

The Path of the Arrow
The Evolution of Mongolian National Archery

Eric X Brownstein
Academic director S.Ulzijargal,
World Learning/SIT Study Abroad Mongolia spring 2008

Table of Contents

Introduction – 3
History- 5
The modern sport in the modern day-11
How the competitions are conducted and rules-11
Competitions-15
Comparison of the 3 sports- 16
Ranks-19
Archer's reasons for participation-20
Explanation of archery associations-23
Analysis and conclusion- 26

Acknowledgements

I would like to take this time to recognize the people who helped to make this paper possible.

-Special thanks to N. Munkhzaya, for her help translating information setting up interviews and then sitting through them when they were excruciatingly long for her. I would also like to thank Munkhzaya for being my guardian and protector through out the ISP period.

- Mr. Bathuyag Seded, for sharing with me his own publications in the field of archery, and knowledge as the former head of the Mongolian Archers Association.

- Mr. Batsaihai, for meeting with me on several occasions, and sharing his knowledge of archeology and stories of his part in the discovery of the grave of Chinggis Khan.

-Rudy, for helping me to better understand the Mongolian National archery, opening me up to the broader world of people trying to resurrect the sport, and for letting me shoot arrows at his couch.

-Mikaela Mroczynski, for helping me to keep organized in times of stress, helping me with grammar checks and for beginning the quest to find that very elusive Farris wheel.

- Mr. Bazarsuren, for his in depth explanations of the history of archery in Mongolia and for giving me his book.

-Paul Caulder for having red hair and being a good friend when he could have been doing his laundry

-I would like to thank all of the people that I interviewed for sharing their knowledge about archery with me their time, patience and wisdom made this paper possible

-Lastly I would like to thank S.Ulzijjargal and Ch. Ulziihishig for making the program possible And Ch. Ulziihishig for introducing me to the archeology faculty at the Mongolian National University.

Abstract

The Mongolian bow, once the cornerstone of the largest empire in the world, has gone through changes in almost every period of history. At present much of its past glory has been lost to people even in Mongolia and while it technically remains as one of Mongolia's three national sports it is of much less prominence than the other two, wrestling and horseback racing. Archery has become detached from its strong history and the sport finds itself in danger of extinction. The reasons for this are complex but can often be attributed to various archery associations which are run in a very hierarchical manner and usually do not collaborate on promoting their sport. If archery is to once again capture the attention of the general public and reinstitute itself as a major sport of Naadam, Mongolia's national festival, changes must be made to make it appealing to modern Mongolians.

Introduction

The practice of Archery is an inseparable part of Mongolian culture and has been for as long as anyone can remember. The bow and arrow have played a distinguished role in Mongolia's history as a symbol, a craft and a sport. Archery has changed from being a tool for survival and a well constructed weapon of war into a national sport. Today archery is the least popular of the 'three manly games'¹ and has been pushed to the back of national interest. In order for archery to sustain popularity in a transforming modern Mongolia, it will have to adapt or before it dies out.

This paper attempts to outline the history of archery from its beginning to the modern day in order to explain its current state as the least popular sport of the Naadam Festival. By speaking to archers, members of the associations and historians one can see the immense the changes that have occurred in the sport since the bow and arrow were used for survival. Archery has become institutionalized as a sport, the rules have been written down, and some of the glory of the sport seems to have been lost to many Mongolians.

Archery in Mongolia has been limited to three types of competitions. The rules of the three competitions; *Khalkh*, *Buriad* and *Urian Khai* are made official by three separate associations: the Mongolian National archery association, the *Buriad* archers association, and the *Uriankhai* archers association. The

¹ Mongolia's 'three manly games' are wrestling, archery, and horseback racing. They have been practiced for centuries and victory in these games is a sign of manly prowess.

associations are trying to popularize archery but have been largely ineffective and the community of Mongolian archers has remained small. This community is affected by the modernizations of the sport and competitors of all ages have opinions about the future of archery. Within this work I attempt to show why archery is important to the individual archer and how this relates to the direction the associations are taking.

Methods

I was able to gather my information in the city through interviews, visits to archery competitions, bow-making studios and museums. Using a translator I interviewed a variety of different specialists on archery, in order to gain a sufficient background in the history, I spoke to anthropologists and historians who were able to provide me with sources including their own writings as well as share with me a piece of their extensive knowledge on the history of archery and the evolution of the bow. I spoke with three different bow makers, two of which lived in the city, and one who had an exhibition at the Modern Art Gallery. I was able to go to their workshops and had them run me through the general process of bow making and to explain to me the state of the art today. These experiences gave me much knowledge about Mongolian archery but attending the archery events every Saturday and Sunday was my best teacher. I was able to meet archers and enjoy the surroundings of the small community first hand. It was on the archery pitch that I made the most connections and with the help of a translator I was able to talk to some of the top ranking winners of Naadam. In

order to get an idea of how the sport is viewed by the community I spoke to a large variety of archers living in the city. I obtained a range of opinions and stories of experiences from both the older, more experienced, and the newer competitors. I also got input from female archers on how they feel about the sport. Lastly I spoke to high ranking members of the archery associations in order to observe how the rules were made, how the sport was run, and the direction in which they feel that archery is going.

