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An Investigation into the Transliterated Name of “Chao’er Yindao”

Authors: Tumenbayar, Tumenbayar

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Abstract

“Chao’er Yindao” is a treasure of Mongolian ethnic music that was inscribed in 2008 as a National Intangible Cultural Heritage Extension Project. During the past 30-plus years since the 1990s, this precious cultural heritage has appeared in relevant national publications and intangible cultural heritage lists under several transliterated names, including “Chao’er Yindao,” “Chao’er Dao,” and “Chao Lin Dao.” These varying names have inadvertently engendered certain misunderstandings regarding the promotion of intangible cultural heritage, as well as in social recognition and public discourse. To help clarify the relevant circumstances and promote more accurate understanding of the “Chao’er Yindao” intangible cultural heritage, this study, based on relevant publications, intangible cultural heritage lists, and local documentary records, conducts a textual examination and discussion of the transliterated names of “Chao’er Yindao” from a documentary perspective.

Full Text

A Study on the Transliteration of “Chao’er Yindao”

Author: Tumenbayar

Affiliation: Abag Banner Library, Bieligutai Town, 011400

Abstract

“Chao’er Yindao,” a treasured gem of Mongolian ethnic music, was inscribed on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage extended list in 2008. Over the past thirty years since the 1990s, this precious cultural heritage has appeared in national publications and intangible cultural heritage inventories under several transliterated names, including “Chao’er Yindao,” “Chao’er Dao,” and “Chao Lin Dao.” These varying names have inadvertently created misunderstandings in the promotion of intangible cultural heritage, as well as in social cognition

and public discourse. To help clarify the situation and foster a more accurate understanding of this cultural heritage, this article examines the transliteration of “Chao’er Yindao” from a documentary perspective, drawing on relevant publications, intangible cultural heritage inventories, and local historical records. (For consistency, this article uses “Chao’er Yindao” except when quoting sources.)

Keywords: Chao’er Yindao; transliterated name; standardized usage

I first encountered “Chao’er Yindao” in the early 1980s when traditional Naadam festivals were resuming on the grasslands. During the cultural evening of a Naadam festival in Abag Banner, Xilingol League, Inner Mongolia, I witnessed five or six folk long-tune singers standing in a row performing “Chao’er Yindao.” I was just a teenager at the time, but the scene remains vivid in my memory. For my generation, this was the moment when “Chao’er Yindao” first entered our consciousness.

More than two decades later, I had a conversation about the proper name for this art form with Batubayar, a hereditary transmitter of “Chao’er Yindao” from Abag Banner. He came to my office to discuss whether it should be called “Chao’er Yindao” or “Chao’er Dao.” Without hesitation, I told him that it had always been “Chao’er Yindao”—a fact beyond question or dispute. In fact, he shared the same view. His concern had been triggered when he saw a banner reading “Chao’er Dao” at a “Chao’er Yindao” event in Xilinhot. The alteration of a name passed down through generations struck him as peculiar. At the time, he was preparing to register an “Abag Banner Chao’er Yindao” association, making the correct name particularly important. Consequently, he had consulted various individuals to gather perspectives on the nomenclature.

1. Records of “Chao’er Yindao” in National Publications and Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventories

1.1 Record in *Chinese Folk Songs Integration: Inner Mongolia Volume* Published by People’s Music Publishing House in 1992, this work states: “Chao’er Yindao, also known as Chao’er songs... According to ethnic tradition, this volume categorizes Mongolian folk songs into six types: Chao’er Yindao, Urtu Yindao, Baoguni Dao, Andai songs, Haodegeqin songs, and Boqu. 1. Chao’er Yindao—Chao’er Yindao refers to Chao’er songs. Chao’er Yindao is an ancient Mongolian multi-part folk song genre, originally performed only at solemn and significant public gatherings. Its melody belongs to the Urtu Yindao category, but is more elaborately developed with a broader vocal range... In summary, Chao’er Yindao is profound in content, rigorous in structure, perfect in form, and rich in variation—a treasure of Mongolian traditional music and a rare masterpiece in the history of Chinese ethnic vocal music development” [2].

