

A JANGAR-CHAPTER CHANTED BY THE BAARIN *KHUURCH* RINCHIN

NEW DATA ON THE FOLKLORE GENERIC TRANSITION OF MONGOLIAN HEROIC EPIC

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In the present paper, one chapter of the *Jangar* epic, chanted by the famous storyteller, *khuurch* Rinchin of Inner-Mongolian Baarin origin, is discussed from two main points of view: (1) the spread of *Jangar* among Mongols not belonging to Oirats and Kalmyks, and (2) how contemporary social circumstances transform the traditional heroic epic into another folkloric genre, i.e. the so-called *khuuriin ülger*. The chapter ‘Minggan, the Beauty of the World’ told by *khuurch* Rinchin—discussed here—is well known from other *Jangar* publications like the ‘Mingyan the Beauty of the World’ (published in the Thirteen Chapters *Jangar/Jinggar: Takil jula qayan-u üledel Tangsuy bumba qayan-u ači Üjüng aldar qayan-u köbegün üye-in önöčin Jingyar-un tuyui arban yurban bölög*). The life story of Rinchin and his creative innovation in traditional folklore genres are typical phenomena of the contemporary transitional period in preserving and sustaining folklore genres and performance.

Key words: Inner-Mongolian folklore, Rinchin epic singer, *Jangar*-epic, genre *xūrīn ülger*.

Introduction

From the numerous heroic epics of Mongolian oral tradition,¹ the *Jangar*² epic became first known to researchers through Benjamin Bergmann (1772–1856), who recorded and translated two chapters from its Kalmyk version (Bergmann 1804–1805: 181–214). Since then, a series of scholars have recorded and studied variants of

¹ About the Mongols’ epic tradition, cf. Walther Heissig’s (1988) comprehensive work.

² Here we use the simplified English spelling of the titles and frequently appearing terminology, cf. Kalmyk *Jangyr*, Mong. *Jangyar*, *Jingyar*, Khalkha, Inner Mong. dialects *Jangar*. Further the usual abbreviations are used: Mong. indicates written Mongolian, Khal., the official language of the Republic of Mongolia.

Jangar—commonly comprehended as an emblematic Oirat and Kalmyk (Western-Mongolian) heroic epic widely known among the Oirats of Mongolia, Xinjiang and Kalmykia.³ Text-versions of certain chapters (Mong. *bölög*) of ‘classical’ *Jangar*⁴ have also been recorded among the Khalkhas in Mongolia (e.g. Jagdsüren 1968) as well as in Inner Mongolia (cf. below). From this later tradition, one chapter will be analysed to answer questions about the contemporary generic transition in Mongolian folk tradition, namely by discussing a chapter of the *Jangar* cycle (‘Minggan, the Beauty of the World’) performed as *khuuriin ülger* (Mong. *quyur-un üliger*, Khalkha and Inner Mongolian *xūrīn ülger*), i.e. a ‘tale accompanied with *khuur*’. *Khuuriin ülger* is a genre designation and a comprehensive type of performing art in which the performer, the *khuurch* (Mong. *quyurči*, Khal. *xūrč*), i.e. ‘a storyteller’, narrates and sings ancient and contemporary stories, combining the forms of poetry and prose while accompanying his (her) performance on a musical instrument. In the case of the *khuuriin ülger*, it is customarily accompanied on the Mongolian four-stringed fiddle (Mong. *quyur*, Khal. *xūr*) (cf. Figure 1).⁵ This genre is also known in the academic literature as *bengsen-ü üliger* (Mong.).⁶

First Rinchin’s life will be introduced to provide details about his education and how he acquired the ways of oral performance. This is followed by an analysis of some characteristic motifs of heroic epics and the *khuuriin ülger* in order to demonstrate the similarities and differences in content and genre and furthermore to point out the strategies used to preserve Mongolian oral tradition. The referred chapter, which forms the central topic of the paper, was performed by Rinchin (1932–2010), a storyteller (Mong. *quyurči*, Khal. *xūrč*)⁷ from the Inner Mongolian Baarin (Mong. Bayarin, Khal. Bārin) territory.⁸ He recited a version of the *Jangar* chapter ‘Minggan the Beauty of the World’,⁹ later published twice: in *Biography of Epic Tellers and Storytellers ...* (Rinčindorji 2010: 146–217), and the *Bensen-ü üliger-ün degeji, bayarin boti* (Rinčindorji, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1795–1859). As far as we know, no other version of this chapter chanted by Rinchin has ever been recorded and published.

The main sources of the present paper are the above publications and the versions of the heroic epic *Jangar* are used as parallel material.¹⁰

³ For a brief summary of time and place of origin and various publications, cf. e.g. Birtalan and Rákos 2001: 99–102, Chao 2001, Taya and Taibung 2012.

⁴ On the *Jangar* epic editions, cf. *Jangar* 1978, Basnğa 1990, etc.

⁵ Mong. *quyur*, Khal. *xūr* is a general name for various string instruments, in the present paper the four-stringed variant i.e. the ‘four-stringed fiddle’ (Mong. *dörben utasutu quyur*, Khal. *dörwön utast xūr*)—also called ‘four-eared fiddle’ (Mong. *dörben čikitü quyur*, Khal. *dörwön čixt xūr*)—is referred to by this definition.

⁶ On the genre, cf. Hasbatar 1999 with rich bibliographical references; from earlier studies, cf. e.g. Rinčen 1961, and Even 1983.

⁷ In our context *khuurch* is a person who performs epic stories with a ‘four-stringed fiddle’.

⁸ The Baarin administrative unit in Inner Mongolia is divided into two parts: Right Banner and Left Banner; here we refer to the Baarin Right Banner.

⁹ This is the tenth chapter of heroic epic *Jangar* and it was chanted by Rinchin in a version of *khuuriin ülger* (recorded by Rinčindorji).

¹⁰ Concerning the parallel texts, there are two chapters about Mingyan: *Boyda Jangyar qayan-u erkim sayin tüsimel Erke Tuy qayan-u köbegün orčilang-un sayiqan Mingyan Jangyar*



Figure 1. Rinchin's four-stringed fiddle (Photo: Chogtu 2019)

noyan-u jaruča-du yabuγad Altan Törög qayan-u altan sira čoqur ayta-yi ergigüljü abčiraγsan bölög (10th chapter in Damrinjab 2002) and the *Aldarsiγsan Erke Tuy qayan-u köbegün orčilang-un sayiqan Mingyan aldar boyda Jangyar-un jaruča-du yabuγad küčütei Gürmün qayan-i amidu-bar kele bariju iregsen bölög* (the 11th chapter in Damrinjab 2002). There are also two chapters about Mingyan in another *Jangar*-edition: *Orčilang-un sayiqan Mingyan Törög qayan-u tümen sira čoqur ayta-yi kögegsen bölög* and *Orčilang-un sayiqan Mingyan küčütei Gürün qayan-i amidu-bar kele bariju iregsen bölög* (the 8th and 9th chapters in Taya and Taibung 2012). As a matter of fact, the above-mentioned two chapters of Mingyan are from two different books, and 'Minggan the Beauty of the World', which was told by Rinchin *khuurch*, is similar to the plot of *Takil jula qayan-u üledel Tangsuγ bumba qayan-u ači Üjüng aldar qayan-u köbegün üye-in önöčün Jangyar-un arban bölög*. This book, the first Kalmyk *Jangar*-edition, was published in 1910 by W. Kotwicz (V. L. Kotvič) in Saint Petersburg on the basis of the *Jangar* told by the Kalmyk bard Elyan Owla in 1910 (Kotvič 1910). The Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House reprinted it with some additional chapters (cf. below) in *Takil jula qayan-u üledel Tangsuγ bumba qayan-u ači Üjüng aldar qayan-u köbegün üye-in önöčün Jangyar-un tuyuji arban γurban bölög* in 1958.

