin Ulaan Khongor’. Also the tuulis lasted only 5-7 minutes that is not even the half of epilogue of their original version. In other words, what they perform is nothing far from incomplete introduction of the main hero. Considering the fact, it suggests that the current versions are adaptations for theatrical stage performance.

Among those, ‘Uridyin Ulaan Khongor’ is one chapter of ‘Jangar’ - one of most famous tuuli. This chapter was recorded from Ch. NAMILAN – a tuuli artist from Turgen soum, Uvs aimag – in 1950s and its lyrics were later published in the book ‘Jangar’s tuulis’ in 1968. It was clear that Mr. NYAMAA – ANKHBAYAR’s father – learned voluntarily and composed its music by himself.

We asked information on other tuuli artists, but found out there is no other within Uvs aimag, except the above-mentioned. Locals consider those people as tuuli artists. However, performing tuuli incomplete and improperly was strictly prohibited because that will fury the Hero of tuulis, according to traditional beliefs. The Hero of tuulis is said to have been a historical person lived in the ancient time. It is still believed that his spirit still lives alive in the sky and so it is restricted to perform tuulis incomplete and improperly. In addition, those who know only one tuuli or two may not be considered as ‘tuuli artist’.

Nevertheless, the fact that the traditional beliefs and rituals have been forgotten and those people are considered as ‘tuuli artist’ proves tuuli-related cultural heritage basically disappeared nowadays. Notably, the tuuli traditions have been forgotten and almost disappeared within the last four decades in Uvs aimag - the homeland with

richest traditions of tuuli. It is already bitter truth that the word 'tuuli' raises eyebrows of many people nowadays, especially among children and youths.

Eventually, it is proved that the last homeland of the tuuli in Western Mongolia appears uriankhai tuuli of Khovd aimag. The uriankhai tuuli origins have been identified in 1957 when a tuuli (cycle epic) about a son and father was becoming popular. The tuuli of Altai's uriankhai people was famous in science; for instance, over 10 tuulis were recorded by scholars in XX century. In the latter half of XX century, famous tuuli artists such as Sh. Buyan, S. Choisureen and B. Avirmed were still practicing this cultural heritage alive. Their heritage transmission has almost cut off now, while only 4-5 people including Mr. Avirmed's children and relatives are currently practicing tuuli. The tuulis performed by these people have not lost integrity of its structure, lyrics, theme descriptions and melody and maintained with original traditions. Supposedly, in order to revive and develop Mongol tuuli, it is crucial to pay attention to this tuuli homeland urgently.

The tuuli traditions have disappeared not only in Western Mongolia, but also in the central, eastern, southern and northern parts of the country, as concluded during field surveys by international joint exploration team from the Institute of Language and Literature, the Academy of Science of Mongolia.

Huumii and Bii bielgee

As results of our exploration surveys suggest, it is concluded that huumii and bii bielgee are not in serious danger of disappearing among intangible cultural heritage types we surveyed, in comparison with tuuli. However, that does not mean they can be left without attention. Looking at huumii performance by some artists, the modern huumii looks to have laid the beginning of new development era as suited to new emerging environment.

In terms of distribution of bii bielgee, torguud bielgee in Bulgan soum, zakhchin bielgee in Uench and uriankhai bielgee in Duut soum (Khovd aimag), and bayad bielgee in Malchin and Naranbulag soums (Uvs aimag) have been preserved and maintained with its original integrity in its homeland each. In Bulgan and Uench soums the local folklore artists have paid significant consideration to transmit their bii bielgee skills, and trained many learners.

In terms of distribution of huunii traditions, it becomes widely popular among khalkha people living in Chandmani soum of Khovd aimag. Basically, it is possible to say everyone aged from 8 to 80 years old can sing huunii. Compared to tuuli and tsuur, many bearers of huumii and bii bielgee traditions have been observed in numerous soums and settlements. Except Chandmani soum, the practicing behaviors are inactive and based on individual talents and interests, and thus it is crucial to focus on the existing base and develop it under sound policy statements in order to expand huumii traditions.

Concluding current situations and bearers of four selected intangible heritage elements examined within the exploration field team, the overall circumstances raise concerns and necessitate urgent actions to implement policy and plans aimed at transmitting and maintaining intangible cultural heritage. Obviously, the intangible cultural heritage cannot survive and prosper in traditional ways based on individual talents, interests and voluntary activities so that systematic and sound policy should be developed and implemented by the government and relevant institutions in place.

Existing heritage bearers have already realized the current alarming situations, while many of them express their concerns with pessimistic opinions. In addition, most of existing heritage bearers are relatively very old. Some heritage bearers affiliated to government organizations like culture centers in soums and other settlements appear leading modest life standards.

However, they are occasionally invited to celebration events and concerts, but forgotten and uncared most of the time, as heard at all places visited. The individual collections of heritage bearers appear very poor and also affected by modern arts influence as simplified, incomplete and .

