

Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States

PROJECT REPORT

Part I (FY 2024)



**International Research Centre for Intangible
Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region
(IRCI)**

This project was implemented as part of the activities of the International Collaborative Project for the Safeguarding of Cultural Properties, commissioned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan.

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PREFACE

The International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI) was established in 2011 as a UNESCO Category 2 Centre under the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage (NICH), Japan. Since its inception, IRCI has been dedicated to advancing research for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) across the Asia-Pacific region. Through collaborative efforts with research institutes, museums, NGOs, and governmental bodies both within and beyond the region, IRCI has implemented a wide range of projects aimed at promoting the understanding and safeguarding of ICH.

Since 2013, IRCI has been collecting research information on ICH and its safeguarding through its projects. This information has been compiled and made available through the IRCI Research Database (<https://www.irci.jp/ichdb/>), which provides insights into the latest trends and developments in ICH research. As part of this effort, IRCI launched the project ‘Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States’ in FY 2022 under its activity focus of ‘Promoting Research for ICH Safeguarding’.

This initiative targets two sub-regions—Central Asia and Small Island Developing States (SIDS)—on which information was particularly limited in the IRCI Research Database. The project was implemented in collaboration with ICH-related organizations in these regions, serving as a valuable opportunity to enhance their capacity for information collection and analysis. Additionally, it strengthened networks among these organizations and encouraged greater information sharing on ICH and its safeguarding.

With the partner organizations in Central Asia having completed their data collection for the project, IRCI is pleased to present this report, which summarizes the collection activities, outcomes, and insights gained. IRCI will remain committed to expanding and updating information on Central Asia in its database to further promote ICH research within and beyond the sub-region.

The conclusion of data collection in Central Asia marks a significant milestone, representing over a decade of continued efforts. As a result, the volume of research information compiled has grown steadily, and the IRCI Research Database has gained increasing recognition among ICH researchers and related institutions. While the process has encountered challenges and issues, IRCI has continuously refined its project planning, management, and collection methodologies.

Finally, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to the partner organizations and their collaborators for their diligent efforts in collecting valuable research data. I am also deeply grateful to the researchers and institutions who provided invaluable advice on data collection and database improvement. Their support has been instrumental in enabling IRCI to achieve remarkable progress in its data collection efforts. Through their contributions, IRCI has gained a deeper understanding of the current ICH research landscape in Central Asian countries and the entire Asia-Pacific Region. IRCI will continue its data collection efforts, building on their invaluable insights and inputs.

I hope this report, along with the research information available in the IRCI Research Database, will support the promotion of ICH safeguarding and advance research efforts in this field.

March 2025

MACHIDA Daisuke
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for Intangible Cultural
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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	i
Table of Contents	iii
Acronyms and Abbreviations	iv
1. Summary of the Collection of ICH Research Information in Central Asia	3
2. Reports by Partner Organizations	
Data Collection in FY 2020–2022	
Kyrgyzstan	19
Philippines	31
Data Collection in FY 2022–2024	
Kazakhstan	45
Mongolia	59
Tajikistan	77
Uzbekistan	91
3. Regional Analysis of the ICH Research in Central Asia	113

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
FY	Fiscal Year
ICH	Intangible Cultural Heritage
IRCI	International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region
SIDS	Small Island Developing States
RICI	Research Institute of Culture and Information (Tajikistan)
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
2003 Convention	Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage



1

Summary of the Collection of ICH Research Information in Central Asia

SUMMARY OF THE COLLECTION OF ICH RESEARCH INFORMATION IN CENTRAL ASIA

Le Yu

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IRCI has been continuously mapping research information related to ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region since 2013. The collected information on research, as well as information on ICH researchers and institutions, has been made accessible through the IRCI Research Database (<https://www.irci.jp/ichdb/>). As part of this effort, IRCI developed a mechanism for collecting research information through inter-institutional cooperation, and the current project, ‘Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States’, was launched in FY 2022¹ under IRCI’s Activity Focus I: Promoting Research for ICH Safeguarding. This initiative specifically targets sub-regions that are underrepresented in the database and where the latest research trends and efforts for safeguarding ICH have yet to be fully assessed.

This project, planned for three years (FY 2022–2024), has progressed smoothly in Central Asia during this period. All participating countries have completed the collection of research information, analysed the data, and submitted their final reports, including their analyses.

Following the conclusion of the planned project activities in Central Asia, this project report mainly summarizes the activities and findings from this sub-region, incorporating the final reports from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan. In addition, it includes a report submitted in FY 2022 by the partner organization in the Philippines, which collected research information from FY 2020 to FY 2022, as well as a regional analysis of all collected information from Central Asia.

Background and Objectives of the Sustainable Research Data Collection Project

Research information, such as literature related to ICH and its safeguarding, is essential

¹ The Japanese fiscal year (FY) runs from 1 April to 31 March of the following year.

for understanding the current situation and challenges of ICH safeguarding. To address this need, IRCI has been collecting research information that contributes to ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region and making it accessible on the IRCI Research Database. In the early years of this effort, IRCI collaborated with individual researchers under the ‘Mapping Studies on the Safeguarding of ICH’ project (FY 2013–2019).² However, several challenges were identified, such as a lack of knowledge or shared understanding of the definition of ICH, a shortage of experts in related academic fields, an imbalance of information between different fields resulting from diverse individual interests, the risk of losing archived research data due to poor storage conditions, and limited accessibility to research information.

Against this background, IRCI launched the ‘Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region’ project in FY 2019 to establish a new mechanism for collecting information on existing research by cooperating with ICH-related organizations, such as universities and museums, rather than relying on individual researchers. During the first three years, the project's activities were conducted mainly in Southeast Asia.

The project aims not only to ensure the collection and publication of research information through the database but also to enable participants to understand the current situation of research for safeguarding ICH in their respective countries, which provides baseline information for promoting further research activities and understanding of ICH in the region. This leads to better safeguarding of ICH and demonstrates the value of research as one of the safeguarding measures. In addition, the experience of collecting research information through cooperation among research institutions has facilitated inter-institutional collaboration in the respective countries.

The research information collected in the project has been added to the online IRCI Research Database, which is open to the public, to widely share the literature information related to ICH research originally conducted in various languages across the Asia-Pacific region. Making this information, which includes a summary of each item in English, available through the IRCI Research Database benefits a wide range of stakeholders engaged in ICH-related activities, including researchers, policymakers, and practitioners. Referring to such information helps understand trends in ICH research within each country of the sub-regions and identify fields that require further

² Details of the ‘Mapping Studies on the Safeguarding of ICH’ project and other data collection projects can be found on the IRCI website (https://www.irci.jp/research/research_data/).

exploration. This broadens the scope of ICH research, thereby contributing to the enhancement of research for the safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific region.

Mechanism for Collecting Research Information

As mentioned earlier, IRCI initially collaborated with individual researchers to collect and analyse research information under the Mapping Project. In FY 2019, this approach shifted to institutional cooperation to establish a more systematic and comprehensive data collection mechanism, with the launch of the Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region project (FY 2019–2021). The data collection process under this project began with the selection of cooperating organizations in the Asia-Pacific region. These organizations, chosen for their extensive research experience related to ICH, functioned as focal points for collecting research information in their respective countries.

In this new scheme, selected cooperating organizations served as National Counterparts and conducted collection in three phases, working with other ICH-related organizations in their respective countries as their National Collaborators (Figure 1). Phase 1 served as a pilot phase for the National Counterparts, while in Phases 2 and 3, they progressively expanded the volume of information to be collected and the number of National Counterparts each year. Over the three-year period, seven countries participated in the project: Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, and Viet Nam. Kyrgyzstan in Central Asia also joined the activities from FY 2021.

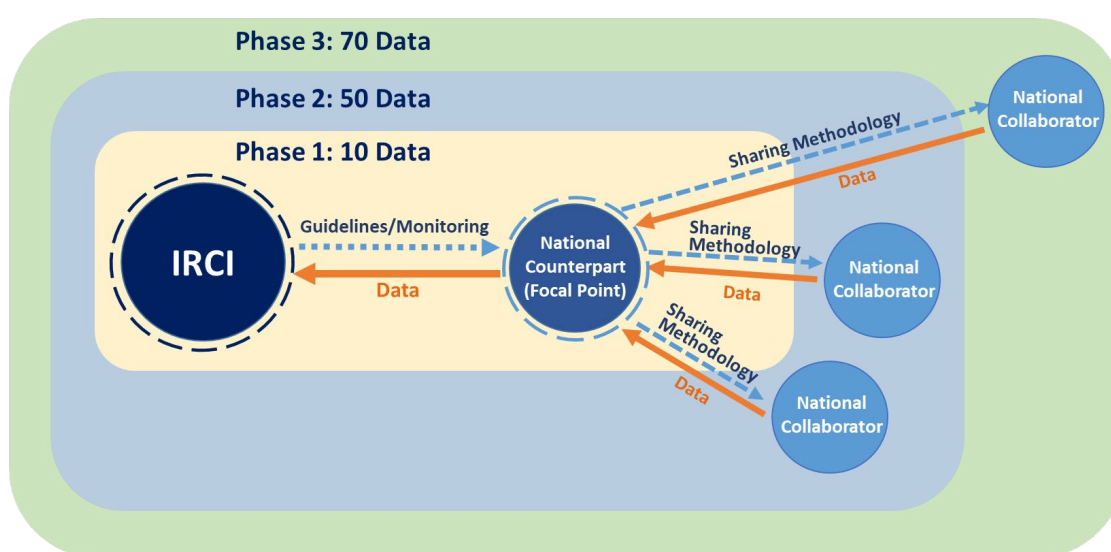


Figure 1: Data collection mechanism during FY 2019–2021

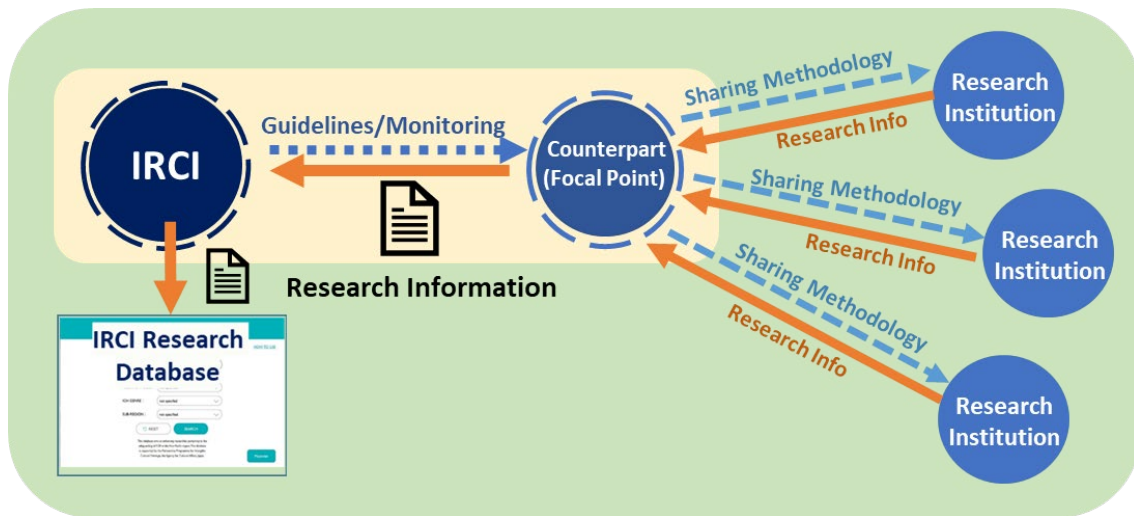


Figure 2: Collection Mechanism for Central Asia

The current project, implemented in Central Asia (FY 2022–2024), also employed a collection mechanism based on institutional cooperation. IRCI, in consultation with national and regional stakeholders including UNESCO offices, selected organizations with extensive experience and knowledge of ICH research as partner organizations (Counterparts). In addition to conducting collection themselves, the partners established and developed an institutional network through cooperation with their collaborators (Figure 2). Partner organizations were responsible for coordinating and communicating with their collaborators on all project-related activities, as well as consolidating and reviewing the information collected by the collaborators before submitting it to IRCI.

On the other hand, several changes were made to the mechanism and the work process. For instance, in the first year of the project, each partner organization identified its collaborators to work with throughout the three-year period and compiled a simple bibliographic list of publications, on which it planned to collect information. This ensured a more planned and consistent collection process.

In Central Asia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan participated in the project. Mongolia also joined the initiative as the country is geographically close and culturally linked to Central Asia through shared nomadic heritage. Partnership was established with a key organization in each of these countries (Table 1). Among them, as mentioned earlier, the partner in Kyrgyzstan joined in FY 2021 during the previous project and conducted the collection for two years until FY 2022.

Table 1: Project Partners in Central Asia

Country	Partner Organization (Counterpart)
Kazakhstan	Kazakhstan ICH National Committee
Kyrgyzstan	Aigine Cultural Research Center
Mongolia	Council for Cultural Heritage Networking and Communication
Tajikistan	Research Institute of Culture and Information (IRCI)
Uzbekistan	Center for Promotion of Culture and Art of Uzbekistan 'Umrboqiy Meros'

The partner organizations began their activities by compiling a bibliographic list of publications on which they planned to collect detailed information. These publications are supposed to deal with ICH in their respective countries and are considered to include important and representative research results for ICH safeguarding. Following this process, they collected detailed information on the listed publications. In addition to providing basic bibliographic information, they were tasked to carefully review the content of each publication to identify information such as specific ICH elements and communities concerned, and the publication's relevance to ICH safeguarding. Since many of these publications are written in local languages, they also provided an English summary for each.

IRCI developed the Data Entry Sheet in Excel format on which the partner organizations could enter the collected information. The above-mentioned information on the ICH-related publications, including basic bibliographic information, relevance to ICH safeguarding, and a summary in English, was compiled and submitted to IRCI using this Data Entry Sheet (Table 2). After the collected information was submitted, IRCI reviewed all the entries and made them accessible through the IRCI Research Database. The detailed information about ICH research in Central Asia, including its relevance to ICH safeguarding measures and publication summaries, is expected to improve the understanding of the situation and trends of ICH-related research in these countries and the whole sub-region. As all the information is provided with English summaries, the IRCI Research Database helps disseminate research information from the sub-region to a global audience; therefore, it serves as a valuable resource, particularly for researchers and other stakeholders who do not understand the languages of Central Asian countries.

Table 2: Information Collected in the Project through the Data Entry Sheets

1) Basic Information I
Title in original language
Title in English
Journal/book title in original language (for journal articles and book sections)
Journal/book title in English
Publication format (online/paper)
Keywords
Pages
Written language
Country
Author's name(s) in original language and English, and author's affiliation
2) Basic Information II
Year of publication
Publisher
Place of publication
ISBN/ISSN/e-ISSN/DOI (if available)
Publication category (Book; book section/chapter; project report; journal article; other articles; thesis/dissertation; proceedings; audio-visual material; other)
Peer-review (Yes/No)
URL link to the information (if available)
3) Research Focus
Name(s) of ICH element(s) dealt in research (main and others)
Focused ICH genre (Oral tradition; performing arts (music/dance/drama/others); social practices; rituals; festive events; ecological knowledge and practices; worldview; traditional craftsmanship; sports/games; food culture; traditional medicine; ICH in general; other)
Academic field (Anthropology, ethnomusicology, ethnochoreology, folklore, heritage management (including heritage law), cultural studies, mythology, etc.)
Region/community/ethnic group or any other group of people/individuals discussed in research
Relevance to ICH safeguarding (Identification; policy making (including heritage law); documentation; promotion; transmission; revitalization; training; education; awareness raising; capacity building; intangible-tangible interface; heritage management; disaster prevention (including natural hazards and conflict); other)
4) Summary in English (less than 500 words)

Project Activities in Central Asia (FY 2022–2024)

Table 3 summarizes the major activities implemented over the three-year period.

Table 3: Major Project Activities During FY 2022–2024

Date	Activity
FY 2022	
April–July 2022	Establishment of partnerships with ICH-related organizations
10 August 2022	Regional Workshop for Central Asia
August 2022	Finalization of guidelines for collection
10 November 2022	Workshop in Kyrgyzstan
10 January 2023	Submission of Data Entry Sheets and summary reports
13–17 March 2023	IRCI’s monitoring visit to Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan
FY 2023	
April–May 2023	Revision of guidelines for collection
26 June, 16 October 2023	Domestic workshops in Kazakhstan
9 September 2023	Domestic workshop in Uzbekistan
December 2023	Submission of Data Entry Sheets and summary reports
22 February 2024	Sub-regional Workshop for Central Asia
FY 2024	
April–May 2023	Revision of guidelines for collection
19 October 2024	Domestic workshop in Uzbekistan
1 November 2024	Submission of Data Entry Sheets
2 December 2024	Submission of final reports
28 February 2025	Final Workshop for Data Collection Project

Following the continuation of research data collection efforts in Kyrgyzstan from the previous project, the activities in Central Asia under the current project began with the establishment of partnerships with relevant organizations in Kazakhstan, Mongolia, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan in FY 2022. Subsequently, an online workshop was held in August, attended by all partners, to discuss data collection methods. Following the workshop, each partner first compiled a bibliographic list of 150 items, as outlined earlier. Using the list, the first round of collection was conducted in the same year, and detailed information was collected for 10 items as specified in Table 2.

In FY 2023 and FY 2024, the partner organizations conducted a full-scale collection. They updated their bibliographic lists as necessary to include the latest and most important research, with each organization collecting at least 70 pieces of information annually. As in the first year, the collected information was reviewed and added to the database at the end of each fiscal year. Additionally, in FY 2023, IRCI developed an online form for collecting institutional information and distributed it to the ICH-related organizations in the four participating countries through the project partners. The collected information was then integrated into the database to update the institutional information.

In the final year of FY 2024, each partner organization also analysed all the information collected over the three-year period and summarized the results of their analysis in their final reports (see country reports in this volume). Additionally, a regional analysis based on all the information collected from this sub-region was conducted in cooperation with an expert specializing in Central Asian culture. The purpose of this analysis was to review the research situation and trends across the sub-region and to identify the issues that need to be addressed and resolved.

During the data collection process, several partner organizations organized domestic workshops to share information with collaborators and strengthen inter-institutional networks. These workshops not only facilitated smoother data collection by improving communication among institutions but also provided opportunities for partner organizations to apply the insights gained from the project to address domestic challenges in ICH research. Additionally, the workshops served as platforms for discussions on current topics related to ICH safeguarding. For example, two domestic workshops held in Kazakhstan in FY 2023 was used as an opportunity to discuss the development of a local ICH database, drawing on the experience and model of the IRCI Research Database. Meanwhile, a workshop in Uzbekistan during the same fiscal year focused on the integrated safeguarding of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, highlighting the interconnected nature of cultural heritage safeguarding efforts.

In February 2024, IRCI organized an online workshop for partners in Central Asia to share their progress, findings, and challenges in FY 2023 and to strengthen relationships among participants. In February 2025, a final workshop was held, inviting all partner organizations from both Central Asia and SIDS. During this workshop, participants shared their findings and challenges in the three-year collection process, as well as their ideas for future projects and collaborations, including advice and suggestions for improving the IRCI Research Database. Participants also explored possibilities for future



Participants of the Final Workshop on 28 February 2025

collaboration beyond sub-regions, focusing on regionally shared and multinational ICH. Additionally, they discussed potential methods to expand this cooperation by learning from each other’s experiences and building networks across sub-regions.

Integration of Collected Information into the IRCI Research Database

Prior to the shift of regional focus in the project to Central Asia and SIDS, entries on Central Asia in the IRCI Research Database were very limited, with only 239 pieces (Table 4). After three years of collection under the current project, ICH research information on this sub-region increased significantly, with a total of 713 pieces of research information added from the five participating Central Asian countries, combined with the 10 pieces collected in Kyrgyzstan in FY 2021.

Table 4: Amount of Information Collected in Central Asia (FY 2021–2024) [Number of Entries]

Country	Before the project	FY 2021	FY 2022	FY 2023	FY 2024	Total (FY 2021–2024)
Kazakhstan	15		10	70	70	150
Kyrgyzstan	34	10	70			80
Mongolia	38		11	70	83	164
Tajikistan	15		12	75	72	159
Uzbekistan	37		20	70	70	160
All	239	10	123	285	295	713

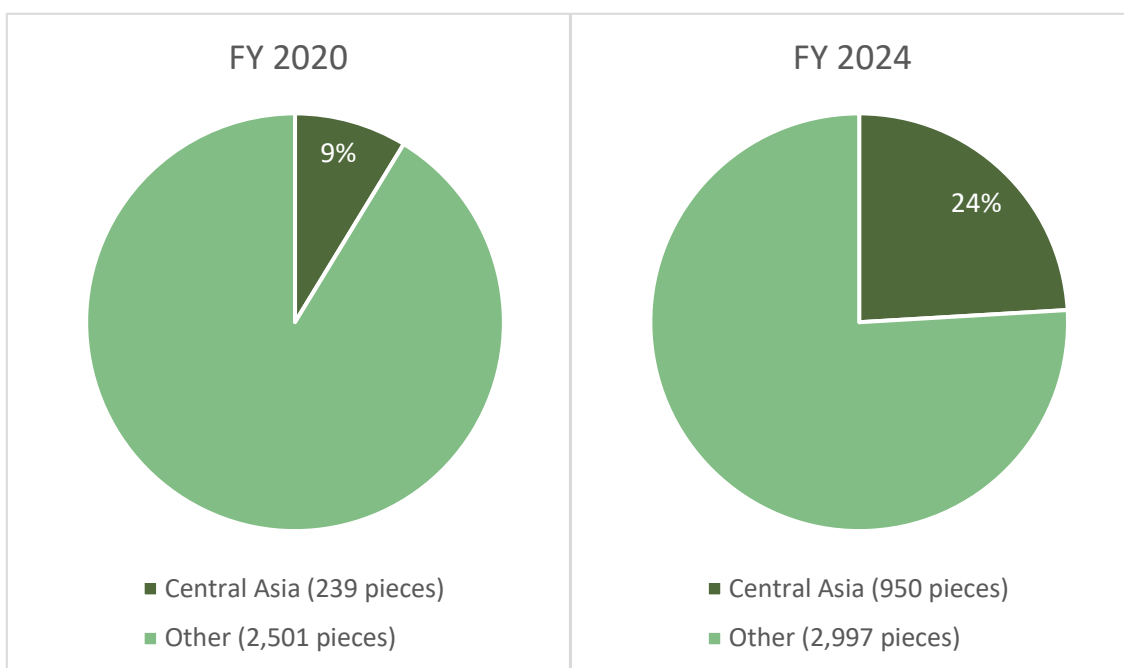


Figure 3: Proportion of Central Asia-Related Entries in the Database

With this addition, the total number of entries on Central Asia in the database reached 950,³ accounting for 24% of the overall 3,947 records⁴ stored in the database by the end of FY 2024—an increase from 9% in FY 2020 (Figure 3).

In addition to research information, institutional information on organizations related to ICH and its safeguarding in Central Asia was also collected, as mentioned earlier in the project activities section. A total of 26 institutions provided details, including basic information such as addresses and telephone numbers, as well as their expertise related to ICH safeguarding, which was incorporated into the database at the end of FY 2023. This was a pilot effort to update the institutional information in the database, and IRCI plans to extend this approach to include other sub-regions in the future.

Alongside expanding the volume of information, IRCI has also been enhancing the functionality of the IRCI Research Database. For instance, in FY 2022, a new feature was introduced, allowing users to search by country. The database is currently undergoing a substantial redesign to improve its structure, accessibility, and usability. This redesign, which involves the reorganization and integration of existing entries, is scheduled for completion by the end of FY 2024 (March 2025). Building on the advice and suggestions

³ Some of the collected information on visual materials was not included in the database.

⁴ Number of records as of 14 March 2025.

provided by partner organizations during the final workshop (February 2025), IRCI will continue its efforts to enhance the database's convenience and user experience.



2

Reports by Partner Organizations

Data Collection in FY 2020–2022

Aiza Abdyrakhmanova

Project Coordinator, Aigine Cultural Research Center

Introduction

The safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Kyrgyzstan is a critical task that requires a systematic approach in the face of modern challenges. The country is rich in cultural heritage, including oral traditions, performing arts, rituals, festivals, and knowledge related to nature.

Kyrgyzstan has been actively taking steps to protect its ICH. One of the key elements of the country's state policy was its accession to UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006. Based on international standards, a national mechanism for safeguarding ICH has been developed, which includes the creation of a national register of ICH elements, support for tradition bearers, the establishment of relevant legislation, and the organization of activities aimed at raising public awareness of cultural heritage. Educational programmes play an important role in this work, not only introducing young people to the richness of the national culture, but also engaging them in the process of preserving cultural heritage.

In Kyrgyzstan, the safeguarding of ICH falls under the jurisdiction of several governmental bodies, which coordinate their activities to preserve and promote the country's cultural heritage. Each of these bodies plays a key role in developing, implementing, and monitoring policies in the field of ICH:

Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports, and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic

This is the central governmental body responsible for overall cultural policy, including the safeguarding of ICH. The Ministry develops and implements national programmes and strategies aimed at preserving cultural heritage, as well as coordinating activities to support tradition bearers and cultural practices. In its work, the Ministry is guided by the Constitution of the Kyrgyz Republic, the country's laws, including the Law on the Revival, Development, and Preservation of Folk Arts and Crafts, the Law on the Protection and Use of Historical and Cultural Heritage, the Law on Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the

¹ Collection in Kyrgyzstan was implemented during FY 2021–2022.

Law on Craft Activities, as well as other legal acts and international agreements to which the Kyrgyz Republic is a party.

The Ministry performs the following functions:

- Forming and maintaining the National Register of ICH elements, which is a key tool for identifying, documenting, and preserving cultural values;
- Supporting traditional crafts and oral traditions through grant and subsidy programmes for masters and bearers of traditional knowledge;
- Organizing cultural events and festivals aimed at popularizing ICH and engaging the public in the process of preserving cultural values; and
- Creating educational programmes to teach the younger generation traditional crafts, dances, songs, and other forms of intangible culture.

The Ministry also collaborates with international organizations, including UNESCO, to implement ICH safeguarding projects at the local level.

National Commission of the Kyrgyz Republic for UNESCO

This body is responsible for coordinating activities between Kyrgyzstan and UNESCO. The Commission plays a crucial role in promoting and implementing international standards for the safeguarding of ICH, as well as in nominating cultural heritage elements from Kyrgyzstan for inclusion in UNESCO's Lists. The Commission's main tasks include:

- Supporting national projects for the preservation of ICH within the framework of UNESCO's international programmes;
- Coordinating efforts between government agencies and international partners to develop and implement programmes for cultural heritage preservation; and
- Conducting informational and educational activities to raise public awareness about the importance of ICH, including participation in international conferences and seminars.

Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Economy and Commerce of the Kyrgyz Republic

While the primary mission of this department is the development of tourism, it also plays an active role in safeguarding ICH, as cultural heritage is a key component of the

country's tourism appeal. The Department implements programmes to promote cultural tourism, where ICH plays a crucial role by drawing attention to local traditions and customs through cultural tours and events. The main areas of the department's activities include:

- Promoting ICH elements as tourist attractions, contributing to their preservation and popularization on the international stage;
- Supporting artisans and cultural events related to traditional festivals, crafts, and performances that attract tourist interest; and
- Developing cultural routes based on ICH elements, allowing the preservation of living culture while simultaneously boosting the economy through tourism.

Research and Educational Institutions

In addition to government agencies, scientific institutes and universities play a crucial role in safeguarding ICH by conducting research and documentation of cultural heritage. The Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnology of the National Academy of Sciences of the Kyrgyz Republic, along with the country's higher educational institutions, actively participates in research projects aimed at studying and promoting ICH. They provide the scientific foundation for the development of state strategies, conduct research to collect and systematize data on traditions, and engage students in heritage preservation projects.

Despite the government's efforts, there are also significant challenges. Limited and insufficient interaction between various agencies and sectors of society, as well as the absence of a comprehensive educational programme that could more deeply integrate cultural heritage into the daily lives of the youth, remains a problem. Although ICH issues fall under the purview of various ministries, there is no single body that consistently coordinates the work of these agencies or engages in long-term strategic planning.

Despite the importance of ICH for cultural identity, educational institutions do not always integrate heritage knowledge into their curricula. As a result, young people do not fully realize the significance of ICH and lack access to the resources needed for its study and practice. Additionally, many of those who possess unique traditional knowledge and skills belong to the older generation, and the transmission of this knowledge to the next generation is often insufficient. Since young people do not always show interest in learning these traditions, important cultural knowledge may be lost forever.

Summary of the Collection of Research Information

In the autumn of 2021, the Aigine Cultural Research Center began collecting data for the documentation of ICH. The process started with an analysis of materials from Aigine's library and archives, which revealed extensive work on documenting social practices, rituals, and knowledge related to nature. Since 2005, the Aigine CRC has conducted projects on sacred sites and rituals, resulting in 14 publications and 15 documentaries used in education. For the first year, 10 publications were entered into the data entry sheets, focusing on the documentation, transmission, and promotion of ICH, with an emphasis on social anthropology, ethnomusicology, and cultural studies. Notably, there were gaps in fields such as traditional sports, medicine, and children's practices, prompting a more inclusive approach in later workshops. From March to November 2022, the Aigine CRC and national partners compiled 70 publications in the data entry sheets, spanning multiple languages, including Kyrgyz, Russian, and English.

A series of national workshops were held to organize the further process of collecting research materials.

First National Workshop (25 November 2021)

The selection process started in October 2021. We purposefully invited the participants from the organizations that actively work on ICH elements. Priority was given to the governmental and non-governmental structures that have produced tangible results on ICH. Based on these criteria, we have selected the following people to participate in the workshop:

1. Altynai Abetekova, head of the PF *Kyrgyz Kayryk* ('Kyrgyz melody'), lecturer at the Kyrgyz National Conservatory named after K. Moldobasanov. The mission of the *Kyrgyz Kayruk* is the dissemination, promotion and revitalization of Kyrgyz traditional musical art;
2. Altynai Kudaibergenova, representative of the Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts named after Gapar Aitiev;
3. Aida Alymova, director of the State Museum of Nomadic Civilizations named after K. Datka;
4. Aisha Sabyrbekova, head of the department on preschool education and statistics at the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic;

5. Nazira Tentigul kyzy, representative of the National Medical Academy, a specialist on Kyrgyz folk medicine;
6. Jumagazy Sadyr uulu, head of Arysh, a community-based self-support organization. One of its goals is the popularization of traditional knowledge among young people;
7. Doolot Rysbaev, member of the PF *Kyiz Duino* ('The Felt World'). The mission of the organization is to spread the traditional knowledge of the Kyrgyz people among the population through the revival, preservation and development of nomadic culture; and
8. Meerim Baigojoeva, member of the PF *Kyiz Duino*.

In addition to the personal invitation, the Aigine CRC made a call through the Aigine Facebook page and website in two local languages, Kyrgyz and Russian. The call perused the goal to inform ICH-related communities and to invite more motivated participants. As a result, the following participants joined the workshop:

1. Saikal Janyshbaeva, member of the PF *Ak Shumkar Kut* ('Blessed by White Falcon'), junior student of the Kyrgyz National University named after J. Balasagyn. The mission of the organization is the preservation and transmission of traditions using modern platforms, styles and approaches;
2. Katycha Aitikeeva, former librarian, currently affiliated with the State Patent and Technical Library; and
3. Meerim Aitikeeva, representative of the National Library of the Kyrgyz Republic.