The Life Story of Rinchin *khuurch*

Rinchin was born in 1927¹¹ in a village called Bayanerdeni located in Inner Mongolian Baarin Right Banner and died in Shilinkhot at the age of 78 on 27th November 2010.¹² He was the son of a herdsman called Sodnamjamchu (Mong. Sodnamjamču), who taught his son to read. Not long after Rinchin was able to recognise Mongolian letters, he started to read by himself a picture book titled *The Race between the Hare and the Tortoise*. Later, he became a pupil of the Kharchin (Mong. *Qaračin*) Xiansheng (先生)¹³ and systematically mastered Mongolian script.

When Rinchin was a child, Buyanibegel,¹⁴ the famous storyteller from the Ongnigud territory,¹⁵ was visiting villages and settlements, like Bayanerdeni, Daban, and Kharamodu and chanted stories about *Tangsuy Lama*,¹⁶ *Zhongguomu*,¹⁷ *Da Tang*,¹⁸ *Dong Liao*¹⁹ and *God Troops*²⁰ to the Mongols. Rinchin memorised these stories and retold them to shepherds' children. When he was seventeen years old Rinchin joined the army and later on went to the Inner Mongolian University of Political Science and Law in Zhangjiakou²¹ for one year. Here he attended different study-related events, learning to perform *khuuriin ülger*.²² Thereafter, he travelled to Chakhar (Mong. Čaqar) Right Banner where he continued telling *khuuriin ülger* to local people. In 1975

¹¹ In Rinchin's biography based on W. Heissig's records, the year of his birth was 1932, cf. *Rinchin's Biography*. https://mongol tales.awk.nrw.de/bards_bio_Rincin.html (accessed 18.09.2019). The data displayed on the site devoted to East Mongolian bards' art are generally identical with the information in the present paper; some minor differences are mentioned in the notes below.

¹² This information was given by D. Čilayunbayan-a, who conducted an interview with the wife of Rinchin *khuurch* (21st September 2015).

¹³ A reputed person of that time referred to as Xiansheng, lit. 'master'.

¹⁴ On Buyanibegel's role in the formation of Rinchin's repertoire, cf. below.

¹⁵ Ongnigud (Mong. Ongniyud) refers to the Ongnigud Banner in Inner Mongolia; its centre is Ulaankhad (Mong. Ulayanqada).

¹⁶ *Tangsuy Lama* is a widespread, brief Mongolian narrative version of some stories from 'The Pilgrimage to the West' (*Xiyouji* 西遊記) written by Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩 (1500–1582), a writer of the Ming Dynasty. *Tangsuy Lama* is the Mongolian name of Xuanzang 玄奘 (602–664), the famous pilgrim monk whose journey to India and consequent adventures of encountering numerous demonic and other supernatural beings constitute the main plot of the Mongolian folk narratives about him.

¹⁷ *Zhongguomu* 钟国母 was told by storytellers on the basis of 'The Heroes in the Spring and Autumn [Period]' (*Yinglie chunqiu* 英烈春秋).

¹⁸ *Da Tang* 大唐 refers to some episodes of the 'The Story of Tang Dynasty'. There is a story about how Li Shimin 李世民 defeated the Sui Dynasty (581–618) and established the Tang Dynasty (618–907).

¹⁹ *Dong Liao* 東遼 ('Story about the Eastern Liao Dynasty') is also entitled as 'The Eastern Expedition of Xue Rengui' (*Xue Rengui zheng dong* 薛仁貴征東). One of the most widespread narratives is dedicated to the emperor of Tang Dynasty called Taizong 太宗, who fought with Xue Rengui 薛仁貴 to win the Eastern Liao Dynasty (1213–1269).

²⁰ *God Troops* refers to 'The Legend of Deification' (*Fengshen bang* 封神榜, *Fengshen yanyi* 封神演義) written by Xu Zhonglin 許仲琳 (?–1560).

²¹ Zhangjiakou 張家口 is a city located in northwest Hebei province.

²² About the origin, typology, genres and motifs of *khuuriin ülger*, cf. Chaogetu's (also Chogtu, cf. Mong. Čoytu, Khal. Cogt) studies printed in Mongolia (Cogt 2011) and China.

he worked in Bayanbulag Commune of Abaganar (Mong. Abayanar) Banner,²³ and later became the assistant storyteller for the House of Tales²⁴ in Shilinkhot (Mong. Sili-yin qota) city.

Rinchin became acquainted with the *Jangar* epic when he was eleven years old and originally heard it from his *naga mama*²⁵ Choirag (Mong. Čoyiray). The brother of Choirag frequently went to Amdo (安多), and among several other places in China to the Gumbum monastery (Qinghai province), Xinjiang and Hulunbuir (Mong. Kōlönbuyir).²⁶ He was a person with wide range of interests, learning much during his journeys. As a result, Choirag heard many stories and tales from his brother. In 1942 Choirag visited Rinchin's settlement and stayed there for three months. During this time he told various tales from the genre *yawgan ülger* (Mong. *yabayan üliḡer*),²⁷ such as the 'Tale of Geser Khan',²⁸ or variants of the 'Tale of the Mangus-monster',²⁹ and the 'Tricky Old Man',³⁰ as well as the 'Stories of the Tricky Wandering Monk, Balangsang'.³¹ The stories of *Jangar* that Rinchin memorised from Choirag *mama* are the chapters of 'Minggan the Beauty of the World Capturing Emperor Gūrmūn',³² and the 'Marriage of Hero Khonggor'.³³ Presumably, as Choirag *mama* would have told several chapters of *Jangar* over the course of dozen nights, Rinchin memorised seemingly the plot of two chapters. As it has been mentioned above, Buyanibegel (1901–1948), the famous *khuurch*, affected Rinchin's art of performance when he was a member of the art troupe in the palace of Kharachin Right Banner.³⁴ He was a celebrated *khuurch* in Inner Mongolia who could tell *khuuriin*

²³ Abaganar (Mong. Abayanar) Banner of Shilingol (Mong. Sili-yin γool) League. Since 1983 Abaganar Banner has been called Shilinkhot.

