

IX. Pending Issues & Urgent Needs

Q1. Is any of the intangible cultural heritage in your country in danger of disappearance or transformation? (Please include the name of the particular heritage, location, problems encountered, etc.)

There is one of such ICH elements and that is “*Bakhshichilik*” (the art of bakhshi). Already in the late Middle Ages (XVII – XIX centuries) and in XX century this particular art flourished. This was as a result of activity of many masters – bearers of traditions in the Sarafshan Oasis, south and north of Uzbekistan. At the same time there were certain schools of mastery and skill, the representatives of which knew *dostons* (folk epics) entirely and were skillful in their performance. For instance, famous bakhshi from Detkanabad (Kashkadarya region) Qodir bakhshi Rahimov, knew more than 72 *dostons* of different themes and content. And only 4 *dostons* were recorded from him, while the others – were not. Or there was Bola bakhshi Abdullaev, who lived for 97 years and knew more than 20 *dostons*. But not all of the *dostons* were recorded. Although their children are famous narrators and to some extent continue traditions of their fathers, this is not enough to preserve or safeguard the element. And although every three years review competitions of *bakhshi-shoirs* (bakhshi poets) are conducted, there are not so many of the individuals who know entire *dostons*. In fact, *dostonchilik* art and its mastery is a lengthy and difficult process and not so many young people have a will or endurance to master entire *dostons*. Young people nowadays are more interested in popular and easily accessible music (variety art).

The same can be told with regard to qobuz music and the art of jyrau in the Republic of Karakalpakstan. Despite the fact that some elements of performance of these intangible cultural heritage traditions were already introduced to the educational process of colleges and HEIs, this is apparently not enough and does not change the situation dramatically. It is very unfortunate to note that only one person remained, who knows the process of making of music instrument *qobuz* (ancient stringed instrument) - A. Otarbaev who lives in Nukus city (in 2012 with the assistance provided by UNESCO his workshop was reconstructed).

Q2. What are the reasons the heritage is in danger and what type of safeguarding measures have been taken? Please be specific.

First and foremost, it is the difficulty associated with the manner of singing, i.e. using recitative guttural voice (it is popularly called as “bogiq ovoz” – hoarse or closed voice), which is oftentimes hard for the young people. Second, it is a good memory and ability to memorize the whole *doston*. Nowadays, young people prefer to use paper versions of epics. In fact, oral and improvisatory features of folk epics (*dostons*) are usually found difficult by the youth. This means to some extent creativity as well, i.e. creating an image, poetry and music. Third, applying creative approach to mastery and low level of awareness about this particular art genre. Fourth, although many *dostons* were already published and their contents, meaning and thematic features were studied, there are no musical notations (because each *doston* has several tunes and all of them are different in character and musical patterns) and audio disks. The only publication is “Tunes of Doston” by Botir Matyoqubov (Tashkent, 2009). Even this publication focuses on studying only one of the schools of *doston*, i.e. Khiva school.

Q3. What are the pending issues for safeguarding ICH in your country that you have found through interviews and the field survey?

Although field studies yielded positive results, they also helped to identify some specific problems and issues requiring an answer. First of all it is lack of ICH specialists, who are able to deal with in-depth and comprehensive analysis of ICH elements (objects). Secondly, it is low awareness of ICH on site in general. This is on the background that local and regional TV channels carry out certain work to raise awareness on ICH objects and produce visuals. A goal-oriented work is not done on the required level. In some cases even the bearers of traditions are not aware of existence of other bearers and of other ICH elements, existing in their localities (*mahallas*). Thirdly, visual agitation (posters, brochures, booklets on ICH elements or ICH in general) is absent. Fourthly, absence of departments or centers on site, which would deal with ICH issues. In the regions this kind of work is done mostly by individuals and enthusiasts. Fifthly, though certain funds were allocated from local budget to Navruz celebrations and organization of competitions in certain genres of performing art, thus far no funds have been allocated to ICH related measures (that is to say for making inventory, compiling local ICH lists, publishing purposes, etc.).

Q4. What kind of problems and difficulties were encountered during the safeguarding projects?

Main difficulty is associated with a failure in understanding of importance of ICH in the conditions of the modernity. Although the State Programme “On Safeguarding, Preservation, Popularization (Promotion) and Use of ICH in 2010-2020” is being executed well, there are still some issues which are omitted or no significant attention is paid. In some regions corresponding ICH programmes are still not developed. And main difficulty is connected with material support, i.e. allocation of funds and grants for technical support, for conducting filed studies, carrying out international scientific expeditions, for publishing activity. At present social transformations take place in different regions of the country, which are connected with preservation of intangible cultural heritage. Correspondingly, there is a need for clever cultural policy on the local level, which is based on deep understanding of the essence of the processes taking place.

Some other problems are associated with the following:

- Lack of holistic approach on the ICH inventory-making;
- Shortage of skilled/competent specialists in the field of ICH, dealing specifically with the issues of inventory-making;
- Insufficient involvement of local authorities (khokimyats (local municipalities) and administrations for cultural affairs) and local communities in the process of inventory making of ICH;
- Inadequate involvement of the youth in ICH safeguarding and mastery process.
- Lack of awareness of local population on the elements of ICH and efforts made for their safeguarding.