In the framework of the workshop potential national collaborators were informed about the goals, conditions, and expected results of the project.

Six participants from the first-year workshop expressed the interest to become national collaborators. Altynai Abetekova was replaced by her colleague Aidai Kalmamatova.

These participants formed a network of national collaborators:

1. Aidai Kalmamatova, PF *Kyrgyz Kayryk*;
2. Altynai Kudaibergenova, official of the Kyrgyz National Museum of Fine Arts named after Gapar Aitiev;
3. Katycha Aitikeeva, former official of the State Patent and Technical Library;

4. Aisha Sabyrbekova, official of the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports and Youth Policy of the Kyrgyz Republic;
5. Meerim Aitikeeva, representative of the National Library of the Kyrgyz Republic; and
6. Doolot Rysbaev, member of the PF *Kyiz Duino*.

The training on entering new sources into the database took place during the first national workshop and was moderated by Gulnara Aitpaeva and Aiza Abdyrakhmanova. The participants worked in groups and individually. Each section and column of the data entry sheets was carefully discussed based on concrete research sources.

The workshop participants were interested in the possible expansion of the type of ICH sources acceptable for the database, as well as the possibility of translating the existing IRCI database into other UNECSO languages.

The main method of building the network of national collaborators was to cover as many areas of research on ICH elements as possible. For this reason, it was decided to involve two more national collaborators in the network: philologist Kiyal Tajieva, official from the Kyrgyz Test, who was able to collect research material in the field of literature and traditional oral arts, and Elmira Kochomkulova, Director of the Cultural Heritage and Humanities Unit Graduate School of Development, University of Central Asia, who was able to enter into the data entry sheets her own research materials on traditional music, traditions and rituals.

Both joined collaborators also received training on how to enter publications into the data entry sheets.

Formation of Publication List (second year of the project)

The process of incorporating publications into the database, started by the Aigine Cultural Research Center in the fall of 2021 with the addition of 10 publications, progressed further through collaborative efforts. From early March 2022 to November 2022, Aigine CRC, together with national partners, worked to compile and expand the list of publications to be documented in the data entry sheets.

Aidai Kalmamatova entered 10 publications into the data entry sheets. Altyнай Kudaibergenova contributed 11 papers to the data entry sheets. Kiyal Tajieva described 15 research works in the data entry sheets. Elmira Kochomkulova contributed seven materials to the data entry sheets. Katycha Aitikeeva entered seven publications into

the data entry sheets. Aisha Sabyrbekova contributed seven papers to the data entry sheets. Meerim Aitikeeva described eight materials in the data entry sheets. Doolot Rysbaev contributed five works to the data entry sheets.

The data entry sheets include 70 publications: 38 sources published in Kyrgyz, 18 in Russian, six papers published simultaneously in Kyrgyz and Russian, one in Kyrgyz and English, two in Russian and English, three in English, two in Kyrgyz, English, and Russian.

Analysis of the Collected Information

Of the 80 publications reviewed within the project implementation, nine are dedicated to the study of traditional crafts, including areas such as shyrdak, tushkiyiz, traditional clothing, female headdresses, and applied arts. According to one of our national collaborators, Altynai Kudaibergenova, these researchers often approach ICH through the lens of women's roles, focusing on their contributions to the production of these elements.

A total of 11 publications explore the epic trilogy '*Manas, Semetei, Seitek*'. Kiyal Tazhieva notes that many of these works concentrate on identifying concepts related to political and state structures within the epic. Additionally, in the papers significant attention is given to the education for the younger generation within the epic. Several studies examine '*Manas*' from the perspective of Kyrgyz traditional oratory and the performing arts.

The study of traditional Kyrgyz music is addressed in eleven publications, two of which delve into contemporary challenges within the traditional music education system. Aidai Kalmamatova observes that most of these studies are based on the European musical framework, often overlooking the distinct characteristics of Kyrgyz traditional music and the unique methods of teaching traditional musical instruments (*ustat-shakirt*).

28 works from the data entry sheets focus on the worldview of the Kyrgyz people. In this domain, researchers attempt to decipher the symbolism inherent in various elements of ICH, such as the *Orkhon-Yenisei* runic inscriptions and Kyrgyz mythology.

Seven books are dedicated to the study of traditional ecological knowledge, including areas such as animal husbandry and botany, with one publication focusing specifically on traditional medicine.

Seven sources cover the study and description of traditional games and sports competitions. One of these works aims to describe and restore certain traditional games based on texts from the epic trilogy 'Manas, Semetei, Seitek'.

Three books explore Kyrgyz traditional genealogy, or *sanjyra*. Kiyal Tazhieva points out that although a significant amount of *sanjyra* has been produced over the last 30 years, there remains a noticeable lack of academic research in this area of ICH.

Finally, three publications examine Kyrgyz and regional traditional rituals and social practices, such as weddings and funerals.

Situation and Trend of ICH Research

In the list of 80 publications entered into the database, there is a wide variety of elements related to ICH. These elements reflect the richness and diversity of Kyrgyz ICH elements.

Analysing the collected material, the national partners came to the conclusion that a large number of research materials in the field of traditional fine and applied arts are descriptive. The kind of research that should be most focused on is the study, preservation, and development of traditional decorative and applied arts, the semantics of ornaments and how traditional techniques are being adapted to modern day needs. Researchers in this field need to bring more of the analytical dimension to their future work. Also, the development of fine arts during the Soviet and independence period needs more attention from researchers, as to how it reflects the ideology, beliefs, and decolonization processes.

In the field of studying traditional music and traditional musical instruments, researchers need to focus more on the specifics of Kyrgyz traditional music and the specifics of traditional systems of teaching traditional musical instruments (*ustat-shakirt*).

Issues and Challenges Relating to ICH Research

Certain ICH genres, such as the epic trilogy 'Manas, Semetei, Seitek' or the Kyrgyz worldviews, tend to attract more scholarly attention and interest than others. For instance, while there is a wealth of research dedicated to these prominent cultural narratives, areas such as traditional medicine, games, or festive events receive comparatively less attention. This imbalance highlights the prevailing academic interests, which often centers on more widely recognized or symbolic elements of Kyrgyz culture.

One of the key challenges in incorporating academic papers on cultural heritage into the database is the lack of studies that are directly aligned with the text, principles, or language of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. Many scholarly works focus on crucial aspects of Kyrgyz ICH, such as the epic tradition, spiritual practices, traditional music, and craftsmanship. However, they tend to concentrate on specific cultural elements rather than engaging with the broader framework established by the Convention.

The absence of an academic approach grounded in the ideas and guidelines of the Convention is a significant gap. While there is substantial research on various ICH elements, these works often do not reflect on or incorporate the Convention's content, particularly its emphasis on the safeguarding, promotion, and transmission of ICH. This disconnection between the Convention and existing research presents a challenge for those seeking to align Kyrgyz academic studies with international standards and practices.

While Kyrgyz scholars have produced invaluable research on various aspects of ICH, there is still a need to develop academic directions that are fully engaged with the principles of the 2003 Convention. Such a development would enrich both the academic discourse and the practical efforts to preserve and promote Kyrgyzstan's ICH in alignment with global frameworks.

Among the 80 publications, collected during the project, there are none that analyse the economic aspects of ICH.

All the 80 sources focus on the ICH of the Kyrgyz people. There is no research on the elements of ICH of ethnic groups living in the country. The Aigine CRC, as the coordinating organization, intends to start working with the people who in the future will be able to describe and research the ICH of other peoples of Kyrgyzstan and supplement the existing database.

Use of the Collected Research Information

The research papers in the database are important educational tools that help preserve and teach about the ICH of Kyrgyzstan. These studies are used by students, researchers, and teachers to understand and pass down the traditions and cultural practices of the Kyrgyz people to future generations. The publications focus on recording, sharing, and

promoting elements of ICH and are used in educational programmes to teach about Kyrgyz culture.

The research covers various academic fields, such as social anthropology, ethnomusicology, folklore, ethnology, and cultural studies. These areas offer different ways of studying Kyrgyz culture. For example, in social anthropology, the studies explore how cultural practices, such as traditional crafts and music, reflect the values and organization of Kyrgyz society. Understanding these practices helps us learn about how Kyrgyz people create a sense of belonging and unity through their traditions.

In ethnomusicology and folklore, the research helps us understand the importance of oral traditions, such as the 'Manas' epic, and the role of music in everyday life. These studies make sure that important cultural stories and songs are not forgotten and are taught to the next generation. The epic trilogy 'Manas, Semetei, Seitek' is not just an old story – it is still important today and shapes the identity of the Kyrgyz people.

In ethnology and cultural studies, researchers look at the deeper meanings behind Kyrgyz customs and rituals, such as traditional games or the genealogies known as *sanjyra*. These publications help preserve not only the history, but also the continued importance of these cultural elements in Kyrgyz society today.

By using these research papers in schools and universities, teachers can help students better understand Kyrgyz heritage. These papers help connect the past with the present, allowing young people to learn about their culture in a meaningful way. They also show that culture is not static but evolves over time, making it important to protect and celebrate it.

Beyond schools, these publications are also valuable for government officials, cultural organizations, and heritage workers. The information in these studies helps create cultural policies that support the preservation and promotion of ICH both in Kyrgyzstan and internationally.

Conclusion

During the project, 80 research publications were collected and entered into the database, each focusing on different aspects of Kyrgyzstan's ICH. These studies cover a wide variety of traditions that make up Kyrgyz culture, showing how rich and diverse it

is. Each tradition, whether it is a well-known epic or a lesser-known practice, is important in its own way and plays a key role in Kyrgyz heritage.

Some areas of ICH, such as the famous epic trilogy 'Manas, Semetei, Seitek' or traditional Kyrgyz beliefs and worldviews, attract a lot of attention from researchers. Many studies focus on these topics because they are seen as important symbols of Kyrgyz culture and history. The *Manas* epic, in particular, is highly valued because it represents the nation's identity and has been passed down through generations. The large amount of research on this epic shows how important it is to both the Kyrgyz people and the academic community.

However, while the great epic receives a lot of attention, other important areas of Kyrgyz ICH do not. Topics such as traditional medicine, games, and festivals are studied less. These are also essential parts of Kyrgyz culture, but they do not get the same level of attention from researchers. This creates an imbalance, where some cultural practices are well documented, while others are overlooked. It is important to recognize that all parts of Kyrgyz heritage are valuable, even if some are more commonly studied than others.

The main issue to include academic papers on cultural heritage into the database is that there are no studies that have a direct relationship with the text, spirit and language of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

An academic direction based on the ideas of the 2003 Convention has not been developed yet. Most academic papers (dissertations, etc.) explore important elements of the Kyrgyz intangible heritage, such as the epic heritage, spiritual practices, traditional music or craftsmanship, but they do not touch or reflect on the content of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.

A lot of research focuses on documenting cultural practices, but less attention is given to how these traditions are passed down to future generations. While it is important to record and preserve these practices in writing, it is equally vital to ensure that they continue to be actively practiced and taught. For instance, although there is significant research on Kyrgyz traditional music, much of it relies on European methods, which may not fully capture the traditional ways of Kyrgyz music. An example of efforts to address this gap is a recent project initiated by musicians and teachers from the Beishenalieva Kyrgyz University of Arts, in collaboration with the Aigine Cultural Research Center. Together, they launched a project to study and preserve the traditional Kyrgyz musical

sound known as *Konur*. As part of this project, Cholpon Turumbaeva, a musician and the university's vice-rector, conducted a detailed study on the origins of the Konur sound and the challenges associated with its preservation. Her research paper is currently being prepared for publication in one of the country's scientific journals. Once published, it will be included in the database, contributing to both the documentation and the active transmission of this essential part of Kyrgyz musical heritage.

There are also other aspects of Kyrgyz ICH that do not get much attention from researchers, such as traditional knowledge of nature (e.g., animal care and botany) and social practices (e.g., weddings and funerals). These practices are important to the daily lives of Kyrgyz people and are deeply connected to their identity. However, because researchers tend to focus on more well-known elements of culture, these everyday traditions do not receive the same level of attention. This shows the need for a broader approach to studying Kyrgyz ICH, one that includes both well-known and lesser-known traditions.

The project also found that many books about Kyrgyz ICH do not meet traditional academic standards. These books often rely on stories passed down through generations or on cultural narratives that are not backed by solid historical evidence. As a result, they are not always considered 'scientific' by the academic community. Nevertheless, these books still hold a lot of valuable information about Kyrgyz traditions, politics, and daily life. They provide a more complete picture of how Kyrgyz people experience their culture, and they should not be ignored just because they do not follow typical academic methods.

In conclusion, the 80 publications in the database show both the strengths and the gaps in current research on Kyrgyz ICH. While some cultural elements, such as the *Manas* epic, are well studied, other important topics, such as traditional medicine and festivals, are less explored. More research is needed to cover all aspects of Kyrgyz culture, and there should be an effort to include both academic studies and more narrative-based works to get a full understanding of Kyrgyz ICH.

FINAL REPORT: PHILIPPINES¹

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Introduction

Since Phase 1 of this project, I have collected close to 150 bibliographic entries pertaining to studies, reports, activities, and documentations on intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the Philippines. They range from scholarly, peer-reviewed journal articles written by academics to unpublished reports initiated by culture bearers themselves who wish to document their own ICH. The bulk, however, are academic in context, meaning that they were published, presented at conferences/symposia/workshops, or submitted as graduate papers or theses and dissertations. Though these are the preferred platform of the academic professionals who are the main contributors to this particular project, it is also worth mentioning that a sizable number of ICH-related studies and activities were also done as a form of advocacy and public service.

As can be gleaned from my outputs as one of the *National Counterparts* of this project in the Asia-Pacific region, my network of fellow ICH data researchers has grown and widened, thanks to the guidance and support of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI) to include new institutional collaborators as a sustainable way of gathering information. In addition, the growth of network can also be attributed to tapping into the existing culture of research that we have in the Philippines, where academic activities intersect with extension and public service, thereby creating synergy among those working toward a common goal. Whatever links that may come out of these intersections are faithfully held and maintained by knowledge producers and disseminators who assist each other and enable one another in common projects and advocacies which also makes the atmosphere collegial and friendly. The same can be said at this juncture of ICH research data collection when the said extension and public-oriented network proved to be valuable in delivering relevant bibliographic entries throughout the phases of research data gathering which was implemented through the Covid-19 pandemic.

¹ Collection in the Philippines was implemented during FY 2020–2022.

At the time when most libraries or special collections had temporarily closed or strictly limited public access to their collections as a safety and health protocol, the private libraries and personal collections of individual researchers provided what mainstream libraries could not do so for scholars during the peak of health emergency period. These micro-repositories of ICH literature in the Philippines sustained research data gathering in spite of limitations of movement and physical or face-to-face interactions.

The network I had tapped for the three phases of this project generally was composed of researchers, teachers and professors, writers, media practitioners, and community leaders. Aside from being professionals in their own respective fields, they are advocates for ICH as well. For culture bearers, such advocacy is normally expected of them because ICH is the lifeblood of their community. Nevertheless, even non-culture-bearers involve themselves in the ICH protection and preservation of another group, so ICH serves as the common link between them.

As participants in the research data collection project, my collaborators worked closely with their respective group affiliations, but did maintain a good rapport and relationship with members of their counterpart organization. As I have already expressed in my previous reports and summaries, it is imperative to recognize the role that the ‘culture of research’ plays in the research data gathering, because it is as important as the research topic itself. The internal culture of research facilitates the flow and sharing of knowledge, so it must be well taken into account in any kind of research project, especially when this is coming from an external initiative. I have also found out that ICH-related groups or organizations converge and overlap in terms of memberships, objectives, and activities. Their work mainly revolves around Philippine culture, so naturally, ICH would be an integral part of their programmes and projects. In a way, this facilitated my data gathering because, almost always, there is an ICH component in their efforts.

Data Collection Process

My data set was collected from four institutions as sources and facilitators of information: the first one is my own institutional affiliation—the Department of Anthropology of the University of the Philippines (UP) in Diliman—where I served as chairperson (2020–2023). The second is the Folklore Studies Program (FSP) of the College of Social Sciences and Philosophy of the same university. I used to be the coordinator of this office until 2020, but now it is being headed by Associate Professor

Jesus Federico C. Hernandez. The third is the Aliguyon-U.P. Folklorists, Inc. (A-UPFI), a professional organization of Philippine folklorists. This group, whose members come from all across the country, is led by its current president, Associate Professor Mary Jane B. Rodriguez. The last group is the Timuay Justice and Governance (TJG), an indigenous political system of the Teduray and Lambangian ethnic groups of Western Mindanao in the southern Philippines. For this particular project, the group is represented by Alim Bandara, who himself is a *timuay* (community leader).

Throughout the three phases of this research project, data collection had been quite challenging during the pandemic era because libraries, special collections, and museums belong to the least priority groups in terms of allowing in-person visits, even as the threat of Covid-19 infection started to decline, allowing for more foot traffic in public areas. The said network of scholars and researchers contributed enormously to moving forward this research data gathering primarily because the scholars do have first-hand knowledge of certain ICH materials and also because they themselves had kept copies of their own works and productions. I believe that tapping this network as an approach in research data collection can be effective not only in times of health or emergency crisis, but can also be advantageous at all times.

Similar to my earlier observations, individual scholars, academics, and researchers represent micro-repositories of ICH-related studies and production because they do keep interesting collections, and oftentimes host rare and specialized collections that mainstream libraries sometimes do not have. Indeed, the biggest *Filipiniana* collections (this is the standard term used to refer to all literature and knowledge production about the Philippines) are found in big libraries such as the university and national libraries, yet they do not have everything and in certain cases their collections are not updated. Therefore, it is not surprising that some rare materials, latest productions and publications, and highly specialized literature, whether published or unpublished, sometimes turn up in personal and independent collections of academics, scholars, or even, enthusiasts and advocates. These decentralized knowledge and workspaces serve as special hubs for documentary research on ICH. It is beneficial to treat these unofficial small repositories as a network of knowledge sub-centers in order to maximize their potential and optimize their value in research. What one lacks, another may provide or supplement.

As collectively agreed upon by myself and the identified national collaborators, we prioritized the selection of the group members' own works or research materials

produced, whether published or unpublished, written or in the form of audio-visual material, so that securing permission would not be much of an issue. Moreover, this is also a boost to the profession and the advocacy of the members of the respective organizations and institutions serving as collaborators, because having their own works listed in the international database for ICH does enhance their presence in the Asia-Pacific literature on ICH.

An added lesson in the data collection process, more profoundly observed in Phase 3, is that the network of researchers should not only be circumscribed within the academics' circles, but must go beyond the conventional loci of the academia—if we really hoped to be inclusive and far-reaching in our scope. In particular, upon the encouragement of IRCI, I have nominated a third national collaborator. Associate Professor Rodriguez suggested that I nominate TJG for this position. True to its promise, this group provided a new and interesting set of data that aptly captures the organic efforts 'from the ground' of an IP community. The TJG, which also functions as an indigenous political and governance unit, keeps valuable written and audio-visual resources pertaining to the ICH of their locality—their very own heritage and ancestral domain. Some of their works that they have chosen to contribute to this project have already been published elsewhere, though many are still unpublished initiatives which aim to document their own lifeways, culture and heritage in the hope of preserving for posterity.

The process of data gathering went in this direction:

1. preliminary meetings (combined Zoom and in-person) with national collaborators represented by their leaders or heads of organization to set targets, explain objectives, and discuss the timetable;
2. follow-up meetings with national collaborators (mainly Zoom and supported by mobile phone calls, text and chat) to discuss which type of materials would be included or not. Asynchronous email thread discussions were also kept open and maintained to address frequently asked questions;
3. data being collected properly and encoded into the prescribed excel file;
4. final check of details and submission of the four respective sets of data using the prescribed Excel file; and
5. compilation of the four sets of data into a unified Excel file and official submission.

Challenges and Findings during the Project

Challenges

The biggest challenge, as stated earlier, was that this project was implemented at the height of the pandemic which limited in-person access to large repositories of ICH and *Filipiniana* materials in the Philippines. Especially during Phase 1 of this project (in 2020), libraries, museums and special collections were totally closed. During Phases 2 and 3 (2021 to 2022), in-person room use of library materials was still quite limited. I thus relied mainly on the private and personal collections of individuals who volunteered their own research materials to be included in the ICH list. Eventually, this proved to be not only a creative solution but, more importantly, an effective strategy in ICH research data collection. There are several advantages worth noting: first, the involvement of the authors themselves assured the accuracy of the data, because they are the ones who have first-hand knowledge of their own materials; secondly, permission or consent of the authors or copyright owners is given, because the materials are their own intellectual production; and thirdly, compliance is monitored, because authors are part of the said network that aided the research data collection itself. At the end of Phase 3, the data collected even exceeded the target number to be submitted. The logistical support of IRCI in this respect was also crucial, because it facilitated and supported the gathering and processing of information among us involved in the project.

The next challenge was how to firm up ties among the collaborators who were part of the network. As the focal person coordinating this project in the Philippines, I called for special meetings with the national collaborators (Zoom or in-person, whichever was possible), attended their organization's meetings, and checked them out once in a while so that I could explain the details of the database research project, go over the objectives, and follow up on their progress. Fortunately, my collaborators supported the vision of this project, which made my task a bit lighter. From time to time, I gave out reminders and answered the frequently asked questions, especially concerning how to properly process the data being collected. It also helped a lot that we enlisted the assistance of data encoders to take care of technical issues with respect to the prescribed Excel file.

Findings

Below is a brief analysis of the findings based on the data collected throughout the three years of implementation of this project in the Philippines:

- *Category of Research Dissemination*

As published and unpublished materials: The majority of the ICH materials collected for the international database were generally published written materials. Most of them went through a refereeing process or had received some critiquing, since they had also been presented in academic conferences or symposia. For the unpublished written outputs, most of them had been discussed in a collegial body or reported in an official or formal venue, so we can be assured of the quality of the materials. The published materials, if they ever appeared as online articles, are available and viewable on their respective online portals. But as conventional printed books, journals, magazines or newsletters, they have to be accessed through bookstores, libraries, non-governmental organizations' (NGOs) special collections, or inquired about in private collections. If the entry was unpublished, such as graduate theses and dissertations, there was no other way but to locate and request them through the authors themselves.

As audio-visual materials: Though still a minority compared to written materials, Phases 2 and 3 of this project saw more audio-visual materials selected for the IRCI database. They were usually uploaded to YouTube, which makes them available for anyone who uses the internet. I believe that this is the way to go in ICH research data collection, as there are many more audio-visual materials out there that could be gathered. Personalized YouTube channels have also been hosting a number of audio-visual productions because of the desire of the ICH knowledge producers to make their works available and accessible to a wider audience, aside from the fact that it is free of charge. Even mainstream media, which also contributes to ICH promotion and preservation in the Philippines, upload their productions to YouTube as online content.

As online materials: An interesting insight that came out from the data gathering is that ICH research materials have been increasingly improving their presence online. As stated above, they appear as online content or materials publicly available for anyone who has access to the internet. They may be in the form of online articles, news features, photographic images, or audio-visual materials. Sometimes, they are uploaded to open-access, community online file-sharing platforms. In other cases, they have their own portal for which one has to pay a certain amount in order to view, read or access specific content. I prioritized those that are open access, free, and publicly available.

I observed an ongoing trend: it is not unusual nowadays to see ICH print publications uploaded to online file-sharing websites. Oftentimes, the authors themselves create an electronic copy of their own articles or books and voluntarily share them with their

colleagues and networks. This is also a good reason why data gathering was still able to move forward, even though in-person access to libraries was quite difficult during the height of the pandemic. Another development is that established publishers and academic book companies have now begun to publish books and periodicals in both print and online versions, which offer an additional option for the reading public. However, the majority of ICH materials on the Philippines have appeared in print versions, so it will take quite a while before most of them would have online versions as well. Nevertheless, I can say that the trend is going in that direction.

- *Research Focus and ICH Genres*

Almost all identified ICH genres have been covered in the data collection: Throughout the three phases of the project, almost all ICH genres have been added in the data gathering process. Oral tradition, rituals, social practices, ecological knowledge and practices, worldview, traditional medicine, and traditional craftsmanship comprise the majority of the data collection. Geographically, the representation is more or less balanced, as they represent areas in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao—the three major geographic regions in the Philippines. Ethnically, the collection is also spread out across the country, but of course there are a lot more ethnic groups not yet included in the collection that can very well be included in future lists.

A few ICH genres were not fully represented in the collection. Quite a few ICH genres were not fully represented in the collection and needed some consideration. Specifically, they were sports/games, food culture, and performing arts. Though the Philippines is not lacking in terms of studies and documentations around these lines, it seemed that they were not the usual topics tackled by the participants of this particular research data gathering group. The majority of my national collaborators, as well as my own department, fall under the disciplines of anthropology, Philippines studies, social sciences, social science education, and the humanities, so there was less data collected from the performing arts and embodied social practices, which are in themselves a potential goldmine of ICH research data. Moreover, it is also possible that available research grants or funding support, as well as current advocacy, did not include these topics in their preferred themes or topics, so there was not enough push or incentive to increase activities or studies around the said subjects.

- *ICH trend in the Philippines*

The results cannot provide a conclusive statement about the ICH trend in the Philippines, but they certainly showed a glimpse of the landscape of ICH research data over the past

four decades, from the 1980s to the present. This period was crucial in terms of ICH production, because it contrasts quite strikingly with the preceding era of cultural research activities in the country. The collection project certainly provides a view of ICH research from a historical standpoint.

In terms of selecting topics to study or document, the last four decades saw a more inclusive scope attempting to close the gap in research between the major ethnolinguistic groups and the least studied ethnicities in the country. This was particularly true in recent years as more research was geared toward elucidating ICH in marginalized ethnic communities in Luzon, Visayas, and Mindanao. Regarding methodology, newer researchers valorize cooperation and co-production of knowledge with the culture bearers, making the research endeavor a collaborative one benefitting both the academia and the community. The agenda definitely shifted from ‘for knowledge’s sake’ or ‘purely academic’ projects to ‘applied’ and ‘agenda-based’ research, where the objective is to empower the ethnic groups through their own cultural resources and not just to be an exclusive scholarly pursuit of academic researchers. An example of a new trend that only came out in recent years is the incorporation of disaster risk reduction and management as a research focus, something that one did not normally see on the agenda in the previous era. The idea is to incorporate the sustainability of ICH into research by safeguarding it from all kinds of risks, including macro-environmental risks caused by climate change and risks caused by human factors such as the depletion and pollution of the natural environment in which ICH is anchored. Another trend is the focus on heritage (both intangible and tangible) management, which indicates a growing awareness not only in elucidating the knowledge of heritage but also in managing it professionally, systematically, and ethically. The point here is to communicate the importance of heritage to various stakeholders, and this needs organizational structure, management skills, and knowledge of the societal and political processes that impact heritage itself.

On the other hand, most of the 20th century until the 1970s was distinguished by the premium that ICH had given to basic research, meaning that the focus and objectives were more on raw documentation and translation, extended fieldwork among the major Philippine ethnicities, and the primacy of written records, all of which served as foundational studies on Philippine ICH. This period was dominated by leading figures of authority—academic elites and well-known scholars on the subject—whose outputs logically came out as conference papers and publicly disseminated as printed scholarly articles or books published by academic presses.

There is certainly more work to be done in assessing ICH research during this long stretch of time prior to the 1980s, but I believe that the former differs considerably from the latter. The early to mid-20th century (we can throw in the late 19th century for greater depth) is in itself a pivotal point in Philippine ICH research because it served as the bedrock of the ICH research activities in the late 20th century up to the beginning of the early 21st century. Much has been done recently in terms of ICH studies, preservation, and promotion, but they undoubtedly benefitted from the achievements of the previous generations of scholars who opened new pathways for research. We learned a lot from the earlier and pioneering cultural workers, including both their successes and their shortcomings as scholars, academics, researchers, and heritage/cultural advocates.

If there would be a continuation of this ICH research data gathering project, I propose that it be stretched back in time to include those produced during the latter part of Spanish colonialism (late 19th century) to the American colonial regime (early to mid-19th century) in the Philippines, and the pioneering knowledge productions by Filipino researchers in the early decades after World War II. Another suggestion: research data collection targets be equally distributed. We can certainly learn a lot from what they study, how they do research, why they do it, and how they think as researchers.

Promoting ICH safeguarding in the Philippines

I have been inspired by this project to explore the possibility of a Philippine-version of ICH Research Database. I believe that this would be in line with the IRCI agenda of safeguarding and preserving ICH in the Asia-Pacific region by mapping the existing literature on ICH through an effective and sustainable research data collection. Though the IRCI-initiated project captures the big picture of ICH data in the Philippines as its humble contribution to the Asia-Pacific regional database, it would be fruitful to continue this at the national level as there are a lot more data to be harvested, so to speak, and many more cultural and heritage workers who could be drawn into to this worthy project especially those coming from the grassroots level.

Indeed, the existing networking among the national collaborators, with me as the national counterpart, supplied the target number of entries for the IRCI international research database, but I firmly believe that with a contextualized national database, the data could be tailored-fit to the Philippine situation. Offhand, I can think of two possibilities: one, providing a historical perspective as an additional layer in the research data collection, meaning that the collecting methodology would incorporate a so-called

periodization of ICH research data over the years beginning from the late 19th century (because this is the period when ICH studies began to be systematized and professionalized); two, a broader national collaborators' network tapping local cultural leaders and foremost community heritage workers who are working 'on the ground' and have first-hand knowledge of the situation of ICH. It was done in Phase 3 and it generated excellent research data. By going grassroots, we can achieve more positive things for the Philippine ICH research data collection.

From what I have observed in the Philippine ICH research landscape, Philippine researchers do not distinguish between intangible and tangible heritage. They are, in most cases, integrated and intertwined so that ICH is a holistic subject matter that must also be captured in the design of the database.

Role of National Collaborators

I have emphasized in the previous reports the crucial role that the national collaborators have played, not only in working toward the successful completion of the project, but more importantly in the promotion of the idea that ICH data is something worth preserving, archiving, systematizing, and making accessible to the researchers and the general public. With the encouragement and motivation that they themselves can nominate or select their own works for the inclusion in the research database, the national collaborators had actively and willingly participated in the selection of the ICH data from the Philippines. This strategy proved to be very effective, not only because the data collection part becomes a little less intimidating, but also because the analysis of the details is more or less accurate and verified by the authors/creators/producers themselves. Third-person analysis, meaning that the collector is the one supplying the analysis on the ICH research data, is minimized as priority is given to the authors/creators/producers of ICH knowledge to submit bibliographic titles and information and to process the data entries for incorporation into the database.

Interestingly, because of this project, the national collaborators were compelled, in a good way, to search for literature/bibliographic entries on ICH that they themselves had authored or initiated. The project somehow paved the way for *eureka* moments when the national collaborators did remember an article, chapter, book, news article/feature, audio-visual material, report, photo-documentation/essay, etc. that can be nominated or included in the Philippine contribution to the IRCI Research Database.

Even without an institutional push or logistic incentive, there is no doubt that ICH knowledge production will still proceed and continue to grow in the Philippines, but it is another matter to systematically organize, archive, and collect research data in a functioning and publicly accessible database to be shared free of charge with interested researchers. A research database is not knowledge production *per se*, but it is integral to knowledge production because it maps the production of ideas. In doing so, vital and crucial knowledge production is preserved and safeguarded.