²⁴ The 'House of Tales' is a place of performance for various genres of Mongolian folklore, among others *khuuriin ülger* accompanied on four-stringed fiddle.

²⁵ *Naga* means 'mother's brother' (cf. Mong. *nayaču*), while *mama* means 'uncle' in Baarin dialect.

²⁶ According to the homepage devoted to the East Mongolian bards' art, Choirag was a monk, and he travelled in several parts of China. Cf. *Rinchin's Biography* (https://mongoltales.awk.nrw.de/bards_bio_Rincin.html (accessed 18.09.2019)).

²⁷ Khal. *yawgan* (lit. 'on foot'); originally this term refers to a method of telling stories without accompaniment from any musical instrument (Xorlō 2007). However, it can also refer to stories and motifs performed with a Mongol four-stringed fiddle.

²⁸ *Geser-ün üliḡer* (Mong.) consists of a chain of short stories related to the Geser epic. The folk-storytellers usually narrate it as a *yawgan üliḡer*. One of the most comprehensive elaborations of the topics connected to Geser's deeds was compiled by W. Heissig (1983).

²⁹ *Mangyus-un üliḡer*, as a *khuuriin üliḡer*, spread in the administrative unit of Khorchin (Mong. Qorčin) in Inner Mongolia. The story is about defeating demonic forces (Mong. *mangyus*, Khal. *mangas*) by the protagonist. It is accompanied by various instruments, and herdsman also narrate it without musical instruments (cf. *yawgan*).

³⁰ Tale and epic whose main hero is a wise and tricky old man in Mong. Arγatu Ebügen.

³¹ *Balangsang* (var. Balgansang, Balgansengge, etc.) is the trickster hero of a Tibetan origin tale- and anecdote-cycle; in some respects it shows similarities with the motifs of tales about the 'Seventy-liar' (Khal. Dalanxudalč), see Birtalan 2015.

³² Mong. *Orčilang-un sayiqan Mingyan Gūrmūn qayan-i bariγsan bölög*.

³³ Mong. *Qongyor-un ger abulγa-yin bölög*.

³⁴ Kharachin Right Banner, the centre of which is Ulaankhad (Mong. Ulayanqada).

ülger in a very humorous and vivid way, and was especially talented in a genre called *urɣuɣ-a qolboy-a*,³⁵ which he was able to both recite and sing conventionally as well as improvise *in situ*. Eventually, he became a representative figure of one of the schools of *khuuriin ülger*'s art.³⁶ In his early childhood, Rinchin memorised and performed the *khuuriin ülger* told by Buyanibegel. Later, he passed on to us some really interesting, anecdotic pieces of information about Buyanibegel *khuurch*. For instance, Buyanibegel usually rode a grey donkey and carried a four-stringed fiddle with him when he went to tell *khuuriin ülger*. We learnt about his humble property. e.g. some sheep, horses and only a few clothes, and that due to his addiction to gambling he lost a flock of sheep.

Rinchin *khuurch* performed two *khuuriin ülgers* to Walther Heissig³⁷ and Rinčindorji from 7th to 9th September 1999: 'Minggan the Beauty of the World' and 'Tangsuy Lama'. He also gave some elucidation on the text: 'I have not changed the plot of *Jangar*, but complemented it with several landscape praises and character descriptions. The name of Mingyan, one of the main characters of *Jangar* has two variants [i.e. Mingyan and Minggan]; I have changed it to Minggan to eliminate pronunciation difficulties' (Rinčindorji, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1758). From Rinchin's aforementioned life story one can recognise how he inherited his *Jangar*-variant and what kind of influences appear in his text:

1. Oirat *Jangar* → *Jangar* of Choirag's brother → *Jangar* of Choirag.
2. Élyan Owla's Kalmyk *Jangar* → Publications of the Thirteen Chapters *Jinggar* in China.³⁸
3. The tradition of Baarin *khuuriin ülger*.
4. The tradition of genre *qolboy-a* performed by Buyanibegel.

The *khuuriin ülger* 'Minggan the Beauty of the World' Performed by Rinchin *khuurch*

Rinchin *khuurch* performed a version of one chapter of *Jangar* epics, namely 'Minggan the Beauty of the World' on the basis of Choirag's performance,³⁹ based in all

³⁵ Mong. *urɣuɣ-a qolboy-a* is a specific genre in Mongolian folklore and performing art. Here the term means performance which can be sung and recited by a *khuurch* or an artist specialised in performing this genre (Mong. *qolboyacı*) even without preparation and improvising according to the situation, audience or event.

³⁶ Art group of Baarin Right Banner; there is a brief brochure about the *Baarin khuurchs*, printed in a limited number by the group in 2009.

³⁷ On the details of Heissig's fieldwork, cf. *Rinchin's Biography*. https://mongoltales.awk.nrw.de/bards_bio_Rincin.html (accessed 18.09.2019).

³⁸ Cf. footnote No. 10.

³⁹ According to Heissig, Choirag performed *Jangar* without musical accompaniment (*Rinchin's Biography*. https://mongoltales.awk.nrw.de/bards_bio_Rincin.html, accessed 18.09.2019).

probability on the tenth chapter⁴⁰ of the so-called ‘Thirteen Chapters Jinggar’,⁴¹ which was published by the Inner Mongolian People’s Publishing House in 1958 (cf. above). He adjusted it to the melody played on the Mongol four-stringed fiddle; hence we call this version ‘*Jangar* of *khuuriin ülger*’.⁴² With regard to ‘Minggan the Beauty of the World’ performed by Rinchin, Rinchindorji, the researcher of various genres of folk literature among others heroic epics, stated the following: ‘Though Rinchin *khuurch* listened to some chapters of the *Jangar* from his uncle Choirag, he performed this story with the Mongol four-stringed fiddle in Inner Mongolian dialect mainly on the basis of the ‘Thirteen Chapters Jinggar’ and added some new motifs’ (Rinčindorji, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1859). Concerning his endeavour to perform the Minggan-episode, Rinchin stated the following: ‘Mongols have loved to listen to *Jangar* in the evening from ancient times until the present for their pleasure. My duty is to perform for you a chapter of *Jangar* which is about how Minggan captured the Gurmün Khan’ (Rinčindorji, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1797).

New Ways of Performance—Using the Mongol Four-stringed Fiddle

The particular pitch of the Mongol four-stringed fiddle can be classified as follows: top, middle, and bass pitched types. Due to the long performance time the bass pitched fiddle is used for singing and narrating *khuuriin ülger*. Therefore, this genre has very distinct features from other kinds of storytelling (Cogt 2011).

Rinchin *khuurch* also narrated the *Jangar*-chapter accompanied on a bass four-stringed fiddle. He played the traditional music of *khuuriin ülger* to perform the text

⁴⁰ Mong. *Orčilang-un sayiqan Mingyan kücūtei Gurmün qayan-i amidu-bar kele bariju iregsen bölög*.