The editorial notes further state: “The work of collecting, sorting, researching, editing, and publishing Chinese folk songs has long been valued by music workers. In the early 1960s, the Chinese Musicians Association, the Institute of Ethnic Music, Music Publishing House, and other units undertook the editing

of *Chinese Folk Songs Integration*. After the Third Plenary Session of the 11th CPC Central Committee, the rectification of various aspects created favorable conditions for rescuing our national music heritage. Consequently, in July 1979, the Ministry of Culture and the Chinese Musicians Association jointly issued the ‘Notice on the Plan for Collecting and Sorting National Music Heritage,’ which was later approved by the National Art Science Planning Leading Group and listed as a key national scientific research project in art science, leading to the re-editing of *Chinese Folk Songs Integration*. The ‘Notice’ required each volume of *Chinese Folk Songs Integration* to have ‘full representativeness, documentation, scientificity, and artistry’ and to be ‘high in quality, broad in scope, and complete in variety,’ ensuring that folk songs from every county would be reflected in the volumes of each province, autonomous region, and municipality directly under the central government, thereby better presenting the full picture of Chinese folk songs. *Chinese Folk Songs Integration* is a series of documents for music workers and enthusiasts to study Chinese national folk music. It is of great significance for inheriting the excellent traditions of national music and developing socialist music culture in China, and also provides valuable reference for readers from various fields to understand China’s politics, history, literature, language, ethnicity, folklore, and social life in various important historical periods” [3].

This represents the first authoritative record of “Chao’er Yindao” in a national publication since the founding of the People’s Republic of China. One point requires clarification: the statement “Chao’er Yindao, also known as Chao’er songs” is not entirely accurate. In Mongolian, “Chao’er Yindao” means “songs accompanied by Chao’er” (or songs featuring Chao’er), indicating that “Chao’er Yindao” consists of a structure combining long-tune songs with Chao’er songs. Therefore, it is inappropriate to directly name “Chao’er Yindao” as “Chao’er songs.” Doing so would substitute the name of the accompanying part, “Chao’er,” for the full name “Chao’er Yindao,” which is certainly unsuitable.

1.2 Record in *Overview of Chinese Multi-part Folk Songs* Published by People’s Music Publishing House in 1994, this work states: “Chao’er Yindao... Most Mongolian folk songs are single-part solo and unison singing, but some long-tune songs employ sustained bass singing. These multi-part songs are collectively referred to as ‘Chao’er Yindao’...” [4].

In the preface by renowned Chinese composer, music theorist, and music educator Lü Ji, he writes: “In summary, this book is a pioneering work in the study of Chinese multi-part folk songs and greatly helps us comprehensively understand this genre. The author devoted over twenty years to specialized exploration and meticulous research to achieve such fruitful results, which deserve our appreciation” [5]. This is how “Chao’er Yindao” appears in the work of distinguished Chinese music scholar Fan Zuyin.

1.3 Records in Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventories “Chao’er Yindao” was inscribed on the National Intangible Cultural Heritage List in 2008 and 2011 under two different categories and names.

- (1) According to the China Intangible Cultural Heritage website, the name used for the 2008 inscription was “Multi-part Folk Songs (Chao’er Dao—Mongolian Harmony Singing).” The website’s description states: “Chao’er Dao is a unique form of Mongolian multi-part music, characterized by a sustained bass part below the melody. This bass part can only exist in dependence on the high-pitched melody and cannot stand alone. During performance, an outstanding long-tune singer uses a high register to sing a melodious and leaping melody, while several other singers use deep throaty voices to sing the bass part, creating a sustained bass below the melody” [6].
- (2) According to the same website, the name used for the 2011 inscription was “Multi-part Folk Songs (Chao’er Dao—Abag Chao’er).” The description reads: “Chao’er Dao is an ancient and unique form of Mongolian multi-part folk singing. Traditional Chao’er Dao consists of two vocal parts: long-tune and Chao’er. Singers are generally male. Using their voices to produce different pitches and timbres, adjusting mouth shapes, and creating chest resonance, they produce the wonderful harmonic effect of double notes in unison and at the octave. Abag Chao’er is what we commonly call Chao’er Dao” [7].

These records clearly show that “Chao’er Yindao” was named “Chao’er Dao” in both the 2008 and 2011 national intangible cultural heritage inscriptions. The two inscriptions can be understood as follows: the 2008 inscription incorporated “Chao’er Yindao” as a whole into the intangible cultural heritage project, while the 2011 inscription incorporated the accompanying part—“Chao’er”—as a separate intangible cultural heritage project.

1.4 Record in *Overview of Mongolian Traditional Music* Published by Inner Mongolia University Press in 2015, this book states: “Chao’er Dao (qogor un daguu) is one of the highest exemplars of Mongolian music, widely considered a remnant of Mongolian court music” and “Mongolian folk tradition also holds that sound structure patterns like Chao Lin Dao originally had no lyrics” [8]. The text uses both “Chao’er Dao (qogor un daguu)” and “Chao Lin Dao” as names. Here, “qogor un daguu” is the accurate Latin transcription of “Chao’er Yindao,” while “Chao Lin Dao” is another transliteration.