Downloading of the actual ICH material is another matter and may be the subject of copyright and editorial policies, but just to put them all together as a unified list is already a tremendous feat. After all, with the aid of a centralized database gathered collectively by stakeholders, interested scholars and legitimate researchers can go after these titles and download/copy them with the permission or consent of the authors. Nevertheless, they can just access, view, or read them in libraries and special collections as these basic details are already included in the database. Much like a road map, the database guides the researchers concerned where to go and how to go about it, which ultimately leads directly to the source.

Finally, any database building project would not be successful without the support of the collaborators, who are themselves one of the main stakeholders of this cause. I throw my support behind any initiative, assistance, funding that may be given to the stakeholders as collaborators, because they really are the lifeblood of any database and research data collecting project. Again, a third-person collecting strategy (like going to a library and listing down all possible entries) would still work, but it would not be as effective or as in-depth as collecting with stakeholders themselves as collaborators.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I would like to turn our attention back to the challenges brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic. While this global health emergency undoubtedly put a strain on our usual academic routines and scholarly pursuits, it has also opened new windows of possibilities on how to go about our research, studies, and advocacy with or without an international emergency. The IRCI-led regional research database project is commendable as it courageously tackled logistical challenges throughout the height of the pandemic, which at the time of writing is not over yet. Definitely, the centralized research database can still be improved and tailored to the context of the nation, say the Philippines, where there is a distinctive culture of research. The details in the

database can also be reworked or reoriented to suit the needs and situation of the country in question through some kind of collective and participatory design of the database.

As a final thought, ICH will sprout everywhere and at various times with or without a centralized research database. But a functioning, comprehensive and collectively designed database will not only sustain the research efforts, but more importantly, will include grassroots ICH research endeavors in the national research landscape as a contribution to the international and regional ICH. This, in fact, may be considered the fruition of a partnership and cooperation among all stakeholders of Philippine ICH making them co-producers, co-owners and co-beneficiaries of the research data collection system.

Data Collection in FY 2022–2024

FINAL REPORT: KAZAKHSTAN

Rustam Muzafarov

Vice-Chairman, Kazakhstan ICH National Committee

Introduction

The intangible cultural heritage of the people of the Republic of Kazakhstan is the most important component of the national culture, the basis of national identity. It strengthens the spiritual link between generations and plays a key role in the cultural development of Kazakhstan. Kazakhstan acceded to the 2003 UNESCO Convention on 21 December 2011. The parliament act on it was further supported by the Conception of the Safeguarding and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Kazakhstan (adopted by the Government of Kazakhstan in April 2013), the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Culture' (originally adopted on 15 December 2006 and further subsequently revised), and the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Safeguarding and Use of the Objects of the Historical and Cultural Heritage' (adopted on 26 December 2019).

The national legislation designated the Ministry of Culture and Information for coordination of the safeguarding and promotion of the intangible cultural heritage. These activities should be conducted with the National Commission for UNESCO and ICESCO, as well as the Kazakhstan National Committee for the Intangible Cultural Heritage. The Ministry provides the activities for safeguarding and promotion of the ICH elements, monitors the status of the elements inscribed in the National List, manages the training of ICH specialists, and prepares and submits the reports to UNESCO. The Ministry takes care of the procedures of inscribing in the National ICH List and its appropriate updates. The National Commission for UNESCO and ICESCO coordinates the nominations to the global lists and facilitates the involvement of international and national experts for the adequate implementation of the Convention. The National ICH Committee provides expert recommendations on the good practices of other countries in Convention implementation and reviews the nominations to the National List and global lists. It is also responsible for wider involvement of the ICH bearers, practitioners and communities in safeguarding, promotion and skill transfer.

The National Commission, in cooperation with partners from governmental institutions, creative communities and NGOs, considers participatory safeguarding efforts of ICH by

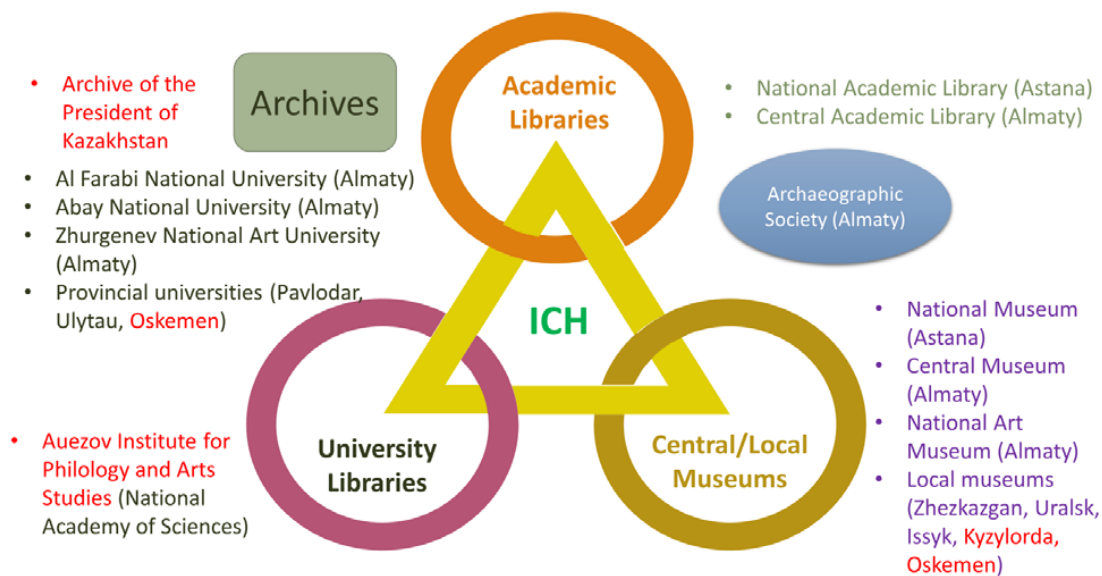
practitioners as well as by public and private stakeholders. The Ministry of Culture and Information implements the respective safeguarding measures in partnership with the communities, groups and individuals concerned. The procedure for national inventory inscription has recently been revised and currently the updated National List includes 79 elements. The Government has raised awareness of the importance of intangible cultural heritage through the national projects such as ‘Tugan Zher’ (special curriculum and textbooks on the local cultural heritage ‘Olketanu’), ‘Sacral Sites of Kazakhstan’, which introduced more than 200 national sacred sites and about 580 local sites known for traditions and rituals to Kazakh citizens. There were some initiatives on promoting the skills of artisans and craftsmen, as well as some fiscal motivations.

Summary of the Collection of Research Information

In March 2022, IRCI set the geographical focus of the project to Central/Inner Asia and Small Island Developing States (SIDS), because research information in these regions is still limited in the IRCI Research Database. By making the research information related to ICH in these regions available in the IRCI Research Database, it is expected that ICH research will be further promoted to contribute to ICH safeguarding in the region, while enhancing opportunities for inter-institutional collaboration both nationally and internationally.

The Kazakhstan ICH National Committee has joined this project in order to: (1) contribute to the IRCI Research Database with academic publications, study reports and other published sources to improve the knowledge of Kazakhstan’s cultural heritage for experts and academic researchers from other parts of the world; and (2) define the ways to improve the skills of Kazakhstan experts in design, methodology applications and performance evaluation of ICH studies.

The core project team was composed of the selected members of the National ICH Committee and experts who had the justified expertise on ICH academic research, UNESCO ICH projects and academic publications. The team had been requested to provide the brief bibliography on the various areas of the ICH inventorying, documenting and safeguarding. After linking the lists, it was sorted to consider the frequency of the records. Citation by three or more experts was considered to be a ‘green-light’ criterion and added to the final list.



The Archaeographic Society of Kazakhstan (chaired by Prof. Meruert Abusseitova, Institute of the Oriental Studies) added to the list the editions considered fundamental for the history and ethnography of Kazakhstan. This resulted in the final bibliographic list of 150 records, including books, book sections, academic articles, theses and web-articles. These records were formatted for the IRCI database in accordance with the project guidelines for each fiscal year.

The project team invited the cooperation of the local libraries in the provinces and also the libraries of the provincial universities in order to assist them in improving the cataloging of the local publications, both academic and oriented to the general public, on the elements and domains of the Convention. However, this proposal received response from a limited number of local libraries. The reasons included the limited number of trained staff and the lack of training on the 2003 Convention. The project team has reconsidered its approach and plans to apply it in five pilot areas next year with the support of the Ministry of Culture and Information and provincial universities.

Analysis of the Collected Information

Publication categories include the following: journal article; thesis/dissertation; book and book section/chapter; proceedings and others (e.g., website blogs, newspapers, etc.).

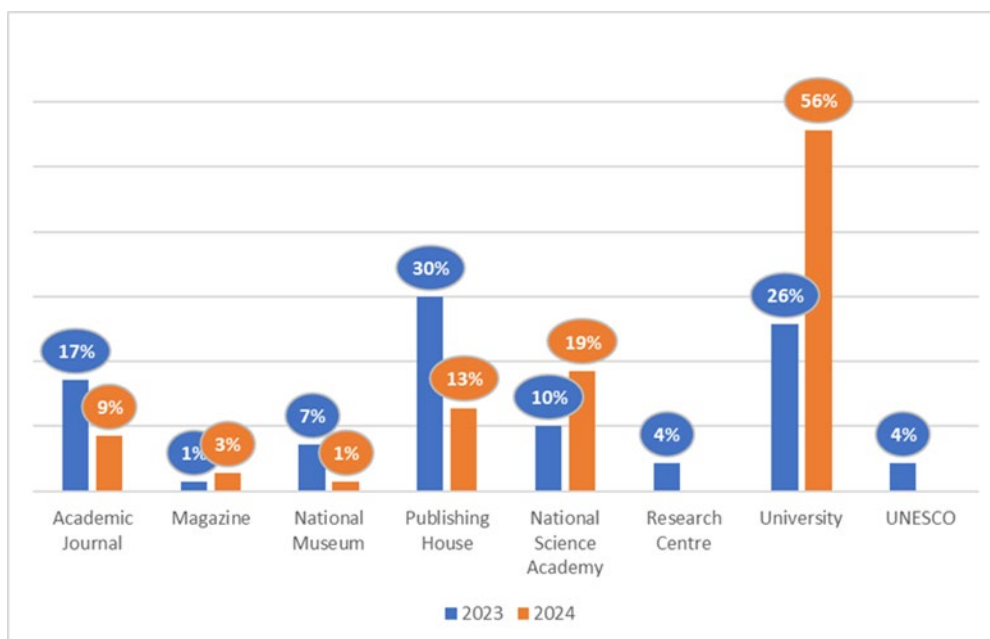


Figure 1: Publishing House Category

The project period coincided with several inscriptions of Kazakh ICH elements in the Representative List, and there was a visible increase of scholars' interest in ICH definition and management issues. This resulted in academic interest and articles published not only by national and local universities (56% in 2024), but also by research institutes of the National Academy of Science (19%) and independent academic journals (9%).

The publications were also analysed by country of publication and language of publication. Eventually, Kazakhstan and Kazakh language were prevailing (Figures 2 and 3), but it demonstrated a visible rise in academic interest in ICH studies and publication of scholars' findings and observations (compared to the situation in 1992–2000). The 13% decrease in articles published in Kazakhstan (and the related decrease of publications in Kazakh language in 2024), contrary to the increase of publications in Central Asian countries and Europe, can be explained by: (1) the growth of interest in academic publications on Kazakh ICH; and (2) the interest of Kazakh scholars to have publications in SCOPUS valued journals.

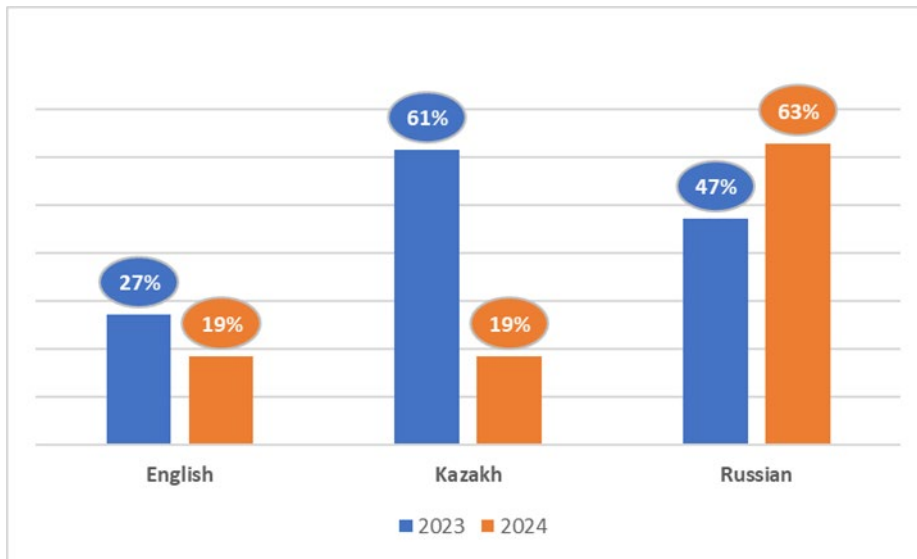


Figure 2: Languages of Publications

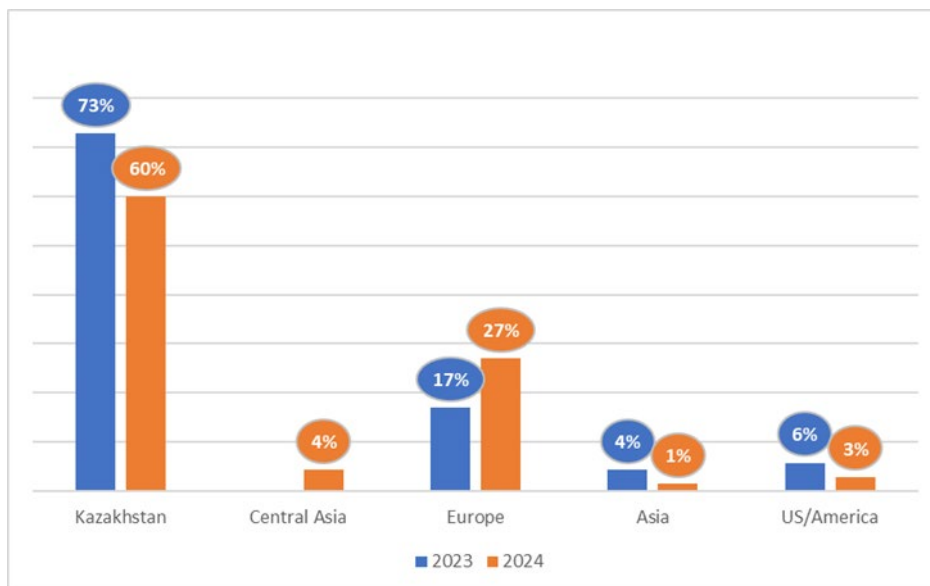


Figure 3: Publishing Location (country)

Situation and Trend of ICH Research

There is a visible positive change in several ICH domains and research directions (Figures 4 and 5). Paradoxically, it is not linked to the 2003 Convention. The academics who conducted the research sometimes have very little knowledge about the ICH definition and its inventory and documentation specificity. Hence, there is a visible increase in proportion of academic publications devoted to national sports and games, martial arts,

and national costumes. Probably, this was inspired by the establishment of the International Ethnosport Federation and the fashionable conducting of the World Nomadic Games. The IRCI project itself played a catalytic role in boosting interest in ongoing academic studies and its coverage in academic publications. The increase of articles in English language in local and Central Asian scientific journals demonstrates the wish of Kazakhs scholars to share their findings and considerations.

The study demonstrated a visible need for ICH identification (87%/74%), definition (70%/51%), and documentation (74%). For the 3rd year of the project, there was a clear interest in ICH promotion (33%), transmission (34%), and revitalization (50%). Awareness-raising was also visible, as it dropped from 80% to 7% due to wide interest and public ICH campaigns.

The ICH genre preferences included: social practices (69%), rituals (31%), worldview (30%), oral tradition (29%), and festive events (27%) (Figure 5).

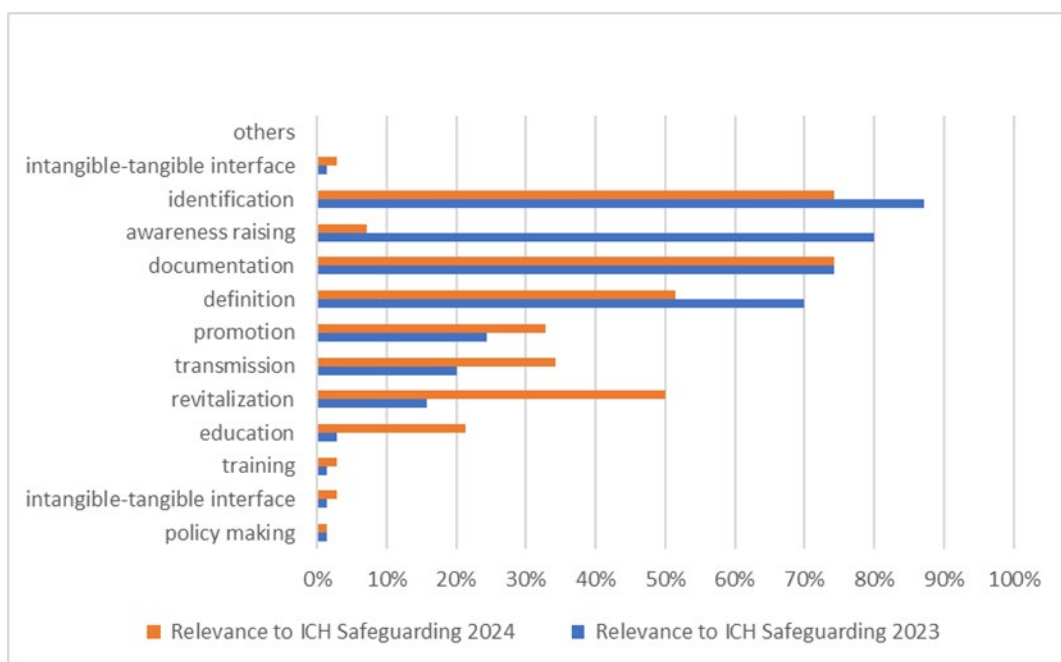


Figure 4: Relevance to ICH Safeguarding

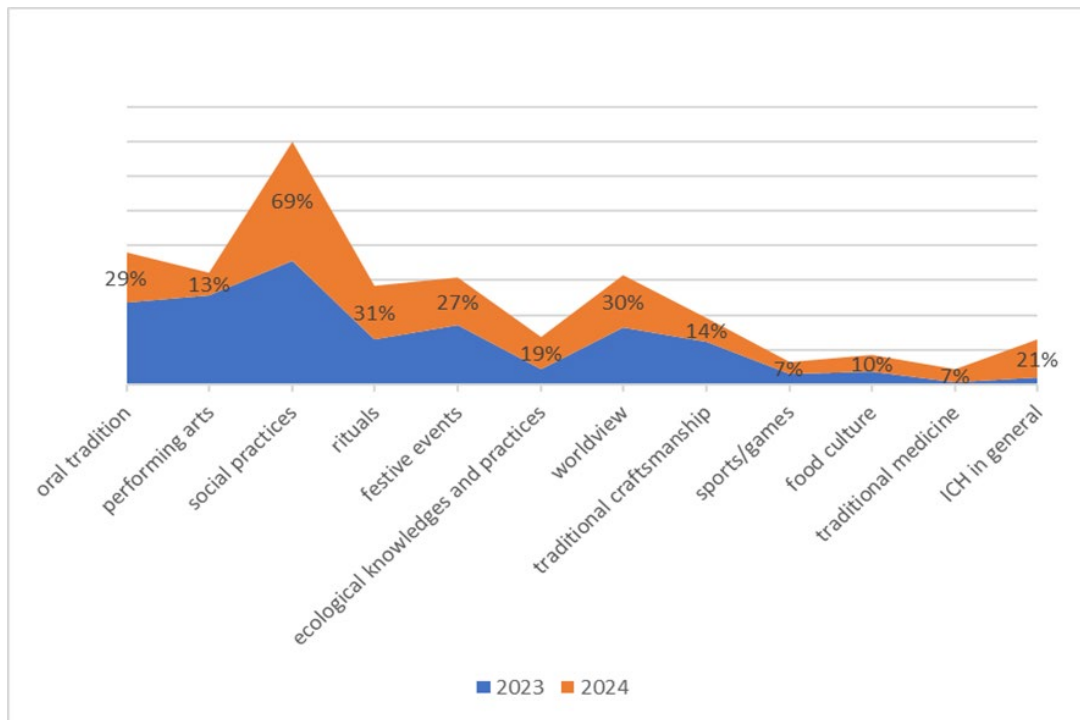


Figure 5: ICH Genre

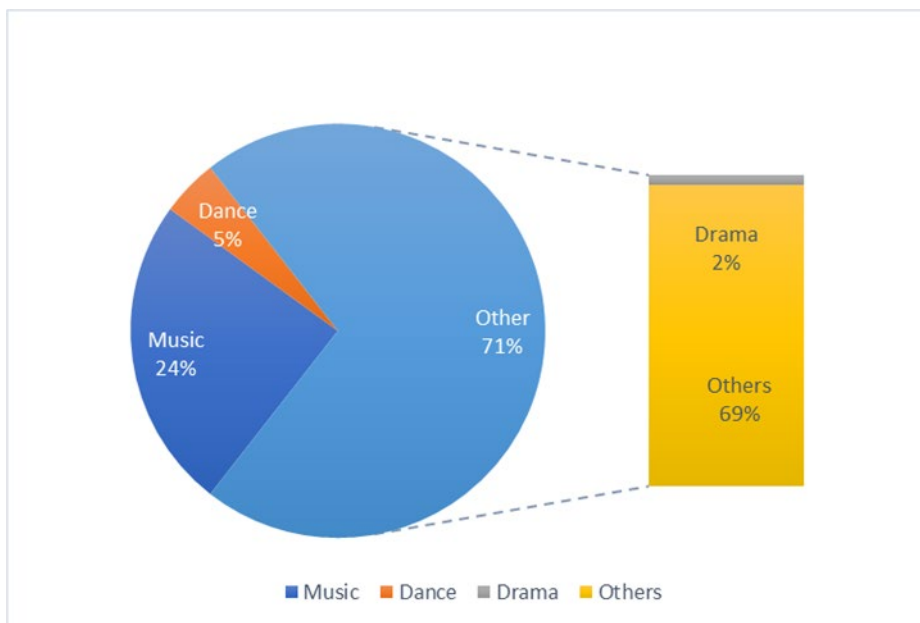


Figure 6: Types of Performing Art

However, sometimes it was not possible to indicate the types of performing arts or crafts art specific to Turkic nomadic culture. Some of them, such as epic performance, remained in the 'Others' category (71%) (Figure 6).

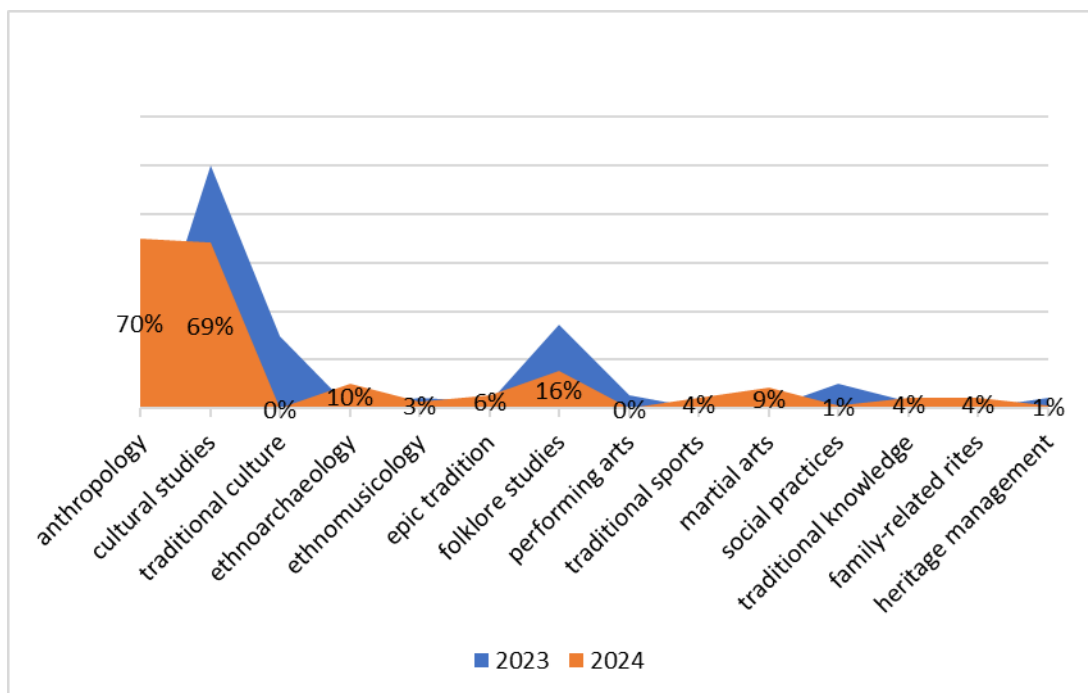


Figure 7: ICH Academic Field

The analysis of the fields of academic studies (Figure 7) revealed the remaining prevalence of anthropology (70%) and cultural studies (69%). Ethnoarchaeology (10%) provided some valuable inputs to the historical development of ICH. The new fields were: traditional sports (4%), martial arts (9%), and family-related rites (4%).

While the tendencies are becoming more visible, there are not yet available statistics on changes in the number and quality of ICH-related articles and books, especially between before and after the ratification of the 2003 Convention, academic disciplines and approaches, relevance to ICH safeguarding, etc.

Issues and Challenges Relating to ICH Research

The use of nomadic oral tradition is a distinctive and essential element in many fields of Oriental studies: history must acknowledge it; literature sees it as the medium for much of the indigenous creative endeavor across cultures; anthropology and its cousin disciplines rely on oral information for their understanding of traditional societies. An appreciation of the value of oral tradition as a source across disciplines involves two efforts: first, a survey of the reported oral tradition as available and documented in past periods; and second, a review of the principles and practices involved in the collection, analysis, and presentation of oral tradition.



Figure 8: Challenges in ICH Safeguarding and Research at Local Level

In fact, a lot of research is unaware of the ICH domains and some specific approaches to their inventory and documentation. Academic fields are not yet associated with ICH research and there is not yet any follow-up from the research to safeguarding ICH. The Ministry of Science and Higher Education and the universities still are not in favour of folklore studies, including oral heritage, which itself is recognized as the major component of nomadic ICH.

Use of the Collected Research Information

The collected research information was discussed at the workshops and conferences (see next section) and presented at expert discussions.

Promotion of ICH Studies and Research at Workshops and Conferences

Scientists from the Department of Folklore at the Rudaki Institute of Language and Literature have decided to compile the 5th volume of 'Bibliography of Tajik Folklore' in the future (four volumes have already been published). The bibliographic information we collected can also serve as a reliable source for them.

- *Kazakhstan Intangible Cultural Heritage: Perspectives of Gaining New Academic Knowledge using the Accumulated Bibliographic and Museum Collections (National Webinars for Librarians and Academic Researchers on 26 June 2023 and 16 October 2023, Almaty, Kazakhstan)*

The National Webinars aimed to review the visibility of local forms and manifestations of ICH and its reflection in local history and academic publications. In addition, the participants discussed the perspectives of the creation of a common online database linked to the existing local libraries and museums collections. The webinars gathered

about 145 in-person and online participants from Kazakhstan's provinces (80 in June and 65 in October) to support the 20th anniversary of the 2003 Convention.

Safeguarding of the cultural heritage is one of the main functions of modern public libraries, especially when they are located at the provincial level. This means that public libraries should not only record, keep, describe, and present cultural heritage, but also provide local history documents and cultural artifacts for public use. The study of local history sources and materials is one of the libraries' important functions. The status of the bibliographic catalogues normally determines the efficiency of librarians in providing the required bibliographic records on local history and development to their users. Local libraries and museums keep the main collections of historical knowledge of literary sources on the given areas, traditional knowledge bearers, outlook of people, traditional skills, etc. Sustainable development cannot be ensured if the authorities ignore the tangible and intangible cultural environment traditionally promoted by local communities.

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (2003) emphasizes that 'intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation, is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity'.

- *IV International Conference: Philosophical understanding of the phenomenon of the intangible cultural heritage of Central Asia (20–21 September 2023, Almaty, Kazakhstan)*

The conference gathered about 110 in-person and online participants from Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Türkiye, Uzbekistan, Iran, Japan, Russia, Republic of Korea, and France to support the 20th anniversary of the 2003 Convention. The aim of the conference was to present analytical and research initiatives for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of intangible cultural heritage, including ideas and knowledge systems that have influenced the development of societies and the rapprochement of cultures in Central Asia. This initiative would lay the foundation for subsequent global discussions on the conceptual expansion of the boundaries of intangible cultural heritage and for information campaigns that will promote educational activities with the participation of scientists, public figures, cultural figures, diplomats, etc. The conference aimed to encourage an in-depth study of the history of

ideas and knowledge systems that had a significant impact on the formation of conscious interdependence between societies and cultures of Central Asia and contributed to their development, as well as to assess the study of the intangible cultural heritage of the region at the present stage and explore ways to improve and increase it. The conference includes discussions about the prospects of updating culturally and socially significant ideas and knowledge systems for the progressive solution of new global challenges of our time, the formation of open and creative societies based on knowledge.

The conference included three main sessions:

I. Cultural heritage of knowledge: from social teachings to social transformations

The session is devoted to understanding the influence of ideas and knowledge systems on social processes of the XX–XXI centuries, as well as their contextualization in the field of intangible cultural heritage. Within the framework of the session, it is proposed to explore the issues of the historical and cultural picture of the world of the societies of Central Asia.

II. The phenomenon of the cultural heritage of the Kazakhs in Central Asia: local and universal

The session is devoted to the transformation of paradigms of nomadic and sedentary cultures in a civilizational context - from a local branch of Eurasian culture to the steppe civilization of the Kazakhs - on the example of life support and ecophilosophy (housing, cattle breeding, hunting, military affairs, traditional medicine, public education, art objects, rites and rituals).

III. The living treasure of the Kazakh steppe civilization: status and prospects

The session considers reports on the status of individual elements of the intangible cultural heritage included in the National List. Information is provided on the actual manifestation of the element, carrier communities, shape changes over time, and scientific judgments made on measures to support, protect, train and develop.

The programme also included a seminar for the provincial cultural authorities, local history museums, and provincial libraries on documenting and identifying ICH elements in accordance with the latest decision of the General Assembly and the Intergovernmental Committee.

- *The Ancient Turkic Calendar and its Reflection in the World Outlook of the Peoples of Central Asia: International Webinar (14 March 2024, Almaty, Kazakhstan)*

The national webinar was conducted in online/offline mode and discussed the duodecimal cycle of the Turkic calendar and its role in man-nature interaction in Turkic nomadic and sedentary societies. The national webinar aimed to: (1) discuss the role and value of the duodecimal cycle of the Turkic calendar and its reflection in Kazakh folklore, such as the samples of the oral heritage. These samples include the sayings and judgements of known mythologic persons; description of the common life situations, and human behavior related to the calendar cycle; (2) modern estimation of the Turkic calendar from the astronomical, ethnographic and social anthropological approaches. The main presentation was made by the Auezov Institute of Literature and Art of Kazakhstan, and then the panelists from Turkey, Mongolia, Azerbaijan and Iran shared their views and research opinions on the main aspects of the key presentation.