History

The history of archery in Mongolia starts well before the Stone Age and progressed steadily through the Bronze Age, when the composite bow was introduced. In the 13th century the skill of Mongolian archers and the design of the bow reached its peak, and it served as the main weapon in Chinggis Khaan's conquest of much of the known world. It was used as an every day tool for hunting and an inseparable part of Nomadic life; every Mongolian *ger* had a bow and every man was taught to shoot. Archery remained this way until the seventeenth hundreds, when archery was suppressed by Manchu rule and the art of bow making and horseback archery was almost completely lost. This changed in 1940 with the founding of the Archery Bureau. In 1959 the Archery Bureau grew and changed in to the National archery association of Mongolia when 60 archers from the countryside came together to conduct a competition. However, at present archery has become a practice which draws little popularity as a spectator sport.

The first definite appearance of the bow in what is now Mongolia was during the Neolithic period though its history likely goes back even further. In early Neolithic times the bow and arrow brought about an influential change in the early nomadic way of life food became easier to attain, furs were more abundant, and war changed forever. It affected the way the Neolithic people hunted and ate, and as a result of this archery evolved in to an efficient hunting tool and an advanced weapon of war (Mongolian Natural History Museum).

Many archaeological remains of bows have been found near Lake Baikal in contemporary Siberia, the ancient center of Mongolian life. *Zuimel*, Multi-layered composite bows using horn and sinew, began to show up as early as the Bronze Age. (Erdenbaatar, May 15th, 2008) The Hunnu dynasty which ruled from 3rd century BC to 2nd century AD had a heavy influence on the archery of Chinggis Khan's empire about 1,000 years later, though 13th century bow resembles that of Turkish invention. (Batsaihain April 14, 2008)

By the 13th century the *Zuimel* was a well-oiled tool of war, which no one could use better than the Mongols. The basic Mongolian warrior was required to have three things: personal strength, a horse and a bow. (Bazarsuren, 05-22-08) The goal of each soldier was to unite the three in to one practice. With an army of this type of warrior the Mongolian empire stretched across Asia and the stories of the ferocious Mongolian archer stretched across centuries. The bow the Mongols carried was similar to the composite bow used by others in Central Asia yet it was

the complete marriage of man, horse, and bow that set the Mongolian soldier apart.

There are many stories that record the prowess of Mongolian archers. Esungge the marksman, one of his Chinggis khans lower ranking generals, is famous for shooting a target from 335 *ald* during a celebratory Nadaam. The *ald* is a system of measurement comparable to roughly 160cm determined by the distance of a man's widespread arms. The distance of the shot is estimated at 536 meters which is an amazing feat for even modern day archers and would be a difficult feat to accomplish with the naked eye even if shooting a gun. The stone recording this feat was found in the basin of the Kharhira River and dates the event to the year 1226. One interoperation of the script reads as follows: "While Chinggis Khaan was holding an assembly of Mongolian dignitaries, after his conquest of Sartaul (East Turkestan), Esungge shot a target at 335 alds"(536m). In 1832 the stone stele on which this feat was recorded was removed from Nerchinsk to St. Peetersberg, Esungge's record is still kept in the State Hermitage Museum. A copy of the stone sits outside the Mongolian National history museum (Lhagvasuren).

The average archer on horseback was able to shoot accurately at 300 meters and, according to historical documents found in China, a Mongolian arrow could penetrate armor at 30 paces. (Bazarsuren) One of the most influential tales of the effect of Mongolian skill with the horse and the bow takes place in Poland, during Chinggis Khan's attack on Korikove in 1259. (Buell) The army of the

great Khan managed to get very close to the city without sounding the alarm. An unlucky guard happened to spot the army and went to sound the alarm and only was able to sound a short blow before being shot clean through the neck from 300 meters away by a Mongolian on a charging horse. Another guard took his place and blew the horn alerting the city of the attack. To this day it is the tradition in Korikove Poland to sound the alarm in three blows in honor of the guards who fell in the battle that day. (Monkjargle, 5-14-08) To Mongolians this tradition is also in honor of their skill and legendary victory in Eastern Europe.

In battle and during the hunts the Mongolian archer was on horseback and the honed skill of the 13th century Mongolian warrior originates from learning to shoot at the age of two. Boys would be required to shoot bows of particular strengths at different ages, and in order to participate in organized hunts a man would be required to use a bow requiring a minimum of 80 kg of strength to pull back. (Atwood) The hunt was called a *Nerge*, *jerge* or *Battu* were the hunters would spread out over several miles forming a circle they would herd the game to the center of the circle where the khan and higher ranking community members would have their first shot at the trapped game and then others would partake. A hole would be left in the ring of hunters leaving room for some animals to run free in a merciful and symbolic act. (Buell , May)

This simple but coordinated hunting strategy was adapted and used on the battlefield with deadly effect. The Mongols would encircle their enemy wrapping their forces around them so that the enemy troops overlapped. As the battle went

on the circle would close, leaving an opening for troops to escape like in the hunt. The hole in the formation gave the opposing army a false sense of security. The fleeing enemies would often drop their weapons while running leaving them helpless. They would be immediately chased down by archers and since the line of the Mongolian troops was doubled over, the circle remained unbroken. The remaining troops would be herded in to the center of the circling Mongols and the hole in the formation would close tightening the noose. (May) This formation was especially effective on the heavily armored warriors of Eastern Europe, who were not equipped to fight the speedy horseback archers of the Mongol army. By using battle tactics that each soldier had practiced since boyhood, which also were practical for feeding troops on long campaigns, the *Nerge* became one of the Mongols' greatest and most effective strategies.

