

## VI. Provisional Inscribed Item

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### IBEX DANCE

#### 1. Heritage Information

- Official Name: Ibex Dance
- Local Name: Skinchen Berghen (Ibex songs)

The tradition is still in practice in the Hushe valley (Villages of Khaney, Kandey and Hushe) of Ghanche Khaplu of Baltistan region.

Presently, the element has got restricted to Hushey Valley only. Hushey is situated to the extreme north of Ghanche District at about 10000 ft. It is stretched over an area of 350 sq kilometres inhabiting a population of 2550 person residing in 372 households. The famous peaks are Mashabrum (K-1 - 7821 meters), Mashabrum Western (7200 meters), K-6 (7185 meters) and K-7 (6992 meters). The dominant glacier ranges are Charghosa, Ghondogoro, Mashabrum Gangri and Aling Gangri.

The people of the Hushey Valley are the main steward of this heritage and still alive in the valley but it is vulnerable to extinction. Therefore, the project will be carried out in the valley.

#### 2. Detailed Information

- Year of Inscription:  
This element is going to be considered for inscription on the Urgent Safeguarding List during its seventh session to be held in autumn 2012.

- **Community Involvement:**  
The communities, groups and individuals are committed to safeguard the element. They are already working at their own level in various modes for the viability of the element and they have worked with and remained in constant contact with BCDF (Baltistan Culture and Development Foundation) in the past and have given their statements in writing regarding the nomination of the element.

The concerned communities, individuals and local governmental and non governmental organizations were involved in the efforts for nomination process not only to produce documented evidences about their interest in the ownership and safeguarding of such cultural elements but also to get an idea about their willingness and potential role they can play in the planning and implementation of the proposed project submitted to UNESCO headquarters.

- **Preservation Association Members and Activities**  
Lok Virsa (National Institute of Folk and Traditional Heritage) and BCDF (Baltistan Culture and Development Foundation) have proposed a project for the preservation and documentation of the project. Otherwise some local organizations and also BCDF which is a local NGO is working at its own for the preservation and development of the local intangible heritage.

### **3. Practitioners**

With the passage of time the community members who were familiar with such traditions either have given up the practice of folk song/dance or have passed away. A very few performing artists are alive. Because of lack of any direct importance attached to it or because of lack of patronage, such intangible cultural heritages are near to be wiped out from the face of the earth.

In past this tradition was in practice throughout the Baltistan region, but due to the least attention or wide gap/chasm in patronage, other areas have given up this beautiful cultural element. Only few senior citizens know the name and purpose of this very important cultural tradition. The account of some of the performers directly involved in the practice like of dancers, singers and musicians is with the local community organizations. Few of them also participated in the nomination process and expressed their willingness for the safeguarding of the element. They are mentioned in the written documents (written documents are direct community members which have been translated into English).

#### **4. Relevant Events**

As such there is no any other event which is directly related to the element. It only emphasises the bigger message of the conservation of the wildlife as discussed below.

#### **5. Abstract**

The element, Skinchan Berghen (Ibex songs) is a folk song about Ibex. (The element is demonstrated in a way; some young men in the shape of Ibex (horns on their heads wearing Ibex skin) descend from the mountain to the village in search of drinking water. Two young men (disguised in snow leopard pelt) chase the animal without know the Ibex and about to hunt the Ibex. The villagers come to know the danger ahead of the Ibex, and beat drums, trumpets and ultimately the Snow Leopard leave the Ibex. Secondly, the Ibex also face life threats from the hunters, meanwhile the villagers come over the place and save the Ibex and it get rid from the encountered danger. In this way they sing the song, showing their joy and happiness. Basically, the element is sung or recited and dancers or performers perform on the specific tune of the element. The idea of reciting and performing is to persuade the new generation to love the wildlife, conserving Ibexes, other wild species,

natural flora and fauna that maintain the nature and eco-system of the mountain region. The element is not only interesting because of its simplicity but it gives a philosophical and impressive message to human being.

## **6. Information Resources**

Our main information source in this regard was BCDF which is already working closely with all other governmental and non-governmental bodies working in the region. As such no interviews were conducted. They were already aware of the urgency of the matter and situation. Rather as to show the consent of the local communities for the safeguarding and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage their consent in terms of appeals which they have made has been gathered together and forwarded. All this information I am attaching herewith (Annex -IV Consent forms which is the English translation of original version).

## **7. Safeguarding Projects**

"Revival Project of the Ibex Dance" is the only one proposed project for the safeguarding of this element which was submitted to UNESCO both for the inscription and also for the financial help for its revival and safeguarding.

## **8. Survey Projects**

As such no survey project has ever been undertaken on this element exclusively rather patchy information was collected from different relevant organizations and individual with the help of BCDF.

## **9. Awards Received**

This element has received an award by ACCU.

## 10. Safeguarding Measures

For instance following relevant activities were performed by BCDF in the region for the preservation of intangible cultural heritage in the region:

Two workshops were organized for the people and stakeholders on Thematic & Performing Balti Music at Ghanche District Headquarters Khaplu in 2005, and Shigar valley of District Skardo in 2006. In these workshops a considerable number of performing artist from various parts of Baltistan participated and they discussed the issues relating to arts & artists. Similarly on the occasion of the music workshops a musical festival was also arranged at restored "Shigar Fort Residence" (SFR) in which all the Former Rajas of Baltistan as well as members of the elected bodies, notables & intellectual all over Baltistan participated. On these occasions several Folk /Classical dances were performed by the dancers/artists.

BCDF arranged several functions to amuse the public as well as government and other high ranking officials of private sectors for the promotion of the art and music in which local performing artist participated and they were encouraged by rewarding cash prizes.

Performing artists belonging to Baltistan were also supported to attend the Functions and festivals held at National level in Islamabad & other big cities.