⁴¹ Mong. *Takil jula qayan-u üledel Tamsuy bumba qayan-u aci Üjüng aldar qayan-u köbegün üye-yin önöčin Jingyar-un tuwji arban yurban bölög*. The editor of this version of *Jangar* wrote that ‘The Kalmyk scholars asked Ėlyan Owla who came from Baga Dörwöd [clan] that belongs to the Ik Bugas tribe to sing the *Jangar*. Later, in 1910 the *Ten Chapters of Jangar* was published in Clear Script by Kalmyk scholars in Saint Petersburg. I added three chapters of *Jangar* from the source published by Pozdneev to the above-mentioned ten chapters and published the *Thirteen Chapters Jinggar*.’ On to basis of the publisher’s introductory words, one can conclude that the tenth chapter of this *Jinggar* is also a chapter of the *Ten Chapters Jangar* which were published in Saint Petersburg in 1910. The *Jangar*-singer Ėlyan Owla’s name is indicated as ‘Obulai Eliye’ and the Ik Bugas tribe as ‘Yehe Buhas group’ (cf. also Pozdneev 1911).

⁴² *Khuuriin ülger* is sometimes identified with the *bengsen üliger* (cf. above); however, some distinctions can be made, e.g. using *bengsen üliger* one refers to the written text published or noted down originally in a booklet, while *khuuriin ülger* indicates the performed variant of the text. Inner Mongolian researchers carry out extended and multilateral studies on the *khuriin ülger*. Chaogetu, for example, wrote several books about the genre and performers, e.g. Cogt (2011), see his studies on Pajai (cf. Čoytu and Čen Gang Lüng 2002), on Muuohin (Čoytu and Čen Gang Lüng 2006), on the oral history of storytellers’ life (Čoytu and Erkimbayar 2012), on the famous *khuurch* Erdenijirüke (Čoytu and Luuzar 2014 and Čoytu, Sambalnorbu and Qan-fu-lin 2016). He also wrote more than fifty articles about *khuuriin üliger* and the role of performers.

modules related to the plot such as *čū xurāx*,⁴³ landscape praises, beauty praises, describing fighting in a battle. His fiddle was suitable for telling *Jangar*, having strings which were made of silk that produced a very deep and ‘magnetic’ sound.

In the same way as *khuuriin ülger* is accompanied on the Mongol four-stringed fiddle, *khuurch* and *tuulich* (Mong. *tuuliči*, Khal. *tül'č*) ‘bard performing heroic epics’ also use it for performing the ‘Tale of Geser’ or the ‘Tale of Mangus-monster’. For example, the famous Pajai (Mong. Pajai) *khuurch*⁴⁴ told the ‘Tale of Geser’ for 80 hours in the 1950s, while another *khuurch* Jimbajamsu (Mong. *Jimbajamsu*)⁴⁵ from Baarin Right Banner performed it for 130 hours recently in the 21st century. At the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st, Qibaode *khuurch* (1945–2011)⁴⁶ from Tüsheet (Mong. *Tüsiyetü*) Banner often told the ‘Tale of Mangus-monster’ over a period of thirteen hours. Furthermore, many other *khuurchs* told the ‘Tale of Geser’ or the ‘Tale of Mangus-monster’ over similar time periods with the participation of Mongol four-stringed fiddles. In the context of its increasing popularity, it is obvious why Rinchin *khuurch* performed a chapter of *Jangar* accompanied on a Mongol four-stringed fiddle. Thus, it can be clearly seen that the spread of the Mongol four-stringed fiddle, the traditions of *khuurch*, and the contemporary taste of the audience are all factors which influenced Rinchin *khuurch* to modify his performance of the *Jangar*-chapter, creating in this way a new genre.

The Texts Combining Prose and Verse (Prosimetrum) and the Way of Performance Combining Narration and Singing

Khuurchs use a combination of narration and singing in their performance, and concerning the text, there are prosaic and versified parts in the *khuuriin ülger*. The outstanding Mongolian scholar Tsendiin Damdinsüren (Khal. Cendin Damdinsüren)

⁴³ In Inner Mong. dialects *čū xurāx* is also called as *se yamūlax* by some *khuurchs* from Ulaankhad, cf. Chinese *shangchao* 上朝. Mong. *čuu* comes from Chinese *chao* 朝, and Mong. *quraqu* means ‘gathering’. According to the tradition in ancient China, the emperor discussed the imperial court events with his chancellors every morning and it was originally called in Mongolian *čū xurāx*.

⁴⁴ Pajai (1902–1962) was a famous *khuurch* from Jarud (Mong. *Jarud*) Banner of Jirim (Mong. *Žirim*) league. He studied storytelling from Čuibang *khuurch* and continued performing epics over his lifetime. His *khuuriin ülger* based on the Beijing version of *Geser* epics received an enthusiastic welcome and became known as *Pajai Geser*. He also wrote several poems such as *Tejige-büri qoyar isige-yin yariy-a* ‘The conversation between two domestic goat kids’. Several institutions and researchers studied Pajai’s legacy, as the Hungarian scholar Gy. Kara (1970) from Eötvös Loránd University, Professor Chaogetu from Minzu University of China and Professor Dulaan from Peking University.

⁴⁵ Jimbajamsu (1934–) is a famous *khuurch* from Baarin Right Banner (Ulaankhad city). Researcher Sechenmönge (Mong. *Sečenmönge*) published his 130 hours Tale of Geser entitled as ‘Holy Geser’ twice: ‘Collections of Geser’ (10 volumes), Inner Mongolia People’s Publishing House, 2003 and 2007, Khökhkhot.

⁴⁶ Chibaode *khuurch* comes from the middle part of the Khorchin Right Banner of Shingan league. He learned ‘Altan Galba Khan’ (Mong. *Altan γalba qayan*) and ‘Iron Sandil Hero’ (Mong. *Temür Sandil bayatur*) from his father.

noticed these particular poetic features of *khuuriin ülger* earlier: ‘The combination of prosaic narrative and poetic descriptive forms of *khuuriin ülger* is similar to the form of *The Secret History of the Mongols* and has its roots in ancient tradition. This makes me conclude that a wise *khuurch* like Pajai, who utilised the historical records of Mongols and sang and narrated them similarly to the artistic language of *The Secret History of the Mongols*, was created in the 13th century’ (Damdinsüren 1979: 1659). Walther Heissig, studying the prosimetric forms in Mongolian oral and written tradition, pointed out Rinchin’s innovative attempt to re-introduce the primarily existing poetic feature: ‘His [i.e. Rinchin’s] *Ĵangyar*, so far a rare example of the West-Mongolian epic in Inner Mongolia, is a further proof of the beginning of the process of introducing the prosimetric form into the hitherto versified Mongolian epic’ (Heissig 1997: 360).

