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 ǰula qayan-u üledel Tangsu qan-u či Üǰung aldar qayan-u köbegün iye-in ńočin Jinggar-un tuǰi arban ǰurban bölg). 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 xürin ülger.

Introduction

From the numerous heroic epics of Mongolian oral tradition, the Jangar 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. Jangar, Jinggar, 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. Text-versions of certain chapters (Mong. bölög) of ‘classical’ Jangar 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. qur-un üliger, Khalkha and Inner Mongolian xūrin 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. qurči, Khal. xūrči), 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. qur, Khal. xūr) (cf. Figure 1). This genre is also known in the academic literature as bengsen-ü üliger (Mong.).

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. qurči, Khal. xūrči) from the Inner Mongolian Baarin (Mong. Bayarin, Khal. Bārin) territory. He recited a version of the Jangar chapter ‘Minggan the Beauty of the World’, later published twice: in Biography of Epic Tellers and Storytellers (Rinčindorǰi 2010: 146–217), and the Bensen-ü üliger-ün degeǰi, baa-rin boti (Rinčindorǰi, 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.

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1 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.
3 Mong. qur, 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 usatutu qur, Khal. dörwön usat xūr)—also called ‘four-eared fiddle’ (Mong. dörben čitutu qur, Khal. dörwön čixt xūr)—is referred to by this definition.
5 In our context khuurch is a person who performs epic stories with a ‘four-stringed fiddle’.
6 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.
7 Concerning the parallel texts, there are two chapters about Mingyan: Boyda Jangyar qayan-u erkim sayin täsimel Erke Teş qayan-u köbegün orčilang-un sayiqan Mingyan Jangyar (recorded by Rinčindorǰi).
Figure 1. Rinchin’s four-stringed fiddle (Photo: Chogtu 2019)

noyan-u jaruča-du yahuyad Altan Törog qayan-u altan sira čoqr aytayi ergigüljı abčirayqan böög (10th chapter in Damrinǰab 2002) and the Aldarsiysan Erke Tuy qayan-u köbegün orcılang-un sayiqan Mingyan aldar boyda Janggar-un jaruča-du yahuyad kičütei Gürmın qayan-i amida-bar kele barju iregsen böög (the 11th chapter in Damrinǰab 2002). There are also two chapters about Mingyan in another Jangar-edition: Orcılang-un sayiqan Mingyan Törog qayan-u tümen sira čoqr aytayi kögegsen böög and Orcılang-un sayiqan Mingyan kičütei Gürmın qayan-i amida-bar kele barju iregsen böög (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 khourch, is similar to the plot of Takil jula qayan-u üledel Tungsuy bumba qayan-u ači Üjüng aldar qayan-u köbegün üye-in önөчин Jangyar-un arban böög.

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 Ėlyan 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 Tungsuy bumba qayan-u ači Üjüng aldar qayan-u köbegün üye-in önөчин Jangyar-un taqṣiqi arban yurban böög in 1958.
The Life Story of Rinchin *khuurch*

Rinchin was born in 1927\(^{11}\) 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. Sodnam ǰamču), 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 *Tangsuγ 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 Zhangjiakou\(^{21}\) for one year. Here he attended different study-related events, learning to perform *khuuriin ülger*.\(^{22}\) Thereafter, he travelled to Chakhar (Mong. Čaγar) Right Banner where he continued telling *khuuriin ülger* to local people. In 1975

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\(^{11}\) In Rinchin’s biography based on W. Heissig’s records, the year of his birth was 1932, cf. *Rinchin’s Biography*. https://mongoltales.awk.nrw.de/bards_bio_Rincin.html (accessed 18.09.2019). The data displayed on the site devoted to East Mongolian bard’s 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. Čilaγunbaγan-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. Ongniγud) refers to the Ongnigud Banner in Inner Mongolia; its centre is Ulaankhad (Mong. Ulaγanqada).