Though, all these issues and problems are being solved currently (step-by-step) through organizing seminars, meetings, scientific expeditions, trips of experts to sites, etc. In addition active work is done to overcome such challenges in the future and optimal solutions are being looked for.

Q5. Please describe more than one ICH item in Uzbekistan that is recommended to promote and raise awareness in international society in cooperation with ICHCAP.

Dorbozlik (rope walking art) is an original genre of folk-spectacular arts of Uzbekistan, which was integral part of traditional artistic programme of folk festivities and festivals held on fairgrounds and bazar squares, with participation of a great number of spectators, as well as during family-related events such as weddings. It emerged in antiquity in the Ferghana Oasis (almost 2000 years ago) on the basis of military exercises and games conducted to cross over gullies and

rivers with the help of a rope. Initially it was perceived as an original game (“oyin” – literally “game”) and later transformed into folk entertainment show (“tomosha” – literally “show” or “spectacle”).

Dorbozlik art (performances on high rope, usually 20-25 meters above the ground) and simboz (performances on elastic wire on a small height, usually 4 meters above the ground) were widely spread and always enjoyed popularity among the people and spectators (because of dexterity and fearlessness of dorbozes in their performances without security measures). Notably, performances of tightrope walkers (*dorbozes*) are always combined with those of other types of spectacular arts, such as *palvans* (strongmen), *qiziqchi* (clowns), *askiyachi* (wise crackers), acrobats, tamers, musicians, etc. So called “wandering” tours of family dynasties of dorbozes of the Ferghana Vally, Bukhara, etc., unsettled (strolling) way of life are typical features of *dorbozes* (alreadt in the Middle Ages leading masters of this genre demonstrated their art and skill in major cities of China, India, Afghanistan, Iran, Russia, etc). In XX century *dorbozlik* became part of circus performances and migrated from open air areas to the circus arena, i.e. indoor area, while forming onstage ropewalking practice. And the founder of the new type of drobozlik performances became the Tashkenbayevs family dynasty.

Dorbozlik is a family tradition. Nowadays there are more than 40 family troupes of *dorbozes* and strongmen. It is family, in which dorbozlik related knowledge, skills, peculiarities and traditions are transmitted. It also the place, where so called “dorbozlik apprenticeship schools” function based on methodology of “*ustoz-shogird*” (“master-apprentice”).

The art of dorbozlik has its own particularities and artistic features, which can be observed in spectacularity of the performances (in front of a large number of spectators). It comprises of more than 30 elements and stunts, including rope running, different types of jumps, somersault, acrobatic rollover, dancing elements, pyramids, gymnastic elements on a trapeze, etc. All these were done at the height of 20-25 m, using langar (balancer; balancing pole) to maintain balance and for safety reasons.

From time immemorial dorbozlik was perceived both by spectators and its performers as a peculiar symbol of folk-spectacular arts, i.e. unity of community and group. Spectators, in turn, provided with moral and spiritual support to *dorbozes* through their kind wishes and words. Since integrity and viability of the element of *dorbozlik* is not endangered, most of the measures on preservation are aimed at further development of dorbozlik art, attraction of the youth, raising

awareness, inventory making, documenting and popularization of this type of art with the use of modern technologies and innovation (that is, improvement of outfit, safety measures, establishing new schools of apprenticeship, etc.).

The XX century played a significant role in safeguarding and development of *dorbozlik* art. Firstly, this is connected with the new attitude demonstrated with regard to the traditional culture, with revival of the certain ICH elements and paying great attention and to them in the conditions of modernity. Secondly, For the purpose of development and mass promotion of *dorbozlik* art review-competitions and festivals are conducted, apprenticeship schools are revived, young people are attracted, new family troupes are organized and supported by the state. (A bright example is organization of the nongovernmental Association of Dorbozes and Palvans (strongmen)).

The kind of construction of the rope, applied in *dorbozlik* art, stretched at the height of 20-25 m., cannot be found in any of the countries of the East (not even speaking of European countries). This makes *dorbozlik* art distinctive and unique. Notably, It was *dorbozlik* art, which laid the foundation for the emergence (and became the core element) of Uzbek circus art. Findings of fieldworks and studies, conducted before and during 2012-2014, helped to arrange inventory-making for *dorbozlik* art and other types of spectacular arts. And it was included in the National List of ICH of Uzbekistan (02.06.01).

The art of *dorbozlik* is recommended for inclusion in the Representative List of UNESCO in 2015. Accordingly, there is a need for support of international community. Also, it is necessary to raise awareness of the international community jointly with the ICHCAP which will help in advancing and promoting this element of ICH.

Q6. Please describe more than one ICH item in Uzbekistan that could encourage international cooperation for ICH safeguarding. (ex. shared heritage, multinational nomination)

Within the last few years international cooperation on safeguarding of ICH is being encouraged and it gets strengthened. Organization of series of seminars and conferences dedicated to the issues of safeguarding and preservation of ICH, exchange of information as well as joint projects on multinational nominations (the brightest example is inscription of Navruz on the UNESCO Representative List as a multinational nomination, i.e. nomination of 7 countries) are only a few examples of this kind of cooperation.