The period of Manchu rule was possibly the most destructive for the Mongolian traditions of archery. The Manchu were afraid of the Mongolians potential to revolt against them and they did all that they could do to suppress and weaken their memory of Mongolia's warrior past. Up until this point horseback archery had been an everyday practice for herders. This daily practice was one of the first things that the Manchu tried to eradicate. Before the 1700's the clothing of the average Mongolian was suited for archery and warfare; the sleeves of the *deel* were tight and well fitted for wielding a bow and the Mongolian boots were straight toed and suited for kicking an enemy from horseback. (Bazarsuren, 05-

22-08) The Manchu turned up the points of the shoes making them ineffective for kicking and lengthened the sleeves of the dell so that they draped over the Mongolians hands and were ill suited for fighting or archery. (Munkhjargal, 5-14-08) Meanwhile, the strong Mongolian bow was replaced with a weaker version of the Manchu bow. Most destructively, Manchu soldiers marched in to gers and broke any bows that they found. Over two hundred years of enforcement these changes stuck and the ancient art of bow making was nearly lost along with a majority of archery games and traditions. The Manchu also incorporated Mongolians in to their army and carefully substituted Manchu traditions for Mongolian ones until Manchu culture was integrated in to Mongolian. As a result of Manchu rule the art of archery as it had been since the days of the Golden Khan was extinguished.

Archery came back to Naadam and was organized for the first time in many years by the newly founded Mongolian National Archery Association. This was the beginning of the sports standardization in the modern era. In many ways the Naadam festival saved archery from extinction. Those who recognized archery's importance and enjoyed its practice gathered to form associations, organizations which are still extremely new.

The oldest and largest of the associations is the National Archery Association of Mongolia, was founded in 1940 by D. Namsrai under the title of the "Archery Bureau" at the "Union of National Sports" (Batkhuuyag). The

association changed its name to the National Archery Association in 1959, when 60 archers from around the country met in Zuukharaa city of the Selenge Province and organized a team contest. Their goal, successfully accomplished, was to form a larger association. Since Namsrai, the association has seen four other presidents: D. Baldandorj, 1959-1989.; S. Batkuyag, September, 1989-July, 1998.; Ch. Enkhtaivan July, 1998 – January, 2003.; Mr. Davaanyam, February, 2003 – through the present day. (Batkuyag)

The modern sport in the modern day

Archery today is practiced only in sport and all its aspects have changed to fit this purpose--the rules have been standardized, the bows have become weaker, participatory motivation has changed, and Associations make major decisions about the direction of the sport. This institutionalization has greatly changed the direction of the sport.

There are three separate types of archery: Khalkh, Buriad, and Uriankai. Each is named for a prominent ethnic group and follow its rules and traditions. They are similar in nature but differ in cultural style and minor rules. In every tradition the goal is to hit targets, made out of hide or sinew, which are placed on the ground. Traditional *deels*, archer's hats (*Malgai*), riding boots (*gutal*) and locally made bows are sported at every event, as a sign of respect to the National history behind the sport.

In *Kalkh* archery there are two different types of target shooting: *Khana* and *Khassa*. The *Khana* target is set up first, followed by the *Khassa*. In *Khana*,

or wall shooting, the targets are stacked 48 cm high and spread out the full four meter width of the *Zurkhai*, or target area. The targets, or *sur*, are stacked on top of each other with a little space in between the targets. One target rests on the two below it in a chain or pyramid-like formation. In *Khassa* shooting, the targets are stacked directly on top of each other two and sometimes three targets high. Usually, 30 individual *sur* make up the whole target area; there is a bottom line of 18 targets and a top line of 12, which are centered on the middle. The double stacked targets are called *dombo*, meaning double balls (Batkhuuyag).

Male archers stand 75 meters away from the targets, while female archers shoot from 65 meters. Children shoot from the distance equaled by their age multiplied by 4 for boys and multiplied by 3 for girls under 18. The target balls, or *sur*, are made of woven strips, camel hide, or sheep guts which are dried and formed in a hard hollow cylinder 0.08 meters tall and 0.08 meters in diameter. (Batkhuuyag) The archers stand sideways in a duck footed stance with their left shoulder facing the target. They typically hold the bow in the left hand. The distance from which the archer shoots is unchanging throughout the match. Archers participate in both team shooting and individual shooting competitions.

Buriad archery is the only archery competition where rules are standardized for women and men. Women shoot the same distance and number of arrows as men. Every archer fires 8 arrows per round in 8 rounds. If, after 32 arrows, less than half of them score, the archer is eliminated. Archers start by

shooting at a distance of 40 meters, then switch to 30 meters and finish the competition shooting at 15 meters but with a smaller target. Two shallow trenches are dug on either side of the targets; points are scored by knocking the target out of the back trench. The ball must travel for 2 meters in order to score. (Amarshaihan May, 20, 2008)

Buriad targets are solid cylinders of woven sheep's wool. There are a total of 20 targets: 8 red in the middle, 12 blue on the sides, 6 on each side of the red targets. In the center, a small red, roughly hot dog-shaped target is placed among the larger red targets. This is stood upright, and is worth 3 points if it is hit dead on. The two targets on either side of it are worth 2 points; all the other targets are worth 1. There are fewer targets in the 30 meter rounds than there are from 40 meter competitions, making it more equally challenging. The targets are 8 cm in all dimensions. (Amarshaihan May, 20, 2008)

Urankhai archery is the oldest of Mongolia's 3 forms and dates back to the days of Chinggis Khan. In the 13th century, Mongolian soldiers would hold competitions to stay in practice and boost moral between and after battles. As a result of the military tradition, only men compete in Urankhai competitions. Since 1992, state championships of Uriankhai archery have been held. Traditionally, an archery competition is held on the first day of the New Year as according to the lunar calendar. However, there is no official beginning or end to the season. (Khongor, 14, May, 2008) One of the main reasons this archery style is so deeply

versed in tradition is because it has remained relatively small. Currently, the style is going through major changes in attempt to further open the game to national and international sportsmanship.