\(^{16}\) *Tangsuγ 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. Tangsuγ 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* 鍾國母 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. Čoγtu, Khal. Cogt) studies printed in Mongolia (Cogt 2011) and China.
he worked in Bayanbulag Commune of Abaganar (Mong. Abaγanar) Banner, and later became the assistant storyteller for the House of Tales 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 Choirag (Mong. Čoyirγ). 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. Kölönbuyir). 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. yabaγan üliger), such as the ‘Tale of Geser Khan’ or variants of the ‘Tale of the Mangus-monster’, and the ‘Tricky Old Man’ as well as the ‘Stories of the Tricky Wandering Monk, Balangsang’. The stories of Jangar that Rinchin memorised from Choirag are the chapters of ‘Minggan the Beauty of the World Capturing Emperor Gürüm’ and the ‘Marriage of Hero Khonggor’. Presumably, as Choirag 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. He was a celebrated khuurch in Inner Mongolia who could tell khuuriin
Ülger in a very humorous and vivid way, and was especially talented in a genre called urγγγ-a qolboγ-a, 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. 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 ąlγγγ-γεr to Walther Heissig and Rinčindorǰi from 7th to 9th September 1999: ’Minggan the Beauty of the World’ and ’Tangsuγ 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’ (Rinčindorǰi, 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. Ėlyan Owla’s Kalmyk Jangar → Publications of the Thirteen Chapters Jinggar in China.
3. The tradition of Baarin khuuriin ülger.
4. The tradition of genre qolboγ-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, based in all

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35 Mong. urγγγ-a qolboγ-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. qolbγγaγči) 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.


38 Cf. footnote No. 10.

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.

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40 Mong. *Orčilang-un sayiqan Mingyan kučütieti Gürmün qayan-i amidu-bar kele barifu iregsen bölög*.

41 Mong. *Takil ğula qayan-u üledel Tangsar bumba qayan-u ați Üjüng aldar qayan-u köhe-gün üve-yin önöčin Jinggar-un tüŋfi arban yurbun 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 *Jinggar*. 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 *khuuriin ülger*. Chaogetu, for example, wrote several books about the genre and performers, e.g. Cogt (2011), see his studies on Pajai (cf. Cogt and Čen Fən Lüüng 2002), on Muuohin (Cogt and Čen Fən Lüüng 2006), on the oral history of storytellers’ life (Cogt and Erkimbayar 2012), on the famous *khuurch* Erdenijirüke (Cogt and Luuzar 2014 and Cogt, Sambanorbu and Qan-fu-lin 2016). He also wrote more than fifty articles about *khuuriin ülger* and the role of performers.
modules related to the plot such as čū xurāx, 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. tuulící, Khal. tül či) ‘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 told the ‘Tale of Geser’ for 80 hours in the 1950s, while another khuurch Jimbajamsu (Mong. Jimbajamsu) 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 (Mong. Tüsietü) 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 khuurc̄h, and the contemporary taste of the audience are all factors which influenced Rinchin khuurc̄h 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

Khuurcs 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. Cendīn Damdinsüren)

43 In Inner Mong. dialects čū xurāx is also called as se yanūlar by some khuurcs from Ulaankhad, cf. Chinese shangchao 上朝. Mong. čuu comes from Chinese chao 朝, and Mong. quraq 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. Jarad) Banner of Jirim (Mong. Jirim) 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 Teğe-bàri 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 Sechenmöngke (Mong. Sečenmöngke) 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 khuurc̄h comes from the middle part of the Khorchin Right Banner of Shingan league. He learned ‘Altan Galba Khan’ (Mong. Altan galba qaγan) and ‘Iron Sandil Hero’ (Mong. Temür Sandil baγatur) 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] *Jangγar*, 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

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Since on the earth} & \quad \text{The human beings came into life} \\
\text{The human beings came into life} & \quad \text{Carnivorous monsters} \\
\text{Carnivorous monsters} & \quad \text{Also appeared.} \\
\text{Also appeared.} & \quad \text{For peaceful life} \\
\text{For peaceful life} & \quad \text{Fought for ten thousands years} \\
\text{Fought for ten thousands years} & \quad \text{Suppressing the treacherous enemies} \\
\text{ Suppressing the treacherous enemies} & \quad \text{and} \\
\text{and} & \quad \text{It is called history.} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Rinčindorǰi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1797)

And finished it with another typical versified formula:

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{In order to} & \quad \text{Protect his dependants} \\
\text{Protect his dependants} & \quad \text{Outstanding hero Minggan} \\
\text{Outstanding hero Minggan} & \quad \text{Has embarked the dangerous road.} \\
\text{Has embarked the dangerous road.} & \quad \text{He defeated and ameliorated} \\
\text{He defeated and ameliorated} & \quad \text{The evil Gürmün Khan} \\
\text{The evil Gürmün Khan} & \quad \text{One chapter} \\
\text{One chapter} & \quad \text{Of the story} \\
\text{Of the story} & \quad \text{I am going to stop here!} \\
\end{align*}
\]

(Rinčindorǰi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1859)

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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 *kuuriin ülger*. Below some ways and means of changes are introduced.

