

## MONGOLIAN TRADITIONAL SHORT SONGS

Mongolian traditional folk songs are classified into two basic forms: long-songs and short-songs. A short-song is a generic term for songs with simple composition and compact form that can be sung by anyone. The traditional short-song is called by different names, such as *'khokhir duu'* (humour song), *'tegüür duu'* (lascivious song), *'zavkhai duu'* (erotic song), *'savaan duu'* (song of the willow branch), *'savriin duu'* (dung-fork song), and *'shagshuur duu'* (song of amours). Among the Mongolian traditional folk song forms, the short-song is the one closest to the daily life of ordinary people, the one richest in terms of repertoire, and the one that is sung with wide popularity in a multitude of versions both indoors and outdoors.

In terms of composition, the short-song has mostly 3-5 verses, each with similar meanings with lyrical rhymes. The short song is usually performed accompanied by small groups of traditional music instruments, such as the *shudarga* (three-stringed lute), *khuuchir* (bowed spike-fiddle), and *yochin* (dulcimer). Folk short-songs are popularly sung in the densely inhabited settlements in Mongolia, where they are called *'khüree duu'* (city songs). They are distinguished from other forms with their

## MONGOLIAN TRADITIONAL LONG SONGS

Mongolian national long song (*urtiin duu*) is an outstanding and extraordinary masterpiece of the song and music art of Mongolia that is sung nowhere else in the world. It is rooted in the world view of nomadic Mongolians and developed by the nomadic Mongolians in ways that have been shaped by the dialects and customs of each region and ethnicity. These songs are characterized by an abundance of ornamentation, falsetto, an extremely wide vocal range and a free compositional form.

Although no one has yet identified the exact time when *urtiin duu* originated, some Chinese historical records related to the period of *Hünnü Empire* mentioned about the peculiar 'wolf-like singing' of the nomadic people who inhabited the regions north of China. This is proof that the ancestors of the Mongolians sang long songs at least 2,400 years ago.

Researchers and experts unanimously believe that the origins of the long song are closely associated with the ritualistic expressions of the nomads, such as animal coaxing and animal calling chants, shamanic calls, *uukhai* cheers, horse race cheers, eulogies, praises, and epic intoning, all of which derive from the needs and demands of environment in which the nomadic livestock breeders lived.

The lyrics and melodies of the long songs are thoroughly influenced by the nomadic Mongolians' philosophical views, ideologies, symbolism, reverence and respect toward the universe, nature, humanity, animals, ancestors and state, as well as their love and sympathy toward parents, children, and their spouse.

The long song has been developed as an integral part of ordinary life, traditional customs and practices, as well as by the extraordinary and exceptional art of singing of the Mongols. It has been passed from one generation to another, bearing the spiritual culture, ethics, values, and aesthetic standards of the Mongolian nations.

In terms of the singing technique, melody and duration, the long song is exceptionally distinct among other forms of singing art in the world. *Urtiin duu* is sung with an extremely wide vocal range; at the same time, it is ornamented with a variety

of excessive ornamentations and elegant melody.

Folk short-songs are classified into the following classifications in terms of their theme and content:

- Household songs
- Love songs
- Filial piety songs
- Philosophic and didactic songs
- Wedding and ceremonial songs
- Humorous songs
- Historic songs
- Lullabies

The melody of the Mongolian short-song is mellifluous and easily remembered. Being transmitted from antiquity to the present day, folk short-songs can strike a deep chord in one's heart. They have the power to pacify anyone who listens to it with its melody and lyrics. The Mongolian traditional short-song is a reflection of the nomadic livestock-breeder's lifestyle and the scenic beauty of the nature of Mongolia, and it is a unique aspect of global folklore.

of unique singing techniques and diverse ornamentations, such as *shurankhai* (coloratura-soprano-like technique to sing high pitched notes; it is done mostly with a head voice), *nugalaa* (a prolonged trill or modulated vibrato on vowels), singing melodies in a slow and steady way while also keeping them infused with a lively rhythm.

Three major styles can be classified in Mongolian long songs: *aizam urtiin duu* (rhythmic long song), *jiriin urtiin duu* (typical long song) and *besreg urtyin duu* (mini long song). *'Ertnii saikhan'* (Ancient splendour), *'Tümnii Ekh'* (The first of thousands, such as a many-time winner of the national horse-race) *'Övgön shuvuu'* (Old bird), *'Uyahan zambuu tiviin naran'* (The majestic sun blesses the world), *'Durtmal saikhan'* (Memorable horse) and *'Herlengiin bariya'* (Herlen's rapids) are a few of the most popular long songs among the Mongolians.

Some long songs consist of several dozen continuous verses. It is very limited to translate the lyrics of Mongolian long song into different languages. Traditionally, long songs are accompanied by the *morin khuur* (horse-head fiddle) and occasionally by the *limbe* (horizontal flute).

As a ritual form of expression associated with important state and civil celebrations and festivities, *urtiin duu* plays a distinct and honoured role in Mongolian society together with the *morin khuur*.

It is performed at weddings, the inauguration of a new home, the birth of a child, the branding of foals and other social events celebrated by Mongolian nomadic communities. A rich variety of regional styles has been preserved until today among the Mongolian speakers living in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Republic, Buryat Republic, and Republic of Kalmyk.

*Urtiin duu*, *höömei*, *morin khuur* and *biyelgee* dance are the origins of the intellectual, aesthetic and artistic mindset and creativity of the Mongolians, and are the roots of other forms of intangible heritage. The *Urtiin duu*-Traditional Folk Long Song was incorporated on the UNESCO Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2008.