There are 5 different kinds of shooting within Uriankhai archery: *Zus Harvah*, or point shooting, where the archer announces the specific ball that he will attempt to knock out, team shooting, individual shooting, Traditional and International shooting. The targets are shot at from at either 25, 30, or 35 meters, two mounds of earth, called *otvog*, are raised on either sides of the target. The two parallel mounds are placed 6 meters apart from each other, with the targets lined vertically in the center of the mounds. The archer must shoot an arrow strong enough to knock the ball three meters over the back mound. If two balls are knocked over, the archer still receives one point for the arrow and one of the *sur* is replaced. If three if the balls bounce over the back mound, 2 points are awarded to the archer and again one of the balls is replaced. In front of the target, there are two piles of rocks replacing cooking pots *togoo*, traditionally eliminated balls would be placed in the pots after scoring. (Khongor, 14, May, 2008)

For team shooting, 24 balls are lined up side by side on the archery pitch. Each competitor receives 2 balls. Every team is required to have 12 members in each set. Each teammate is permitted 3 chances to shoot their two balls. If a member does not knock their balls out of the target area, they run the risk of getting their team behind. In this case, the opposing team will have the chance to knock their balls out and score. As the balls are knocked out, the target becomes smaller and the shooting more difficult. The archers rotate, so that they are

constantly pitted against a random opponent, though the highest ranking archers always shoot first. The teammates of the archer stand on either side of the target area. If an arrow scores and then hits the inside mound or the leg of a teammate the point is not scored. If the ball breaks when being knocked over the back mound, no point is scored. A father and son are not to shoot in the same set as each other, nor are brothers, uncle and nephews, or any close family members participating in the same tournament. This rule is, however, only enforced in traditional shooting. (Khongor, 14, May, 2008)

There are 5 main archery competitions held every year: Opening of the Season Competition, State Championship, Naadam, Team Championships, and *Otgo Kharva*, the closing competition. (Bathuyag 21, May, 2008) Besides these, there are smaller archery competitions held throughout the countryside. These smaller competitions are a source of great enjoyment for both local archers and dedicated competitors from Ulaanbaatar who travel to these in the summer months before and after Naadam as a way to continue competing as well as take pleasure in the countryside. In Ulaanbaatar Archery contests are held every weekend starting about 3 months before the Naadam festival.

Khalkh is the largest ethnic group in Mongolia, and *Khalkh* archery competitions are the largest and most frequently organized. During a one month period, I was able to attend 4 of the *Khalkh* competitions. The best of these was, *Neelt*, which is the opening ceremony where the archers gather to begin their season of competitions. This competition is held to celebrate the warm weather.

Archery competitions are not held in the winter, except for one version of Uriankhai archery, which uses *havchaahai num*, plain wooden bows, and involves shooting targets arranged on frozen rivers or lakes. *Neelt* opens up the competitive season and lasts for two days. This archery competition was the most exciting that I attended and many archers gathered for the event. All the usual ceremonies were emphasized and done with care. All of the archers were properly introduced stating their name and rank, followed by a procession to the target area where the *Sur* was set up carefully and candy was sprinkled inside them. The opening shots were fired by the top ranking male archers and every hit was greeted by a loud and enthusiastic roar. There were even a couple spectators at this event and family members who came to watch and encourage their loved ones in the opening game.

Comparison

The differences and similarities in the set up of the three sports demonstrate how, though they are separate forms, they still all fall under the same title of Mongolian National Archery. In all of the 3 archery styles archers take turns when shooting, an archer never fires 2 arrows in a row, and the targets are set up in between hits. This does not change in team or singles competitions, making the all 3 styles rather slow paced. The unchanging rules and regulations limit participation and contribute heavily to the low popularity of the sport which effects all 3 styles.

Each style of archery constructs their *Zurkhai* differently, which is one of the most fundamental differences when comparing the 3 types. Buriad and *Uriankhai* archery's *Zurkhai* are almost exact mirror opposites of each other. Both have earthen made obstacles in front of and behind the targets. In Buriad archery this takes the form of a shallow trench which must be crossed by the *sur* where in *Uriankhai* the *sur* must roll over the *otvog*, a small mound of dirt, in order to score. The arrow must fly over the first mound or trench and push the *sur* over the second. The obstacles on both sides of the target make the games slightly more challenging by blocking the arrow from hitting the target and then blocking the target from scoring, hence adding an extra component of difficulty. Not only must the arrow hit the target but it must do so with enough strength to knock it 2 to 3 meters over the obstacle in back of the target area. In Khalkh archery the targets are stacked on top of each other, the archer must hit the targets just hard enough to knock the target 8cm away from where it stands. The variety in the set up of the targets is the main difference that set the styles apart from each other and other types of archery.