Rinchin *khuurch* started his *Minggan the Beauty of the World* with a versified formula typical of the Mongolian heroic epics:⁴⁷

Tib delekei-yin yaĵar
kümün amitan egüsügsen-eĉe
tüidĉü tüibegekü miqaĉin simnus
basa dayayad yaday :
töbsin engke-ber amiduraqu geĵü
tüidker qoortan-i daruqu-bar
tümen üy-e-degen temeĉeged iregsen-i

teüke kemen nereyidiĵei :
 (Rinĉindorĵi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014:
 1797)

Since on the earth
 The human beings came into life
 Carnivorous monsters
 Also appeared.
 For peaceful life
 Fought for ten thousands years
 Suppressing the treacherous enemies
 and
 It is called history.

And finished it with another typical versified formula:

Öber-ün oron-u albatu-yi-ban
ömegleĵü abqu-yin tusa-du
örlüg bayatur Mingyan
üregdel-ün dumdayur ĵamnaysayar
üĵel mayu gürmün qayan-i
ögereĉileĵü ĵasayad abuysan küi
üliger teüke-yin
nigen bölög-iyen
ende-ben kürgeged ĵabsarlay-a küi :
 (Rinĉindorĵi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014:
 1859)

In order to
 Protect his dependants
 Outstanding hero Minggan
 Has embarked the dangerous road.
 He defeated and ameliorated
 The evil Gürmün Khan
 One chapter
 Of the story
 I am going to stop here!

⁴⁷ The transcription of the whole text one can find on the website on East Mongolian oral tradition; cf. Rinchin’s *Jangar* (transcription): https://mongoltales.awk.nrw.de/pdf/21_Orcilang_Sayiqan_Minggan_auga_kücütü_Kürmün_qan-i_amidu_bariju_iregsen.pdf (accessed 18.09.2019).

In the most important parts, his versified poetic forms prevail. This kind of performance is less characteristic of other Baarin *khuurchs*, it is rather Rinchin's own unique art and style.

The Beginning and the Ending Formula of *Jangar*

The *Jangar* performed by Rinchin *khuurch* does not completely follow the 'Thirteen Chapters Jinggar' (1958), one of the sources of his text; it can be observed that he changed the sequences in the plot, modifying it to the structure of the *khuuriin ülger*. Below some ways and means of changes are introduced.

1. The Beginning of *khuuriin ülger Jangar*

In the 'Thirteen Chapters Jinggar', the story begins when the protagonist was crying at a feast:

Doluyan duyur-a güiçeǰü sayıysan

All [his people] were sitting in seven
circles

düübür qar-a araǰa-yin sayuri-dur

On a feast of clear and strong spirit.

eǰen noyan Jinggar ni

The overlord Jinggar

raşıyan qar-a nilbusun-ıyan sačun

Was sitting watering his black holy
tears,

qar-a toryan bisimüd-ün

And wiping it away

qanču-bar buruǰu jöb ügei arčın sayuba :

With the sleeves of his black silk dress
to left and right.

(*Jinggar* 1958: 173)

Rinchin *khuurch* changed this module with the formula of the usual beginning of the traditional Mongol *khuuriin ülger* and also numerous heroic epics and tales that start with the description of the origin of the humanity, lineage of succeeding dynasties and goes on with introducing the main topic of the major plot, the background of the story, then the homeland and the early years of the hero (here *Jangar*). After this commonly spread starting formula he continued as follows:

Čayan dung-ıyan üliyeǰed

Blowing his white conches

čay-un dokiı-a talbil-a

Making the warning of time

čayaǰa-yin olan tüsimel sayid-ud

Chancellors of law and officials

čöm bükün-ıyer čuǰlaral-a :

All were gathering together.

Čayan qas-un örgügen-degen

Holy *Jangar* arrived to

boǰda Jinggar ǰalarayad

His white jade palace

čay-un yabudal alban-u učir-ıyan

Preparing to discuss

jöblekü-ber bolul-a küi :

The current official affairs.

(Rinčindorǰı, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1799)

This is basically similar to the fixed formula of *čuu quraqu* ‘gathering’ in *khuuriin ülger* which is an important motif:

*Qayan ejen-iyen jalan-a ged
qas-un qarangy-a qabirul-a .
Qamuy sayid-un dokiya-gejü
luu-yin kenggerge deledül-e :*

For inviting the emperor
Beat the jade gongs.
As warnings to all officials
Beat the dragon drums.

...
*Yü ši lüng jing (玉石龙镜) qabirul-a :
Olan sayid-un dokiya-gejü
luu-yin kenggerge deledül-e :
(Rinčindorji and Qubitu 1988: 63)*

...
For arriving of Yü shi lüng jing
As warnings to many officials
Beat the dragon drums.

A comparison of the usual motifs of *khuuriin ülger* and ‘Minggan the Beauty of the World’ performed by Rinchin shows that the former would contain the invitation of the emperor, beating the gongs and drums and the gathering of the officials for consultation, while in the latter ‘Holy Jangar’ would come instead of the emperor and conches are blown (which is probably a Buddhist motif). Furthermore, a slight difference between these versions is related to the word ‘gather’ as in the common form it is a noun, whereas Rinchin uses it as a verb. By analysing the above-mentioned comparisons, we can draw a conclusion that Rinchin *khuurch* told the *Jangar* with the traditional beginning of the *khuuriin ülger* with only some minor differences in the vocabulary of the text.

2. The Ending Formula of *khuuriin ülger* Jangar

The ending formula of the ‘Thirteen Chapters Jinggar’ is the following:

*Burqan šasin naran metü manduju
yirtinčü-yin törü qada metü badaraju*

Buddhism flourishes like the sun,
The state in the world develops like the
rocks,

*emüneki-eče-ben yeke jiryaltai bolju :
emnig gegüd-ün sü
elbeg araja-yin sayuri boluyad
jiryal čenggel kiged sayuba :
(Jinggar 1958: 187)*

The life becomes happier than before,
The tameless mare’s milk
Becomes the source of ample spirits and
[People] have a great feast and joy.

The Mongol epic usually ends with a large feast after defeating the enemy and achieving a great victory; as seen, the above *khuuriin ülger* has also preserved this characteristic of Mongol epic tradition. Rinchin *khuurch* reformulated the ending part of his *Jangar* as follows:

Ser ser gesen salki-tai
bor bor gesen qur-a-tai
törü šajin qoyar-ni
qada metü bekijiged
tüimen olan-iyar-ıyan jırıyajai :
tangsuy bayaliy idege
tabun qoşıyu mal-tai
elbeg araja-yin sayuri
emnig gegüd-ün sü-ber

ende-ben nayirlayad sayučiqaba siu küi :
 (Rinčindorji, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014:
 1858)

Breeze sighs as *ser ser*,⁴⁸
 Rain falls as *bor bor*,⁴⁹
 Both the state and the religion,
 Became stable like rocks.
 Ten thousands of people became happy.
 There were ample tasty food,
 Five kinds of livestock,
 And with strong milk brandy
 That's source is the tameless mare's
 milk

They had a great feast *küi*!⁵⁰

Here we can see that he praised the beauty of nature and the five kinds of livestock which introduces the theme of a stable society and people living contentedly in those circumstances. Then he continued it as follows:

Bumba-yin oron-u ayul boluysan
borunqai eteged-i nomoqadqayad
bum saya albatu-nuγud
bayar jırıyal čenggel-tei :
boγ simnus-un bučaqad irekü-yin
baray-a suray-i ni tasulaγsayar küi
boγda Jangyar-un aldar yabiy-a

buman üy-e-degen durasqaltai küi :
 (Rinčindorji, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014:
 1859)

Taming the impudent enemies
 Who were dangerous for Bumba land,⁵¹
 Millions of dependants were
 In a cheerful mood.
 Jangar cut off forever
 The back way of demons, *küi*!
 The endeavour and name of holy
 Jangar
 Earned fame for hundred thousands
 years, *küi*!