1. **The Beginning of kuuriin ülger Jangar**

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

*Doluyan duγur-a güičejü sayγysan*  
*düübür qar-a araγa-yin saγuri-dur*  
*ejen noyan Jingγar ni*  
*rašiyan qar-a nilbusun-iyan sačun*  
*qar-a torγan bisimüd-ün*  
*qançu-bar buruγų jöb ţügei arčin sayuva :*

*(Jinggar 1958: 173)*

Rinchin *khuurch* changed this module with the formula of the usual beginning of the traditional Mongol *kuuriin 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:

*Čaγan dung-γyan üliyeged*  
*čaγ-un dokγ-γa talbiγ-a*  
*čaγaγa-yin olan tűsimel sayγid-ud*  
*čöm bűkün-γyen čuγlaral-γ-a :*  
*Čaγan qas-un örgügen-deγen*  
*boγa Jingγar jalarayad*  
*čaγ-un yabudal alban-u učir-γyan*  
*jöplekü-ber bolul-γ uγi :*  
*(Rinčindorǰi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1799)*

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

Qayang ejen-iyen jalan-a ged                       For inviting the emperor
gas-un qarangy-a qabirul-a .                       Beat the jade gongs.
Qamur sayid-un dokiy-a gejü                      As warnings to all officials
luu-yin kenggege deledül-e :                       Beat the dragon drums.
...
Yü ši lüng jing (玉石龙镜) qabirul-a :            For arriving of Yü shi lüng jing
Olan sayid-un dokiy-a gejü                      As warnings to many officials
luu-yin kenggege deledül-e :                     Beat the dragon drums.
(Rinčindorǰi and Qubitu 1988: 63)

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 metū mandužu                      Buddhism flourishes like the sun,
yırtınčī-yin töörü qada metū badaražu          The state in the world develops like the rocks,
emüneki-eč-ben yeke jirγaltai bolжу :          The life becomes happier than before,
emnig gegūd-ın sü                              The tameless mare’s milk
elbeg araja-yin sayuri boluyad                  Becomes the source of ample spirits and
jirγal čenggel kiged sayuβa :                   [People] have a great feast and joy.
(Jinggar 1958: 187)

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:
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 bolu’yan
borungqai eteged-i nomogad’yan
bum saya albatu-nuyud
haqir hir qeegel-tee:
boy simnus-un buqyad irekhi-yin
baray-a suray-i ni tasulaqyayar kuyi
boyda Jangyar-un aldar yahy-a

buman uy-e-degen durasqaltai kuyi:

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

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. kui, Khal. xuii ‘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
örülü bayatur Mongyan
üregeley-ün dumdayur jamnay sayar
üjel mayu Gürmin qan-i
örgereleyi jayay abuysan küi :
öliy teke-yin nige bölög-yen
ende-hen kürgeged jabsarlay-a küi :
(Rinčindorǰi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1859)

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

For another typical ending of khuurin ülger, cf. a fragment from the performance of the famous khoorj Erdenijirük (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 (薛剛反唐) gedeg üliger-e
sine tang-i bayıruluyad
It is about the building up the new Tang dynasty;
sečen mergen sayid nar
The wise officials
čuuy-dayyul jalara matière-üs-i jasaba :
Gathered and improved the state.
Ködege tosqun-u orun-dayyan
In the dusty countryside
kümün čuú bür bayar-tai
Everybody became happy
kögšin jalaya nasutan-muyud
Old and young, all people
bayar-un ayur-iyar bıqlalčájat :
Were full of happiness.
(Čoytu, Sambalnorbu and Qan-fu-lin 2016: 931)

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 khoorj changed the typical ending formula of heroic epics Jinggar with the one used mostly in khuurin ülgers.