2. Records of “Chao’er Yindao” in Local Documents

Before examining these records, it is necessary to introduce the historical background of Abag and Abahanar banners, the cradle of “Chao’er Yindao.” The Abag and Abahanar banners evolved from an ancient tribe—the “ulus” of Belgun Tai, one of the eastern princes enfeoffed by Genghis Khan [9]. “Abag” is a

Mongolian term meaning “uncle” in Chinese. Because the leader of this “ulus,” Belgun Tai, was Genghis Khan’s half-brother and thus an uncle to Genghis Khan’s children, his descendants named their “ulus” the Abag and Abahanar banners [10]. Between the 1630s and 1660s, the Abag and Abahanar banners successively pledged allegiance to the Qing Dynasty and migrated south from their original territories in the Onon and Kherlen River basins to their current locations. The Qing court divided the Abag and Abahanar banners into four *zasak* banners for governance: Abag Right Banner, Abag Left Banner, Abahanar Right Banner, and Abahanar Left Banner (later collectively referred to as the “Four Abag Banners”). On the eve of the founding of the People’s Republic of China, through the democratic revolution of 1946-1949, the “Four Abag Banners” abolished the feudal system along with other Mongolian banners and established new democratic regimes. After several mergers and changes, the former “Four Abag Banners” gradually formed the current two county-level administrative entities—Abag Banner (established through the merger of Abag Right Banner, Abag Left Banner, and Abahanar Right Banner) and Xilinhot City (renamed from Abahanar Left Banner) after 1956.

2.1 Records in Abahanar Right Banner Historical Materials The recollections of Wangjila Chenden, the last *zasak* beile of Abahanar Right Banner, contain three records of “Chao’er Yindao.” The relevant content is translated as follows: “On the first day of the White Month (Mongolian term for Spring Festival) each year, a New Year ‘nair’ (nair means celebration banquet) is held in the beile prince’s fifteen *hana* (*hana* refers to the wall structure of a yurt; one *hana* is approximately 2.3 meters wide after construction) yurt. Visitors pay respects to the banner *zasak* beile in sequence and exchange New Year greetings. After the ceremony, banner government officials, nobles, and royal family members take their seats in order. First, toasts are made to everyone with *hada*-adorned wine cups, and simultaneously the New Year ‘nair’ begins with the performance of ‘Chao’er Yindao’ titled ‘Eerte Yin Chagan’...” [11]. This record describes the performance of “Chao’er Yindao” during Spring Festival in Abahanar Right Banner. The same source also depicts the autumn blessing ceremony: “After entering autumn in the eighth month, several lamas first chant scriptures for blessings for several days. Following the chanting, a three-to-four-day ‘blessing nair’ is held. To prepare for the ‘blessing nair,’ mare milk is milked early and large quantities of ‘koumiss’ are stored in a special room under designated management. When distinguished guests are seated, koumiss is first served in *hada*-adorned bowls, and then ‘Chao’er Yindao’ titled ‘Eerte Yin Chagan’ is performed...” [11]. The source also contains records of “Chao’er Yindao” being performed at wedding ceremonies in Abahanar Right Banner.

2.2 Records in *Overview of Modern History of Abag Left Banner Before Liberation* *Overview of Modern History of Abag Left Banner Before Liberation* (Mongolian language) is included in the Abag Banner Chinese People’s Political Consultative Conference (CPPCC) historical records—*Overview*

of *Modern History of the Four Abag Banners Before Liberation* (edited and published by the Abag Banner CPPCC Cultural and Historical Committee in 1981). The relevant record is translated as follows: “At any ‘nair’ Naadam, such as wedding or blessing celebrations, songs accompanied by Chao’er must be performed to enliven the nair atmosphere. In our banner, besides the famous ‘Chao’erqin’ such as Temur, Dabagai, Baorihu, and Sarengerile, there are countless singers who enjoy performing ‘Chao’er Yindao Urtu Yindao.’ The following song titles are selected from the ‘Urtu Yindao’ performed with Chao’er accompaniment: Eerte Yin Chagan, Shangzhaling Arisileng Han, Altan Aru Ra, Hudexili, Tongla Gegeen, Handelehei, Altan Onggotu, Naren Mutu Manduhu, Heijia Garisi Geigu Luqi, Wenagan Honggeer, Jutu Tala, Nariyin Xiariga, Baogeda Chengjisi, Gaihamuxigatu... and many others. Because ‘Chao’er Yindao’ is a nair song (banquet song) performed at solemn and significant occasions, it has strict rules. The rhythm of a day’s nair is controlled entirely by ‘Chao’er Yindao’ from beginning to end. After performing three ‘Chao’er Yindao’ songs at the start of the nair, participants may leave the yurt for a brief rest before returning to continue... Following this rhythm, a total of 9-12 songs are performed to conclude the day’s nair. Moreover, a singer cannot repeat the same ‘Chao’er Yindao’ performance. There are specifically designated opening and closing songs for the nair. According to the traditional customs of Abahanar Left Banner, performing ‘Eerte Yin Chagan’ indicates the opening of the nair, while performing ‘Gaihamuxigatu’ signals its conclusion” [12]. The renowned former Abahanar Left Banner scholar Chao Balaha (1920-1992) also mentioned “Chao’er Yindao” in his 1983 paper “Koumiss and Its Nair” published in *Inner Mongolia Social Sciences* (Mongolian language) [13].