This part refers to Jangar's victory over the demons and becoming a world-renowned hero whose realm was inhabited by people living in a peaceful world. As a matter of fact, at this point the story was finished; although Rinchin summed up the plot once again at the end of his performance:

⁴⁸ Onomatopoetic expression for the blowing of wind, frequently used in Mongolian folklore, cf. also Birtalan 2004.

⁴⁹ Onomatopoetic expression for the rainfall, frequently used in Mongolian folklore, cf. also Birtalan 2004.

⁵⁰ Ending formula in Mongolian heroic epics and folk songs: Mong. *küi*, Khal. *xüi* 'Heigh-ho!'.

⁵¹ The name of Jangar's country, the perfect state. There is no acceptable etymological explanation for its meaning.

Öberün oron-u albatu-yi-ban
 ömüglejü abqu-yin tusada
 örlüg bayatur Mingyan
 üregdel-ün dumdayur jamnayşayar
 üjel mayu Gürmün qan-i
 ögereçilejü jasayad abuysan küi :
 üliger teüke-yin nige bölög-iyen
 ende-ben kürgeged jabsarlay-a küi :
 (Rinčindorji, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014:
 1859)

In order to
 Protect his dependants
 Outstanding hero Minggan
 Took his dangerous way
 He defeated and ameliorated
 The evil Gürmün Khan, *küi*!
 A chapter of the tale and story
 I am going to stop here for a while.

For another typical ending of *khuuriin ülgер*, cf. a fragment from the performance of the famous *khuurch* Erdenijirüke (1919–1984) who told his sixty seven hours story ‘Destined to Rebel’ ending with another version of the summarising closing formula:

Xue gang Fan Tang (薛刚反唐) *gedeg*
üliger-e
sine tang-i bayıyuluyad

sečen mergen sayid nar
čuu-dayan jalaraju ulus-i jasaba :
Ködege tosqun-u orun-dayan
kümün čü bür bayar-tai
kögšin jalaıu nasutan-nuyud
bayar-un aıur-ıyar bilqalčajai :
 (Čoytu, Sambalnorbu and Qan-fu-lin
 2016: 931)

In the tale entitled ‘Destined to Rebel’

 It is about the building up the new Tang
 dynasty;
 The wise officials
 Gathered and improved the state.
 In the dusty countryside
 Everybody became happy
 Old and young, all people
 Were full of happiness.

Such an ending formula is quite similar to endings in Mongolian heroic epics, yet there are also some minor and major differences in motifs, and motif elements. Rinchin *khuurch* changed the typical ending formula of heroic epics *Jinggar* with the one used mostly in *khuuriin ülgерs*.

Additional and Removed Parts in the Text of Rinchin’s Jangar

1. Additional Motifs and Text Modules in the Plot

Although Rinchin *khuurch* performed the original plot of the tenth chapter of the ‘Thirteen Chapters *Jinggar*’ principally without major changes, he added several new motifs and short narrations to it. Furthermore, in some places he restructured the original plot by shortening or omitting some motifs and inserting some short narrations in order to make the original plot more fluent and comprehensible for the audi-

ence. For instance, he created a new conversation to explain the reason for sending Minggan to capture Gürmün Khan:

*'Aru Bumba-yin orun-u
awya kücütei olan-u dotur-a-ača
as-un yaγča Mingyan namayi
yayakiyad oluyad üjebe : 'ged
ayuuliqai čegejin-dü boduysan-i-ban
aru aru-ača-ni toyačijai :
Asqarayulqu nilbusu-yi-ban
kelkiye kelkiye-ber bayulyačiqala küi.
'As-un bey-e-yin čini
aburyu čidal erdem-i üjeged
Gürmün qan-i bariju irejü čidan-a
kemen
sanaysan-ača busu
asdayan čimayi
ad üjeged yabuyluysan busu. 'gejü
aldar Jangyar dayu ügei sayuba :*

*Olan sayid ene qoyar-un qoyurundu ken
ni čü duuyarqu-yin arγ-a ügei nigen
nigen-iyen qarajai : ene üy-e-dü Altan
Čegeji dotur-a-ban boduju bayin-a:
'Mingyan-u küčün čidal kedüyiber Aray
ulayan qongyur-tu kürkü ügei bolbaču
qurča böged šalamayai, dakiyad
Mingyan-u unuysan altan sirγ-a bol aru
bumba-yin orun-u yurban erdeni-yin
külüg-ün nige ni mōn : dakiyad ene bol
endel yarul-a gegseger ejen-iyen tusalažu
aburaday yum : genedte basa nige
yayum-a boduyad olba : tere yaγar basa
nige kümün egün-dü tusalažu bolun-a :
ene yabudal tayaran-a. getel-e ene
borunqqayilayad yabuqu ügei bayin-a :
egün-i yayakiju yabuylu bui? egdegüü-
yi ni ködelgejü ayur-i ni kürgebel
yabučiqu bayin-a 'ged Altan Čegeji
iniyeged ügülejü bayin-a
(Rinčindorji, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014:
1804)*

*'From the many strong peoples
Living in northern Bumba-land
Why you choose only me, Minggan?'—
Asked he directly.
He spoke straightly what he thought in
his mind.
His tears were dropping
As chain links one after another, küi!
'I sent you, because
Due to your great strength and ability.*

*You are the one who is able to catch
Gürmün Khan and
Not because of mistreating you.'
Famous Jangar told it to him
And was sitting in silence.*

In the meantime the officials saw each other and had no words to say. At this time Altan Cheeji was thinking the following 'Though Minggan is not that much stronger than Arag Ulaan Khongor, but he is clever and fast. Furthermore, his golden steed is one of the three treasure horses of the Bumbaland. Furthermore, the golden steed can help and save without failing his owner if there is a danger.' Suddenly another thought came into his mind: 'Besides, another person can help him in that place. Actually, it is a great deal. But he hesitates to go. How could I send him? If I provoke him and make him angry, he would surely go on his way!'—Altan Cheeji thought so laughingly.