The inner line of the *Zurkhai* is 3 meters away from the targets. This distance used to be determined by the length of a man's body, as if a man was lying down with the targets above his head. The line judges touch the part of their body to show where the arrow has landed in accordance to this line. If the arrow hits the targets they touch their head or cheek, if the arrow is just inside the inner

line, the line judge will touch his lower leg. Traditionally this is a *Khalkh* practice but has been adopted by *Uriankhai* archery. Archers who are shooting use this practice to judge if the firing archer has scored. This has become a way of getting more accurate results and is an example of the sports standardization.

Buriad archery is the most officially un-established of the three types. Because of this it has the potential to be more effectively established in the modern day by observing what has and hasn't worked for the other styles in their standardization. The aspect of *Buriad* archery that makes it the most modern is its even standards for men and women. All archers are required to shoot from the same distances, with the same amount of arrows, creating an inviting sport to be participated in by both sexes. This division has created controversy in archery in the past, especially during the Naadam celebrating 800th anniversary of the great Khan. During this Naadam there was an attempt to exclude women from the sport of archery in order to restore its tradition as one of the 3 'manly games'. This resulted in the women archers protesting during a *Khalkh* archery event by shooting the same amount of arrows as men to show they were not inferior in endurance or in skill. (Davaajargal May, 21, 2008) At present there is a movement within *Uriankhai* archery to modernizing by opening its doors to women as *Buriad* archery has. (Khongor May, 14, 2008) This change in policy has not yet occurred but if it does it may increase participation and overall acceptance of women as equals all sports of Mongolian National archery.

Recognition is a big deal in all of Mongolia's traditional sports and archery is no different. It is an honor and an achievement to win Naadam and gain the title of *Mergen*. The winner receives 500,000 tugruk presented by the president of Mongolia. *Buriad* archery is the only style that has no official titles and it is working on them in order to grant recognition to the archers that have mastered the *Buriad* style. (Amarshaihan, May 20th, 2008) Rank given to *Uriankhai* archers who win *Naadam* differs slightly from *Khalkh*. The first two are the same, but there are only 4 ranks, while in *Khalkh* archery 6 are recognized. *Uriankhai* ranks are:

1. *Mergen*- one time champion of Naadam, state or *aimag* competition
2. *Hoshoi Mergen*- 2 time champion
3. *Darhan Mergen*- 3 time champion
4. *Erhee Mergen*- champion of Naadam four times or more

Khalkh archery Ranks

Candidate Sport Master- scored over 30 points out of 40 in Naadam

Sport Master- scored over 33 out of 40 points in Naadam

1. *Mergen*- one time champion of Naadam, state or *aimag* competition
2. *Hoshoi Mergen*- 2 time champion
3. *Gots Mergen*- 3 times winner of Naadam
4. *Garamgai Mergen*- 4 times champion
5. *Dayar duursah Mergen*- 5 times champion or more

Archers who hold the highest rank are allowed to shoot first and are given the honor of competing in *merge* sets, bouts against other *mergen*. The highest ranking archers shoot first during special events such as Naadam and the opening of the archery season. When the archers are announced at the opening of a match the *mergen* are always announced first. It used to be that the *mergen* were announced in order of the year that they won Nadam. There has been a recent change in this rule by the associations and now the person who has won Naadam the most times stands before the older archer. (Bathuyag 21, May, 2008) This change is awkward for some accomplished younger archers that feel their elders should be honored and has not contributed a positive change in the sport.

Archers' reasons for participation

Archers gather motivation for different personal reasons--some finding solitude and relaxation in the act of archery, while others are drawn to the prospect of winning Naadam. All archers that I spoke with felt as if they are preserving something and participating in a tradition they would like to pass on. Even the archers new to the sport who lack direct family ties have a dedicated attitude towards preservation.

Archery is an important sport for women in Mongolia, because wrestling is forbidden and children compete in horseracing, it is their only way of participating in the three traditional sports. "In the three manly games it is the only thing a woman can do to preserve her culture"(Tserenbuu May, 20th 2008) Tserenbuu has practiced archery for 9 years and her mother bought her first bow

around the age of 11 after she showed promise in the sport. Today she is a student at secondary school and an avid archer.

Bayartsetseg is a new archer and feels tied to the sport out of physical make up rather than heritage. “Every Mongolian has the genetic inclination to do archery” (Bayartsetseg May, 20th 2008). This answer seemed to demonstrate an instant ownership of the sport, which she demonstrated on the following Saturday by shooting her arrow clean through the final target to win a Khalkh team competition.

Davaajargal is the highest-ranking woman in Khalk archery. She has won Nadaam five times and is tied as the highest-ranking archer in Mongolia. She got in to the sport through her father and brother. “My father passed away in 1994 I wanted to continue doing something that he loved and I compete in his memory” (Davaajargal, May 21st 2008) she uses her father’s bow in competitions. I asked her if she felt her achievements were under recognized and under rewarded by the associations. “I don’t feel bad about the associations, rules don’t matter, technique is all that matters.”(Davaajargal, May 21st 2008) Though it is becoming more open, National archery is still a male dominated sport and women must be persistent in its pursuit. She has decided to confront the inequality in the sport by competing and for her this seems to be enough. She has no desire to hold any official position but instead hopes to lead by example showing young archers how to hold the bow.