Consequently, based on observation findings during field exploration surveys, we propose the following comments and recommendations in regards to strengthening social and legal frameworks aimed at developing traditional cultural heritage:

1. To improve public awareness and education on cultural heritage and its bearers. Apparently, local authority officials in soums and bags have poor knowledge of traditional cultural heritage and its bearers, and so never pay attention. Similarly, public awareness and attitude seem no better. Thus, local folklore artists are neglected and abandoned in some areas. This is very alarming. Most of interviewed heritage bearers have very modest life standards and some even may be considered as poor. In particular, they feel most pressure from attitudes of locals who do not understand their talents and not care them as heritage bearers. Historically, most folklore artists lived modest lives, however local community members respected and supported them, while earned rewarding reputations and fueled with enthusiasm to maintain their heritage skills and knowledge. Therefore, the one of basic activities should focus on raising their reputation and valuable roles through public awareness and education on traditional cultural heritage and its bearers.
2. To raise reputations and valuable roles of heritage bearers based on the example about Mr. Avirmed. The past history shows its importance. It is not accidental that Mr. Avirmed's *tuulis* have been transmitted and maintained intact without losing its integrity, while others' have been forgotten and cut off, because the fact shows there should be incentives and encouragement in place. The socialism ideology propaganda, pop culture spread among the general public and civilization breakthroughs have definitely counter-affected *tuuli* to disappear, yet lack of incentives and support even accelerated its rapid disappearing process. The fact that a State Honor was extended to reward Mr. Avirmed when he was alive alone, has showed direct and positive impact to his enthusiasm transmit and maintain *tuuli* traditions and knowledge to his children and relatives so that relevant *tuuli* heritage have survived intact and alive. Therefore, it is crucial to provide incentives to encourage heritage bearers and raise their reputations among the general public.
3. To reward generational reputation status to heritage bearers. Looking back to history of generational transmission of intangible cultural heritage, intergenerational reputation status have played prominent roles in preserving heritage traditions. In other words, there is an unwritten traditional rule such *tuuli* artist's son becomes a *tuuli* artist, fairy tale narrator's son becomes fairy tale narrator, whereas *huumii* singer's son becomes a *huumii* singer. Intergenerational transmission of heritage traditions from fathers to sons, learning techniques and performing rituals all used to be inherited as complex in order to avoid from disappearing. Normally, studies prove that generational heritage bearers have learned that particular types of heritage with complete

integrity in compliance with traditional rituals accompanied. Generational heritage bearers definitely hold rewarding deeds in regards to having transmitted and maintained existing heritage traditions from generation to generation up to date. Such accomplished people should not be just recognized, but measures aimed at providing the generational reputation status should contribute important impact to efforts in preserving cultural heritage alive.

4. To preserve language dialects. One of factors causing obstacles to preserve and maintain cultural heritage appears decline and loss of diverse dialects spoken by different ethnic groups. Preserving Mongolian traditional culture and heritage does not mean only general concepts focusing on the Mongolian language itself, but saving different local dialects contained in the Mongolian language. In any nationality the cultural heritage and traditions are seen inseparably linked to language dialects, as indicated from study results. For example, tuuli artists N. Damdindorj and A. Baldandorj are making efforts to teach their tuuli skills and knowledge to relatives' children and schoolchildren. However, children do not understand the meaning of lyrics and words because children and youths' dialects have been standardized to the mainstream khalkh dialect and thus they do not understand their native local uriankhai dialect. Then they tried to modify lyrics based on khalkh dialect, but tuuli melody cannot accommodate khalkha dialect since the original tuuli lyrics and melody suitably fit one another in its specific local dialect. For examples, 'gigaid' in uriankhai dialect is said 'geed' in khalkh dialect.
5. To preserve original integrity. Interviewing heritage bearers, there are many incidents to have modified and changed original characteristics to suit modern pop culture patterns, while deviating integrity and genuine features. For instance, bii bielgee trainings are observed to possibly contain such incidents significantly. Consequently, within efforts in preserving and maintaining cultural heritage, it is necessary to specify clear guidance for trainings and standards for teaching methodology. Otherwise, heritage elements might be transmitted with improper and unoriginal features.
6. To organize training with different forms. Some heritage elements such as humii, tsuur and bii bielgee may be taught within the classroom environment to many people at a time, whereas other heritage forms may not be taught so, but require apprenticeship learning. For instance, tuuli typically consists of thousands lines of rhymes, so it is difficult to learn each line heart. Even after learning by heart, it is crucial to rehearse constantly, otherwise prone to forget in awhile. Learning tuuli, it is not required to learn each line word by word, but study the structure and themes first, then meditate and focus on that tuuli world with both his/her spirits and body so that the learner will be acquire skills to compose lyrics and melody on his/her own based on event orders. Therefore, in olden days tuuli artists could learn many tuulis with several thousand lines each within a relatively short period of time. The reason behind the fact that current young tuuli-artists cannot learn one tuuli fully may be explained by their lack of knowledge in traditional learning and performing techniques, but trying to learn whole lyrics by heart without much results. Therefore, it requires to take urgent measures to revive traditional teaching and learning techniques based on existing few homeland spots.

Concluding from the overall circumstances, preserving and maintaining cultural heritage appears not easy, but complex efforts to implement multi-faceted policy and plans based on indepth studies and explorations.