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

1. Additional Motifs and Text Modules in the Plot

Although Rinchin khoorj 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:

'Arubamba-yin orun-u arya kūciitei olan-u dotur-a-거나 as-un yācyia Mingyan namayi yayağiyan oluyad üjebe : 'ged ayauiliqai čegejin-dü boduyas-i-ban aru aru-a-ṇi toyačijai : Ašgarayulu nilbusu-γi-ban kekije kekije-ber bayuylačiqaḷa küi. 'As-un bey-e-γin aburγu čidal erdem-i üged Gürmün qan-i barju irejű čidan-a kemen sanayasan-ača busu asdaγan čimayi ad ijegeyayalyuysan busu.' ġejű aldar Jangyar daγa ügei saγa ba :

‘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, kii!
‘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 fol-
lowing ‘Though Minggan is not that
much stronger than Arag Ulaan Khon-
gor, but he is clever and fast. Further-
more, his golden steed is one of the	hree treasure horses of the Bumba-
land. 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.

(Rinčindorǰi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014:
1804)
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:

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 khuurin ülger.

There is a similar text module of farewell ceremony in the eighty-one hour long khuurin 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:
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 ülger 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 arya bayiqula abuyad iregeči. ese čidaqula öber-iyen oruyad dayabaču basa ilyal üget 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 dam dalba ša ing-iyar dara daru ad 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 khuurc 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 khuurin 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 khuurc changed the name to Minggan (lit.) ‘Thousand’, a word close in sounding to Mingyan and well known for the audience.\footnote{Professor Rinchindorji was of the same opinion: ‘Rinchin khuurc changed this expression; he used Minggan instead of Mingyan’ (Rinčindorǰi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1859).} 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), labsi-a (Kalm. lawšig, Ramstedt 1976: 250) mirad (Kalm. mirid, Ramstedt 1976: 263), šuturan (Ramstedt deest) in sequence. Also he changed the general Mongolian word tüngküyigede to següdegenen which has still remained somewhat obscure. Köbčig refers to a ‘thick pad used upon the saddle’, labsi-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 khuurin ülger, but they are different from the enormously expanded ones in heroic epics (cf. above the motif of Mingyan’s drinking). Rinchin khuurc was influenced by the expressive means of khuurin ülger and this led to several extended hyperbole in Jinggar being changed, e.g. the descriptive motif about Mingyan’s horse:

\footnote{Acta Orient. Hung. 73, 2020}
Jirγuγ-a alda-yin bey-e-tei yum  He had six fathom long body,
jirγuγ-un sayiγan toluyai-tai yum  He had a head like a painting,
jirγuγan imaγu čiγi-tei yum  He had six inches long ears,
ju tegsiken foo-tai yum  He had very flat spine.
(Rinčindorǰi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1805)

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 changed ‘day’ into ‘hour’. He told that Minggan ‘had a rest for forty nine hours’ (doluγan döγi döγi yisün čay uunγa yadaγa-yi γai-yi) (Rinčindorǰi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1827). By changing the text in this way, the behaviour of the characters in a khuurii ulger became more realistic.

3. Clarification of Some Unclear Matters

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

Keüken qar-a nomun-du  [Minggan] put three arrows
γurbarad sumu-yi köbčileged  Into the young black bow and
dub duγurad sara metiγ tataju  Pulled it like a round moon.
nomun-u köbči dangnig geğiγ  The bowstring was stretched and
γurbad sumu qoyin-a qoyin-a-ban  While the three arrows were flying
whisling one after another
suburad šuγiyad irekγ-yin uy-e-dü  Bars Mergen
bars mergen turgig sumu-ača  Escaped to the west.
barayunis jayilajai  From the first arrow,
qoyadγar sumu-ača  Escaped to the east
jegiγunis jayilajai  Unable to escape
γurbanγar sumu-ača  From the third arrow,
jayilaju jadγuyan ügei  His throat was hit
qoyulai ni onydayad  Neck was divided [from his head].
küγiγiγi ni tasulaba  (Rinčindorǰi, Sagaster and Chiodo 2014: 1849–1850)

The original version is somewhat obscure in comparison to Rinchin’s version: ‘[He] shot apart his throat and made his head jump’ (qayolai-bar ni tasu qarbuyad toluyai-yi ni üsirγeged 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 ülger*; 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 ülger*, 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

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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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