- *The Era of the Golden Horde and the Song of Heroes: International Webinar (22 May 2024, Almaty, Kazakhstan)*

This workshop gathered 63 participants from Central Asian countries, Azerbaijan, Turkey, Tatarstan, and Yakutia-Sakha in Russia. The panelists discussed the role of oral epic heritage in safeguarding Turkic ICH and agreed on the need for further cooperation in studying it. There was also a proposal to consider designing and submitting to UNESCO a multinational nomination on Alpamys epics, shared by Kazakhs, Tatars, Bashkirs, Kalmyks, Turks, and Azeris.

- *The International Conference on the Spiritual Heritage of Turkic Peoples in the World Civilization Context: The Epic 'Alpamys Batyr' (17–18 October 2024, Almaty, Kazakhstan).*

The conference was organized by the National Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan for UNESCO and ISESCO, the Turkic Culture and Heritage Foundation, the National Committee of the Republic of Kazakhstan for Intangible Cultural Heritage, and the Mukhtar Auezov Institute of Arts and Literature.

Ms. Zhanar Shaimenova, Secretary-General of the National Commission of the Republic of Kazakhstan for UNESCO and ISESCO, congratulated the participants on the first anniversary of the International Intangible Cultural Heritage Day.

Mrs. Aqtoty Raimkulova, President of the Foundation for Turkic Culture and Heritage, emphasized that the epic Alpamys Batyr, the classic heroic epics of the Turkic world, is

a part of the shared cultural heritage of the Turkic peoples. It describes the traditions, knowledge, and worldview of ancient nomads. The epic became a national pride, and it is important for strengthening the national consciousness of the younger generation and safeguarding the identity and unity of the Turkic peoples.

Within the framework of the conference, the Foundation for Turkic Culture and Heritage and the Mukhtar Auezov Institute of Literature and Arts presented the new edition of the epic 'Alpamys Batyr' in Kazakh, English, and Russian languages.

Almost 100 academicians, linguists and folklore researchers, and bearers (storytellers and musicians) from Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Turkey, Uzbekistan, Mongolia, and the Russian Federation (Ufa, Kazan, Novosibirsk) took an active part in the discussions and elaborations.

Within the framework of this conference, the first meeting of the international expert group was held to draft a multinational nomination for the epic 'Alpamys batyr' for inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

Next Steps

The ICH Intergovernmental Committee has supported the request of the Kazakhstan ICH Committee to conduct a special project for 2025–2026 in five regions of Kazakhstan to ensure inventory of ICH elements and ICH bearers in rural areas, and capacity building of local history museums and libraries. The ICH Committee plans to involve local universities in the project to benefit from their library resources and guide the scholars in the main trends of ICH academic studies.

Conclusion

Even though it was a small study and not guided by a specific methodology, the collection of records revealed some positive and negative issues. First, it helped to justify the increased amount of various academic publication on Kazakhstan ICH after 1986–1987, with the considerable number of them after 2014. The proportion of Kazakh experts and research is large and compatible to a half of the publications, while in 1950–1970 this proportion was quite low. Since 2015, there has been a visible trend of publications in Kazakh and English languages, although the quality of translation varies. Academic publications match the areas of ethnology, traditional culture, rites and social

practices, crafts making, anthropology, folklore, ethnomusicology and some others. However, there is a visible lack of publications on ICH inventory, documentation, safeguarding measures, national or local law, and policy making.

The collection of records demonstrated the lack of local expertise in methodological design and implementation of academic surveys in the mandatory area of the 2003 Convention. It was useful to get information from IRCI staff and its online database. However, there is still a definite need to train university experts (history faculties) and librarians on the content of the 2003 Convention and to improve the performance of ICH academic research.

There is also an urgent need to process the bulk amount of research data and academic publications in the ICH fields. For now, it is stored in the central academic and university libraries under different sections dealing with ethnography, traditional culture, local history, folklore, etc. This creates a certain obstacle for researchers searching for specific publications. Also, it makes access almost impossible if the publication is in Kazakh language and there is no English or Russian abstract in a catalogue.

These issues were discussed with the IRCI leadership and responsible researchers, and there was an understanding and wish to consider what can be done. The National ICH Committee, in its turn, has discussed the findings with its partners: Central Academic Library of the National Academy of Sciences, Central Archive of Kazakhstan, the libraries of the Al Farabi Kazakh National university and Abai National Teachers University (both libraries have the unique collection of the academic publications in Kazakh history and culture), and the libraries of two provincial universities - in Pavlodar and Ulytau. The project proposal was submitted to IRCI for consideration in 2023.

Finally, the Kazakhstan National ICH Committee would like to express its gratitude to IRCI for the opportunity to learn about global dimensions of ICH academic studies and to add selected Kazakhstan academic publication to the IRCI online database. Kazakhstan National ICH Committee would appreciate the possibility to continue the next stage of the IRCI project.

FINAL REPORT: MONGOLIA

Altansukh Badam

Executive Director, Council for Cultural Heritage Networking and Communication

Introduction: Legal Framework of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Mongolia

Mongolia ratified UNESCO's 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2005 and the 2005 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2007. Over the past decades, Mongolians have commonly understood intangible cultural heritage (ICH) through traditional folk art. Research in the field of ICH is primarily recognized through ethnography and, more recently, social and cultural anthropology.

In recent years, the Mongolian government has focused on safeguarding cultural heritage, including ICH. To ensure the transmission and sustainability of ICH in Mongolia, the government has adopted and amended several laws in line with the aforementioned conventions, such as the Law of Culture and the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage.

The Ministry of Culture was established in 2020, and each of the 21 provinces has set up local governing bodies dedicated to culture and the arts. However, there is an insufficient allocation of human resources committed to safeguarding ICH.

The Mongolian government has successfully organized national and international festivals dedicated to intangible cultural heritage in 2018, 2022, 2023, and 2024. The country's long-term development policy, Vision 2050, demonstrates its commitment to becoming a center for nomadic culture and a significant hub for global nomadic citizenship.

The Law of Culture

Mongolian traditional crafts are an integral part of the country's cultural heritage. The Law of Culture was amended in July 2021, highlighting in paragraph 4.1.1 that 'cultural heritage will receive special attention and support from the state'. Additionally, paragraph 8.5 states that 'cultural heritage reflecting the unique features, traditional knowledge, and mindset of the Mongolian people will be protected'.

The Mongolian Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage

On 15 May 2014, the Mongolian Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage was amended to include 13 chapters and 61 articles. The primary purpose of this law is to regulate all aspects related to the investigation, registration, research, classification, evaluation, conservation, protection, restoration, revitalization, transmission, ownership, usage, and promotion of cultural heritage.

The first step in safeguarding and supporting traditional crafts and their practitioners is to accurately investigate and register them in a registration and information database. Subsequently, research should be conducted on their craft types and techniques. The law and policies for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage are implemented based on this investigation, registration, and research. As of 2024, 10,980 practitioners of 362 ICH elements were registered in Mongolia.

Several regulatory articles in the Mongolian Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage are being implemented to further support practitioners of intangible cultural heritage. For instance, in Article 14, which addresses the powers of the state administrative central authority overseeing cultural affairs, paragraph 14.1.15 states that ‘the state central administrative organization for cultural issues shall provide financial assistance to individuals and legal entities for activities aimed at promoting and protecting cultural heritage’.

In Article 16 concerning the powers of governors of provinces and the capital city, paragraph 16.1.12 outlines their responsibility to ‘identify bearers of intangible cultural heritage, as well as provide publicity, assistance, and organize activities for transmission’.

Article 34 discusses the rights and duties of bearers of intangible cultural heritage, particularly in paragraph 34.1.1, which grants them ‘the right to receive financial support for protecting, transmitting, and recreating intangible cultural heritage, where necessary’. Furthermore, paragraph 34.2.3 states that they have ‘the responsibility to assist in recording information and carrying out the registration of intangible cultural heritage’.

Long-Term Policy: ‘Vision 2050’ and Other Related Documents on ICH

Mongolia has made significant efforts to increase the social significance, role, and involvement of ICH and is committed to creating a favorable legal environment for the safeguarding and supporting of ICH.

National Legislation:

- Law of Culture (approved in 1996 and revised in 2021)
- Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage (approved in 2014 and revised in 2021)

Government Resolution:

- Mongolia's long-term development policy document 'Vision-2050'
- 'Procedure for Awarding Monetary Awards to Inheritors Who Have Made a Special Contribution to Promoting and Disseminating Intangible Cultural Heritage at the National and Global Levels' (Resolution No. 354 of 2018)
- 'On Approval of the National List of Inheritors of Intangible Cultural Heritage' (Resolution No. 475 of 2019)

Procedures:

- 'Regulations of the Professional Council of the ICH' (A/05 dated 15 January 2021)
- 'Procedures for Reporting and Researching Intangible Cultural Heritage' (A/151 dated 30 April 2015)

At a time when urban culture has become dominant and people's lifestyles are changing rapidly due to globalization, urbanization, and technological advancement, there is an urgent need to conduct a combined study on inheritance and dispersion, to take immediate safeguarding measures, to revive rituals, to establish training frameworks and research towards equipping with abilities to exist for the types of ICH such as national culture, traditional nomadic experiences, knowledge, abilities, talents and history, rituals, art, intellectual heritage of scientific significance that have been passed from one to another.

The Government of Mongolia has adopted several short-, medium-, and long-term policy documents, including the 'VISION-2050' Long-term Development Policy of Mongolia, National Action Plan of Government of Mongolia, the Guidelines for Development of Mongolia in 2021–2025, the Guidelines for Improving the Laws and Regulations of Mongolia until 2024, and the Strategic Plan of the Ministry of Culture for 2021–2024. They incorporate organizing the activities in the field of identification, registration, studying, creation of a registry and database, as well as transmitting, distributing, and promoting intangible cultural heritage and supporting, protecting, educating, and identifying its practitioners. They aim to support the transmission of

academic talent and traditional knowledge to future generations and provide a system of support and incentives for groups, communities, and practitioners who have established apprenticeship training. A working group has been established and has begun to conduct relevant research in order to submit an independent law on ‘Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage’ to the State Great Khural in 2023.

‘Vision 2050’ emphasizes the importance of ‘national values’, including ethnic pride. To implement its long-term vision for the next three decades, the policy outlines ambitious goals across nine key areas, including human and regional development.

For instance, within the ‘National Values’ objective, the policy plans to develop unique national products and brands that reflect the specificity of nomadic culture from 2021 to 2030. It also aims to simplify the construction process of the traditional Mongolian dwelling, known as the ger, and expand its use between 2031 and 2040 (Vision 2050, 2020, page 49). The traditional craftsmanship of the Mongolian ger and its associated customs were inscribed on UNESCO’s Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2013. The ger is notable for being easily dismantled and reassembled, making it environmentally friendly.

The Mongolian government’s tourism development plans are detailed in the long-term ‘Vision 2050’ policy and the 2020–2024 Action Plan, which includes specific projects and targets for each region. The government aims to promote sustainable tourism development while preserving cultural heritage and encouraging local participation and entrepreneurship.

The President of Mongolia and the Minister of Culture have issued decrees and resolutions to support traditional crafts and their various forms. Notably, the President has issued the following decrees:

- Decree on Respecting and Disseminating the Horse Head Fiddle (11 February 2002, No. 17)
- Decree No. 32 of 2009 on Worshiping State-Sacred Mountains and Hills
- Decree No. 101 of 2012 on the Designation of Falcon as the National Pride Bird
- Decree on Supporting the Mongol Blacksmith (9 August 2016, No. 115)

In 2019, the Minister of Education, Culture, Science, and Sports of Mongolia enacted the ‘Updating the Inventorying’ initiative through Resolution No. 759, which identified a

total of 362 elements of intangible cultural heritage, and the relevant documentation of ICH has been accumulated in the State Integrated Registration Database of Cultural Heritage

The Government of Mongolia has successfully implemented the following national programmes related to ICH in order to provide concrete support to the safeguarding, development, generation, training, promotion, and dissemination of cultural heritage. These include:

- ‘National Programme on Supporting Folk Art’ (1999–2006) was implemented under Resolution No. 68 adopted by the Government of Mongolia on 21 April 1999.
- ‘National Programme of Morin Khuur (horse-headed fiddle) and Long Drawn Song’ (2005–2014) was implemented under Resolution No. 43 adopted by the Government of Mongolia on 9 March 2005.
- On 26 June 2007, the Government of Mongolia passed Resolution No. 159 and ‘National Programme of Mongolian Khöömei’ (2008–2014) has been implemented. Throughout the implementation of the programme the art of Khöömei has been revived and an environment was established to make it a part of the nation, ethnos, cultural, state affairs and celebrations, and progress was made to bring Khöömei to the international stage. The Mongolian traditional art of Khöömei was inscribed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity of UNESCO in 2010.
- Following Resolution No. 10 adopted by the Government of Mongolia on 14 January 2009, ‘National Programme of Mongolian Traditional Folk Dance (Mongol Biyelgee)’ (2009–2014) has been implemented. Within the scope of the programme, the Mongolian traditional Folk Dance has been inscribed in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding of UNESCO in 2009.
- ‘Mongolian Epic (tuuli) Programme’ (2012–2014) has been implemented following Resolution No. 357 adopted by the Government of Mongolia on 16 December 2011.
- ‘National Programme of Mongolian traditional music of Tsur’ (2014–2016) has been implemented following Resolution No. 72 of the Government of Mongolia adopted on 7 March 2014.
- ‘National Programme of Mongolian Artwork’ (2015–2025) is to be implemented under Resolution No. 252 adopted by the Government of Mongolia on 7 August 2014.

In the framework of enhancing the legal environment for the safeguarding

- The Government of Mongolia has approved and implemented the ‘Procedure for Awarding Monetary Awards to Inheritors Who Have Made a Special Contribution to Promoting and Disseminating Intangible Cultural Heritage at the National and Global Levels’ (Resolution No. 354 of 2018)

Organizational Structure

In 2020, the Government of Mongolia has made a historic decision to establish the Ministry of Culture separately from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Sports. The newly established ministry has seven departments, and one is the Cultural Heritage Department. The department is responsible for managing the implementation of policies, plans, and laws for the protection of cultural heritage, developing procedures, rules, and legal documents required for their implementation, and providing advice and all-around support.

The Government Implementing Agency of Culture and Arts Authority is a government organization operating under the Ministry of Culture to help improve the development policy of the cultural and artistic sector by the government, and to increase the socio-economic development of the cultural sector aimed at the development that can be built in order to support, respectively.

In 2021, the Government of Mongolia decided to establish the Department of Culture and Arts of the Government Implementation Agency of Culture and Arts Authority in the provinces. It is hoped that the reorganization of the Province Governor’s Office into a ‘Department of Education and Culture’ with a small number of people in charge of cultural issues will improve the preservation and safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, the quality of and access to cultural services, and the implementation of state cultural policy.

The National Center for Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Culture is a governmental organization with the capacity and commitment to operate at the national level to conduct research and inventory-making of cultural heritage elements, their restoration, preservation, and safeguarding, and to provide professional and methodological expertise in the field utilizing the means of information and communication technologies and best practices.

State Integrated Cultural Heritage Database

In 2015, the Minister of Education, Culture, and Science adopted Decree A/151, which established a procedure for investigating and researching intangible cultural heritage. This decree aims to coordinate efforts to identify ICH bearers in Mongolia and register, document, safeguard, and promote this heritage through the Constitution of Mongolia, government cultural policies, laws concerning cultural heritage protection, and relevant international treaties and conventions.

Applications from individuals and communities are accepted to involve citizens and the public in identifying cultural heritage bearers. According to the procedure, individuals and communities wishing to register bearers of ICH must submit their applications to the local sectorial council responsible for intangible cultural heritage based on a decree from the relevant aimag (administrative unit below the city level) or the governor of the capital city.

The sectorial council reviews these applications and selects candidates according to specific criteria. They then submit a list of ICH items and their bearers, along with supporting documents (application forms, audio and video recordings, photographs), to the National Centre for Cultural Heritage under the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Sports.

Based on the materials received from the aimag and the city, the National Centre for Cultural Heritage will draft several lists, including a 'National List of ICH of Mongolia in Need of Urgent Safeguarding', a 'Representative List of ICH of Mongolia', and a 'National List of Skilled ICH Bearers', which will be submitted to the ICH Professional Council.

Currently, 362 ICH elements from the 23 ethnic groups in Mongolia are registered across seven domains in the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mongolia. There are 83 elements listed in the 'National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding' and 279 in the 'National Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage'. Additionally, 102 individuals are recognized as masters in the 'National List of Bearers of ICH Heritage with High Level of Skill', following the update made by Order A/759 of the Minister of Education, Culture, Science, and Sports of Mongolia on 29 November 2019. Among these ICH elements, 77 traditional craftsmanship elements are included in UNESCO's Representative List, while five ICH elements are in the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.

Summary of the Collection of Research Information

On behalf of the initiative ‘Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding’ during the fiscal year 2022–2024, we have collected and submitted 153 research records utilizing the Data Entry Sheets as the collaborating organization based in Mongolia.

The National Center for Cultural Heritage was the local collaborator of the data collection activity. The data collection team comprises four people, including two researchers from the National Center for Cultural Heritage.

The primary source for collecting research data was the library of the National Center for Cultural Heritage, which has a significant journal series pertinent to research in intangible cultural heritage. Furthermore, additional books have been borrowed from private researchers and other institutions.

A considerable amount of the data was obtained from journals published by prominent institutions engaged in academic research on intangible cultural heritage. These include the journal ‘Studia Ethnologica’ published by the Institute of History and Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences, which currently holds this designation. Previously known as the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences, the institution has published the series ‘Studia Historica’, ‘Studia Archeologica’, ‘Studia Ethnographica’, and ‘Monumenta Historica’ since 1959.

Among these four series, ‘Studia Ethnographica’ published 33 issues from 1959 to 2024. In 1997, the journal changed its name from ‘Studia Ethnographica’ to ‘Studia Ethnologica’. It disseminates primary materials collected through field research conducted in the early 20th century and the 1950s, utilizing ethnographic scientific methodologies. These materials have become essential primary resources for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage.

In essence, this journal occupies a position by documenting and describing types of intangible cultural heritage that are currently listed under the categories of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Protection and the Representative List in their relatively original form at that time. It remains a foundational resource for research.

Another notable journal is ‘Mongolian Cultural Studies’, published by the University of Culture and Arts in collaboration with the Institute of Culture and Arts. This journal encompasses a wide range of topics, including cultural and artistic theories, history, criticism, cultural policy planning, heritage restoration, preservation, cultural tourism,

and creative production. It also publishes research findings pertaining to technology and innovation in cultural and artistic disciplines, offering translations for public access.

Furthermore, the National Museum of Mongolia published the journal 'Nomad Heritage Studies', which succeeded the journal 'Museum Studies'. Since 2009, the journal has compiled innovative research in various fields, such as ancient studies, history, ethnography, museology, and cultural and artistic studies. As of 2019, it has published its Tomus XXV issue. The journal is distinguished by its frequent publication of academic articles focusing on intangible cultural heritage, mainly traditional crafts.

In the first year of the project, FY 2022, we compiled a bibliography list of 150 items in the format. When collecting research materials, first of all, a list of the main national and international organizations operating in the field of research and protection of intangible cultural heritage in Mongolia was compiled. In which:

1. Ministry of Culture, Sports, Tourism and Youth (current name)
2. National Center for Cultural Heritage
3. Institute of History and Ethnography of Mongolian Academy of Science (current name)
4. Institute of Linguistics of Mongolian Academy of Science
5. National University of Mongolia
6. Mongolian National University of Culture and Art
7. National Museum of Mongolia
8. International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations
9. Institute of Science and Academic Education
10. Nature and Culture Protection Fund these institutions, are covered.

The list of relevant books and publications published by the above organization was arranged by publication year. Then, the content of each publication was filtered, and the materials related to the protection and study of intangible cultural heritage were selected individually. Additionally, other relevant literature was searched using keywords such as 'Intangible Cultural Heritage' and 'Protection of Cultural Heritage' in the electronic catalog of the National Library of Mongolia.

The project team systematically collected and organized 70 research records in 2023 and 83 research records in 2024. Following the recommendations, we prioritized data collection, focusing especially on academic research works. Still, we aim to cover as many types of publication categories as possible. We have focused on the academic research publications published by institutions that play a leading role in ICH research in our country. They include:

No	Publication	Publisher
1	'Mongolian Culture and Art Studies' Journal series	Mongolian National University of Culture and Art
2	'Ethnographic Studies' Journal series	Institute of History of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences
3	'Nomadic Heritage Studies' Journal series	National Museum of Mongolia
4	'Mongolica' Journal series	Secretariat of the International Association for Mongol Studies
5	'Acta Historica' Journal series	Mongolian National University of Education, Faculty of History
6	'Historical Journal'	Mongolian National University

68 (44%) of the 153 pieces of research information has an original summary in English, and 45 (53%) of the remaining 85 pieces of research information has an original summary in Mongolian. Therefore, we wrote 40 summaries in Mongolian and then translated the total 85 summaries in Mongolian into English. We also improved the quality of translations because most summaries in English had stylistic mistakes and poor word choice.

As mentioned above, 40 research articles do not have summaries, either in Mongolian or English. We dedicated more time than anticipated to summarizing the research information.

We encountered numerous challenges throughout the project and identified solutions, as detailed below.

Problem: The names of the research institutions were changed multiple times.

Solution: We utilize the current names of the institutions.

Problem: The English translation of the ICH elements and other ICH-related terms in the original texts has multiple variants.

Solution: We utilize the unofficial translation of ‘The National Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage’ and ‘The National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding’ by the National Center for Cultural Heritage.

Analysis of the Collected Information

Out of 153 pieces of research information, 121 (79%) were published in paper form. The rest, 32 (21%), were online and included short video content of the national and international representative intangible cultural heritage of Mongolia. (Figure 1)

The oldest research information came from ‘Ethnographic Study of Mongolia—Journal Vol I’, published in 1987 by the Institute of History, Mongolian Academy of Sciences. The most recent publications include two journal articles and one book published in 2024. The collected research data includes almost every year from 1987 to 2024 as nearly equal, except for the year 2022. The records of 2022 include 29 online videos about intangible cultural heritage published by the National Center of Cultural Heritage. (Figure 2)

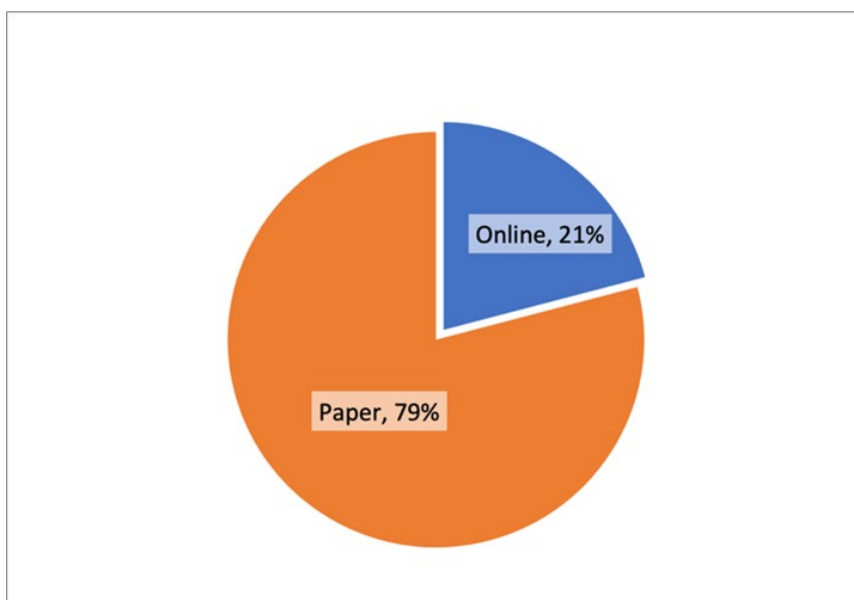


Figure 1: Publication Format

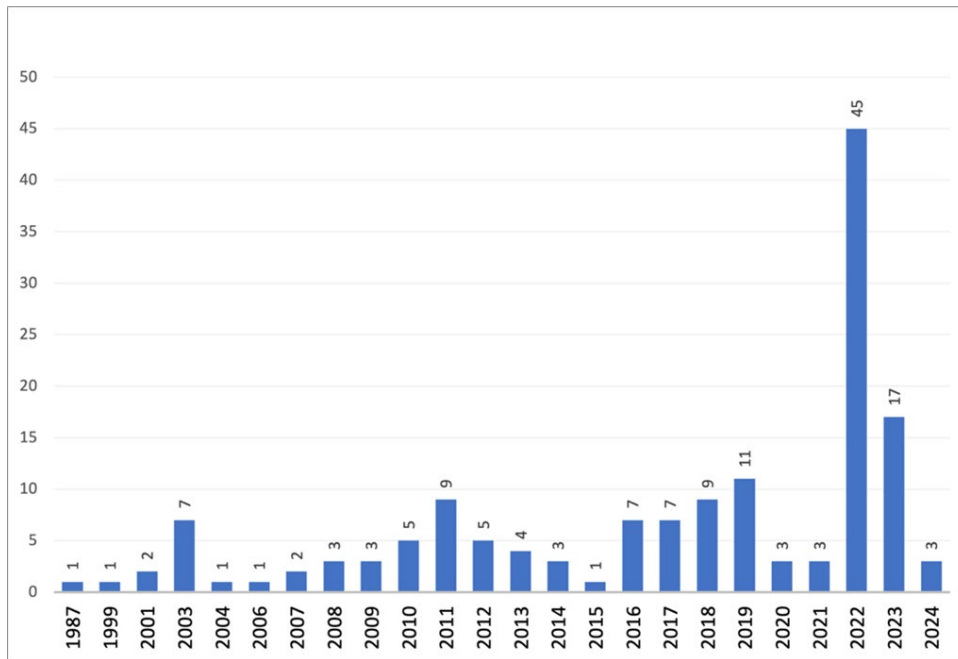


Figure 2: Year of Publication

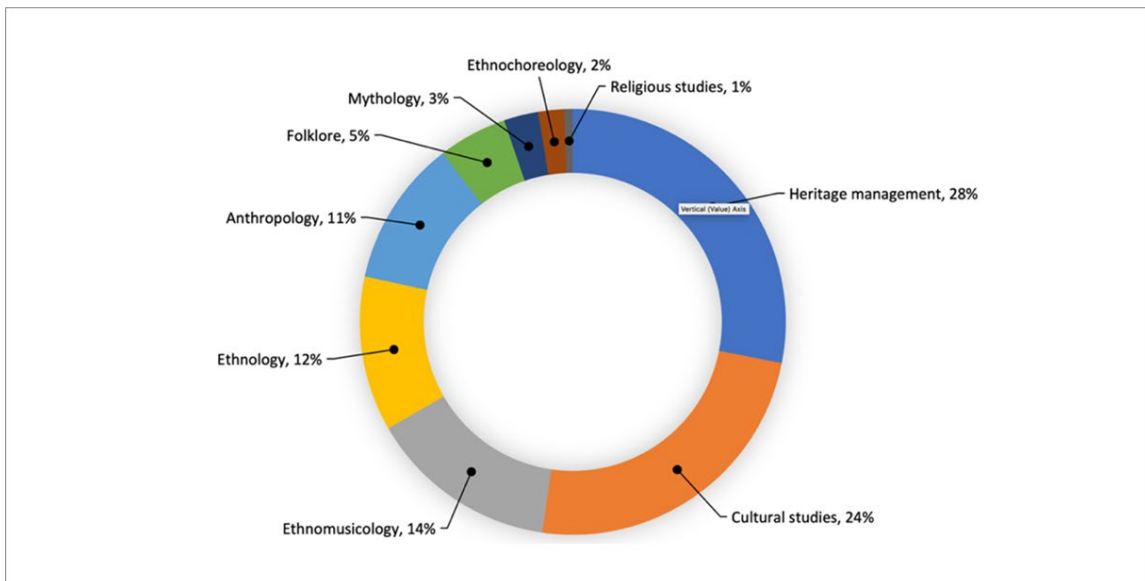


Figure 3: Academic Field

The collected research data covers various types of academic fields. Heritage management (43 pieces, 28%) and cultural studies (37 pieces, 24%) were the most common academic fields. (Figure 3)

The most common focused ICH genre was ‘Performing arts: music’ (22%). Mongolian traditional folk song was the most numbered ICH element (18 pieces, 55%) in the ‘Performing arts: music’ genre. Urtiin duu, a traditional folk long song, was inscribed in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2008, marking it as one of the first two elements of intangible cultural heritage registered from Mongolia. It reflects that Urtiin duu constitutes a significant element of intangible cultural heritage to be studied in Mongolia. The second common ICH genre was ICH in general. It is a prevalent practice among Mongolian researchers to explore the dialogue between nomadic and sedentary cultures in a general context. Other ICH genres included ‘Traditional medicine’, ‘Ecological knowledges and practices’, ‘Sports/games’ and ‘Festive events’, which were rarely collected during the project. (Figure 4)

According to the relevance to ICH safeguarding, 72 (47%) of the total 153 pieces of research information were primarily related to ‘Definition’. As mentioned, Mongolian researchers often cite nomadic cultural heritage elements based on historical resources and field studies, which is reflected in the fact that most of the research information related to the term ‘Definition’. We found fewer research materials than expected on ‘Capacity building’, ‘Revitalization’, ‘Training’, ‘Ecological knowledges and practices’, and ‘Disaster prevention’, as we can see on Figure 5.

