

INTANGIBLE HERITAGE OF THE TAJIK PEOPLE

1. CONCISE HISTORY OF RESEARCH ON INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TAJIKISTAN

Tajiks are one of the oldest inhabitants of the Central Asian region owning many multifaceted cultural expressions and elements with a many centuries old of cultural interactions history with their nomadic and settled neighboring nations. The intangible heritage of the Tajik culture is rooted in the history of esoteric and folklore of the Arian people. Some of the grandeur examples of the intangible heritage of the Tajik people include the “Avesta” and many other written monuments in Pahlavi, Sogdian and other Iranian languages. The medieval examples are “Shahnameh” of Firdousi, “Athar al-baqiya” of Biruni, “Navruznameh” of Khayam, “Ta'rikhi Bukhoro” of Narshakhi, “Badoe' ul-vaqoe” of Vasifi and many-many other writing. Of course one should name also the continuity of this intangible heritage in the writing of the 19th and 20th century Tajik writers such as Sadriddin Ayni.

However the academic study of the aspects of intangible cultural heritage in Tajikistan begun in the last decades of the 19th and early decades of the 20th centuries. In this period Russian scholars of Oriental Studies N.V. Khanikov, A.A. Semenov, M.S. Andreev, A.P. Babrinskiy, D.N. Logofet, G. A. Aranderenko, A. Shishov and many others have made great contribution in the study of cultural heritage and gathering immense ethnographic material, including art, history and languages. The works of the aforementioned scholars and their other contemporary academic colleagues reflect the great wealth of customs, traditions, aspects of life and vocation relevant to mode of living, social structures and regional characteristics of Tajik people. From the establishment of the Soviet rule in Tajikistan to the middle of the 20th century nearly all research expeditions and academic undertakings were directed by the famous research institutions based on Leningrad (St. Petersburg) and Moscow.

In 1951 at the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Tajikistan specialized research Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography named after Ahmadi Donish was set up and henceforth major ethnographic and historical expeditions and special researches were conducted employing local scholars.

The research members of staff of the Ethnographic Department launched large-scale expedition and research projects on various aspects of the Tajik culture encompassing, family life, customs, ceremonial and festive celebrations, traditions, folklore including dances and singing, languages, agriculture and horticultural production, etc., and since than many publications emerged featuring the results of these academic endeavors in form of monographs, individual academic pieces and photo albums.

In addition, in 1958 in the Rudaki Institute of Language and Literature a special folklore studies department was created, which specifically has aimed and continues researching in the field of the folklore and traditional oral compositions and literature. Through many years expeditions and field visits has been undertaken to collect the oral literature and folklore material, both within Tajikistan and outside of the country in other Central Asian countries. The folklore archives of the Rudaki Institute contains more than 225000 pages folklore materials, including 21000 proverbs and sayings, 8200 riddles, 30000 traditional quadrants and couplets, 20000 traditional songs, 6100 tales, 3200 anecdote and 140 poems of the traditional epic song «Gurghuli». There are also more than 200 field notes and expedition diaries of the academic researches that have worked in the department.

This treasure of material has been basis of many academic dissertations and large studies devoted to the topic of folklore and ethno linguistics. In particular, in 1970s and in 1980s a multi volume publication

of the «Tajik Folklore» was prepared and eventually printed in 5 volumes. The most recent publication of the academic endeavor of the members of staff of the folklore department is «Encyclopedia of the Tajik folklore studies».

2. CURRENT STATE OF SAFEGUARDING THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN TODAY

The intangible cultural heritage of the Tajik people has seen a long history of formation and development and has grown in multiple ways and expressions and forms. These intangible cultural forms have always played significant functional role both in past and today. Indeed, in the course of history as society developed from ordinary ways to more complex some of the cultural forms and expressions being affected by different factors (for instance industrial development) have either ceased or transformed (for example, paper making, glass blowing, needle making, Hut festival, etc.). It was also the case that changes in social habitat has made it possible for the new cultural genres and expressions to be born and these new elements has either substituted the old ones or have added to the exiting baggage of intangible cultural elements. An example is emergence of Mavrigi singing cycle or emergence of teahouse culture. There were also cultural elements that were acquired and adopted from the other cultures with which Tajik people had close intercultural relations e.g. buzkashi game has entered Tajik culture from Turkic-Mongolian culture.

On August 17th in 2010 Majlisi Oli of the Republic of Tajikistan has ratified the protection of the country's intangible cultural heritage law and Tajikistan has officially become the UNESCO Convention member on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Tajikistan has unique and rich culture of both tangible and intangible expressions. In 2012, the Program of Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Tajik People for 2013-2020 has been approved by the Government of Tajikistan with the purpose and focus on research, revitalize, protect and promote of the traditional intangible cultural expressions.

In the context of researching Tajikistan's cultural heritage in the framework of the «Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Tajik People for the 2013-2020» the State Organization «Tajik Encyclopedia» has taken an initiative to publish an «Encyclopedia of Traditional Tajik Culture» and to date the two volumes of this work has been printed. In addition special volume of «Encyclopedia of Navruz» and «Encyclopedia of Traditional Tajik Cuisine» is being prepared to be published soon.

It is important to note that in the study and research of the intangible cultural heritage of the Tajik people there are several non-governmental organizations, including «Odam va Olam», «Ilm va Maorif», «Mino» and «Haftpaykar», which are making a significant contribution.