In fact, peoples of Central Asia have centuries-long history and their culture and artistic heritage indeed has the common roots. For instance, folk epic and the art of epic story telling (these exist in Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Eastern Turkestan, Uzbekistan, Russia (Turkic people)); wedding rituals and wedding-ritual related music (Central Asia, Eastern Turkestan, Turkey, etc.); traditions of oriental hospitality; knowledge and skills associated with preparation and cooking of pilaw (this is the element typical for many nations in the East); traditional skills of construction of dwellings of nomads (Turkic peoples of the East).

Here it bears mentioning about multinational nomination of “*Otov*, the traditional dwelling of nomads” (Afghanistan, Central Asia, Mongolia, etc.). *Otov* (or *yurt*, *qora uy*, *oq uy*, *khirga*, etc.) is a traditional style dwelling house of a nomad. As it was in the past, at present it is considered as one of the most popular dwelling houses among the peoples, who in the past lived nomadic life. Generally speaking, specific features of nomadic life can be observed not only in the life style of the people, but also in the interiors of yurts. Nomadic life’s features can be observed for instance in the main elements (wood and leather), with the help of which yurts are constructed; in the way yurts are mounted (they were mounted by both men and women; in mounting special attention was paid to windrose, directions of sunrise and sunset as well as *qiblah* - the direction of the sacred shrine of the *Ka’bah* in Mecca); in the way yurts are designed (felt covers, woven runners, rugs, felt carpets, decorative arrangement (embroidered pillows, blankets, etc.)); in other words the items of folk applied art such as carpet making, embroidery, woodcarving, etc.); in the order of the interior of yurts (right side of the yurt is for women, the left side – for men).

In this regard it is possible to tell that the future of yurt making is not only connected with daily life of the population of any given region, but also with an ecotourism (a good example for this is the organization of the Festival of Traditional Culture “*Asrlar Sadosi*” (Echo of Ages) in Ellikqala district of the Republic of Karakalpakstan (May 2012), when such yurts were installed and exhibited).

Multinational nominations on certain ICH elements will help, in fact, to strengthen international cooperation, allow to expand intercultural dialogue and stimulate cultural diversity, ensure development of unique culture of cohabitation and mutual spiritual enrichment, and form solicitous attitude to the own and universal cultural heritage.

Q7. What future plans are there for the safeguarding of ICH (programme information)?

The plans for the future are the following:

- To establish international collaboration with the majority of cultural and information centers of UNESCO in the Asian continent.
- To continue cooperation and fruitful collaboration with the ICHCAP on the issues of ICH safeguarding.
- To continue the work on implementation of the State Programme on safeguarding of ICH in 2010-2020 and conduct regular monitoring of the activities.
- To continue the work on making inventory of ICH of Uzbekistan, update and enrich regularly the National ICH List, provide support for compilation of local (regional) lists of ICH, develop a multifaceted approach to the study of ICH of Uzbekistan.
- To prepare new nomination files on ICH elements of Uzbekistan to be included in UNESCO Lists (i.e. “Mahalla, the Uzbek model of preservation and transfer of ICH related knowledge and traditions” – for inclusion in the UNESCO Register of the Best Practices in ICH in 2016; “Bakhshichilik, the art of narrators of epics” - for inclusion in the List of the Elements in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2016; “Traditional Music of *Qobuz*” - for inclusion in the List of the Elements in Need of Urgent Safeguarding in 2017; “Lapar, the Song Heritage of the Uzbek People” – for inclusion in the Representative List in 2017; “Margilan Center for Revival of Traditional Crafts” - for inclusion in the UNESCO Register of the Best Practices in ICH in 2018; “Otov, the Traditional Dwelling House of the Nomads” (knowledge and skills associated with making, construction, installation and designing of yurts) – for inclusion in the Representative List as a multinational nomination in 2018; “Ceremonies and Festivities in the Islamic Religion” – for inclusion in the Representative List as a multinational nomination of the countries of the East in 2018).
- To update regularly the online database and web site, which provides all required information on ICH of Uzbekistan.
- To publish the results of the field studies and expeditions conducted in 2012-2014 (in the form of books, collections, audio and multimedia disks).
- To continue carrying out field studies and scientific expeditions with participation of specialists and bearers of traditions (comprehensive and mobile expeditions), establish contacts with cultural centers of UNESCO and other interested countries for conducting international expeditions, regional and national seminars and scientific conferences.

- To continue awareness raising activities among the population of Uzbekistan on ICH with the help of mass media, promote knowledge of ICH of Uzbekistan abroad.
- To integrate information materials of ICH in the learning process (from primary to tertiary tertiary level of art education in Uzbekistan); create training programmes and training manuals on ICH; establish contacts for the purpose of training of specialists in in ICH; to organize constantly professional development courses for specialists, cultural workers and teachers of schools, colleges and universities.