2.3 Records in *Overview of Modern History of Abag Right Banner Before Liberation* *Overview of Modern History of Abag Right Banner Before Liberation* is also included in the aforementioned *Overview of Modern History of the Four Abag Banners Before Liberation*. The relevant record is translated as follows: “At nair ceremonies for mountain and oboo worship, there were six excellent singers who performed ‘Urtu Yindao’ (long-tune songs), along with many ordinary singers. There were also numerous ‘lebuqin’ (flute players), ‘hurqin’ (xianqin zither players), and ‘Chao’erqin’ (Chao’er singers)” [14]. Additionally, *Research on Mongolian Folk Songs Collected by Henning Haslund* contains records of “Chao’er Yindao” from Abag Right Banner, translated as: “Singers: West Abag King and Zhalatonga, Chao’er Yindao, Ebgen Shaobu (this is the famous ‘Old Goose’ sung by the renowned vocalist Lazhabu)” [15].

2.4 Records in *Overview of Modern History of Abag Left Banner Before Liberation* *Overview of Modern History of Abag Left Banner Before Liberation* is likewise included in the aforementioned *Overview of Modern History of the Four Abag Banners Before Liberation*. The relevant record is translated as follows: “Among the common people were numerous artistic performers—singers, instrumentalists, and eulogists. For example, the renowned morin khuur

player Ayurzhana (also called the left-handed player) and the famous vocalist Timudun, among others. These folk artists would perform Chao'er Yindao, play the morin khuur, and play flutes during Spring Festival, weddings, oboe spring sacrifices, blessing ceremonies, and dharma assemblies, winning the admiration of the masses through their songs... There was a popular saying at the time: 'If you encounter two Abag people traveling together, one is surely a singer and the other a Chao'erqin.' The traditional custom in Abag was that any nair must open with the performance of 'Eerte Yin Chagan' and close with 'Baogeda Chengjisi' " [16].

2.5 Records in *Abag Banner Gazetteer* (Chinese Language) Published by Inner Mongolia People's Publishing House in 2001, this gazetteer contains Mongolian-language records of "Chao'er Yindao," translated as follows: "Chao'er Yindao, West Abag (Abag Right Banner is also called West Abag) 'Turin Tao Buqi' 'Arun Tengger,' East Abag (Abag Left Banner is also called East Abag) 'Turin Tao Buqi' 'Eerhe Min Dedu,' Chao'er Yindao, 'Naren Mutu Manduhu,'" documenting the musical scores and lyrics of these three songs [17]. Here, "Turin Tao Buqi" refers to what would now be called a banner (county) anthem.

The source cited in this section—*Overview of Modern History of the Four Abag Banners Before Liberation*—was compiled by senior scholars including Palam, Polje, Idam, and Chao Balaha, who had served as clerks in the Qing Dynasty banner government (or as literate lamas in temples). As eyewitnesses to much of the history of "Chao'er Yindao," their records in this work constitute precious documentary materials left by predecessors.

Conclusion

Based on the above analysis, the following conclusions can be drawn: First, records in Abag Banner local documents and other sources demonstrate that "Chao'er Yindao" is a historical name passed down through millennia by the Abag (Abahanar) tribe. Second, the name "Chao'er Yindao" recorded in the 1992 publication *Chinese Folk Songs Integration: Inner Mongolia Volume*—the first monumental work compiling national folk songs since the founding of the People's Republic of China—and in the work of renowned scholar Fan Zuyin, *Overview of Chinese Multi-part Folk Songs*, represents the most accurate transliteration. Third, the statement "Chao'er Yindao is also known as Chao'er songs" is inaccurate and requires further discussion. Fourth, if "Chao'er Dao" is considered a transliteration of "Chao'er Yindao," this transliteration is insufficiently accurate. Fifth, the International Phonetic Alphabet for "Chao'er Yindao" should be written as " ". Sixth, the naming of intangible cultural heritage projects, including "Chao'er Yindao," is a serious undertaking. All sectors of society concerned with intangible cultural heritage, especially experts and scholars, should conduct more in-depth and meticulous research to achieve standardized usage of the name "Chao'er Yindao" based on full consideration of

traditional cultural characteristics.

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Corresponding Author: Tumenbayar

Email: tumenb@163.com

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