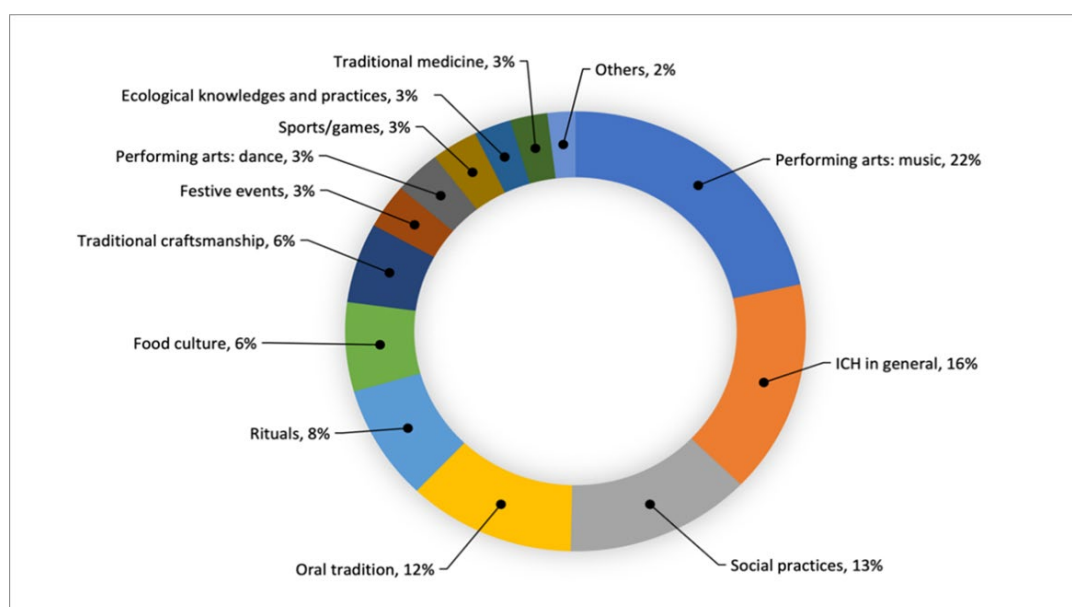


Figure 4: Focused ICH Genre

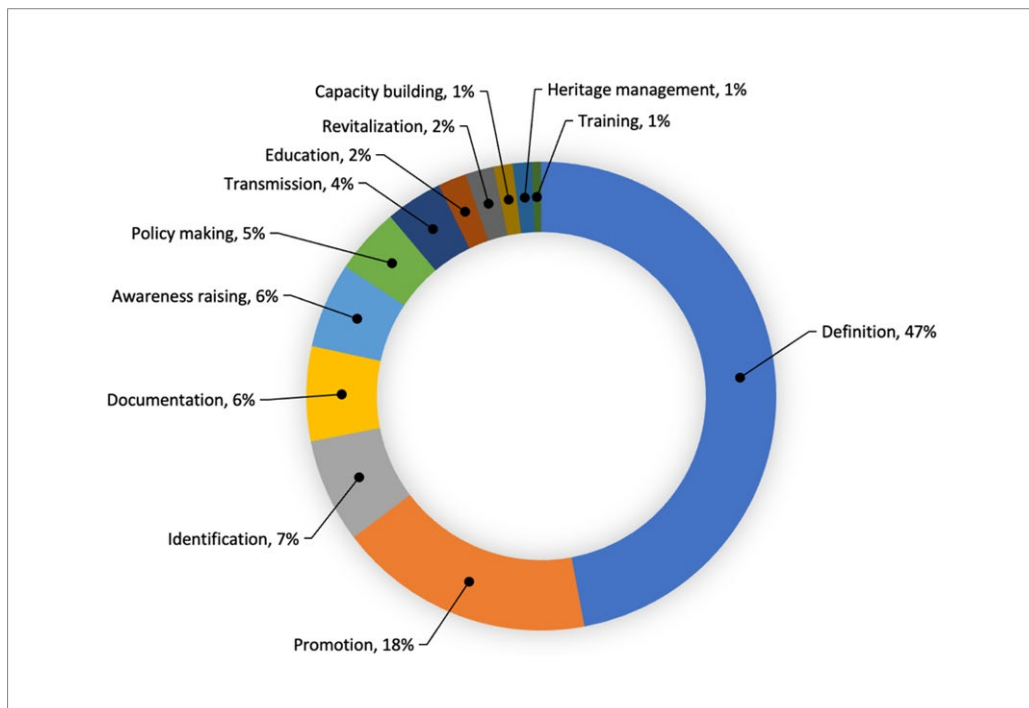


Figure 5: Relevance to ICH Safeguarding

Situation and Trend of ICH Research

Since the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, there has been a significant increase in research, publications, and academic discussions focused on intangible cultural heritage. This burgeoning field of study builds upon earlier ethnographic research that established a foundational understanding of various cultural practices and traditions, offering a deeper insight into the complexities of human expression and identity.

Over time, scholars have placed a growing emphasis on the management of intangible cultural heritage, recognizing its intrinsic value and its critical role in the processes of inheritance and apprenticeship. Inheritance refers to how knowledge, traditions, and practices are transmitted from generation to generation, ensuring that cultural identity is preserved and respected. Apprenticeship, on the other hand, involves the methods through which individuals acquire skills and knowledge related to these cultural expressions, often taking place in informal settings where mentorship and relationships are cultivated, allowing for a personalized transfer of wisdom and techniques.

In tandem with this scholarly focus, there has been a concerted effort to develop practical policy planning to safeguard and promote intangible cultural heritage within

local communities. This involves creating frameworks that protect these cultural expressions and encourage their vibrant continuation in contemporary society. Stakeholders, including community leaders, cultural practitioners, and policymakers, are increasingly engaged in dialogue about best practices for safeguarding these cultural elements while ensuring that they remain relevant in a rapidly evolving world.

The multidisciplinary nature of this approach—drawing from anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, and policy planning—enriches our comprehension of intangible cultural heritage. It emphasizes safeguarding these practices, fostering scholarly discourse and community engagement. By doing so, we can ensure that future generations are equipped to connect with, participate in, and appreciate their cultural heritage, fostering a sense of belonging and identity in a globalized landscape.

Issues and Challenges Relating to ICH Research

There is a significant and concerning gap in research regarding the risks associated with intangible cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage encompasses traditions, practices, expressions, knowledge, and skills that communities recognize as part of their cultural identity. Despite its importance, there is still insufficient understanding of how natural risk phenomena, such as earthquakes, floods, and various climate-related events, can adversely affect these unique cultural assets. For instance, a sudden flood may disrupt traditional practices, threaten oral histories, and displace communities from their culturally significant locations, resulting in a profound loss of cultural identity.

Furthermore, the impact of climate change on the preservation of both tangible heritage (such as buildings and monuments) and intangible heritage is an increasingly urgent area of study, yet it remains notably underexplored. As climate change continues to intensify, the risks to cultural heritage will escalate, making it imperative for researchers to investigate how rising snowfall, increased temperatures, and extreme weather events can compromise physical and cultural integrity.

In addition to understanding these vulnerabilities, comprehensive research on how cultural heritage can help manage natural risks is essential. This involves thoroughly examining the physical and infrastructural impacts of natural disasters on heritage sites and analysing the social and economic implications for communities that depend on these cultural resources. For instance, after a disaster, the loss of cultural heritage can affect community cohesion and financial stability, as local traditions often contribute to tourism, job creation, and regional identity.

Moreover, the importance of inter-sectorial development coordination cannot be overstated in the context of cultural heritage preservation. Research should focus on understanding the complex interplay between urban development and migration patterns and their collective effects on cultural heritage. As urban areas expand and populations shift due to various factors—economic opportunities and climate-induced displacement—the preservation of cultural sites becomes increasingly complex and necessitates a coherent approach.

There is a pressing need to explore the dynamics of settlement patterns and tourism, and investigate how these elements influence both the preservation of heritage and the achievement of sustainable development goals. A thorough analysis of how tourism can contribute to or detract from cultural heritage preservation may provide crucial insights for policymakers and community leaders. By addressing these interconnected aspects, we can work towards cultivating a more comprehensive understanding of heritage in the broader context of environmental change and societal development.

Furthermore, the research landscape faces challenges related to financial and human resources, similar to those encountered in other fields. The lack of funding often limits the scope of studies on cultural heritage, which is already a marginalized area in research agendas. Additionally, there are noticeable gaps in comparative research on shared intangible cultural heritage across different communities and regions. Language barriers among researchers can complicate efforts to conduct joint studies and collaborate on publications in peer-reviewed journals, hindering the advancement of knowledge in this critical field. Overall, a multi-faceted approach is essential to address these challenges and to safeguard our invaluable cultural heritage for future generations.

Use of the Collected Research Information

One of the priority goals of our institution is to build knowledge through networking and sharing of experiences among cultural heritage practitioners and researchers. Throughout the implementation of the project, we truly understood what ICH-related research information was lacking. Finding and combining such information is time- and resource-consuming. The collected information from the project will be a more valuable resource for the ICH researchers if all the information is in Mongolian. Therefore, we, the Council for Cultural Heritage Networking and Communication, plan to build a lightweight web-based database in Mongolian using the collected information.

Developing a comprehensive database dedicated to protecting cultural heritage in Mongolia is a groundbreaking initiative of immense significance. This project is closely aligned with the objectives of the 2003 UNESCO Convention, which aims to safeguard and promote the principles of cultural heritage preservation globally.

The proposed database will serve as a vital repository of information, encompassing a wide range of research materials, case studies, and best practices related to preserving Mongolia's rich cultural heritage. By aggregating this knowledge, the database will provide substantial support for the academic pursuits of students, researchers, and scholars focused on cultural heritage protection. It will enable them to access important information and resources, fostering a deeper understanding of the challenges and strategies in safeguarding cultural sites and practices.

Moreover, the database will also be an essential tool for government officials and policymakers responsible for developing cultural heritage databases and implementing laws and regulations related to heritage protection. By offering easy access to comprehensive and up-to-date information, the database will enhance their decision-making processes, improve policy development, and effectively enforce cultural heritage laws.

This initiative aims to strengthen academic research and support the sustainable management and protection of Mongolia's unique cultural heritage for future generations.

Conclusion

The collected research and institutional information related to the ICH were carefully selected by the project members. Academic research articles were selected from the main academic journals published by research institutions and universities that play a major role in the field. Therefore, we anticipate that the gathered research data will illustrate the trends of ICH research and safeguarding in Mongolia.

The project team comprises four representatives: two from the Council for Cultural Heritage Networking and Communication, an NGO, and two from the National Center for Cultural Heritage. These representatives have comprehensively reviewed and synthesized significant research studies and reports about major projects and programmes related to the country's study and conservation of intangible cultural

heritage. This initiative has allowed us to assess and evaluate past activities focused on safeguarding ICH, and to enhance our knowledge and expertise in this field.

As we move into to the next phase of the project, it is imperative to cultivate an understanding regarding the significance of the ICH research database among internal organizations, researchers, and relevant experts. We propose organizing training sessions to promote the utilization of this database and actively engage these stakeholders in ongoing data collection efforts.

In Mongolia, institutions frequently change their names. For example, after the 2024 state parliament election, the Ministry of Culture was renamed the Ministry of Culture, Sports, Tourism, and Youth. It would be beneficial for us to be able to update the information we provide in the IRCI Research Database. Updating this information would be expedited if we could independently modify and enhance the relevant information in the database. This would also help eliminate the possibility of duplication.

Finally, we value the clarity and usefulness of the data collection sheets and guidance provided by IRCI.

FINAL REPORT: TAJIKISTAN

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Introduction

The Tajiks are one of the oldest inhabitants of the Central Asian region, owning many multifaceted cultural expressions and elements with a centuries-old history of cultural interactions with their nomadic and settled neighbouring nations. The intangible heritage of the Tajik culture is rooted in the history of esotericism and folklore of the Aryan people. The intangible cultural heritage of the Tajik people has seen a long history of formation and development and has grown in multiple ways, expressions and forms. These intangible cultural forms have always played a significant and functional role both in the past and today.

The Republic of Tajikistan is a party to several UNESCO conventions, in particular, on August 17, 2010, Tajikistan ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO (2003) and pays special attention to the intangible cultural heritage of the country's population.

As part of the protection of ICH, a number of programmes and projects, research activities and publication of books, symposiums and conferences, competitions and festivals, etc. were carried out, contributing to the safeguarding and development of the national cultural heritage and its dissemination at the global level. It is noteworthy that at the initiative of the Republic of Tajikistan and a number of states celebrating Navruz, a special UN resolution was adopted in 2010, which gave the wonderful holiday of Navruz international status.

In 2012, the Government of Tajikistan approved the 'State Program for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Tajik People for 2013–2020' with the aim of studying, preserving, reviving, supporting and promoting the culture of the people. This programme was continued in the next years, titled 'State Program for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Tajik People for 2021–2025'. In both phases of the programme, the development and publication of the 'Encyclopedia of Tajik Traditional Culture' (nine volumes have been published to date), fieldwork for inventorying, documenting and researching intangible cultural heritage (including

folklore, dance, music, arts and crafts, etc.) were implemented. As well as five times (every two years) were organized republican festival-competition of Folk Art 'Andaleb', recording of the film series 'Traditional Tajik Culture' and other activities to protect and develop intangible cultural heritage.

The President of the Republic of Tajikistan H.E. Mr. Emomali Rahmon proclaimed the years 2019–2021 as 'Years of Rural Development, Tourism and Folk Crafts' in the country, which gave a serious impetus to the further development of intangible cultural heritage, including folk crafts and the revival of traditional cuisine. Craftsmen were exempted from paying taxes on homemade products, which also contributed to the development of traditional crafts.

To date, the Republic of Tajikistan has registered 12 elements of intangible culture in the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage, of which four are national and eight are multinational files.

The Research Institute of Culture and Information (RICI) is a state institution subordinated to the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Tajikistan, which performs significant work in the implementation of the cultural policy of the Government of the Republic of Tajikistan and the UNESCO Convention (2003) in the field of intangible cultural heritage.

The Research Institute of Culture and Information publishes the scientific journal 'Herald of Culture' four times a year. One of the sections of the journal is devoted to the intangible cultural heritage. In addition, the Institute publishes annually the results of studies under the title 'Proceedings of RICI employees'.

One of the priorities of this institution is the identification, inventory, and preparation of the nomination files and the study of the intangible cultural heritage of the people of Tajikistan. In this direction, the main goal of our organization is to contribute to the preservation and dissemination of the intangible cultural heritage of the people of the country.

During the years 2016–2020, the scientists of the Institute implemented the research project 'Current state of intangible culture in the country: problems and prospects' and gave very significant results. Currently, another project, which is a continuation of this project, entitled 'The study of intangible cultural heritage related to historical-cultural

monuments and sacred places of Tajikistan' (for the years 2021–2025) is being implemented.

Starting from 2016, the Institute has written and published the book series 'Intangible Culture of the Tajik People', which includes the results of the fieldwork of the employees of the Institute. So far, 12 issues of this series have been published. Since 2023, this book series has changed its name to 'Cultural heritage in Tajikistan', until now two issues have been published.

During the last 12 years, 26 books and more than 300 scientific and public scientific articles have been published by the Institute.

Summary of the Collection of Research Information

On behalf of the Republic of Tajikistan, Dr. Dilshod Rahimi, an expert in the field of intangible cultural heritage, started cooperation with the **IRCI project 'Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States'** from 2022–2023. For two years, he gathered bibliographic descriptions of many books and articles and entered them into the database. In 2024, when D. Rahimi was appointed as the Permanent Delegate of the Republic of Tajikistan to UNESCO and travelled to Paris. I was offered to cooperate with IRCI on the recommendation of Mr. Rahimi and the director of the Research Institute of Culture and Information, Mr. Aminzoda Abdufattoh.

The activity of collecting scientific literature related to the heritage of intangible culture from August 2024, I started from the study of the works done by Mr. D. Rahimi. Then, with his advice, I compiled a list of new literature. I collected those books, articles and published works which are relatively recent and not included in the previous works of D. Rahimi. I visited the scientific institutes of the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, the National University of Tajikistan, the State Pedagogical University of Tajikistan named after S. Ayni, met with the editor-in-chief of the university's scientific journals and received permission to use the electronic form of the journals.

Also, with the assistance of the associate professor of Khujand State University named after B. Ghafurov, Mr. Islam Rahimov, the researcher of the Institute of Humanities of Khorug, Dr. Qurbon Alamshoev, and the professor of Bokhtar State University, Dr. Abolhai Komilov, I studied the electronic journals of these universities and collected the necessary materials. All of these scholars had the equal support, sending electronic copy

of published books and journals. Thus, I compiled a bibliographic list of books and articles related to ICH, which includes 142 pieces of literature.

During the work, there were some small problems. One difficulty is the separation of the fields of academic sciences. For example, in the countries of Central Asia, where the influence of the classification of Soviet science is still visible, ethnography is an independent science, and the scope of its study is the traditional culture of the peoples. However, in Western science, ethnography is considered a methodical science of collecting material for scientific research. Or if the art of dance is studied by the science of choreography, it can also be included in art studies. The position and approaches towards anthropology in the post-Soviet countries are different from the West. Thus, there is a problem in the classification of academic fields. During the implementation of the project, we used the view that is common in Tajikistan today.

It is necessary to note that there are many published works on the subject of intangible cultural heritage. However, most of them are informative, descriptive and research of individual elements of intangible cultural heritage. There are very few articles on the issues of safeguarding, expansion and development of the elements of the ICH. During the information gathering and data collection of the published books and articles, it became clear that the awareness of the population of the country about the intangible cultural heritage has increased compared to previous years.

It should also be emphasized that in FY 2024 we bibliographically described mainly books and articles of scientific journals of Tajik universities. However, there are dozens of dissertations and theses related to ICH in the libraries, which we had some problems to access. Not all of them are stored in archives and libraries, and to access some of them, it is necessary to contact the university management.

Analysis of the Collected Information

Situation and Trend of ICH Research

In the field of research of intangible cultural heritage, research is carried out in two forms: 1) general research, which is devoted to issues of protection, problem solving, expansion and presentation of intangible cultural heritage. For example, the book of the ICH expert Dilshod Rahimi 'Safeguarding, presentation and development of the intangible cultural heritage in Tajikistan' includes information about the characteristics and categories of the ICH; the issues of safeguarding and transmission of the intangible cultural elements in the Republic of Tajikistan; the implementation of the UNESCO 2003

Convention in Tajikistan; the national inventory of intangible cultural heritage; the practice of preparation of nomination files; the issue of education and training of specialists in the field of intangible cultural heritage, etc. Also, the books of scientists of the Research Institute of Culture and Information, A. Aminov 'Investigation of aspects of intangible cultural heritage' (2019), Z. Kholmurodov 'Study of intangible cultural heritage of the Tajik people' (2020), G. Karimova 'Research of some elements of traditional Tajik culture' (2020), A. Abdulloev 'Research of some cultural traditions of the Tajik people' (2021), 'Culture of the people of Devashtich', compiled by L. Nosirova (2021), discuss the current situation of certain categories of intangible cultural heritage in Tajikistan and raise people's awareness of ICH.

2) Another kind of scientific books and articles are devoted to individual issues or genres and types of folklore, performing arts, festivals and ceremonies, traditional crafts, and knowledge and experience related to nature and the universe. For example, articles and books of folklorists, professor of the Tajik National University R. Rahmonov, professor of the Pedagogical University of Tajikistan S. Qosimi, senior researcher of the Rudaki Institute of Language and Literature Sh. Umarova and others are devoted to the issues of oral tradition. In particular, the books of D. Rahimi, 'Navruz, Mehrgon and other celebrations of ancestors' (2018) and 'Traditional games of Tajik children' (2021), L. Nosirova 'Development of the woman folk crafts in Tajikistan' (2018), Nosyrova L. Development of traditional women's crafts in Tajikistan (2018), Klicheva N. Dance art of Tajiks: history and modernity (2018) are the representative ones.

In addition, the 'Encyclopedia of the Tajik Traditional Culture' was developed in the last 10 years and nine volumes of it have been published so far, which provides encyclopedic information about all elements.

The situation of research and publication of books and articles related to the intangible cultural heritage in the Republic of Tajikistan in 2024 is slightly different from previous years. First, we will consider the situation in 2024 and then compare it with 2023 and 2022.

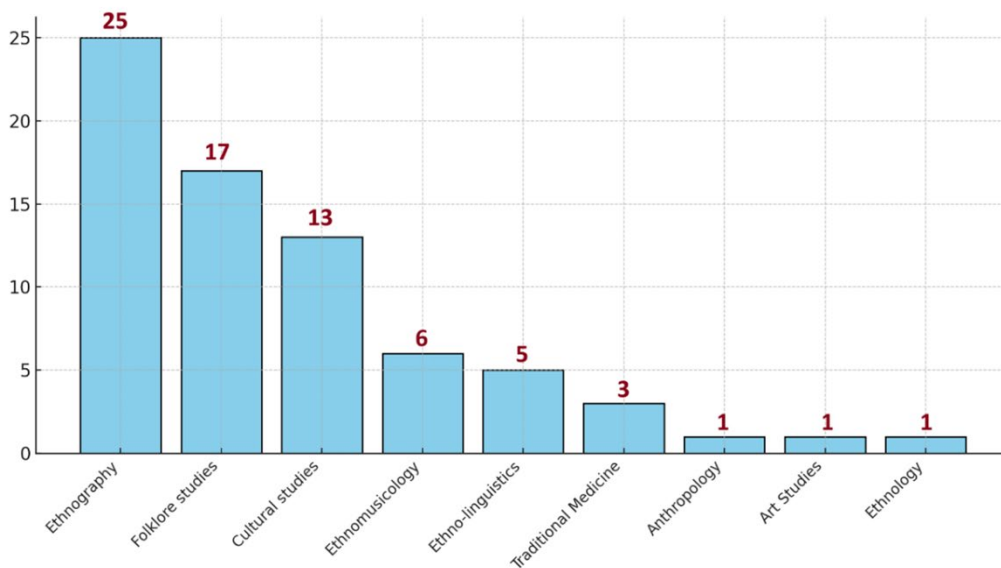


Figure 1: Academic Disciplines

In 2024, we provided bibliographic descriptions of 72 pieces of literature in the framework of the data collection. This number covers 10 books, 61 articles, and one dissertation. The authors and editors of the books are experienced scientists and employees of scientific institutes and universities. The authors of the articles are a mixture of senior and experienced scientists, university professors and young scientists, doctoral students and a few master’s students.

The academic disciplines of the authors are as follows:

Ethnography – 25, Folklore studies – 17, Cultural studies – 13, Ethnomusicology – 6, Ethno-linguistics – 5, Traditional Medicine – 3, Anthropology – 1, Art Studies – 1, Ethnology – 1.

According to ICH domain focus, the collected data in FY 2024 is as following:

Oral tradition – 20, Festive events and rituals – 17, Social practices, including traditional medicine practices, ecological knowledge and worldview – 11, Traditional craftsmanship – 11, Performance arts – 7, sports and games – 4 and 2 items dedicated to the ICH in general.

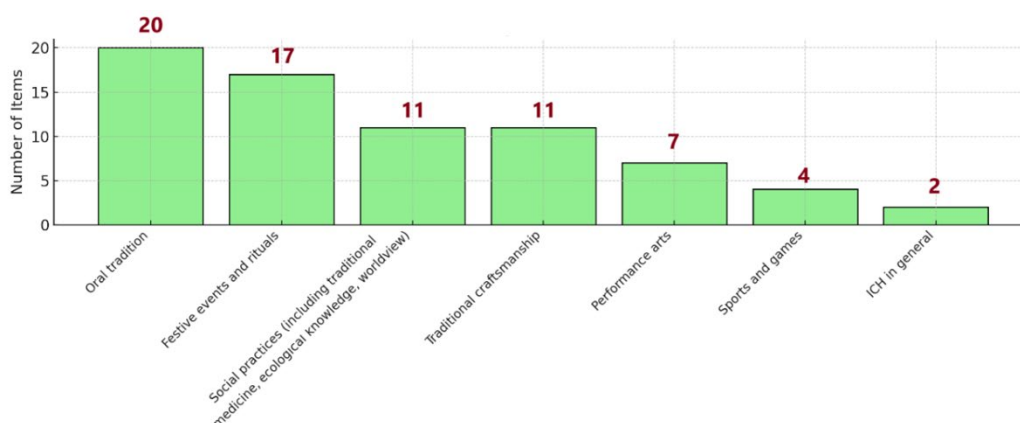


Figure 2: Data Collection by ICH Domains in FY 2024

• *Total three-year comparison*

In total, during 2022–2024, bibliographic data were collected on 159 publications, including 63 books, 91 articles, three book sections, one proceeding and one dissertation. The language of the publications is mainly Tajik with 12 publications in Russian. In addition, publications in multiple languages were included in the bibliographic data: 10 in Tajik/English, five in Tajik/Russian, one in Tajik/Korean, and one in Tajik/Russian/English.

According to the academic disciplines, the bibliographic materials are mainly related to ethnography, folklore studies, anthropology, and art studies:

The academic disciplines in FY 2022 (12 total entries)

Anthropology – 3, Folklore studies – 2, Cultural studies – 2, Heritage Management – 2, Ethnography – 1, Ethnomusicology – 1, Art Studies – 1;

The academic disciplines in FY 2023 (75 total entries)

Ethnography – 39, Folklore studies – 15, Anthropology – 8, Cultural studies – 3, Choreography – 3, Art Studies - 2, Ethnomusicology – 2, History – 2, Ethnology – 1;

The academic disciplines in 2024 (72 total entries)

Ethnography – 25, Folklore studies – 17, Cultural studies – 13, Ethnomusicology – 6, Ethno-linguistics – 5, Traditional Medicine – 3, Anthropology – 1, Art Studies – 1, Ethnology – 1.

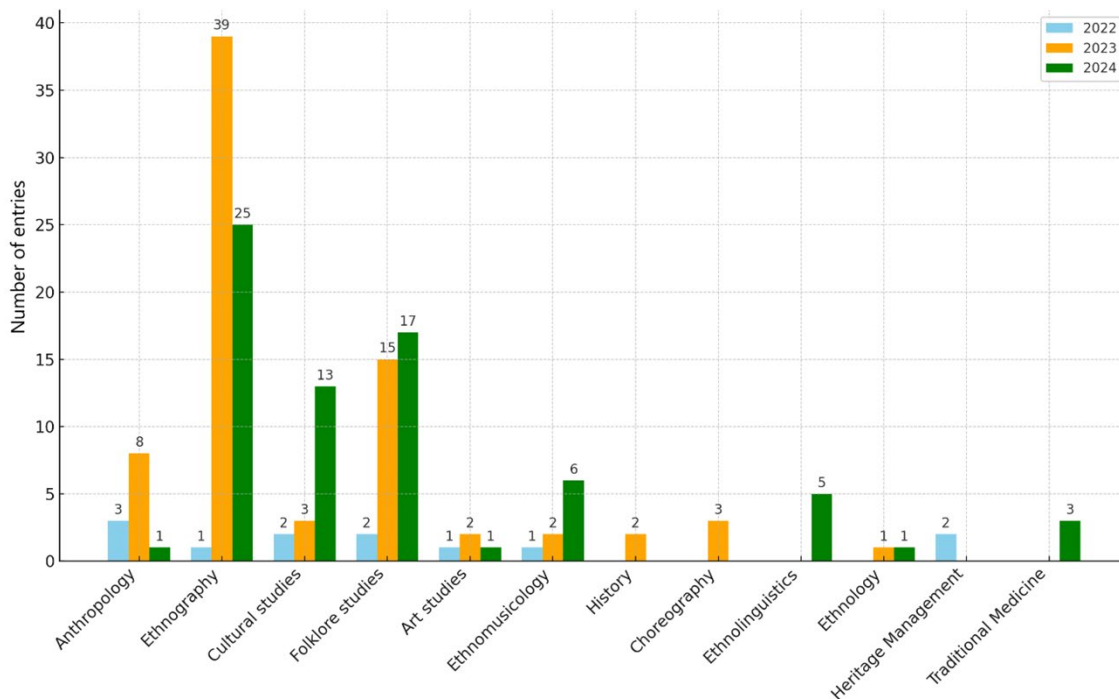


Figure 3: Studies Across Academic Disciplines (FY 2022–2024)

Table 1: Academic Disciplines

Academic disciplines	2022	2023	2024	Total
Anthropology	3	8	1	12
Ethnography	1	39	25	65
Cultural studies	2	3	13	18
Folklore studies	2	15	17	34
Art studies	1	2	1	4
Ethnomusicology	1	2	6	9
History		2		2
Choreography		3		3
Ethnolinguistics			5	5
Ethnology		1	1	2
Heritage Management	2			2
Traditional Medicine			3	3
Total	12	75	72	159

• *ICH focused genres*

The collected data entries according to ICH focused genres are related to oral tradition, performing arts, traditional craft, festive events and social practices, and the knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe. Below we bring the details in the table and diagram.

ICH focused genres in FY 2022:

ICH in general – 4, Festive events and rituals – 3, Performance arts – 2, Traditional craftsmanship – 2, Oral tradition – 1;

ICH focused genres in FY 2023:

Oral tradition – 24, Traditional craftsmanship – 16, Festive events and rituals – 14, Performance arts – 6, Social practices, including worldview – 5, Food culture – 5, ICH in general – 3, Sports and games – 2;

ICH focused genres in FY 2024:

Oral tradition – 20, Festive events and rituals – 17, Social practices, including traditional medicine practices, ecological knowledge and worldview – 11, Traditional craftsmanship – 11, Performance arts – 7, sports and games – 4 and 2 items dedicated to the ICH in general.

Table 2: ICH Focused Genres

ICH genres	2022	2023	2024	Total
Oral tradition	1	24	20	45
Festive events and rituals	3	14	17	34
Performance arts	2	6	7	15
Traditional craftsmanship	2	16	12	30
Social practices, including worldview, ecological practices		5	8	13
Food culture		5		5
Traditional Medicine			2	2
Sports and games		2	4	6
ICH in general	4	3	2	9
Total	12	75	72	159

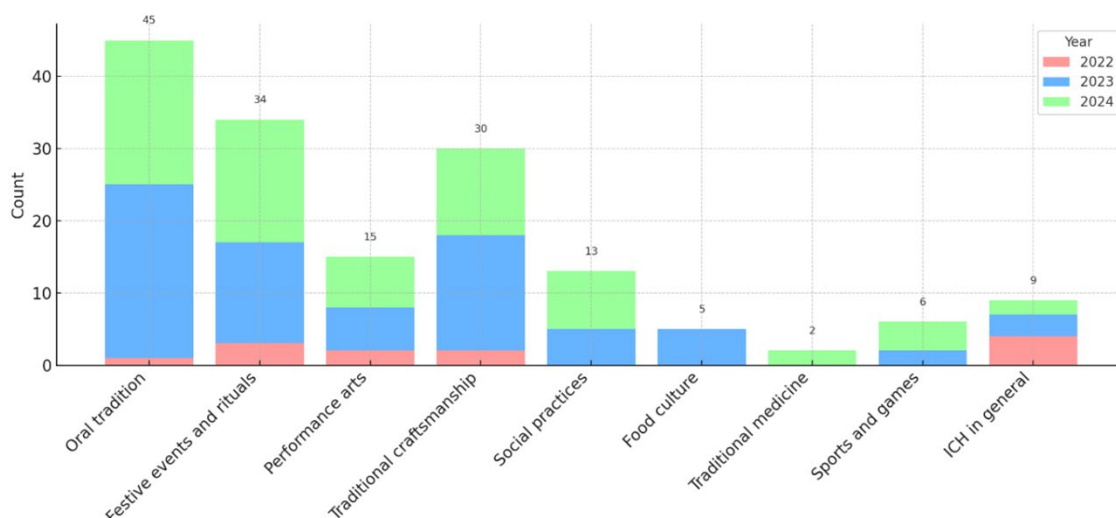


Figure 4: ICH Genre Distribution by Year

According to the details of the table, the research on intangible cultural heritage in Tajikistan has been increasing in recent years. The attention of the authors to the oral tradition, i.e. folklore, festivals and ceremonies, traditional crafts, social experiences has increased. Of course, we did not cover all the published materials of recent years. Due to the limited scope of the project and travel opportunities, not all cities and regions of Tajikistan were included. Nowadays, specialized journals are regularly published in ministries and state committees, institutes of the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, and universities of the country, in which articles on various topics and genres of intangible cultural heritage are placed.

It is clear from the content of the articles that the authors investigate certain elements with various scientific methods and approaches. For example, ethnolinguists study the language and discourse of craftsmen, literary scholars and folklorists study oral texts.

However, less attention has been paid to the issues of safeguarding, transmission and development of elements of intangible cultural heritage.