By adding new parts to the conversation between Minggan and Jangar and the internal thoughts of Altan Cheeji about Minggan, Rinchin made the story more logical and understandable for the audience. Below there is another example of this type of small insertion into the narrative:

Saqal ni čayiyısan abu nar:
'Aru Bumba-yin sakiyusu-ni
örösiyetügei :
ayul jobalang čini arilatuıai :

atayatan samayun-u darulı-a boltuıai :'
kemen :
mendü-yin irügel-iyen talbin-a :

samayan buyurul emegen eji nar :
'sayın yabu. küü mini. mendü ire :
sakiıusun čimayi örösiyejü nabday
sabday ibegetügei :' *kemen*

sü-ben ergüged sačun-a :

ayakima jalayı beriyed keüked:

'amur mendü morilatuıai : aq-a a :'
kemen
aman-u irügel-iyen debsigüljei :
abu eji-yin-iyen niruıun deger-e
angya nilqa keüked kürtel-e
'abaya a, bayartai :' *gejü*
kögerükün yar-ıyan dalalajai :
 (Rinčindorji, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014:
 1808)

The fathers with white beard said:
 'Oh, Protector of the Bumba home-land
 be gracious!
 May your dangers and troubles go
 away!
 May your enemies and turmoil be
 pressed down!'
 Wishing a good luck, they blessed
 [Minggan].

The grandmothers with white hair said:
 'Go well, dear son, come back safely!
 The Protector would be gracious to you,
 may the spirit-lords patronise you in
 all ways!'
 They sprinkled milk [for his safe
 journey].

The beautiful young men, daughters-in-
 law and children said:
 'Please have a peaceful and smooth
 journey, brother!'
 So blessed him with their good wishes.
 Even the little children who were
 carried on their parents back said:
 'See you again soon, uncle!'
 And waved with their lovely hands.

When Minggan went to capture Gürmün Khan, the folk of Bumba empire starting from the old men with white beards and the white-haired grandmothers to the beautiful young men, women (daughters-in-law) and the little children saw him off and wished him all the best, which is also characteristic in the plot of *khuuriin ülger*. There is a similar text module of farewell ceremony in the eighty-one hour long *khuuriin ülger* about *Da Xi Liang* told by the blind *khuurch* U. Daorji (Mong. U. Dorji) (1933–1997) from the middle part of Khorchin left banner of Jirim League. It is as follows:

*Bai Hu Guan-u udayan dasuyŋsan arad-
uud a :*

'boyda ejen mordan-a geǰū bayin-a ged

*hao (bügüde) čöm longqu düǰüireng
ariki a*

arad-un sedkil e

ǰam-un qoyar tal-a-bar ariki ergüged

söǰüdkü-yin üyes-tü

*tayizüing boyda teskel ügei nidiün nilbusu
unayan-a a :*

(Daorji and Baoqingyu manuscript:
993–994)

The accustomed people of the Bai Hu
Guan [Pass] said:

'The emperor is going away [to fight
with enemies]!'

And all of them took bottles full with
milk brandy

And with open heart

Offering it to the [emperor] kneeled
down on both sides of the route.

Meanwhile the Taizong Emperor was
dropping his caring tears.

Here, people were seeing off the Emperor Tang Taizong 唐太宗 and his army with offering milk brandy, wishing him a good journey at Baihu guan 白虎关, a pass of the Western Liang Dynasty (Xi Liang 西凉).

Similar to the above-displayed short narrative parts, Rinchin *khuurch* borrowed several other modules from *khuuriin ülgers* to make his *Jangar*-version more lively. Such additional parts contribute to developing a more cohesive and coherent narrative and according to our observation, they made the story of 'Minggan the Beauty of the World' much more dramatic, logical, and vivid.

2. Missing Parts of the Original Plot of Jinggar

When Rinchin *khuurch* performed *Jangar* in a version of *khuuriin ülger*, he also omitted some narrative modules from the 'Thirteen Chapters Jinggar'. For instance, when Jinggar asked Minggan to capture Gürmün Khan and he hesitated to go, provoking Altan Cheeji to challenge him as follows: 'If you have a way, go and capture him! Otherwise, if you cannot do it, no problem; you can join to him and become a kind of cup-bearer!' (*abqu arɣa bayiqula abuɣad iregeči. ese čidaqula öber-iyen oruɣad dayabaču basa ilɣal ügei ergin sayin söngči ni bolqu či*). Listening to these words, Minggan became very angry and said: 'I will drink milk brandy seventy-one times from a huge yellow porcelain bowl that could only be carried by seventy people!' (*dalan kümün damǰiladaɣ dalbayar sira šayǰing-iyar daray-a-bar dalan nige daruɣad orkiya*) (Jinggar 1958: 175). Rinchin *khuurch* omitted the above-mentioned part. The motif of Minggan's drinking seventy-one times milk brandy from a huge bowl that could only be carried by seventy people also appeared two more times later in the written version and Rinchin omitted all these parts.

We propose that Rinchin *khuurch* made these omissions based on a reasonable and logical understanding of the story and not due to an inaccurate retelling; he insisted on the tradition of *khuuriin ülger* and concentrated on its connection to reality. For this reason, he left out the motif of drinking exaggerated amounts of milk brandy.

Further, one cannot deny the importance of the custom of drinking in *Jinggar* epic, which could embolden Mingyan and made him more decisive, but it is also true that omitting these motifs would not affect the main plot, as there is no essential connection between the action of drinking and what followed in the story.

In conclusion, Rinchin *khuurch* performed ‘Minggan the Beauty of the World’ on the basis of the main plot of the original *Jinggar* without omitting the main elements of the plot and adding some new colourful motifs, narrations adjusted to the character of the *khuuriin ülger*. As a result, his version became somewhat longer, more colourful and enjoyable for the audience than the original story.

The Changed Elements (Vocabulary, Hyperbola) in Jangar

There are several changed elements in ‘Minggan the Beauty of the World’ performed by Rinchin in comparison with the original *Jinggar*.

1. Changing Unfamiliar Words

It has been mentioned above that the name of the protagonist has been changed: Minggan is called Mingyan in the Kalmyk and Oirat *Jangar* versions. As a result, Rinchin *khuurch* changed the name to Minggan (lit.) ‘Thousand’, a word close in sounding to Mingyan and well known for the audience.⁵² Concerning the specific Oirat and Kalmyk vocabulary, Rinchin used his familiar dialectal words; e.g. *qabtasun*, *lobču*, *mirdi*, *siyayad* in place of Kalmyk/Oirat expressions: *köbčig* (Kalm. *köpčig*, Ramstedt 1976: 240), *labsiy-a* (Kalm. *lawšig*, Ramstedt 1976: 250) *mirad* (Kalm. *mirid*, Ramstedt 1976: 263), *šuturan* (Ramstedt *deest*) in sequence. Also he changed the general Mongolian word *tüngküyiged* to *següdegenen* which has still remained somewhat obscure. *Köbčig* refers to a ‘thick pad used upon the saddle’, *labsiy-a* refers to ‘a kind of robe’, *mirda* refers to ‘a little figure of the Buddha’ which can be worn as a protecting medal or amulet, *šutura-* means ‘to touch something’.