It is matter of proud that on the basis of the initiative of the Republic of Tajikistan and some other countries in 2010 and according to the special resolution of the United Nations the Navruz (Nowruz) festival have been recognized as an international holiday i.e. «International Day of Nowruz». It is also due to the cultural policies of the government of the Tajikistan that several other intangible culture expressions from Tajikistan has been included into the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Currently Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity include three nominations from Tajikistan; these are «Shashmaqam music» nominated jointly with the republic of Uzbekistan, «Oshi Palav – a traditional meal and its social and cultural contexts in Tajikistan» nomination of 2016, and «Nowruz» also nominated in 2016 jointly with Afghanistan, Iran, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Azerbaijan, Iraq, Pakistan, Turkey, Turkmenistan and India. At the moment there are two other nominations proposed to be considered for inscription in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity these are «Falak» and «Chakan - an embroidery art».

3. CONTRIBUTION OF THE RESEARCH INSTITUTE OF CULTURE AND INFORMATION IN THE FIELD OF SAFEGUARDING, RESEARCHING AND PROMOTING OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Research Institute of Culture and Information (RICI) in the field of safeguarding, researching and

promoting of intangible cultural heritage is an institution of the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan with a designated center for «Tajik Cultural Heritage».

Prior to the establishment of this center, research and data collection on traditional cultural expressions and particularly the intangible cultural heritage was undertaken by the individual research workers of the institute's folklore and methods and research departments. In particular, one of the currently main ongoing research projects executed by the members of the Center is «Current situation of the intangible cultural heritage in the country: challenges and perspectives (for the years 2016-2020)». This large-scale project is distributed among the Center's members who conduct field work, data collection and analysis following the terms of reference laid out in the state initiated program «Safeguarding the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Tajik People for the 2013-2020».

Data collections methods employed in fieldworks include multimedia recording such as photos, audio and visual records and field notes. The gathered materials after analysis are archived in the Institute and post-fieldwork materials are then used for updating and completion of the «National Inventory List of Intangible Cultural Heritage», which has been printed twice already. In addition the gathered material allowed organizing a catalogue of the traditional craftspeople in the country that are the main agents of continuity, revitalization and transfer of intangible national cultural expressions.

The intangible cultural heritage of any nation is always in development and improvement. With the influence of different factors, they cease, change and become partially active, they expand and the circles of their function also expand.

According to the requirements of the UNESCO Convention on the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003), part 3, Article 12 each of its member states must maintain one or more national registers and archives of the intangible cultural heritage in its territory. In connection with in 2010, the first register of the «Elements of the Cultural Heritage» was prepared, which included 48 elements of the intangible cultural heritage of the Tajik people.

After four years of research, the scholars of the Research Institute of Culture and Information in the field of safeguarding, researching and promoting of intangible cultural heritage compiled the «National Inventory List of Intangible Cultural Heritage» containing 286 elements of traditional culture, which was published a year later. In 2016, a new edition of this inventory in Tajik and English languages was published, which covered 515 elements of the intangible cultural heritage of the Tajik people. In compilation of the inventory and its content many national experts including members of non-governmental organization working the sphere of culture and heritage and members of various craft communities played active role.

The updated Inventory of the intangible cultural heritage consists of sections devoted to oral tradition, Performance Art, Celebration and Rituals, Customs and Social Practices Folk Crafts, National Food, Traditional sports and children games etc.

In updating this Inventory the recent gathered ethnographic data by the members of the Research Institute of Culture and Information in the field of safeguarding, researching and promoting of intangible cultural heritage including secondary academic sources on culture and heritage has been used. Research members of the Institute for the academic research and information in the field of safeguarding, researching and promoting of intangible cultural heritage regularly work on revision and adding new material to the Register and the next improved and updated edition is planned to be printed in 2018.

In the Institute for the academic research and information in the field of safeguarding, researching and promoting of intangible cultural heritage, since the beginning of 2016, the book series on «Intangible Cultural Heritage of Tajik People» is being published, which reflect the breadth and variety of the result of the painstaking work of the research members of the institute. So far, two volumes in this series were published and the third volume is in preparation. Additionally, in collaboration with the State Entity «Tojikfilm» in 2016, the book-album titled «Samples of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Tajik People» was released. In short, all of these initiatives are targeted to facilitate promotion, preservation and protection of the cultural heritage of Tajik nation.

4. STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

This book «The Intangible Cultural Heritage in Tajikistan» is one of the results of the research of the members of the Research Institute of Culture and Information in the field of safeguarding, researching and promoting of intangible cultural heritage and a number of researchers from the academic and cultural institutions of the country. Materials presented here are directly based on the first-hand data gathered by the members of the Institute as well as archival data and recently published relevant secondary sources.

The book is comprised of seven sections and each section contains series of articles pertaining each section. The first part includes essays on the oral traditional expressions, the second section is devoted to performance art and third section covers traditional ritual and celebrations; the fourth section is devoted to the traditional knowledge and practices and the fifth section covers the traditional folk crafts; the sixth section is on traditional cuisine and the final seventh section is about the traditional sport and children games.

Some of the sections have also subsections, for example the second section has subsection devoted on traditional dance and other forms of performances. Thus, the book in total covers 117 essays describing various forms of cultural expressions in concise and comprehensive manner.

Indeed, there are much more spiritual and intangible cultural expressions in Tajikistan, which one book cannot contain all of them. However, the aim is that what has been included in this book will provide enough descriptive information on what was selected be in this book and remainder what has not been included will appear in future publications. It is hoped that in the future publications there would chance to include more examples of the intangible cultural heritage expressions of the Tajik people.

At the end of each section, a list of publications or a short bibliography related to the subject is mentioned that readers may refer to for more information.

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