Ts. Khuderchuluun is considered to be one of the best archers in Mongolia. He has won Naadam 3 times and holds the rank of Gots Mergin. His father A. Tseveen is one of the few great bow makers and also a four-time winner of Naadam. Khuderchuluun is tied to archery by family, fame and love of the sport. "Last year my father was the oldest man to compete in Naadam and my son was the youngest, he shot two targets." (Khuderchuluun May, 25th, 2008) He proclaimed with pride when I asked him if his sons knew how to shoot. He shared with me stories of his three victories and the rivalries between him and other archers. He has been able to work archery in to every aspect of his life, even finance, and is at present helping his father to make a huge order of bows that will be shipped up to the Buriad Nation in Russia.

Bayaraa is a 24 year old taxi driver and hair dresser; he holds the rank of Sports Master which he gained in 1996. Bayaraa claim's to have learned a personal lesson by practicing the sport which helps him in the practice of archery as well as in life. "Archery teaches me to hide my emotions and to be patient." (Bayaraa, May, 20th 2008) he has made archery a personal asset that he ties to his home town in Buyan Ulgi and feels proud to be participating in a sport that has roots in his heritage.

All of the archers I met had a personal reason for practicing and competing in archery. While they all shared the interest in the national heritage of the sport it was their personal attitude or interest that tied the heritage they spoke

of to modern times. As individuals they were able to link archery to their personal role as a family member, community member or female participant in the sport. If archery has begun to fade in Mongolian culture then it is up to a community of individual archers like these to weave it back in by associating it with the things they feel are important to honor.

Explanation of archery associations

The archery associations are non-governmental organizations that seek to preserve the tradition of Mongolian archery by keeping the sport alive. They set up and arrange competitions, make titles for the winners, record, enforce and amend the rules for the games. They are a binding force for archers that help to organize and promote the sport on a professional level.

The Archers Association is made up of 10 branches: The Archer's Assembly, President of the Association, Administration board, Executive board, Executive Vice president, Vice-Presidents, Control Board, Good Marksman's Board, other branches of the association, and archery clubs and teams. (Batkuyag) Members of the association include: those who practice Mongolian National Archery, sponsors of the association, sponsoring organizations of Mongolian National Archery, and all foreign people and organizations that cooperate with the Mongolian National Archers Association. (Bathuyag)

The *Uriankhai* Archer's Association and Buriad Archer's Associations are both separate branches unaffiliated with The National Archery Association of Mongolia. When talking to archers and members of all three associations, they

articulated their main concern to be advertising, planning and showing people the appeal of archery. While the other sports get an undivided amount of attention during Naadam, archery is pushed aside. Archery is slow; it is not an ideal spectator sport for the 21st century viewer. The whole association seems to be working with this problem, but it is just as much an issue of advertisement and planning as it is with the pace of the sport itself. Another problem is winnings: a large allure of competing in Naadam is the titles and prizes. In wrestling, there is one obvious champion, as there is in horse racing, but in archery there is more than one winner, which decreases the winnings. During a larger countryside competition cars were given to the winners of the wrestling and horse racing while the top prize for archery is only 500,000 Tugruk.

The Buriad Archers Association was founded in Erdenet in 2003, but is still not official. 7 head members include the President, Vice President, and a 5-member board. The association is working to create titles and ranks for victorious archers to make the sport official in Naadam rather than simply a traditional practice. As of now, there is simply a small prize or certificate given to winners. None of the association members are residents of the Buriad Nation but they participate in the *Altargana* festival in Erhuu (Irkutsik) Hot, the capital city of the *Buriad* Nation in Russia. The competition will be conducted once every two years and involve many games. It started out as a competition for singers only, but has since expanded to other traditional arts and games. The festival started in a *Soum*

Center and now it is organized by the entire *Buriad* nation it goes on for 3 days from the 3rd of July to the 5th. (Amarshaihan, may 20th, 2008)

The *Uriankhai* Archer's association was established in 1997 by the families and individuals who wanted to preserve the sport. The newest addition to the sport is a fifth style of shooting, International Shooting, which will allow women to shoot *Uriankhai* archery, a practice which has been previously not allowed.

Khalkh and *Uriankai* archery rules are well standardized but each new president of the Mongolian National Archery Association amends the official rule book slightly according to what they think would be best for the sport. This has become an important reason why the sport has not progressed. The boards of the association are closed off to younger archers and even though the associations are attempting to popularize the sport they refuse to accept help from the young archers with new ideas of how to further the sport. From talking to members of the associations and a group of young archers it is clear that there is a huge gap in communication between the archery community and those who control the rules. It is also clear through the little progress made that the associations are not sure how to re-popularize the sport of Mongolian National archery. The institutionalization of the sport is impeding the change that all involved agree is necessary.

The associations aim to keep archery traditional while simultaneously changing it in to a modern sport; these goals conflict in interest and are making

progress incredibly difficult. The associations work to further their own sports. The Mongolian National archers association organizes *Khalkh* archery, *Urian Khai* organizes for *Uriankhai* archery and *Buriad* organizes for *Buriad*. (Batkuyag, May 25th, 2008) Because of this, the newer associations, Buriad and *Khalkh* follow the lead of the *Kalkh* archery, by borrowing rules (mentioned above). By focusing on their own sports, the associations make only minor adjustments to their own rules and block out any possibility of new archery styles.

