

DISCUSSION POINT

PRESERVATION OF INTANGIBLE HERITAGE IN BOYSUN

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I. Brief historical background

Boysun district of Uzbekistan is one of the most ancient regions of human settlement. Boysun is situated in South Uzbekistan, the western part of the Gissar mountains (Boysun-tau mountains). The landscape formed from sediments, the scenery is vivid with multi-coloured soils, vertical plates, canyons and caves. The mountains are covered with cedar, almond and walnut trees, and abound in sub-alpine lakes.

The Boysun paleontological sites date back to more than 100,000 years BC (Teshiktosh Cave, Machaydarya river – Neanderthal man's settlements; Upper Sharabaddarya river – Mesolithic settlements; Zarautsai – 200 rock drawings of “the magic hunt for oxen”). In the 2nd millennium BC agricultural tribes migrated from the south to the foothills along Boysuntau and Kugitanga and settled there. During the Iron Age (1st BC) this fortified area became a part of the Ancient Bactria. Archaeologists have found in the region the remnants of an old town destroyed by Alexander the Great. Later this area became part of Selevkid's State, or the Greeco-Bactria or Kushan State. About 2,200 years ago the Boysun-Sogd trading road became a part of the Great Silk Route. To protect Kushan's state from the nomads' raids the wall of Iron Gates was erected. The troops of Sasanids, Eftalits, ancient Turks, Arabs and others marched through these gates.

Since the proclamation of Boysun region as Masterpiece of Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity a number of measures have been taken towards safeguarding and developing this unique heritage. Since 2002, the International Open Folklore Festival “Boysun Bahori” is organized annually with the support from the government, local municipality and non-governmental organizations. In the framework of the festival, two international scientific confer-

ences devoted to the problems of the study and preservation of folk cultural traditions in Boysun are held. Since the proclamation, cultural heritage of Boysun has become a subject of systematic scientific study, archaeological excavations and ethnographic expeditions. Public awareness has risen due to the annual nation-wide broadcasting of “Boysun Bahori” Festival. The festival also contributes to the promotion of conservation and development of folk culture in various communities, revitalization of artistic crafts workshops.

Scientific expeditions to Boysun began in 2003 with the support of the Fine Arts Scientific Research Institute of the Academy of Arts of Uzbekistan. This activity was funded within the framework of the UNESCO/Japanese Fund-in-Trust project for the preservation of Boysun’s cultural heritage and was actively supported by NGO “Boysun” Foundation.

II. Safeguarding and development of the cultural space of Boysun

Recognizing the universal significance of the traditional culture of Boysun, an inventory project was elaborated and approved by UNESCO. The UNESCO/Japanese Fund-in-Trust project focuses on preservation of intangible cultural heritage by recording examples of traditional culture and folklore. The first stage of this programme (2003–2004) concentrated on field recording, inventorying and creation of a digital archive as well as training programmes on traditional crafts.

The following actions have been implemented:

1. Scientific inventory

Six scientific expeditions were organized from July 2003 to March 2004. Reports of scientific expeditions have been published in two volumes in Uzbek, Russian and English.

2. Digital inventory:

One DVD film and a multimedia CD have been produced (2004–2005).

3. Crafts training programme

Boysun's crafts training center has been built in local traditional style by local masters with financial support from UNESCO and TACIS programme of European Union (AID project for Development of Rural Economy in Uzbekistan). The center was inaugurated during the 4th Boysun Folklore Festival (18–22 May, 2005). The crafts training programme is planned to commence soon.

Among the old craft industries of Boysun it is worth singling out pottery along with the production of traditional ceramic dishes (*kasa*, *piala*, *lyagan*, jug-pots of various sizes). The most ancient roots have the production of leather clothes, shoes, elements and details of horse equipment and other objects of practical purpose. Leather objects were decorated with diverse ornamentation, metallic pieces, clasps and others. In Boysun the production of wood objects (chests, cradles and etc.), wood-cut, jewellery was developed. Piling of patterns on metal-engraving was skilfully mastered. Making carpet from wool was developed traditionally in all *kishlaks* of Boysun region. Beautiful and light carpets of Boysun have always been and still are in demand even outside Boysun. From ancient times the embroidery art of Boysun was highly distinctive. The traditional method of transmission *Usta-Shogird* (Master-Student) is part of the safeguarding process. Skills are transmitted by the community prominent masters who accumulated lifelong expertise and feel responsibility to transmit it to younger generations. Also lessons based on new information and communication technologies (multimedia CD-ROMs, CD and video recordings of masters' performances) are used. Boysun children's ethnographic ensemble "*Kuralai*" serve the same purpose of transmitting cultural heritage.