It should be noted that the Republic of Tajikistan ratified the UNESCO Convention (2003) in 2010. After the ratification, the term ‘intangible cultural heritage’ became more popular. Especially in the last 5 years, the awareness of the people of Tajikistan about this Convention has increased. In newspaper articles, Tajik radio programmes and television channels, interviews and speeches about the heritage of intangible culture and issues of its development are broadcast more often. However, there are still fewer

scientific articles related to the safeguarding and development of ICH and the normative legal documents supporting it.

Issues and Challenges Relating to ICH Research

With the announcement of 2019–2021 as the ‘Years of rural development, tourism and folk crafts’, not only folk crafts and handicrafts have developed, but also scientific research on this topic has increased. Many conferences and seminars were held, speeches and summaries of reports were published in the form of books and brochures.

Other sectors of intangible cultural heritage, including knowledge and experience related to nature and the universe, traditional sports and children’s games, have also received less attention from researchers. As a result of the studies, it became clear that traditional children’s games are almost disappearing. Their place is being taken by electronic, computer and mobile games, which seriously harm the health of our future generation.

The state of research and publication of books and articles on the knowledge and experience of cooking is also not very satisfactory. In the culture of the Tajik people, there are many types of food, bread products and sweets, which have an ancient history and are related to rituals and social and seasonal celebrations. Nowadays, the influence of globalization also affects the traditional dishes of Tajiks, and new dishes from foreign countries enter the culture of Tajiks.

There is still a lack of research on the legal aspects of intangible cultural heritage and related acts and legislation. Aspects of management, administration and safeguarding issues of ICH have not been investigated.

The same should be said about the research of intangible cultural elements through academic subjects or disciplines, that scientists of not all disciplines are interested in intangible cultural heritage. Otherwise, it is possible to investigate many issues of traditional culture through interdisciplinary sciences such as ethnolinguistics, ethnomusicology, and folk medicine.

In our opinion, it is necessary to strengthen research in the direction of safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage. In addition, the integration of elements of intangible cultural heritage with the field of tourism is one of the requirements of modern science. Tourism is a traditional field of cultural development.

Fortunately, the Research Institute of Culture and Information is implementing the scientific project ‘Research of Intangible Cultural Heritage Related to Historical-Cultural Monuments and Sacred Sites of Tajikistan’ (2021–2025), in which the issues of the relationship between tourism and tangible and intangible cultural monuments are being investigated. Several articles have already been published in this area, and research on the subject is ongoing.

Another important topic is the connection between intangible cultural heritage and areas of sustainable development in Tajik society. In recent years, some studies have been conducted on the importance of handicrafts in people’s lives and their sustainable development. There are also some articles about the importance of some elements of traditional culture in teaching activities and education in general. However, very few articles have been written on issues of gender and heritage of intangible culture, elements of ICH and the issues of climate change, prevention of natural disasters, protection of ecosystems, and peace.

The safeguarding and promotion of intangible cultural heritage not only enriches cultural diversity, but also contributes significantly to achieving sustainable development. By strengthening the relationship between culture, economy, environment and social sphere, states and societies can create a bright and equal future.

Use of the Collected Research Information

Traditional culture is a source of rich heritage that shapes the identity of nations, passes on values from generation to generation, and strengthens the connection between the past and the present. Scientific research in this area provides an opportunity to better understand, preserve and adapt traditional elements to modern realities. The results find practical application in a variety of areas: education, cultural centers and public life.

In the school curriculum, the results of scientific research on traditional culture can be introduced through subjects such as history, literature, music and art. Teaching materials based on local cultural traditions help students understand their heritage. For example, studying folk tales, legends and myths in literature lessons promotes the development of creative thinking and national pride.

Practical activities such as master classes in crafts (woodcarving, embroidery, ceramics) or folk dancing strengthen children’s connection with cultural heritage. At school events such as national culture days or ethnographic exhibitions, students have the opportunity

to touch the traditions of their own and other nations, developing respect for cultural diversity.

At universities, research in the field of traditional culture serves as a basis for academic disciplines aimed at studying ethnology, cultural studies, art history, and even modern anthropology. Master's and doctoral students can use the results of research to write dissertations, develop new scientific hypotheses, and apply knowledge in social projects.

Cultural centers are a bridge between scientific research and a wider audience. Here, the results of scientific work can be presented in the form of interactive exhibits, ethnographic exhibitions, theatrical performances, and concerts. In addition, cultural centers often create clubs and sections where people can study traditional crafts, language and folk customs. Such events not only preserve culture, but also make it accessible to younger generations.

Research papers can be the basis for developing tourist routes and excursions that include visits to places associated with national culture. This promotes cultural exchange and increases interest in regional history among both locals and tourists.

The information collected during the last three years is of great scientific importance. Together with Mr. D. Rahimi, we decided to write a joint article based on the collected bibliographic material of the last three years and identify the strong and weak areas of research related to intangible cultural heritage in the country. At the same time, we emphasize the problems and unexplored topics of intangible cultural heritage in the article, so that researchers may pay attention to these topics in the future.

On the other hand, the collected information is a good guide for young scientists who work in the field of the traditional culture of Tajiks. We share the collected materials and information and the results of our activities with scientists, colleagues, students and everyone interested in the field of intangible cultural heritage.

The Center of cultural heritage of Tajiks activates in the Research Institute of Culture and Information, which has a fund of intangible cultural heritage materials. For each element of the intangible cultural heritage, in accordance with the National Inventory List of ICH, 575 separate folders have been placed in the fund, and each folder included inventory documents of this element and other information, including articles, photos, audio and video recordings. We decided to give a copy of the bibliographic materials

collected by us to this fund, so that in the future, employees and specialists will use them for scientific and practical purposes.

Also, the senior researcher of the Department of Library Activities of the Research Institute of Culture and Information, Dr. Sharif Komilzoda and his colleagues are planning to prepare the book 'Bibliography of Intangible Cultural Heritage'. They can also make extensive use of the collected information.

Scientists of the Department of Folklore of Rudaki Institute of Language and Literature have decided to compile the 5th volume of 'Bibliography of Tajik Folklore' in the future (Four volumes have already been published). The bibliographic information, which we collected can also serve as a reliable source for them.

Conclusion

In general, the cooperation in the bibliographic data collection project with IRCI gave very good and important results. First, a wide audience at the international level will get acquainted with the situation and tendencies of research on intangible cultural heritage in the Republic of Tajikistan. In addition, they will get to know the names of scientists and specialists of various genres of intangible cultural heritage and will be able to establish cooperation relations with interested specialists in the future.

The cooperation in this project was also a rich experience for us, and we will continue to use in our future works the bibliographic description methods applied in this project. There are still many books and research articles on various topics of intangible culture. In the activity of collecting information materials, we recorded only the last 5–6 years, but in previous years, for example, in the 20th century, in 2000–2015, hundreds of scientific and news publications were published. In addition, candidate and doctoral theses on the topics and genres of intangible cultural heritage have not yet been studied. It is clear that the rate of research and study of cultural heritage is growing in Tajikistan in recent years, and we need to consider them in the coming years.

It should be noted that in addition to the publication of printed information, there are countless programmes and reports on radio, television, and the Internet. Perhaps in the future, in cooperation with IRCI, this form of information will also be studied.

FINAL REPORT: UZBEKISTAN

Lutfiya Mirzaeva

Director, Center for Promotion of Culture and Art of Uzbekistan ‘Umrboqiy Meros’

Introduction

The Republic of Uzbekistan submitted its instrument of ratification of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage to the Director-General of UNESCO on 29 January 2008. According to Article 34 of the Convention, Uzbekistan became a State Party to the Convention since 29 April 2008.

After the accession to the Convention, the National Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Oliy Majlis) amended the existing Law on Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage Objects of the Republic of Uzbekistan by adding several articles regarding safeguarding measures of the intangible cultural heritage elements (9 October 2009).

According to the provisions of Article 13 of the Convention, the Government of Uzbekistan approved ‘State Program for the Safeguarding, Preservation, Promotion, and Use of Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements for 2010–2020’ on 7 October 2010. In order to facilitate the implementation of the goals set by the State Program, the Government of Uzbekistan adopted decisions on ‘Regulations on the Register of Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements’ and ‘Regulations on the Procedure for Conducting Historical and Cultural Expertise of Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements’ on 23 February 2011.

The resolution on ‘Additional Measures for the Protection, Scientific Study, and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage’ was issued by the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on 29 December 2023.

A comprehensive legal framework and favorable conditions for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage elements have been established in Uzbekistan through the above-mentioned initiatives in the field of development of national legislation and adoption of governmental normative acts.

Meanwhile, there are four registers of intangible cultural heritage elements in the Republic of Uzbekistan:

1. National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements in Need of Urgent Safeguarding

2. National List of Elements to be Nominated for Inclusion in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity
3. National Register of Good Safeguarding Practices of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
4. Local Registers of Intangible Cultural Heritage Elements

Currently, there are the following 14 elements (seven national and seven multinational) from Uzbekistan inscribed in UNESCO's List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

- Cultural Space of Boysun District (proclaimed as UNESCO Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2001) – in 2008
- Shashmaqom Music (proclaimed as UNESCO Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2003, jointly with Tajikistan) – in 2008
- Navruz (Spring New Year Festival) initially in 2009 and later in 2016 with additional State Parties (jointly with Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, India, Iran, Iraq, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, and Türkiye)¹
- Katta Ashula – in 2009
- Askiya, the Art of Wit – in 2014
- Palov Culture and Traditions – in 2016
- Khorazm dance, Lazgi – in 2019
- Art of Miniature (jointly with Azerbaijan, Iran, and Türkiye) – in 2020
- Bakhi Art (traditional storytelling art) – in 2021
- Sericulture and Traditional Production of Silk for Weaving (jointly with Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Tajikistan, Türkiye, and Turkmenistan) – in 2022
- Telling tradition of Nasreddin Hodja Anecdotes (jointly with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkiye, and Turkmenistan) – in 2022
- Art of Illumination – Tazhib (jointly with Azerbaijan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Türkiye) – in 2023

¹ The 19th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (Asuncion, Republic of Paraguay, 2–7 December 2024) included Mongolia in the list of States Parties.

- Iftar and Its Socio – Cultural Traditions (jointly with Azerbaijan, Iran, and Türkiye) – in 2023
- Ceramic Arts in Uzbekistan – in 2023

Moreover, the Margilan Crafts Development Centre (safeguarding of the atlas and adras making traditional technologies) was inscribed in the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices in 2017. It was the first element from Central Asia to be added to the Register of Good Safeguarding Practices.

It should be noted that the Government of Uzbekistan encourages public-private and global-local partnership in the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage by organizing various international festivals, such as ‘Boysun Bakhori – Spring in Boysun’, ‘Aslar Sadosi – Echo of the Ages’, ‘Sharq Taronalari – Oriental Melodies’ in Samarkand, ‘Namangan Flower Festival’, ‘Bukhara Silk and Spices Festival’ in Bukhara, ‘Atlas Festival’ in Margilan, ‘Traditional Crafts Festival’ in Kokand, ‘Maqom Arts Forum’ in Shakhrisabz, ‘Bakhshi Arts Festival’ in Termez and Nukus, and ‘Traditional Culinary Festival’ in Tashken and in Karakalpakstan.

The Government of Uzbekistan also supports the integration of elements of the intangible cultural heritage into the formal and non-formal education system. Training courses on epic storytelling art and maqom performing art were introduced into the curriculum of music and art schools, such as the Yunus Rajabi National Institute of Musical Art, specialized music schools on Bakhshi art in Nukus and Termez. From the 2022/2023 school year, all general education students in Uzbekistan will have the opportunity to learn to play at least one traditional musical instrument.

Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage

Books and articles on intangible cultural heritage are being written, doctoral dissertations are being defended, and more than ten educational-methodological guides and over 150 scientific articles have been published based on national grants.

Safeguarding Uzbekistan’s intangible cultural heritage requires a comprehensive approach, including education, legislative initiatives, active community involvement, and collaboration with international organizations.

Summary of Data Collection Activities

Data collection activities were coordinated and conducted by the ‘Umrboqiy Meros’ Center. In order to promote close collaboration between different stakeholders, the ‘Umrboqiy Meros’ Center created a Task Force Team consisting of experts from various organizations, such as the Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture, Bukhara State University, the National Library of Uzbekistan, the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, the Republican Association ‘Hunarmand/Craftsmen’, the Bukhara Regional Center for Craft Development, Nizami Pedagogical University, and the Institute of Uzbek Language, Literature, and Folklore under the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan. Data collection activities combined both desk research and field studies.

Information on over 160 publications on Uzbekistan’s intangible cultural heritage was gathered. The data collection process aimed to balance the five domains outlined in UNESCO’s Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage and to ensure equal representation of intangible cultural heritage elements from various regions of Uzbekistan. Thus, the research data covered oral traditions and expressions, including language as a bearer of intangible cultural heritage, performing arts, communal traditions, rituals, festive events, knowledge and skills related to nature and the universe (such as food preparation), and knowledge and skills related to handicrafts.

Analysis of Collected Data

Over the span of three years (FY 2022, 2023, and 2024), 160 publications and information on intangible cultural heritage (ICH) were collected and submitted to IRCL. Of these, 20 were submitted in FY 2022, 70 in FY 2023, and another 70 in FY 2024.

Analysis of this data:

FY 2022: Out of 20 publications, all 20 were books. Among them, 10 on craftsmanship, 6 on performing arts, 1 covering all ICH fields, and 3 on national rituals.

FY 2023: Out of 70 publications, 62 were books, and 8 were articles. Among them, 16 on craftsmanship, 21 on performing arts, 14 on national rituals, 6 on culinary arts, 9 on horticulture, and 4 on language.

FY 2024: Out of 70 publications, 29 were books, and 41 were articles. Among them, 25 on craftsmanship, 20 on performing arts, 4 on ethnology, 6 on linguistics, 1 on horticulture, 7 on national customs and rituals, 4 on culinary arts, 2 on traditional games, and 11 on folk oral literature.

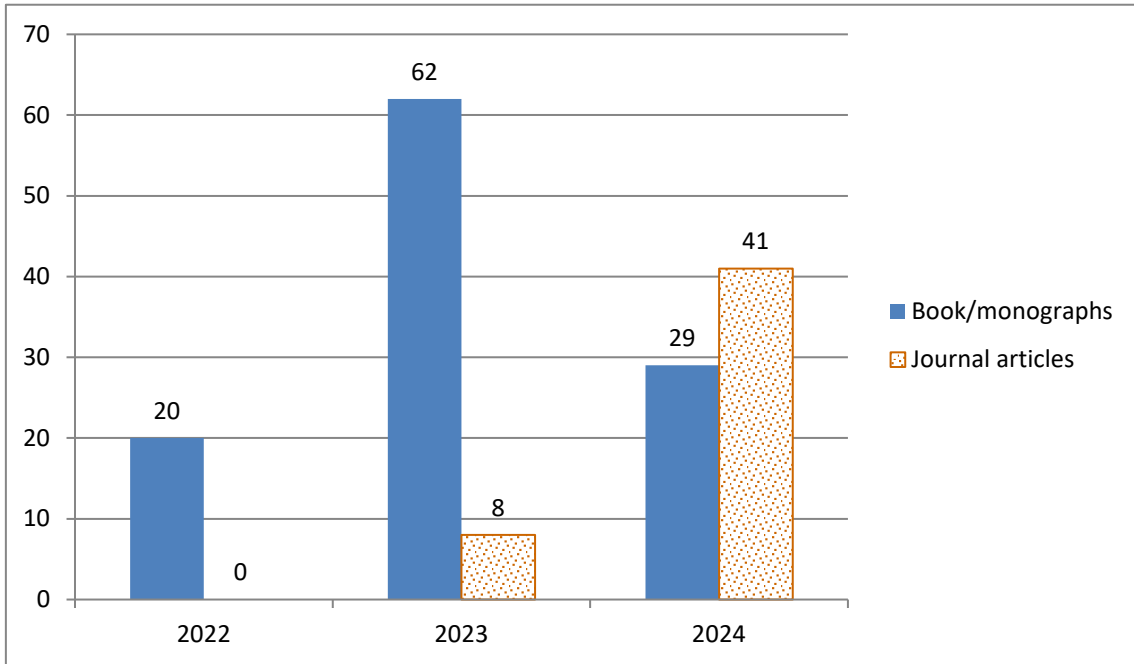


Figure 1: Distribution of Publication Sources

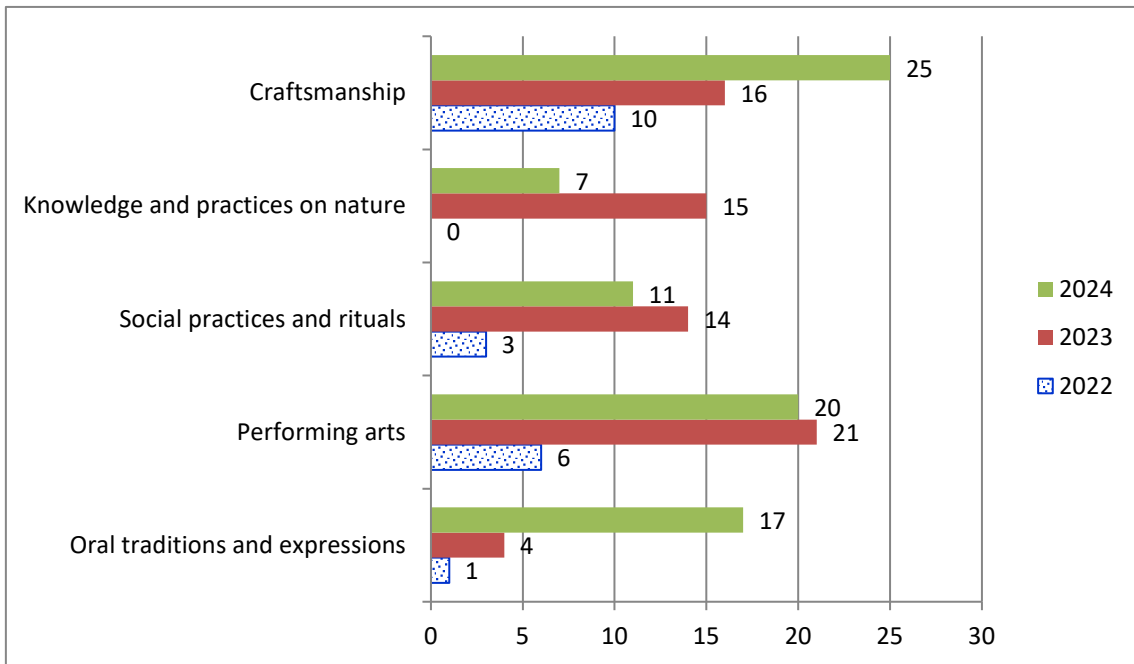


Figure 2: Distribution of ICH Domains in Research Publications

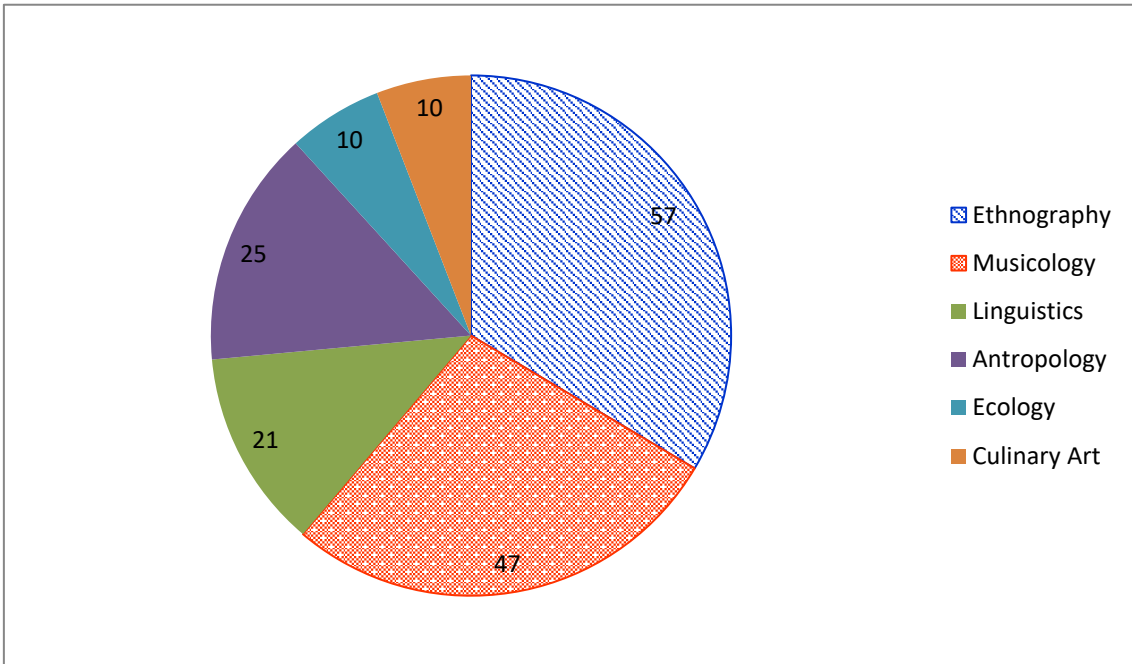


Figure 3: Distribution of Academic Fields of ICH Studies

In **FY 2022**, a categorized bibliography of 132 publications were prepared, including 53 journal articles, 16 academic dissertations, 62 books, and 3 other publications.

In **FY 2023–2024**, a strategic plan focusing on ICH elements, genres, academic disciplines, regions, and other key areas was created to guide future activities.

Process of Data Collection

The ‘Umrboqiy Meros’ Center began to collect the required data for the IRCI Research Database in FY 2022.

According to the IRCI requirements, in FY 2022 we had to collect and submit 20 pieces of data. We started the work by attracting partner organizations. In FY 2022, Bukhara State University and the Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture collaborated with us.

We first decided to include the research on ICH conducted by the staff of the ‘Umrboqiy Meros’ Center (Lutfiya Mirzaeva, Urazali Tashmatov, Binafsha Nodir). Then, with their consent, we submitted the research of Professor Jahongir Mamatkosimov of the Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture, Doctor of Philology Darmonoy Urayeva of Bukhara State University for inclusion in the IRCI database.

During the data collection process, we paid special attention to the annotation of the research. In doing so, we tried to fully disclose its content and essence. At the same time, we included a photo of the cover of each book.

We tried to cover as many genres and areas of intangible cultural heritage as possible, but it is difficult to do so based on 20 studies.

All of the data collected in FY 2022 pertains to books. It should be noted that the research on the ICH for writing these books was mainly conducted in 2011–2022.

In the second phase of data collection, i.e. in FY 2023, the number of our partners increased. The Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan and the National Library of Uzbekistan named after Alisher Navoi also joined them. Professor Adhamijon Ashurov, Doctor of Historical Sciences, collaborated with us from this institute. Books and articles written by him were included in the database for FY 2023 and 2024. In addition to books, in FY 2023, articles from the collection of materials of international conferences held in Uzbekistan were also included. Most of these articles are related to handicrafts and performing arts. Articles were also selected from the scientific and methodological journal ‘Eastern Culture and Art’, the scientific electronic journal ‘Foreign Philology’, the scientific electronic journal ‘Economy and Innovative Technologies’, and the journal ‘Khorezm Mamun Academy Newsletter’.

In the third phase of the project, i.e. in FY 2024, we collaborated with four more state and non-state organizations. They are: Association ‘Hunarmand’ of the Republic of Uzbekistan, Center for the Development of Handicrafts of the Bukhara Region, Nizami Pedagogical University, Institute of the Uzbek Language, and Literature and Folklore at the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan. Of course, the more partner organizations participate in the research work, the more publications will be collected for IRCI’s database which will expand the scope of the research covered.

The analysis below summarizes the distribution of ICH genres, academic fields, and written languages for the publications uploaded to the IRCI Research Database for the data collection period from FY 2022 to 2024.

ICH genres, collected for the IRCI project, Phase 1 (FY 2022)

- Oral tradition – 15%
- Performing art – 10%
- Traditional craftsmanship – 12%
- Food culture – 8%
- Social practices – 9%
- Worldview – 7%
- Festive events – 8%
- Rituals – 6%
- Performing arts: music – 10%
- Performing arts: dance – 7%
- Performing arts: drama – 8%

Academic fields of study collected for the IRCI project, Phase 1 (FY 2022)

- Heritage management – 14%
- Ethnochoreology – 10%
- Ethnomusicology – 12%
- Cultural studies – 11%
- Culturology – 9%
- Folklore – 13%
- Anthropology – 10%
- Mythology – 7%
- Cookery – 6%
- Ethnography – 8%

The data collected in the first phase of the project were written in Uzbek, Russian, and English, and were analysed as follows:

- In Uzbek, Russian and English – 4
 - In Russian – 1
 - In Uzbek – 1
 - In Uzbek and Russian – 3
 - In Uzbek and English – 11
- Total – 20

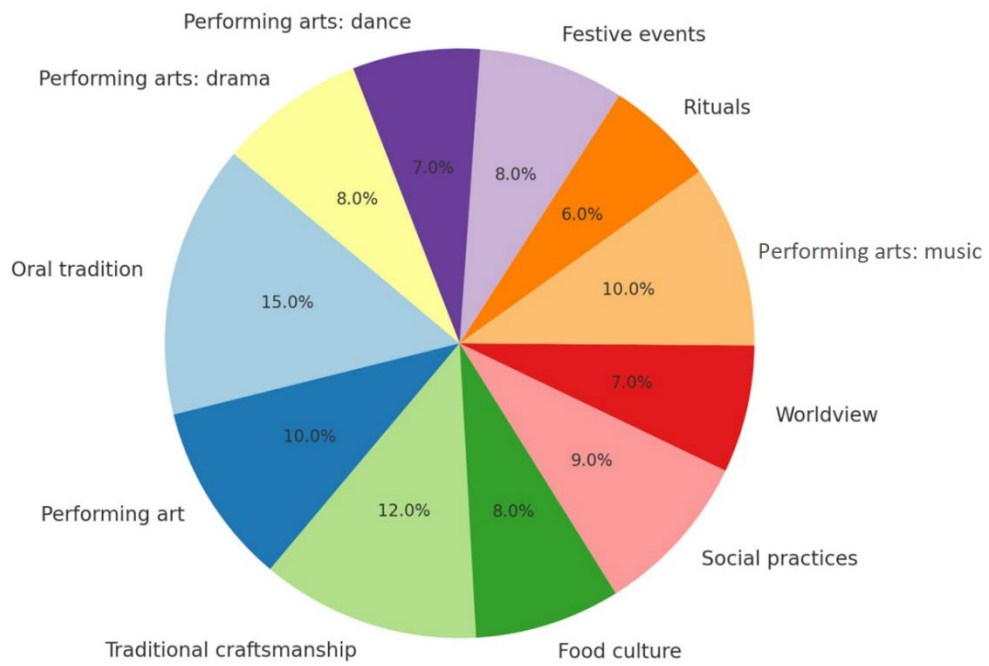


Figure 4: Distribution of ICH genres in Studies Uploaded to the IRCI Research Database in Phase 1

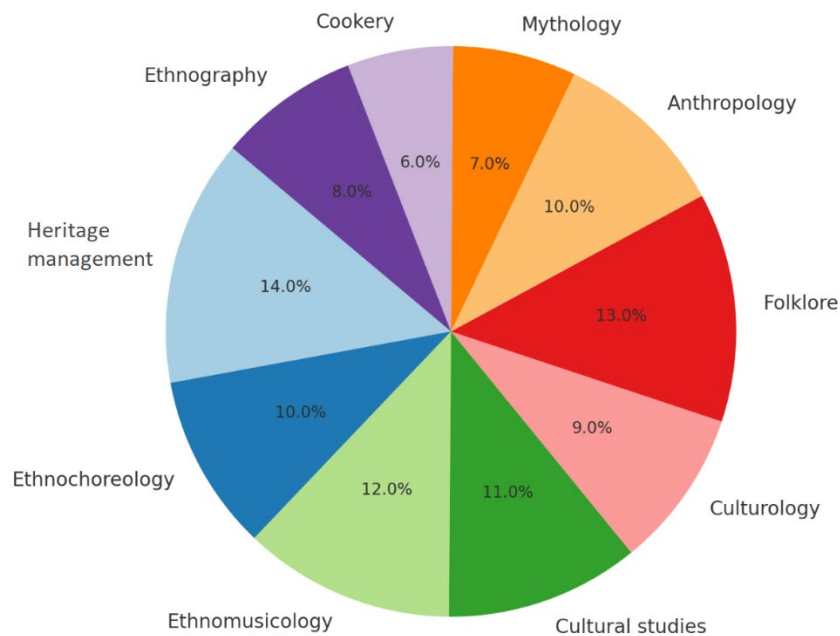


Figure 5: Distribution of Academic Fields of Uzbek ICH Studies Uploaded to the IRCI Research Database in Phase 1

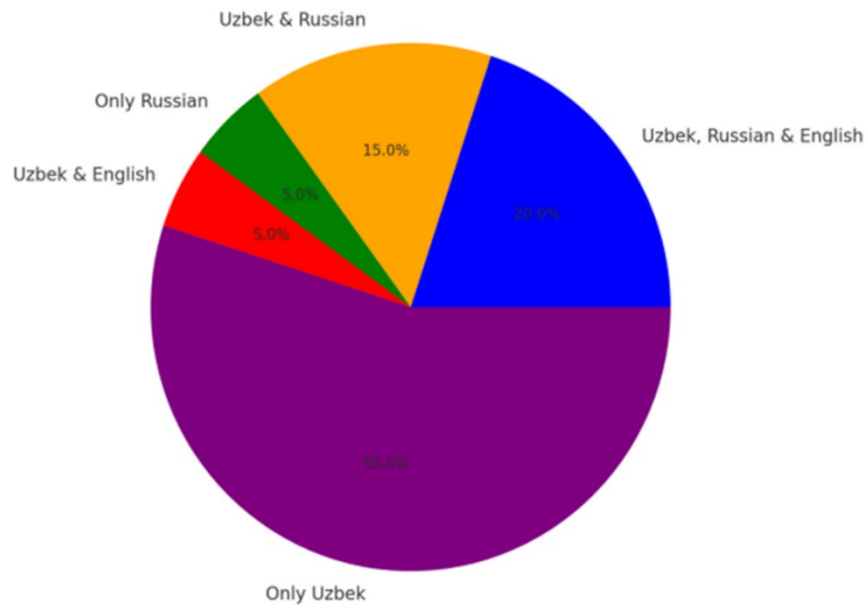


Figure 6: Distribution of Languages Used in Published ICH Studies Uploaded to the IRCI Research Database in Phase 1

ICH genres, collected for the IRCI project, Phase 2 (FY 2023)

- Traditional craftsmanship – 18%
- Performing arts: music – 15%
- Social practices – 14%
- Ecological knowledges and practices – 12%
- Oral tradition – 16%
- Rituals – 12%
- Festive events – 13%

Academic fields of study collected for the IRCI project, Phase 2 (FY 2023)

- Folklore – 14%
- Cultural studies – 13%
- Heritage management – 15%
- Anthropology – 12%
- Mythology – 10%
- Ethnomusicology – 11%
- Cookery – 8%
- Ethnography – 9%
- Medicine – 8%

The data collected in the second phase of the project were written in Uzbek, Russian and English and were analysed as follows:

- In Uzbek, Russian, and English – 1
- In Russian – 14
- In Uzbek and English – 2
- In Uzbek – 53

Total – 70

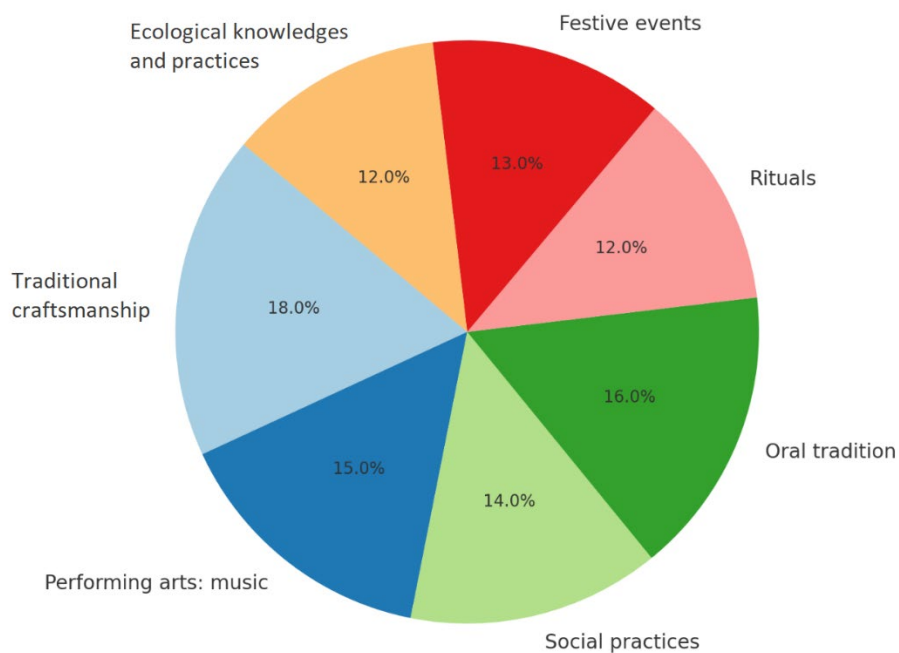


Figure 7: Distribution of ICH Genres in Studies Uploaded to the IRCI Research Database in Phase 2

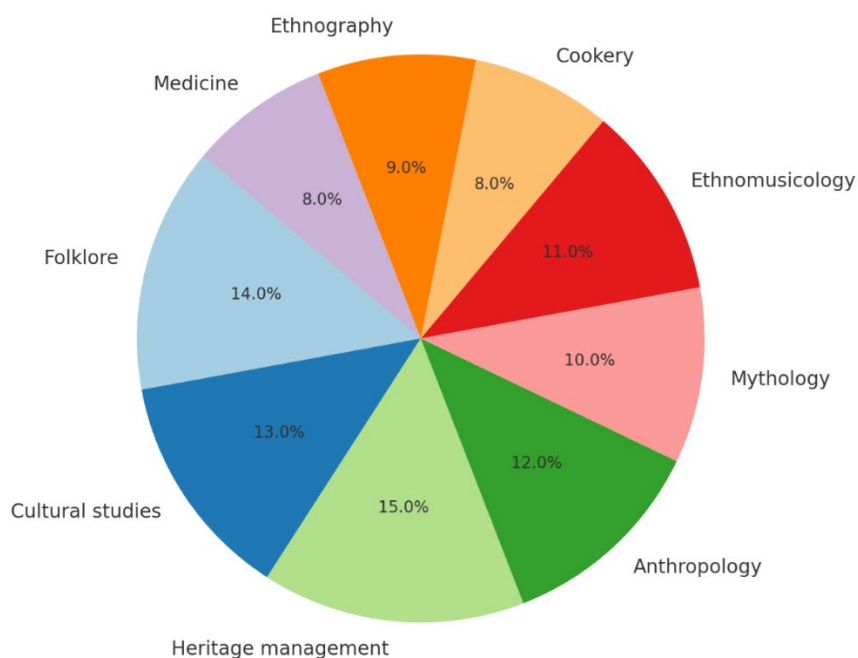


Figure 8: Distribution of Academic Fields of Uzbek ICH Studies Uploaded to the IRCI Research Database in Phase 2

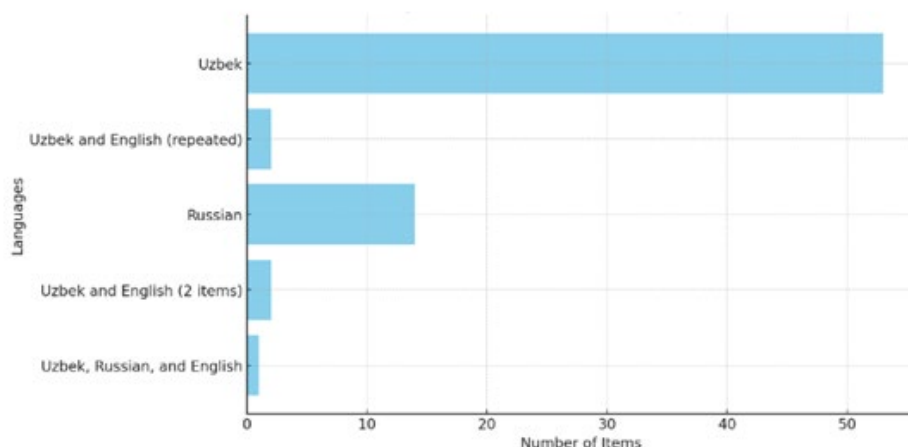


Figure 9: Distribution of Languages Used in Published ICH Studies Uploaded to the IRCI Research Database in Phase 2

ICH genres collected for the IRCI project, phase 3 (FY 2024)

- Traditional craftsmanship – 16%
- Social practices – 15%
- Rituals – 14%
- Oral tradition – 10%
- ICH in general – 9%
- Ecological knowledges and practices – 3%
- Carving – 7%
- Performing arts: music – 8%
- Festive events – 7%
- Performing art – 6%
- Food culture – 5%

Academic fields of study collected for the IRCI project, Phase 3 (FY 2024)

- Heritage management – 14%
- Cookery – 8%
- Ethnochoreology – 10%
- Cultural studies – 13%
- Ethnomusicology – 12%
- Folklore – 11%
- Mythology – 9%
- Culturology – 7%
- Handicraft – 6%
- Ethnology – 6%
- Ethnography – 4%

The data collected in the third phase of the project were written in Uzbek, Russian, and English and were analysed as follows:

- In English – 1
 - In Uzbek and English – 1
 - In Russian – 8
 - In Uzbek – 60
- Total – 70

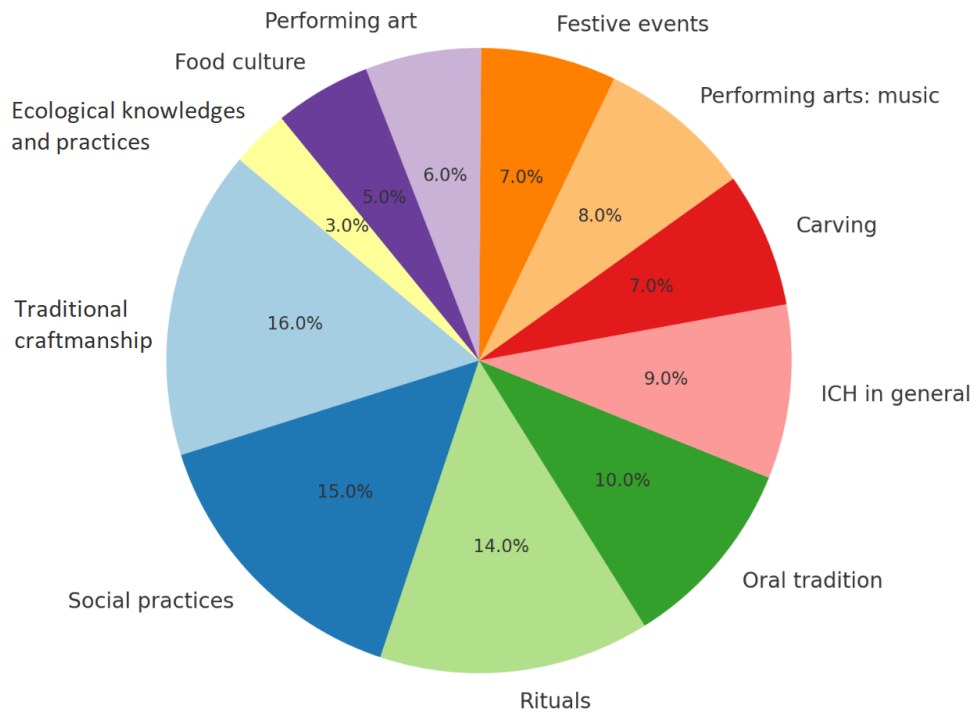


Figure 10: Distribution of ICH Genres in Studies Uploaded to the IRCI Research Database in Phase 3

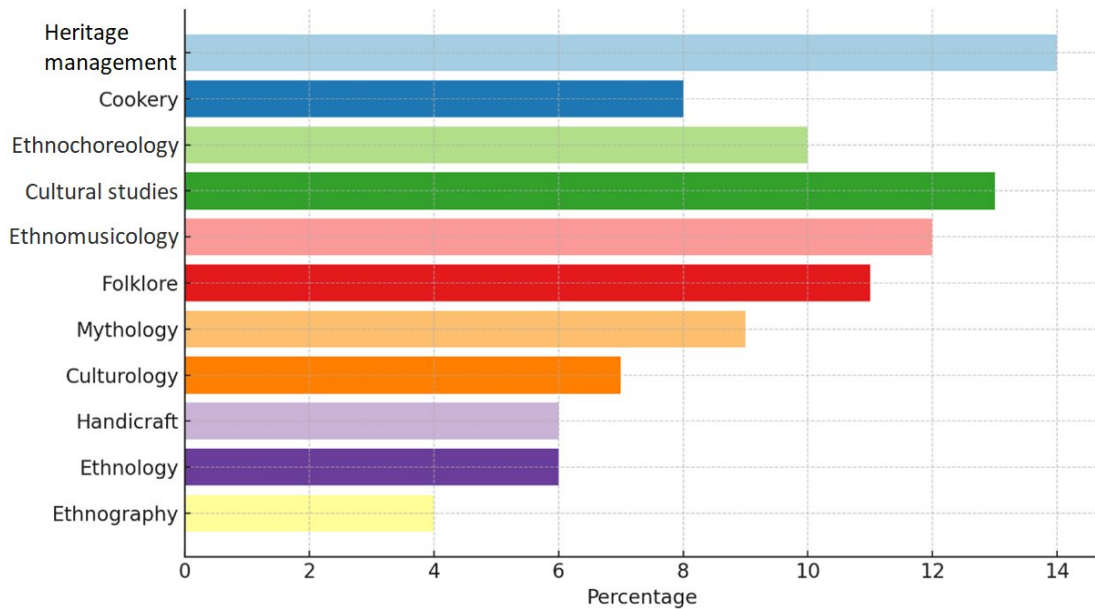


Figure 11: Distribution of Academic Fields of Uzbek ICH Studies Uploaded to the IRCI Research Database in Phase 3

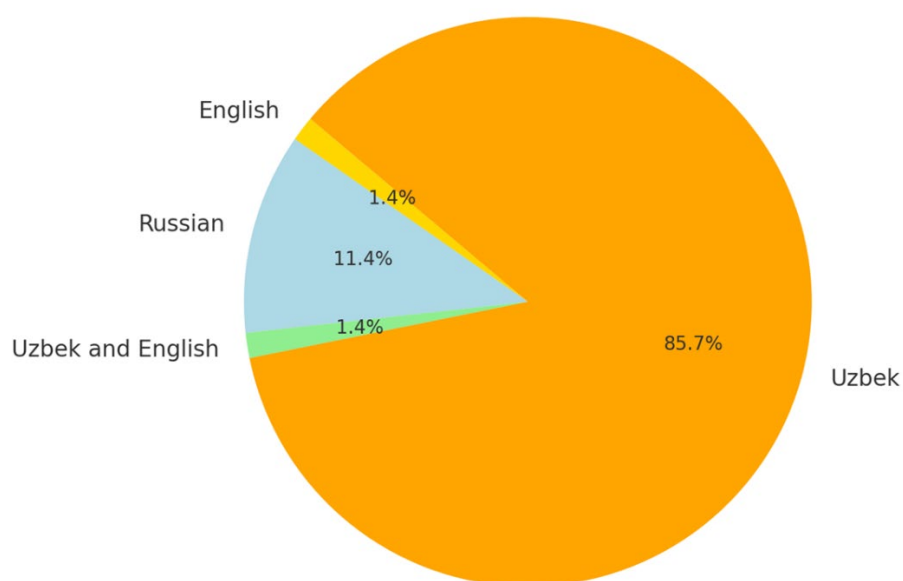


Figure 12: Distribution of Languages Used in Published ICH Studies Uploaded to the IRCI Research Database in Phase 3

Based on the data collection of the third phase, we found that traditional craftsmanship, social practices, and rituals are the most popular genres. If we look at the distribution of academic fields of study, heritage management, cultural studies, and ethnomusicology are the most popular, followed by folklore and ethnochoreology.

Scientific and Practical Conferences and Seminars Held within the Framework of the IRCI project on the Initiative of the ‘Umrboqiy Meros’ Center

The following international and national conferences and seminars were held by the ‘Umrboqiy Meros’ Center.

On 9 September 2023, an international scientific and practical conference on the topic ‘Harmony of Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage’ was held to commemorate the 20th anniversary of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the anniversary of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage. The conference was held online and offline at the center’s main partner, Bukhara State University. The conference was attended by representatives of international organizations and scientists, professors from nine countries (Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Japan, Mongolia, Bangladesh, Russia,

Iran, and Türkiye), as well as specialists in intangible cultural heritage from the International Institute for Central Asian Studies (IICAS).

The following issues were discussed at the conference:

- Problems in the implementation of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
- Problems in the implementation of the Convention concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage
- An integrated approach in programmes for the protection of tangible and intangible heritage
- The role of public organizations in the protection, preservation and promotion of tangible and intangible cultural heritage

Work carried out in Uzbekistan in the areas of knowledge and skills related to the above issues, research work, expeditions, scientific research, published books, scientific articles, achievements in the protection of tangible and intangible cultural heritage, and existing problems, including the protection of intangible cultural heritage in foreign countries. The advanced experiences of scientists from leading universities of the republic and abroad, professors, teachers, scientific workers, and researchers working in the secondary specialized and higher education system on protection of intangible cultural heritage were discussed.

A book collection containing the materials of the conference was prepared and published. This collection was distributed to the participants of the conference.

On 19 October 2024, a national scientific and practical seminar was held on the topic 'Preservation and promotion of knowledge and skills related to craftsmanship, performing arts: problems and opportunities'.

This seminar was held in an online and offline format at our main partner Bukhara State University, in collaboration with the Association 'Hunarmand', the Bukhara Regional Center for the Development of Crafts, the Bukhara Regional Department of Culture, the Bukhara Regional Branch of the State Philharmonic of Uzbekistan, the Bukhara Regional 'Sun of Sogdian Tajik-Persian National Cultural Center', the 'Bukhara Waves' Ensemble, and the 'Mavrigi' Ensemble.

The purpose of the seminar is to discuss methods of supporting and transmitting knowledge in traditional crafts and performing arts, to demonstrate the role of modern technologies in their preservation and development, to provide seminar participants with information about publications on crafts and performing arts, to hold a book exhibition, and to conduct master classes.

The seminar was attended by professors, teachers, masters, specialists engaged in intangible cultural heritage, researchers, craftsmen, artists, and industry specialists from Uzbekistan.

The seminar included presentations on the development of traditional crafts and performing arts in Uzbekistan during the years of independence, problems and opportunities, master classes (practical exercises) on traditional crafts such as goldsmithing, jewelry, carving, miniature painting, embroidery, abru-bahor art, and performing arts such as playing melodies on national musical instruments and performing folklore songs, and videos prepared by the 'Umrboqiy Meros' Center reflecting the promotion, preservation, and development of traditional crafts and performing arts.

Participation of the 'Umrboqiy Meros' Center in Seminars and Events Organized by IRCI

In 2022, an online seminar was held with IRCI. It was attended by eight specialists, scientists, and the center's management in ICH from Uzbekistan.

On 22 February 2024, IRCI organized a regional workshop dedicated to its research data collection project, which was attended by nine people, including the management and staff of the 'Umrboqiy Meros' Center, as well as representatives of other partner organizations of IRCI.

Lutfiya Mirzayeva, Director of the 'Umrboqiy Meros' Center, delivered a report at the workshop. She provided the information about the work carried out on this project in FY 2023 and plans for the next fiscal year.

In FY 2023, the 'Umrboqiy Meros' Center took part in IRCI's collection of information on institutions and organizations associated with ICH. Information was prepared and sent to IRCI by the following 13 organizations:

- Association 'Hunarmand' of the Republic of Uzbekistan

- ‘Umrboqiy Meros’ Center for Promotion of Culture and Art of Uzbekistan
- Museum of Applied Arts of Uzbekistan
- Kamoliddin Behzod National Institute of Arts and Design
- Academy of Arts of the Republic of Uzbekistan
- ‘Entrepreneurial Woman’ Association (NGO)
- Benkov National Arts College
- Association of Artists of Uzbekistan (NGO)
- Caravansarai of International Culture
- ‘VORIS’ Folklore and Intangible Cultural Heritage Development Center (NGO)
- Bukhara Crafts Development Center
- State Institute of Art and Culture of Uzbekistan
- Bukhara State University

Status and Directions of Research in the Field of ICH

In Uzbekistan, books, pamphlets, articles, scientific works, and dissertations are being written on the five domains of intangible cultural heritage identified in the Convention. This certainly serves a great purpose in increasing the knowledge of society about intangible cultural heritage. After the ratification of the 2003 UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage by Uzbekistan (2008), attention to intangible cultural heritage increased, and the number of books, articles, and dissertations increased dramatically. In particular, the number of studies covering the knowledge and skills of intangible cultural heritage, performing arts, national customs and rituals, knowledge of nature and the universe, cooking, and other areas has increased. As a result, society has also become more knowledgeable about intangible cultural heritage. Various republican and international festivals, conferences, and competitions have been organized.

In Uzbekistan, the academic study of intangible cultural heritage aims to document, preserve and disseminate knowledge about these aspects of culture, as well as to understand their significance for the identity and sustainability of communities. One of the important objectives of the research is to raise awareness of the intangible cultural heritage of Uzbekistan (both within the country and abroad).

In November 2022, in accordance with the decision of the 17th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, held in Rabat (Kingdom of Morocco), the multinational nomination ‘Sericulture and Traditional Silk Production of Silk for Weaving’ (Uzbekistan in collaboration with Afghanistan, Azerbaijan, Iran, Tajikistan, Türkiye, and Turkmenistan) and the nomination ‘Telling tradition of Khoja Nasreddin’ (Uzbekistan in collaboration with Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Türkiye, and Turkmenistan) were included in the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

The 18th session of the UNESCO Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, held in December 2023 in Kasane (Botswana), was very successful for Uzbekistan: three nominated countries were included in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.

One of them is ‘Ceramic Arts in Uzbekistan’, and the other two are multinational nominations, ‘Art of illumination: Naqqoshlik’ and ‘Iftar and its social-cultural traditions’ together with Azerbaijan, Iran, Tajikistan, and Türkiye’.

In 2024, the ‘Rubab’ nomination was prepared and submitted for inclusion in the UNESCO list.

Contribution of Institutions to the Collected Data

The data collected in the IRCI project is actually very useful to visualize the distribution of ICH research that Uzbek scholars conduct from year to year. The collected data also shows us that there are certain areas of ICH that were popular and some areas that were unpopular in the focus of Uzbek scholars in a particular year. Moreover, once uploaded, this collected data will inspire other researchers to fill in the research gaps in certain genres or areas. However, the IRCI Research Database is not well-known among researchers in Uzbekistan, hence the database should be promoted more for the benefit of ICH as well as research scholars.

Challenges and Conclusions

If we combine all the ICH studies we have collected in Uzbekistan, we see that the diversity of genres among the results reflects the genre trends of ICH studies in Uzbekistan. Many ICH researchers in Uzbekistan are not limited to research in institutions of culture, art, literature and history, as their work also concerns other non-

governmental non-profit organizations in Uzbekistan: associations, centers, and so on, and thus our data collection contributes to the rich diversity of genres identified in Phases 1–3.

For example, researchers in Uzbekistan working in non-governmental non-profit organizations, such as associations and centers, all contribute to ICH research, although the research volume is small. We also found that research in some genres is carried out by specialized cultural institutions: linguistics, traditional medicine, etc. They prefer to conduct research on social practices and family rituals.

In Phase 1–3 of the data collection, we did not find any research on knowledge and skills related to farming, seasonal rituals, or bread traditions, and in Phase 1, we did not collect research on national dishes. Uzbekistan has a variety of traditional dishes that need to be revived so that they do not disappear, but rather change in line with current lifestyle trends. Therefore, more research on the revival of traditional food products should be conducted in the future. This can be achieved not only by researchers in cultural studies, but also by researchers in agriculture/agricultural technology, pharmacology, and other interdisciplinary fields. Interdisciplinary researchers working together can provide more meaningful research results.

In Phase 1 of the project, we included more research on Bakhshi. The art of Bakhshi was developed mainly in the Surkhandarya, Kashkadarya, Navoi, and Karakalpakstan Republics of Uzbekistan. During the former Soviet Union, Bakhshi studies were on the verge of extinction. Since the first years of Uzbekistan's independence, attention has been paid to Bakhshiism. Today, international festivals on Bakhshi have been organized. Research on the art of Bakhshi also contributes to its preservation and development.

During the process of collecting literature in the first phase, we encountered various difficulties: firstly, during the process of collecting original books and information from authors, it was difficult to contact experts and this process took a lot of time. secondly, since the authors did not have full information about this project, they had various questions and were interested in the benefits of the project for them. The process of answering questions and providing them with full information also took a lot of time.

In Uzbekistan, a lot of research is being carried out on the preservation, study, and transmission of ICH to future generations. This work is carried out by the Ministry of Culture, the Research Center for Cultural Studies and Intangible Cultural Heritage, relevant universities and non-governmental non-profit organizations.

At the same time, the following academic research areas related to ICH are not sufficiently studied: pharmacology, tourism, geology, anthropology, ethnomusicology, linguistics, and among others. Very little research has been conducted on the in-depth study of the following genres of ICH, including proverbs and sayings, riddles, instrumental performance, dance art, traditions related to bread, and knowledge and skills related to the seasons.

Although a number of ICH elements in Uzbekistan have been included in UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, many more elements are waiting for this. For example: tales, myths and legends, proverbs and sayings, alla, o'lan, lapar, khalfalik, Mavrigi, family rituals, seasonal rituals, traditional medicine, puppetry and doll making, cradle-making, chest-making, etc.

Of course, the above shortcomings and problems will be positively solved if the research work on studying ICH is increased.

Conclusion

This data collection project is an excellent attempt to motivate researchers to preserve various elements of intangible cultural heritage. It will help raise awareness among local communities about preserving their cultural heritage and passing it on to future generations. This project highlights the trends of research conducted in Uzbekistan on various genres of ICH. It is also useful to identify neglected genres of ICH that Uzbek researchers could potentially study in the future. Our ongoing collaboration on the 'Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States' project has shown us that we still lack research on certain genres of ICH.



3

Regional Analysis of the ICH Research in Central Asia

Intangible Cultural Heritage in Central Asia and Mongolia: Current Status and Issues of the Data Collection Project

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Introduction

‘Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding: Focusing on Central Asia and Small Island Developing States (FY 2022–2024)’ is a multinational project that covers five countries, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Uzbekistan from the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), excluding Turkmenistan, along with Mongolia, to comprehensively collect and safeguard intangible cultural heritage (ICH), an unprecedented project. This project was launched in FY 2022 as a commissioned project to IRCI through a public grant provided by the Agency for Cultural Affairs.

Central Eurasia, known as the Silk Road, is a unique region where different modes of human survival strategies, such as agriculture, pastoralism, and hunting, coexist [UNESCO 2014]. Across Central Eurasia, two classical ‘cultural spheres’ have been used and widely discussed in a dichotomous manner, one being the ‘steppe nomadic world’ and the other being the ‘oasis settlement world’ [Mano 1977; Mori 1984]. Eurasian-wide interactions and conflicts between these two worlds were stated in *Shiji* by Sima Qian, *The History* by Herodotus, and *The Shahnameh* (Iranian ethnogenesis mythology) by Ferdowsi. Regarding major geographical divisions, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and Mongolia have been classified as the ‘steppe world’, while Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, and Tajikistan have been classified as the ‘oasis world’. In reality, the distribution of ethnic groups and the spread of culture overlap and are multi-layered, so the region, culture, and society would not be a separable ‘cultural sphere’. Nevertheless, these two different worlds are still clearly divided from the perspective of, for example, the Tajik society, which represents the oasis settlement world in the desert. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan also find their identities in steppe nomadic culture, which is directly linked to the contemporary ethnicity of each nation and people. Compared to the plains of Kazakhstan, where the grassland culture is more strongly represented, the Kyrgyz Chuy River basin in the Tianshan Mountains has traces of agriculture from the 6th century at the Balasagun ruins in the Turkic period [UNESCO 2021], and was in a contact zone ‘agro-

pastoral ecotone' termed by Moriyasu [Moriyasu 2007], which was more susceptible to influence from the settled world. The Uzbeks and Turkmens settled down from nomadic lifestyles, and were strongly influenced by Persian culture, playing a role in the buffer zone between Iranian-Persian culture and the steppe territory in the medieval Silk Road. On the other hand, the Tajiks have a different background, having engaged in commerce, distribution, and conflicts with the nomadic world since ancient times, based on their lives in oasis cities. Tajik society is thought to have its cultural origins in old Bukhara during the Samanid dynasty (873–999), inheriting the Sassanid Persian Empire, and gave the greatest contribution to building the foundation for the medieval to modern Silk Road culture to flourish (See details about *Bukhara* by O.A. Сухарева). The intangible cultures of Central Eurasia along the Silk Road were highly emergent and influenced by the fluidity of ethnic groups and national systems, and as a result, multiple common cultures were preserved as intangible cultural heritage.

Among the Central Asian and CIS countries, awareness of safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage was somewhat delayed, and it was fully started with the inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO in the mid-2010s. The independence of the CIS countries and the socio-cultural liberation of Mongolia from Soviet control following the collapse of the Soviet Union (December 1991) awakened a 'post-socialist identity' that confronted the oppressive trend against ethnic indigenous cultures that had continued until the 1980s. It led to the rapid development of a return to ethnic and traditional cultures at both the national and ethnic levels [Soma 2016, 2021]. However, the negative impacts of the dissolution of the Soviet Union, such as the high unemployment rate and poor living conditions in the 1990s, fragile social and administrative infrastructure, declining educational standards and school enrollment rates, underdeveloped economic foundations, and problems such as the civil war in Tajikistan, made it difficult to develop an awareness of reevaluating their own culture and necessity for their safeguarding.

In Central Eurasia, the movement to reevaluate traditional cultures has rapidly grown since the adoption of the 'Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage' at the 32nd session of the UNESCO General Conference in 2003. The number of intangible cultural heritage elements inscribed by the six countries, including the five CIS countries and Mongolia, is 84 as of 2024, and 63 elements are inscribed excluding joint inscriptions (Figure 1). This trend started with the inscriptions of 'Cultural space of Boysun District' [nomination file No. 19] in Uzbekistan proposed in 2001, 'Art of Akyns, Kyrgyz epic tellers' [No. 65] in Kyrgyzstan and 'Shashmaqom music' [No. 89], a traditional

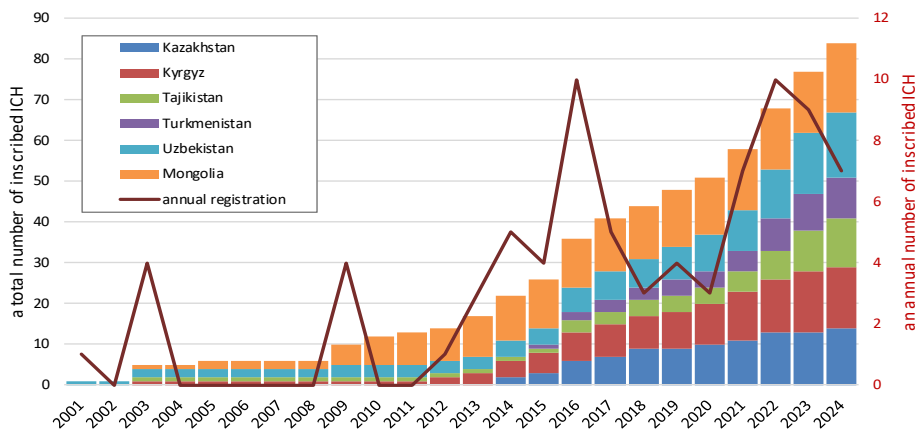


Figure 1: UNESCO ICH Inscribed from CIS and Mongolia (6 target countries, 2001–2024)

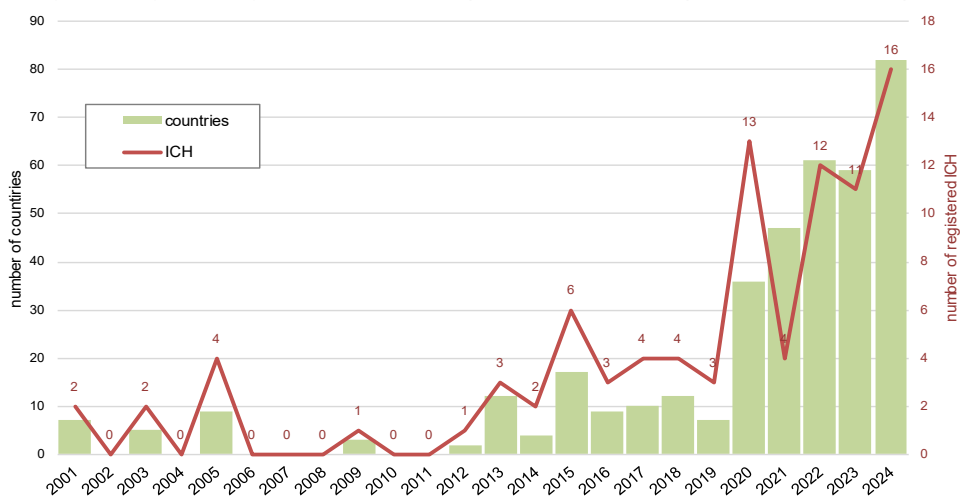


Figure 2: Joint-inscription of UNESCO ICH (Worldwide, 2001–2024)

musical art form jointly proposed by Tajikistan and Uzbekistan in the same year. In the CIS countries, which have an extremely complex ethnic composition, many intangible cultural heritage elements are shared across regions and ethnic groups, and joint inscriptions were made one after another in the 2010s. Looking at the global trend, joint inscriptions of ICH have been seen in large numbers after 2020 (Figure 2). Therefore, it can be said that the Central Asian countries, which peaked in 2016, are ahead of this trend.