Analysis and conclusion

Over the years archery's popularity has declined. This is in direct contrast to horse racing and wrestling, which have distinct winners, better prized and are faster paced. These sports are more enticing and therefore contract a larger following than archery. It is likely that archery lost some recognition during the Manchu period when many bows were destroyed; leading to an inability to participate in the sport, whereas horse racing or wrestling continued to be practiced. Additionally, since the introduction of the gun, archery, as a practice outside sport, has become virtually obsolete. In nomadic culture, where practicality is law, archery became easily passed over while horse racing and wrestling continued as a part of Mongolia's lifestyle.

Archery is successful as a small community sport, but is hard to sell to the public. Some of the deterring factors for contenders include the lack of prize money and advertisement in the sport, but these are hard to build up without

initial interest to provide sponsorship and money to the sport. This signifies a need for change in the sport itself so that it can once again attract a following that can put it on the same level with the other sports in Naadam.

After conducting my observations I think that archery could do a few things to help it to attract a stronger following. First the associations should collaborate. The archery community is small yet it has three completely separate associations representing it. This divides the potential for shared funding, hindering the potential for larger events and better advertising. The associations should also make positions available to new board heads--specifically young archers that participate in the sport and travel around the countryside, making connections with other archers in smaller competitions. Also, the establishment of 'new' games would not necessarily result in the loss of culture that is feared by some. On the contrary, researching and reviving old games from during the time of Chinggis Khaan would preserve ancient Mongolian customs. For example, distance shooting could be held in the name of Erkhii Mergin and horseback archery competitions with traditional Mongolian rules could be held. Archery competitions do not have to be held only during Naadam and making the sport grow outside of Naadam might kindle an interest in the festivity. It might be possible to speed up the sport by making the archer shoot all 4 of their arrows from one set in succession instead of firing one shot and then going to the next archer. Less time in between arrows fired and faster eliminations of unsuccessful archers would also make archery more presentable as a spectator sport.

Looking at the history of archery in Mongolia one can see the potential the sport has for growth. If it is handled correctly, what is now an event for a tight-knit community can once again gain fame and national pride. Since it is a small sport, separated from its original purpose, it might not be able to suffer blows like it has in the past. An alteration to the way the sport is run is crucial for an increased fan base and archery's survival in Mongolia.

Glossary of Terms

- Ald*- old system of measurement about a meter and a half used to be determined by the distance of a mans out stretched arms.
- Amgai*- The two pieces of rope or hide that are tied to the bowstring and hook in to the *hovchlouur* of the bow.
- Boltsuu*- sport arrowhead usually made from bone, horn or wood.
- Burriad-ethnic group living in the north part of Mongolia and Russia*
- Deel*- traditional mongolian robe
- Dombo*- 12 double stacked *sur* in the middle of *khassa* target.
- Erheevch*- Thumb protector ring made of bone, Horn or stone or other hard material.
- Godle*- Target arrow, made with a wooden shaft and a wood or bone tip.
- Gutcher*- stiff ears on the end of the bow that give the bow extra leverage.
- Havaa*- the 4 red *sur* used to mark the center of the targets in *khalkh khassa*.
- havchaahai num*- Wooden bow made for a version of Uriankhai archery held in the winter.
- Hoolore*- the thin leather cover on middle of bowstring that helps the archer to knock the arrow in the right place and protects the string.
- Hovchluur*- the two shallow nooks cut in the *gutcher* on each end of the bow.
- Khalkh-Majority ethnic group in Mongolia*
- Khana*- target set up in Khalkh archery were the *sur* are stacked 48 cm high with space in between them, one target rests on the two below it. this type of target is set up first in a competition.
- Khassa*- 2nd type of Khalkh target set up with 30 sur 24 targets stacked on top of eachother with three targets one level high on each side of the stack.
- Khantsuunii Booldt*- braided leather string used to tie back the sleeve of the *deel* and protect the archers arm from the string of the bow.
- khuir*-string knot that ties the bow string to *Amgan*
- Meduuleg*-Piece of wood taped to the upper shaft of the arrow, indicates when the arrow has been fully drawn back.
- Mergen*- archer who has won Naadam.
- Num*- bow
- Otvog*- mounds of dirt bordering the targets in Uriankai archery (target atrea).
- Sambarchin*- umpire
- shormorcon ar*- flexible sides of the bow on either side of the handle.
- Sureen talbai*- archery pitch
- Sum*- arrow
- Sur*- targets and the straps of hide the targets are made with.
- Tovkh harvaa*-tie breaking practice in the individual contest of Khalkh shooting were two archers face off against each other stepping back one meter after every shot.
- Togoo*- place to keep the sur in uriankhai archery (cooking pot)
- Tumuriin Darkhan*- Iron worker.
- Uukhai*- roar, or singing cheer in Khalkh archery announces when the archer hits the target.

Uriankai- Ehtic group living in the western Mongolia and some in Khentii aimag
Xovch- bowstring

Zev- arrow head made of metal for hunting or for war.

Zuimel- composite bow. bow made from multiple layers of flexible materials
glued together.

Zurkhai- target aria, end of *sureen talbai* marked by two lines, targets are set up
on the furthest line size varies on type of archery.