2. Reducing Some Extended Hyperbolic Expressions

Extended hyperboles as poetic means are used in *khuuriin ülger*, but they are different from the enormously expanded ones in heroic epics (cf. above the motif of Mingyan’s drinking). Rinchin *khuurch* was influenced by the expressive means of *khuuriin ülger* and this led to several extended hyperbole in *Jinggar* being changed, e.g. the descriptive motif about Mingyan’s horse:

⁵² Professor Rinchindorji was of the same opinion: ‘Rinchin *khuurch* changed this expression; he used Minggan instead of Mingyan’ (Rinčindorji, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1859).

Ĵiruy-a alda-yin bey-e-tei yum
Ĵiruy-un sayıqan toluyai-tai yum
Ĵiruyan imaqu ċiki-tei yum
Ĵu tegsiken joo-tai yum
 (Rinčindorĵi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014:
 1805)

He had six fathom long body,
 He had a head like a painting,
 He had six inches long ears,
 He had very flat spine.

In Rinchin's version the golden horse of Minggan has 'six inches long ears', but in the original *Jinggar* it has 'six spans long ears'. Rinchin changed the expression to a more understandable term of measurement (cf. five inches equals one span). Another example is the motif describing the resting time of Jangar: Rinchin *khuurch* changed 'day' into 'hour'. He told that Minggan 'had a rest for forty nine hours' (*doluyan doluy-a döči yisün čay untaju yadaray-a tayiluyad*) (Rinčindorĵi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1827). By changing the text in this way, the behaviour of the characters in a *khuuriin ülger* became more realistic.

3. Clarification of Some Unclear Matters

Rinchin *khuurch* also clarified some matters, obscure for his audience, in 'Minggan the Beauty of the World'. For instance, he made a detailed description how Bars Mergen was killed by Minggan by three arrows shots:

Keüken qar-a nomun-du
ĵurban sumu-yi köbčileged
dub duĵuriĵ sara metü tataĵu
nomun-u köbči danggi geĵü
ĵurban sumu qoyin-a qoyin-a-ban

suburayad šuugiyad irekü-yin üy-e-dü
bars mergen türügü sumun-ača
barayunsi ĵayılajai :
qoyaduĵar sumun-ača
ĵegünsi ĵayılajai :
ĵurbaduĵar sumun-ača
ĵayılajı ĵabduĵsan ügei
qoĵulai ni onoydayad
küĵügüü ni tasulaba :
 (Rinčindorĵi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014:
 1849–1850)

[Minggan] put three arrows
 Into the young black bow and
 Pulled it like a round moon.
 The bowstring was stretched and
 While the three arrows were flying
 whistling one after another
 Bars Mergen
 Escaped to the west.
 From the first arrow,
 Escaped to the east
 From the second arrow,
 Unable to escape
 From the third arrow,
 His throat was hit
 Neck was divided [from his head].

The original version is somewhat obscure in comparison to Rinchin's version: '[He] shot apart his throat and made his head jump' (*qoĵolai-bar ni tasu qarbuĵad toluyai-yi ni üsürgeged orkiba*) (*Jinggar* 1958: 186). Similarly to the above-mentioned example,

Rinchin *khuurch* made the obscure features of the story more obvious and clear. Because of this, his *khuuriin ülger* became more realistic, lively and attractive for the audience. A similar type of expression can be found in other traditional *khuuriin ülgers*: for example, ‘The Eastern Expedition of Xue Rengui’ (薛仁貴征東) told by Ganjuraa *khuurch*, there is a motif of killing the lord of the Tianshan by shooting him twice.⁵³ In *Jinggar* three arrows are used together and in ‘Minggan the Beauty of the World’ it happens in three shots.

Concerning the language of Rinchin’s version, he performed in Baarin dialect to make it completely understandable to the audience. In contrast, a performer of the *Jangar* epics follows the peculiarities of Kalmyk language or the Oirat dialects. This is another clear and obvious change compared with the original *Jinggar* and its performance.⁵⁴

Conclusion

The Inner Mongolian Baarin *khuurch* Rinchin heard some parts of *Jangar* epics told by his uncle (*naga mama*) Choirag and memorised several chapters of it when he was eleven years old (probably in 1943). This became the solid foundation for him to perform the *Jangar* in a version as a *khuuriin ülger*. Further he read the tenth chapter ‘Minggan the Beauty of the World’ of the *Jinggar*, which was published by the Inner Mongolia People’s Publishing House in 1958. He performed it in a combined form of prose and verse (prosimetrum) with various kinds of melody of *khuuriin ülger* and with the help of the Mongol four-stringed fiddle. Regarding its main plot, he took advantage of the traditional structure of the *khuuriin ülger*, and made the ‘Minggan the Beauty of the World’ more realistic, clear and lively for the audience than the original one. This comprised the addition of the new beginning and ending formulas, complementing or eliminating some text modules, and changing several motifs in order to restructure his *Jangar* of *khuuriin ülger*. After the extensive spread and growing popularity of the *khuuriin ülgers*, the bards performed a great variety of genres: e.g. the *Tale of Geser*, stories of Mangus-demons, folk songs, oral stories, and even fictions, reportages, films and dramas using the forms of the *khuuriin ülger*. *Minggan the Beauty of the World* is a *khuuriin ülger* based on *Jangar*, performed by Rinchin, developed from this background.⁵⁵

⁵³ Cf. Ganjuraa, U. (performed), Narasu (transcribed): *Šüe Ren Gūi jegün-i töbsidgegsen ni* [The eastern expedition of Xuerengui]. Manuscript 2017: 7.

⁵⁴ From the numerous differences between the Western Mongolian (Kalmyk, Oirat) and Eastern (according to other classification southern) Mongolian languages and dialects, here we refer only to major phenomena: the presence of diphthongs in Baarin vs long vowels in Kalmyk and Oirat, and the different pronunciation of non-initial syllables (cf. the Kalmyk, Oirat *shwa*), the presence of rounding harmony in Baarin vs Kalmyk. It is also considered that to some extent Baarin dialect is closer to written Mongol, and its properties appear in vernacular language usage (see Birtalan 2003).

⁵⁵ This tendency was pointed out by W. Heissig (1995) in the 1990s.

Since the early 19th century, scholars from Russia, China and other countries have started to study the *Jangar* and have had remarkable progress. In China, in the 1950s and 60s researchers studied the *Jangar* epic and from the late 70s–80s new versions were collected and analysed more profoundly. Later, from the early 90s, studies on the *Jangar* have become a field of high importance concerning poetical, aesthetic, religious and ethnographical aspects. Comparative studies of the different versions of the *Jangar* and the studies on its spread have also been undertaken (Süke 2008: 208–209).

Our present paper offers an example of a new tendency in contemporary Mongolian folklore regarding its performance and comprehension. An analysis of these changes demonstrates some of the ways and means that have been employed in the revival of ethnic oral traditions and which are very important to their long-term survival.

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