4. Ten year master plan

Ten year master plan for the safeguarding and development of the cultural space of Boysun district was adopted by the steering committee during the 3rd Boysun Folklore Festival (2004). Work has already started on elaborating and implementing the recommendations of the steering committee with funding from the donation of the UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador. Master plan consists of the following actions: preparation of legal documentation for the protection of Boysun District as a cultural and natural park; creation

of a tourism information and development center in Boysun; transmission of folklore through educational and training programmes for young performers (Music Academy of the Boysun House of Culture); publications of the *Atlas of Handicrafts of Boysun* and *Folk Traditions and Rituals of Boysun*, training programmes on pottery, carpet and suzane weaving.

It should be mentioned that the cultural heritage of Uzbekistan are protected by Principal Law on Protection of Cultural Heritage (both tangible and intangible heritage) and the Constitution of Uzbekistan (Article 49). Moreover, there is *Meros* (Heritage) programme, which is oriented on revival of Uzbekistan's ancient traditions, conservation and research of the cultural heritage.

III. Local sustainable development strategy for safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage

The local development strategy aims:

- to improve living standards of local population,
- to safeguard cultural and natural heritage,
- to foster tourism (infrastructure).

Social protection of local population, artisans and bearers of traditional culture is ensured.

Since Boysun has mostly preserved the traditional-economical way of life, it has created favourable conditions for preservation of traditional culture. Nevertheless, introduction of modern economical infrastructure (for example, development of railway road, industrial development of rich coal deposits and others) could create new challenges for sustainable safeguarding of intangible heritage for future generations.

IV. Social and economical development of Boysun

Boysun district is one of the most important agricultural districts of the Surkhandarya region. Agriculture is the main sector of economy. Manufacturing industry of agricultural profile exists.

Agriculture is mostly state-owned. Private sector exists in farming, husbandry and handicraft industry. Local textile industry, carpet, ceramics and leather-making, weaving, embroidery, mining and jewelry are widespread.

The basis of the district's economy form crop growing and stock breeding. There are farms specialized in breeding pedigree sheep, horses, astrakhan; gardening and vine-growing; cultivating alfalfa for seed-growing; bee-keeping; cotton- and grain-growing. The area of watering land in the district is equal to 3,137 hectares, and land for pastures is 273,061 hectares.

Boysun is the largest grain-growing district of the region. Forests cover the area of 56,106 hectares and on 20,690 hectares from it juniper is cultivated. In collective and private farms of the district 22,165 heads of cattle, 184,998 heads of sheep and goats, 46,020 heads of birds, 1,744 heads of horses are kept (2001).

In the district there are also joint-stock clothing companies and others, the association of businessmen in the sphere of service, the association of craftsmen, more than 200 small enterprises, trade enterprise, joint-stock transport enterprise, "Agrotrans" company, open type joint-stock company "Boysun Bozori" (Market of Boysun) and several commercial markets (*bazars*). The construction of two-kilometer tunnel for the transportation of water through Mount Sanjar is being finished.

The 52 schools of primary and secondary education of the district educate 21,001 pupils, and 1,320 students studied at four technical vocational colleges. 38 clubs, 38 public and children's library, five cinemas, one cultural center, sports complex, modern tennis court and art museum operate. For celebrating the millennium of the epic *Alpomish*, several sports facilities and the "*Alpomish*" park, spread over 25 hectares, have been constructed. The performances of "*Shalola*" song and dance company, folkloric show group "*Boysun*", children's folklore company of "*Shiru shakar*" are famous beyond Boysun.