Looking at the inscription status of the six subject countries, there are two inscription peaks in 2016 and 2022–23. In particular, the celebration of Islamic New Year ‘Nowruz’

[No. 2097] was inscribed in the name of five CIS countries in 2016, and each country celebrated the decision. In addition, 'Telling tradition of Nasreddin Hodja/Molla Nesreddin/Molla Ependi/Apendi/Afendi Kozhanasyr Anecdotes' [No. 1705], which is sometimes told as a bedtime story for children as a witty tale or short story, is widely known as a folk tale not only among the Tajik and Turkic peoples of Central Eurasia, but also in Turkey, the Caucasus, Afghanistan, and the entire Middle East. In particular, the symbolic intangible cultural heritage that shows the shared relationship of culture, which supported the peak in 2021–22, is thought to be 'Falconry, a living human heritage' [No. 1708] and 'Sericulture and traditional production of silk for weaving' [No. 1890]. Recognition of the value of unique environmental symbiosis, traditional knowledge, and indigenous resource utilization techniques with an awareness of environmental conservation is not as highly regarded in Central Eurasia as it is among the indigenous peoples of the Americas and Oceania. Nevertheless, the recognition of the culture of 'falconry' and 'sericulture,' which could be described as a 'heritage of harmony between humanity and the environment,' [Soma 2015] is thought to add a new dimension to the intangible cultural heritage of the region.

Due to the similar cultural and linguistic basis, the Kyrgyz and Kazakh peoples share several traditional cultures as intangible cultural heritage. In 2014, 'Traditional knowledge and skills in making Kyrgyz and Kazakh yurts' [No. 998] was added to the list, in 2015, 'Aitysh/Aitys, art of improvisation' [No. 997], in 2016, 'Flatbread making and sharing culture: Lavash, Katyrma, Jupka, Yufka' [No. 1181], and in 2020, 'Traditional intelligence and strategy game: Togyzqumalaq, Toguz Korgool, Mangala/Göçürme' [No. 1597] was added to the list. After the collapse of the Soviet Union, Mongolia showed a strong interest in promoting its own ethnic culture from an early stage, and proposed the inscription of 'Traditional music of the Morin Khuur' [No. 68] in 2003, and 'Urtiin Duu: Mongolian Traditional Folk Long Song' [No. 115] in 2005 (the actual inscription was in 2008). Unlike the CIS countries, there is an intention to inscribe a highly unique intangible culture. The number of inscriptions has increased since 2008, partly due to the sudden rise in ethnic consciousness and inspiration caused by the '800th Anniversary of the Founding of the Mongolian Nation' held in 2006.

Unlike the Kyrgyz, Tajiks, and Mongols, Turkic ethnic groups such as the Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Turkmens emerged between the 14th and 15th centuries after the Mongolian conquest in the 13th century. As a result, in order to justify state ownership, their post-socialist ethnogenesis was designed to be supported by both tangible and intangible cultural characteristics for identity formation. The issue of inscribing Central Asia's

intangible cultural heritage is inextricably linked to complex politics that include not only the diversity and multilayeredness of ethnic cultures, but also social instability following the collapse of the Soviet Union and the post-socialist era, as well as the search for national identity.

Research Trends Related to ICH in Each Country Based on Bibliographic Information

The project aims to have each of the five target countries (excluding Turkmenistan) independently collect all written sources and documents related to intangible cultural heritage, both domestic and international, to elaborate a public database established in FY 2014. For the period from FY 2022 to 2024, the total number of documents available in the five countries is summed up to **641 items**.¹ There are **390 documents** with recognizable page numbers, which brings the total publication volume to **3,089 pages** (Table 1). In terms of the country of publication, 93% of the documents were published domestically, and only 7% were published in other countries, including Russia (Table 2). In relation to the place of publication, 78.2% (n=501) of the documents were written in the local language, 8.1% (n=52) of the documents were written in English, and 13.7% (n=88) of the documents were written in Russian (Table 3). The percentage of documents available in English was high in Mongolia at 22%, while in Uzbekistan it was only 0.6%. Meanwhile, the percentage of documents available in Russian was slightly higher in Kazakhstan at 4.8%, but overall, it was around 3–5%. No written documents in Russian were registered in Mongolia. Therefore, it is considered that multilingualization, especially improving linguistic accessibility through parallel writing in English, will be required in the future.

Table 1: Listed Total References

	working year	total	published (with pages)	pages
Kyrgyz	2021–22	78	75	125
Kazakhstan	2022–23	80	48	463
Tajikistan	2022–24	159	97	1384
Uzbekistan	2022–24	160	68	348
Mongolian	2022–24	164	102	769
Total:		641	390	3089

¹ This number is based on data collected for Kyrgyzstan during FY 2021-2022, excluding items not included in the IRCI Research Database, and data submitted from Kazakhstan as of December 2024.

Table 2: Written Language

	native	English	Russian	Native/ English	Native/ Russian	total	English availability	Russian availability
Kyrgyz	53	3	22	0	0	78	3.8%	3.4%
Kazakhstan	40	9	31	0	0	80	11.3%	4.8%
Tajikistan	139	1	16	2	1	159	1.9%	2.7%
Uzbekistan	141	1	18	0	0	160	0.6%	2.8%
Mongolian	128	5	0	31	0	164	22.0%	0.0%
Total:	501	19	87	33	1	641	8.1%	13.7%
	78.2%	3.0%	13.6%	5.1%	0.2%			

Table 3: Published Country

	Local	Russia	USA	UK	Korea	China	other	total
Kyrgyz	66	7	2	1			2	78
Kazakhstan	54	14	3		3	1	5	80
Tajikistan	157				1		1	159
Uzbekistan	156		1		1		2	160
Mongolian	163						1	164
Total:	596	21	6	1	5	1	11	641
	93.0%	3.3%	0.9%	0.2%	0.8%	0.2%	1.7%	

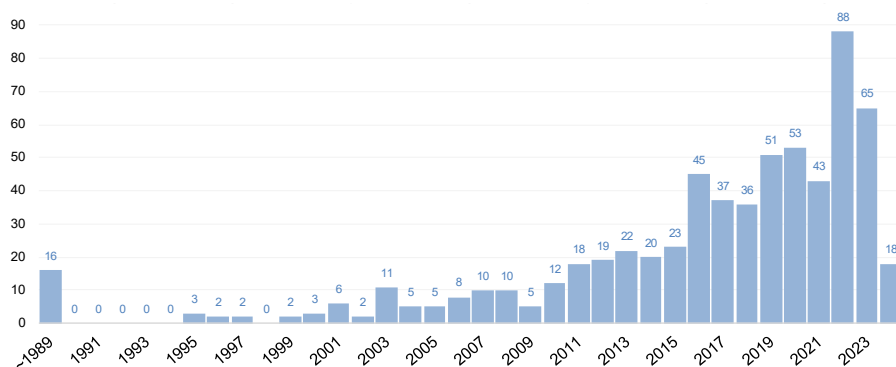


Figure 3: Number of Listed ICH References Published (1990–2024)

Looking at the annual trends in registered publications (Figure 3), culture-related publications in general were sluggish during the turbulent period of the 1990s, but there are signs of recovery from around 2003. After that, the number of documents began to increase steadily from around 2016, with a peak in publications in 2022. As mentioned above, this coincides with the inscription of intangible cultural heritage to UNESCO in 2016 and 2022. The figure for 2024 is slightly lower due to the absence of data from Kazakhstan and non-entered data for each country.

As an overall trend, there seems to be a relatively small number of Russian and English publications. In addition, the criteria for documentation and inscriptions applied in this

project are not standardized across the target countries, resulting in some difficulty in drawing an overall analysis of more precise tendency. Furthermore, it cannot be denied that Russian-language texts from the 1990s were purposely excluded, either due to a psychological antipathy toward the Soviet Union and the Russian language, or due to a preference for stressing their own original culture ownerships. Therefore, as a preliminary summary, it seems necessary to keep on collecting more comprehensive documents and information in the future by experts from Japan and other parts of Central Asia.

As for the analysis focusing on the subjects of ‘Focused ICH genre’ and ‘Relevance to ICH Safeguarding’ specified in the assembled publication list, the following trends were observed in each country (Figure 4/5) (a maximum of five options were entered for each subject, and the analysis was conducted assuming a weighted distribution).

In the ‘Focused ICH genre’ (Figure 4), ‘Social Practice’ and ‘Oral Tradition’ are the most prevalent, and the trends of each country are reflected in other genres. In Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, and Mongolia, which retain the centuries-old nomadic culture of the steppe world, much of the literature information is devoted to ‘Ritual’ and ‘Performing Arts’. On the other hand, in Tajikistan and Uzbekistan, which inherit the strong influence of

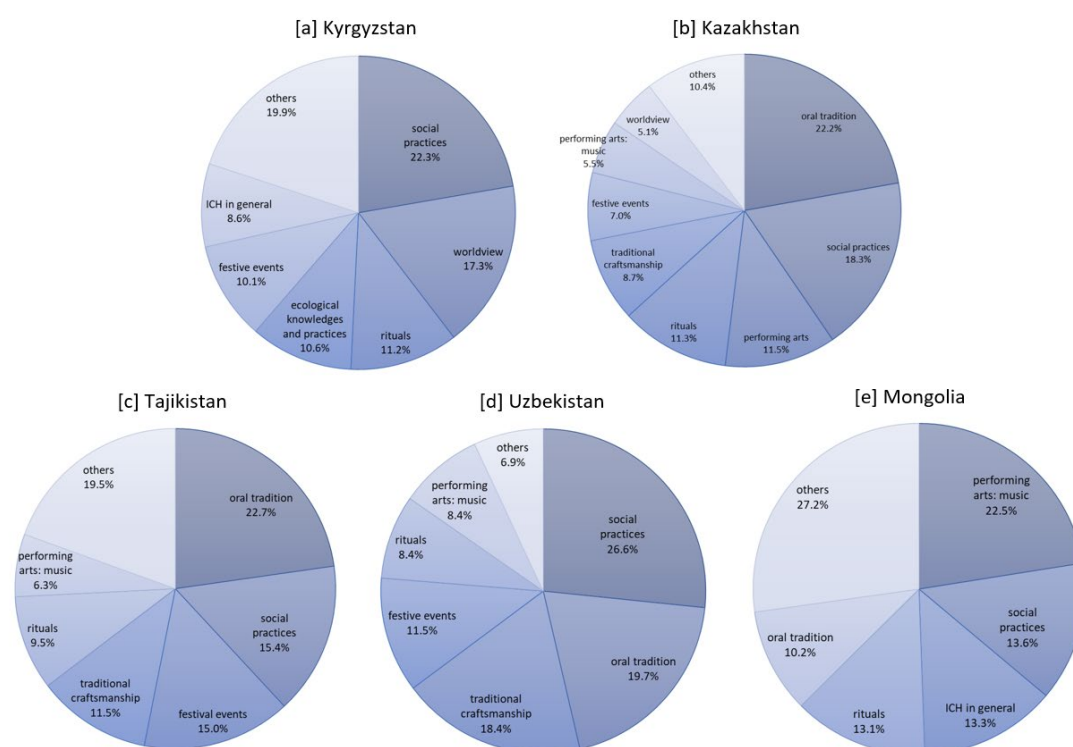


Figure 4: Focused ICH Genre

the Persian-Tajik culture that developed in the oasis settlement world, there are many documents on ‘Traditional Craftsmanship’ and ‘Festival’, which have a long tradition of several thousand years. In particular, Uzbekistan has revived the old traditions of craftsman culture that flourished in the ancient Khorasan region, such as Tajikistan, Afghanistan, and Iran, in modern times (Bukhara as a place of skillful metalwork, Chust as the famous of knife-smithing, Margilan as a center of sericulture and silk weaving, etc.), and its literature list seems to reflect this. In the steppe world, more immaterial rituals and oral transmissions closely related to nomadic animal herding life developed, while in the oasis world, craftsmanship and traditional rituals involving material objects developed. This classical dichotomous tendency can still be seen in the collected list of bibliographies.

As to the ‘Relevance to ICH safeguarding’ category (Figure 5), the highly universal options of ‘Documentation’, ‘Identification’, and ‘Definition’ were excluded on purpose, and the items related to cultural preservation were analysed by the weighted average. Overall, it can be seen that ‘Promotion’ and ‘Awareness’ of cultural heritage are common concerns in Central Eurasia. In this region, where politics and nationalism of the socialist era still persist, the tendency to implement internal and external extension

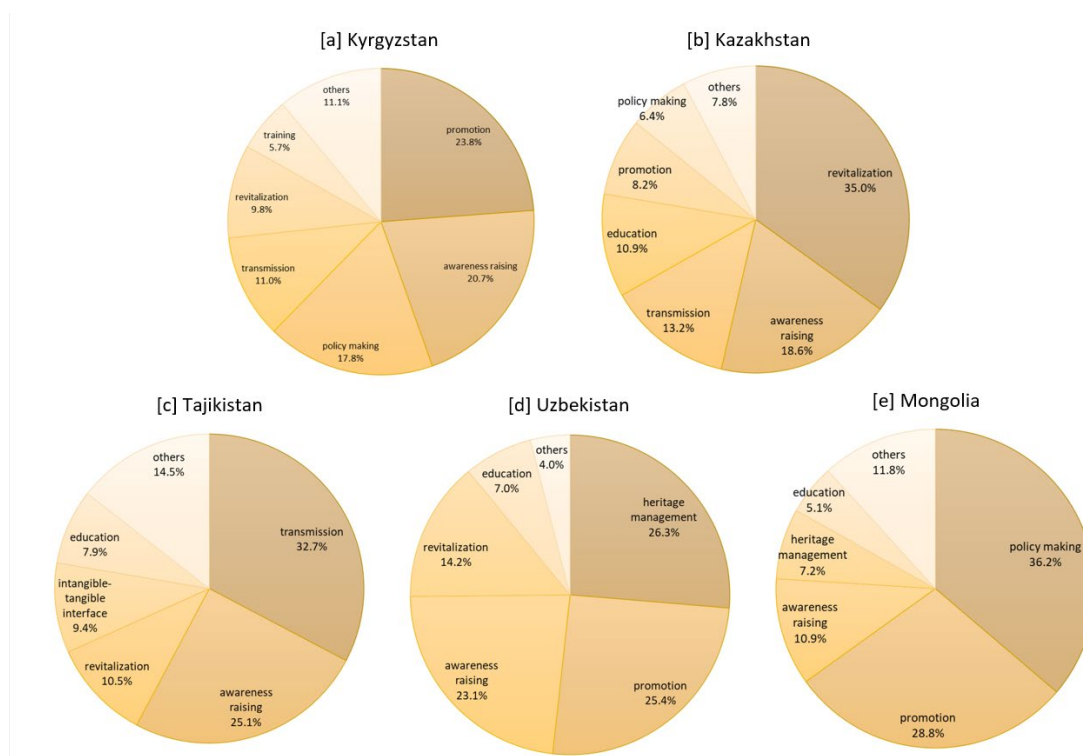


Figure 5: Relevance to ICH Safeguarding

of the culture of one's own ethnic group through indigenous culture continues to this day. On the other hand, concrete implementation and interest in 'Transmission' and 'Education', which should be the most important aspects of intangible cultural preservation, are not yet very high in the analysis of collected literature. The high proportion of items such as 'Policy-making' and 'Heritage Management' in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan, and Mongolia are thought to reflect a top-down social system. In Central Eurasia, bottom-up civic activities through private activities are at an underdeveloped stage. In addition, ethnic groups from CIS countries form ethno-communities as 'minorities' in each country, and traditional cultures not seen in the 'home country' are strongly retained. However, minoritized Tajiks, Karakalpaks, Kyrgyz, and others face difficulties in promoting their own culture due to governmental constraints. The Silk Road CIS countries, originally a mosaic of ethnic groups without borders, need to show tolerances toward ethnic minorities to enable them to promote cultural preservation based on international criteria.

Below is a summary of the situation in each country, and for details, please refer to each country's report.

Kyrgyzstan

Kyrgyz publications of focused ICH genre tend to stress mainly unique worldviews, rituals and ecological knowledge in their social practices (Figure 4a). Kyrgyzstan has been keen on working to protect intangible cultural heritage, including the national oral epic 'Manas', performing arts, rituals, festivals, and knowledge of nature, from an early stage. In the Kyrgyz Republic, the Ministry of Culture, Information, Sports, and Youth Policy is responsible for overall cultural policy initiatives, including the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage, and implements procedures such as creating a national register of elements of ICH, supporting young inheritors, enacting related laws, and organizing activities to raise public awareness. Research and educational institutions such as the Kyrgyz Republic National Commission for UNESCO, the Department of Tourism under the Ministry of Economy and Commerce, and the National Academy of Sciences are involved in the safeguarding of ICH through education programmes. However, there are challenges such as limited collaboration between institutions and the absence of systematic educational programmes to pass on ICH knowledge to younger generations.

According to the project, the Aigine Cultural Research Center (CRC) began working on a database of ICH in 2021. Since 2005, the CRC has been conducting a research project on intangible culture, which has produced 14 publications and 15 documentary films. In the

first year of 2021, the project focused on 10 publications of social anthropology, ethnomusicology, and cultural studies, and in 2022, the project registered 70 publications in Kyrgyz, Russian, and English. During the project period, the project collected 80 publications on Kyrgyzstan's intangible cultural heritage.

In Kyrgyzstan, *the Epic of Manas* has been regarded as the most important symbol of the nation related to the ethno-genesis. However, more academically oriented research on traditional ecological knowledge (TEK) about nature guardianship, ecological and medicinal plant use is very limited so far. Furthermore, the skill of cattle herding by Kyrgyz herders, while largely acknowledged by locals as an ethnic legacy, is not completely developed, nor are related traditional festivals and sports, nature worship, and social behaviors. The biggest issue with integrating academic articles into the database is that many books on Kyrgyz ICH do not meet contemporary academic standards, as well as a lack of basic research directly connected to the Convention and ICH safeguarding principles, which is a serious difficulty in Kyrgyzstan. As a result, there is no clear strategy for passing on these valuable traditions to future generations, despite the fact that Kyrgyz custom is firmly ingrained in centuries of daily life.

Kazakhstan

Kazakhstan's publications of focused ICH genre focus more on oral traditions in socio-cultural practice together with ritual performing arts (Figure 4b). Kazakhstan joined the UNESCO 2003 Convention on December 21, 2011. The legal basis of the 2003 Convention is endorsed by the 'Conception of the Safeguarding and Promotion of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Kazakhstan' (adopted in April 2013), the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Culture' (adopted on December 15, 2006), and the Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan 'On Safeguarding and Use of the Objects of the Historical and Cultural Heritage' (adopted on December 26, 2019).

The documentation survey on intangible cultural heritage (industry, history, and culture) in Kazakhstan revealed plenty of challenges, but in recent years, interest in 'nomadic folklore and oral tradition' has been increasing at a nationwide level. There has also been an increase in publications focusing on wrestling sports, martial arts, sports, and national costumes. However, this trend is not directly related to the 2003 Convention, and the awareness seems to be greatly influenced by the inbound ethnic sports festivals held by the World Ethnosport Confederation (since 2015/Turkey) [World Ethnosport 2024], and the World Nomad Games (since 2014/Kyrgyzstan) [World Nomad Games 2024]. Still, internal awareness of safeguarding and protecting traditional ICH is thought to be under

development in Kazakhstan. One of the major issues of this stagnation is that higher educational institutes and governmental divisions such as the Ministry of Science and Higher Education and domestic universities have not shown any enthusiasm to build up the scheme for the study of oral tradition of local folk, although undisputably they are the basis of Kazakh nomadic intangible culture.

The survey found that academic publications on Kazakhstan's ICH have increased since 1987, with a significant contribution from domestic experts and researchers. However, there is a significant lack of publication volume on the inventory, documentation, safeguarding plan, legislation, and policy-making of ICH. In Kazakhstan, the number of academic articles written in English is increasing now, and some of the old publications are being opened up as electronic resources by the National Library of Kazakhstan, although many publications are still written in Russian. The project also reveals the deficiency about the establishment of a network of specialists and integration of disparate knowledge and information on behalf of cultural protection policies in fulfilling the obligations of the 2003 Convention. Also, one of the site-specific issues across Central Eurasia is that much of the research data and publications in the field of ICH are stored in exclusive libraries of national libraries and universities, making them difficult to access. This would be a common problem in post-socialist countries, where closed-stack libraries and low circulation numbers make it even more difficult to access the designated documents.

Tajikistan

Tajikistan's publications of focused ICH genre are diversified by their themes for oral traditions, festivals, and craftsmanship as a local societal practice (Figure 4c). The Tajik society in Central Eurasia adheres to strict Islamic rules and local disciplines regulating social activities. Nevertheless, the beliefs and folklore of the Aryan people are deeply rooted, and many intangible cultural heritage elements are strongly influenced by Tajik traditions. In 2012, the Tajik government approved the 'National Program for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Tajik People 2013–2020' to promote cultural research, revival, and preservation of the Tajik people. In connection with this initiative, the country has launched programmes for the protection of ICH, including the compilation of the 'Encyclopedia of Tajik Traditional Culture' and the 'National Program for the Protection of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Tajik People 2021–2025'. In response to these cultural preservation efforts, the President of Tajikistan himself declared 2019–2021 to be the 'Year of Rural Development, Tourism

and Folk Crafts’, and promoted the development of ICH, including folk crafts and traditional cuisine, as a national project.

The project in Tajikistan began in August 2022. The counterpart organization, the Institute of Culture and Information (RICI) in Dushanbe, is a national institution responsible for the implementation of the Tajik government's cultural policy and the UNESCO Convention on ICH. The Institute is also a research institute that publishes the scientific journal ‘Messages of Culture’ (Паёмномаи фарҳанг), a quarterly magazine including original research results. The project is being carried out in direct collaboration with faculty and researchers from the National Academy of Sciences of Tajikistan, the National University of Tajikistan, and the State Pedagogical University of Tajikistan. As a result, 142 items of ICH-related books and articles have been compiled. During the three-year project period (FY 2022–2024), bibliographic data on a total of 159 items of publications has been collected in the country, including 63 books, 91 journal articles, 3 book chapters, 1 proceeding, and 1 thesis. The language of the publications was mainly Tajik, with 17 in Russian (including the Russian language), and only 3 in English.

Despite the fact that Tajikistan has a very thick layer of intangible culture and folklore, their significant impact on Silk Road tradition, the so-called Persian-Tajik cultural wave, has been underestimated for many years. This is due to emotional and/or psychological barriers of the Turkish population, who consider Persian-Tajik influences as an obstacle to legitimize the originality of their ethno-genesis. Furthermore, in Tajikistan, there are significant ethnic entanglements among minority groups such as Pamir, Uzbek, Lakai, and Kyrgyz, all of whom claim their own cultural importance. As a result, the gathered publication list has an uneven distribution based on ethnicity. RICI has recently launched a study to investigate the integration of ICH in the tourism sector, as well as proposing solutions to address globalization. This inclusive outreach plan for tourism links should be in great demand across Central Eurasia. To protect traditional culture, it is also thought that more interdisciplinary studies involving ethnic groups across borders are urgently required for the country's ICH. Tajiks have preserved an ancient type of distinctive Silk Road intangible culture, such as culinary culture (e.g., plov and lagman), which are typical soul food of the Silk Road, bread (non) making, and sweets such as halva, as well as handicrafts and dress-making traditions. Ceremonies and rituals are integral to all tangible and intangible cultures. Such ICH-related cultural origin is thought to be attributed to Persian-Tajik culture, hence Tajiks must reaffirm the value of their cultural significance themselves.

Uzbekistan

Uzbekistan's publication list of focused ICH genre provides a theme of greatly shared for oral traditions in social practices, which also reflects the diverse craft-making culture of domestic Uzbek and Tajiks (Figure 4d). Uzbekistan ratified the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage on January 29, 2008, and became one of the State Parties on April 29. On October 9, 2009, the National Parliament of the Republic of Uzbekistan (Oliy Majlis) revised the existing Law on the Protection and Use of Cultural Heritage to add measures for the safeguarding of ICH. Subsequently, the government adopted the 'National Program for the Protection, Preservation, Promotion and Utilization of Intangible Cultural Heritage 2010–2020' on October 7, 2010, and the 'Regulations of Uzbekistan on the Procedures for the Registration of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the Implementation of Historical and Cultural Surveys of Intangible Cultural Heritage' on February 23, 2011, thus preparing the legal framework for ICH. More recently, on December 29, 2023, the 'Resolution on Additional Measures for the Protection, Scientific Research and Promotion of Intangible Cultural Heritage' was issued based on a presidential decree, establishing a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of ICH in the country.

The Umrboqiy Meros Center, a counterpart organization in Uzbekistan, has assembled a task force of experts from various organizations, including Uzbekistan State Institute of Arts and Culture, Bukhara State University, the National Library of Uzbekistan, the Institute of History of the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, the Republican Association 'Hunarmand/Craftsmen', the Bukhara Regional Center for Craft Development, Nizami Pedagogical University, and the Institute of Uzbek Language, Literature, and Folklore under the Academy of Sciences of Uzbekistan, to implement this project. A total of 160 items of publications on ICH have been collected over the three-year project period (FY 2022–2024).

ICH research in Uzbekistan aims to document, preserve, and disseminate the individuality and knowledge of traditional cultures, as well as to link community identity. The data collected in this project will enable the visualization and sharing of the status of ICH research in Uzbekistan, and may involve a wider range of researchers and people. However, research on rituals, customs, and cuisine related to nature and agriculture in Uzbekistan is still necessary to be added, and at the same time, there is a lack of documentation on the ethnic minority group of Karakalpaks and Tajiks. Thus, the principal challenge in Uzbek ICH is to demonstrate the multi-layered history and society of the country, as well as its historical origins and ethnic diversity.

Mongolia

Mongolia's publication list of focused ICH genre shows some concentration on performing arts related to ritual and social practices (Figure 4e). Mongolia ratified the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2005 and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions in 2007. In 2020, the Mongolian government established the Ministry of Culture, separate from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Science, and Sport, and seven departments, including the Cultural Heritage Department, were established within the ministry. In particular, this department is responsible for policies, plans, legal developments, measures, regulations, and legal documents related to cultural heritage protection, and is implementing comprehensive measures for cultural protection policies. In the following year, 2021, a resolution was passed to establish the Agency of Culture and Arts Authority in each province. In particular, this agency is expected to improve the national initiative for the safeguarding of ICH by reorganizing the Governor's Office into the 'Department of Education and Culture' and assigning personnel in charge of cultural policy.

In Mongolia, traditional crafts have been attracting strong attention as ICH in recent years. The National Culture Law was revised in July 2021, and Article 4.1.1 explicitly states that 'cultural heritage will receive special attention and support from the state'. Article 8.5 also states that 'cultural heritage reflecting the unique features, traditional knowledge, and mindset of the Mongolian people will be protected'. As of 2024, Mongolia has independently registered 362 ICH items in seven fields across 23 ethnic groups, and 10,980 people have been certified as active participants. Of these, 83 items were listed on the 'National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding' and 279 items were on the 'National Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage'. In the field of traditional crafts, 77 items are included in the domestic list, and 102 people have been recognized as skilled inheritors based on the 'List of Highly Skilled National Bearers of Intangible Cultural Heritage'.

The project team of the Council for Cultural Heritage Networks and Communication recorded and collected 164 items of documentary publications during the three-year project period. Through the project, the Council plans to create a web database as part of a comprehensive resource and tool for policy formulation and implementation for researchers and policymakers. Based on 'VISION-2050', the Mongolian government is promoting further national policies to safeguard ICH. In particular, measures are being taken to ensure the technical succession of ICH and to develop apprenticeship systems.

However, it can be concluded that research related to the safeguarding and risks of ICH is still in the development stage.

Challenges and the Future of Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding

As mentioned above, Central Eurasia has seen an extremely complex ethnic composition and multi-layered history and society in the national state for several thousand years. As a result, traditions and performing arts that share a common cultural origin have been cultivated. In a sense, the ‘conflict between the nomadic world and the agricultural world’ that spread among the Silk Road countries is a hidden structure of the division between the Turkic and Persian cultures that still exists today. However, Turkic ethnic groups are hybrids that introduced ancient Persian (and Arabic) culture into the steppe nomadic livelihood, so that person and place names, linguistic expressions and vocabulary are greatly derived from the Persian language. Due to the trend of emphasizing ethnic distinctiveness since the collapse of the Soviet Union, there is still a psychological reluctance that makes it difficult for Turkic peoples to accept the historical origin acknowledging ‘the influence of the Persian culture’. Persian peoples, particularly the Tajik people who used to be the rulers of oasis towns, such as Bukhara and Samarkand, which they created themselves, have a strong predisposition to reject Mongolian and Turkic peoples, and some people are sure that ‘all Turkic culture is of the Persian origin’. Therefore, each ethnic group tends to find it difficult to accept historical facts and academic achievements as socially accepted literacy, which may be directly linked to intangible cultural heritage safeguarding and cultural policies. Thus, the urge to clearly link the uniqueness and originality of intangible culture with the growth of ethnicity and nationalism has become a reason to fuel the discussion about the origins of culture.

From a personal perspective as a researcher, based on experiences of life along the Silk Road, there is a discrepancy between the inscription of intangible cultural heritage, which reflects the political orientation of the states, and the sense of ordinary people and local residents. For example, in ‘Flatbread making and sharing culture: Lavash, Katyrma, Jupka, Yufka’ [No. 1811], Tajikistan is not included, but the Tajik community in the Khatlon District is the center of bread-making, where people make bread (non) very enthusiastically in Central Asia, with a wide variety of bread types and detailed ritual connections. Based on ‘Tandir craftsmanship and bread baking in Azerbaijan’ [No. 2120], registration of this culture as a traditional folk may be possible in Tajikistan and other CIS countries. As for ‘Iftar/Eftari/Iftar/Iftor and its socio-cultural traditions’ [No. 1984],

although it is widely practiced in Tajikistan, where there are many devout Muslims, the fact that Tajikistan does not recognize Islam as the state religion may affect the registration of such religion-related culture. 'Transhumance, the seasonal droving of livestock' [No. 1964] is possible to also include the Naryn and Issyk-Kul provinces of Kyrgyzstan and the Kungay-Ala-Too Mountains of southern Kazakhstan, reflecting the Kyrgyz and Kazakh pastoral animal herding culture practiced there.

The multi-ethnic society and the post-Soviet political regime surrounding the distinction of traditional cultures and folk present a quite unusual situation in the context of ICH policies. In this sense, the perspectives of experts from third parties should be integrated into the international safeguarding initiatives of ICH in the Central Asian CIS countries (including part of Mongolia). Central Eurasia is made up of a complicated layer of ethnic groupings, so cultural uniqueness and independent origin with wide influences have been emphasized too much in terms of ethnic identity promotion. However, the commonly shared ICH and its inscription indicate several prospects for reasserting the similarity and local distinctions of mutual cultures. When we turn our attention to the origins of the jointly inscribed ICH, such as 'Shashmakam', 'Osh/Plokh', 'Silkworm Rearing', and 'Atlas and Adras Weaving', most of them indisputably originate from ancient Persian culture before the ethnogenesis of Uzbeks, Kazakhs, and Turkmens. Rather than focusing on the debate over specific origins, Central Eurasian countries should consider the spatial distribution, regionality, and diversity of their shared intangible culture, as well as reevaluate and share the distinct features that have undergone distinctive deepening and growth. This would showcase each country's distinctiveness while also strengthening the significance of jointly inscribed ICH treasures as universal knowledge and practices for all humanity.

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