Work Cited

Bibliography

Altangerel, D., Lattinmore, Owen., Mongolian Folktales Ulaanbaatar, 2003

Atwood Christopher P., *Encyclopedia of the Mongol empire*

Batkhuuyag, S., Key issues of Theory and Methodology of Mongolian National archery, Abstract of the dissertation for degree doctor of Science., Mongolian State University of Education, National Institute of Physical Education., Ulaanbaatar, 2007.

Batkhuuyag, S., “Brief History of the National archery Development of the Mongols” Nomadic Monthly Newsletter

Batkhuuyag, S., *Khalkh Archery Rules.*, Ulaanbaatar,

Buell, paul D., “Historical dictionary of the Mongol world empire.” Scarecrow Press, Inc. Lanham Maryland, and Oxford 2003. Page 211.

Bazarsuren, J., “The Weapon of Chinggis Khans soldier” Ulaanbaatar, 2006

Cleaves, Francis Woodman. “The secret History of the Mongols.” Harvard University Press, Cambridge Massachusetts. 1982.

Gombojapova, Madame Kh. D. “The Bow – Weapon of the Ancient Buryat people” Buryat state University. [www.atran.org Mongolian/Mongolia.htm](http://www.atran.org/Mongolian/Mongolia.htm)

Koppedrayer, Kay. Flight Shooting, *Primitive Archer*. June-July 2007 vol.15 issue.3 page 57

Lhagvasuren, Gongor., *What is the script on the Chingis Khan's steel about? A moment to top athletic performance? A moment to the Uiarjin Mongolian script?*

Lajos, Kassai *Horseback Archery* Puski Istavan Hungary, 2002

May, Timothy. "The Training of an Inner Asian Nomad in the Pre-Modern period" *The Journal of Military history*. July, 2006

Munkhtsetseg, Choijelsuengiin. "Mongolian National Archery" *Instinctive Archery Magazine*, Spring 99. www.atran.org/mongolian/mongolia.htm

Ried, Robert W. "Weaponry in the Secret History of the Mongols." *Mongolian Studies: Journal of the Mongolian society*, volume XV. Ed. John R. Bloomington. Indiana. 1992

Interviews

Amarshaihan vice president of Buriad archers association: Translated Interview May, 20th 2008

Amarshaihan vice president of Buriad archers association: Translated Interview May, 20th 2008

Batkhuuyag, Honored Archer and formal head of the Mongolian National archers Association, Meetings in his office: April 24th, May 13th, May 16th and May 23rd.

Batmunkh, Bow maker. translated Interviews April 17th and May 16th.

Batsaihain, Professor of archeology at Mongolian National University, April 14th and May 15th.

Bayaraa, young archer conversation over dinner: Translated interview, May 20th 2008

Bayartsetseg, archer conversation over dinner: Translated interview, May 20th 2008

Bazarsuren, Professor of Military sciences, Military science Academy: Translated Interview, May 22nd 2008

A. Khongor, Police Major, Head of Uriankhai archery association: Translated interview May 14th.

Ts. Khuderchuluun honored archer: Translated Interview May, 15th 2008

Davaajargal Highest ranking female archer: Translated Interview May 21st 2008

Tserenbuu, young archer conversation over dinner: Translated interview, May 20th 2008

Contact Name English/Cyrillic	Date interviewed	Phone number # e-mail	Position held Occupation	Location
A. Khongor	5-14-08	91178674 70150550 99139073	Police Major Head of Uriankhai archery association	Police academy In his office
Rudy	5-13-08	350547	English teacher/ missionary student of Mongolian archery	Apartment near the U.S. embassy
Mr. Batsaikhain	4-14-08 5-15-08	batsaikhain@num.edu.mn #99096017	Professor of Archeology at the national university University	
Enkhmandah	5-13-08	?	Buddhist monk and artist	Buddhist Art Studio near Bakula Rempoche Betub monastery
Mr Bathuyag (Advisor)	4-24-08 5-13-08 5-16-08 5-21-08	#99154618	Honored archer and formal head of the Mongolian National archers Association	?university across the street
Dr. Dulam	5-6-08	#99113099 sdulam@mobemail.mn		

Erdenbebaatar	4-31-08 5-15-08	99185773	Professor of Archeology National University and Ulaanbaatar University	
Mr Munkhjargal	5-3-08	#88006550	Head of horseback archery association	In his car at Uriankhai competition
Mongolian military museum	4-4-08	#261782		Visited w/ Ulzii-ah
Mr.Batmunkh	4-17-08 5-16-08	#976-11-687085 #976-99094020 #976-99140140	bow maker Ulaanbaatar	Marvel bow shop/ his apartment in 10 th district
Ts. Khuderchuluun	5-25-08	# 99096781	Mergen (state honored archer), bow maker	Apartment #38-43 in 13 th microdistrict
Amarshaihan	05-20-08	#88005908	Archer, Vice president of Buriad Archery association	Amragal ger district east of Ulaanbaatar
Bazarsuren	05-22-08	#99081726 #11-313349(home)	Military Science Academy	Military university,
Mrs. Davaajargal	05-21-08	#99246870	Mergen, honored archer	Near wrestling palace
Bayaraa	05-20-08	# 99803002	Archer 24 year old	Near wrestling palace
Tserenbuu	05-20-08	# 99696311	Young female archer	Near wrestling palace

Bayartsetseg	05-20-08		Young female archer	
Dr. Bom-Ochir	5-24-08	#96665541	Professor of anthropology	NUM second bldg