Unit 46

Blika Hand-out 4:

PRELIMINARY LIST OF ORI ICH IN BLIKA AS PREPARED BY THE ORI SAFECOM

*Disclaimer: the facts in this scenario are entirely fictitious. Any resemblance with actual facts is mere coincidence.*

#### **Introduction**

After two meetings and intermediate consultations with practitioners, the Ori SafeCom established a first list of eleven Ori ICH elements that were considered important for the sense of identity and continuity of the Ori in Blika. These elements could be proposed for inclusion in the preliminary inventory of intangible heritage in Blika, once the consent of the groups or individuals concerned has been obtained and the final name and description of the various elements agreed upon.

The elevent elements on the list are:

1. Traditional Ori wedding
2. Top ball game
3. Haf – mutual assistance
4. Ori name giving
5. Ori New Year and cooking
6. Ori fortune-telling and traditional healing
7. Ori midwifery
8. Ori improvised poetry
9. Ori traditional dancing
10. Ori traditional music and singing
11. Ori archery

So far, information about fortune-telling and traditional medicine has been given only on a strictly confidential basis. Ori tattoo artists already indicated they do not want their art to be included in a national inventory. The Ori SafeCom is aware that most Ori would not like the haf (mutual assistance) to be included in a public inventory of ICH.

This year, the Ori SafeCom may propose three or four elements to include on the preliminary inventory, next year, there will be another opportunity for proposing Ori ICH elements to include on the list.

#### **THE LIST**

Traditional Ori wedding

Except in wintertime, there are traditional Ori weddings in Blika most weekends. These are one- or two-day events to which many guests are invited, often from far away (including from Ika). Many more people may drop in to participate in public parts of the celebrations and the weddings provide important meeting places for Ori.

Ideally, the weddings are organized in Ori tea gardens or restaurants with a spacious courtyard or garden and semi-professional Ori musicians and singers are invited. There is usually outdoor and indoor dancing; long banquets for invited guests, with singing and speeches, and special dishes; the ceremonial dance of bride and groom; outside games and a public afternoon session for giving gifts with a lot of jokes. Before the wedding, some people contribute by helping rebuild or furnish the young couple’s home or by financing the wedding reception. Ori weddings are organized months after the official registration of the marriage. Wedding receptions are sometimes organized for several couples at a time, which is condemned by some as non-traditional. Older Ori regret that the chain dance is rarely danced any longer at Ori weddings and that on most occasions the guests perform only one type of circle dance.

Many Ori could not organize a traditional wedding and therefore feel as if they never got properly married. The reasons are various:

* There are not enough wedding venues large enough to host the weddings. Most ‘non-Ori’ hotels or restaurants are reluctant to accommodate ‘noisy’ Ori weddings. The problem of Blika youngsters disrupting Ori weddings seems to have stopped but there still is a great deal of intolerance towards Ori wedding parties.
* There are not enough specialized (semi-)professional musicians and singers available.
* Special permission is required by municipalities, and not easily given, for large gatherings such as weddings, where many cars and other nuisances can be expected.
* Young Ori people cannot always afford such expensive weddings.

Top ball game

The game is played on a field laid out in a circle, with two goals – back to back – in the middle. Teams of nine men or women, including a keeper, try to hit the ball in the goal of the other team. The rules are partly similar to those of football. There are only five special fields in all of Blika; however, usually most clubs use football fields that are poorly adapted with chalk markings and movable goals.

There are 30 top ball clubs all over Blika, with over 3,600 members, about 10% of whom are non-Ori. Young people play simplified versions of the game where ever they can. There are four local competitions; the season is concluded by a Blika-wide championship. Early in February the Harkal based Ori Students Association organizes the Blika-Ika championship for male and female teams.

Technical terms and supporters’ chants are in Ori language. Ori fruit drinks and fatty snacks are served in mobile stands. Young Ori and non-Ori enjoy the atmosphere. Competitions started in the late 1970s. The insufficient number of special fields restricts the development of more clubs and competitions.

Haf – mutual assistance

In the old days, back in Kvetana , Ori people practised what they called haf, or mutual assistance, within their villages and families. They helped each other with the harvest; friends and relatives would help new couples build or older couples repair their houses; when people were ill, assistance was provided on the spot, or children were taken care of and money was frequently borrowed. Important agreements were concluded in the presence of a haf witness. haf, unless given in an emergency, created the obligation for the individuals concerned or their family to pay back, or to return a haf service later on.

In Blika, the haf was a great help to Ori who had just arrived. Nowadays, friends and relatives still help each other with the repair or furnishing of houses, or by lending money, sometimes large sums, thus avoiding complicated bank loans. Gifted young Blika from poorer families are given loans to study. Young families may agree to look after each other’s children (Haf adoption) in the case of major problems.

Small loan amounts are permitted under Blika legislation, the larger sums are not. This means that not all haf agreements are legal under Blika law. Most Ori would not like the haf to be included in an inventory of ICH. The Ori SafeCom hesitates whether to propose the full haf, which is a quite viable Ori ICH in Blika, for the national inventory, or only certain aspects of it, or whether to forget about it.

Ori name giving

In Kvetana, Ori children were traditionally given their names three months after birth during a name-giving ceremony that included singing, fortune-telling, and preparation and distribution of special sweets and cookies. Their first names in the Ori language were related to the seasons, their place in the family or other circumstances, such as ‘Spring-Flower’, ‘Second-Hope’, or ‘Born-on-boat’. If the first child in a family were a girl, all children in the family would have the mother’s surname, and the other way around. Most Ori families in Blika still organize traditional name-giving ceremonies, at which the child receives its Ori names.

When accepting Blika citizenship, Ori and other immigrants have to select first names from a list of 1,464 Blika names, and to adapt or translate their family names. New born children again must be given a first name out of the Blika list and they must take their father’s surname; their names must be registered within one week after birth. Most Ori are unhappy about this situation. In the 1980s some Ori campaigned unsuccessfully to have their naming system recognized and legalized. Recently, some Ori organizations started discussing options to try again. In discussions on the internet, Ori people have been saying that the time has come to change the fact that the average Blika citizen of Ori descent has two sets of names and is not allowed to use his/her real name in public.

Ori New Year and cooking

In traditional Ori families dishes like spinach and mutton stews, cheese puddings, fish dishes and various dishes involving walnuts are occasionally prepared. Some Blika speak negatively of the Ori as ‘nut people’. New Year is the occasion par excellence when traditional Ori recipes are truly honoured, with Ori weddings and name-giving celebrations coming next. Ori cuisine is transmitted in the family and cultivated in tea gardens and – the less healthy parts of it – are available in canteens and stands at top ball events.

The Ori in Blika, like all Blika citizens, celebrate New Year on 31 December. Relatives and friends (in particular Haf partners) are invited, special Ori dishes are prepared (with the obligatory roast mutton, Ori dumplings, sour cabbage salad and Ori pies and cookies), while children are allowed many special pancakes. People start the celebration at 6 pm, gifts may be exchanged and speeches given. At 8 pm, when it is midnight in Kvetana, Ori New Year is celebrated with many good wishes, renewal of haf relations and consumption of Ori pie. After dinner is finished, there is traditional singing and dancing. The Blika New Year is celebrated at midnight with lots of fireworks and once the children have been put to bed, ‘modern’ singing and dancing will continue for quite some time. Young bachelors do not often attend traditional New Year parties; they celebrate New Year with friends and colleagues, with a lot of karaoke. Once they have a family, most of them return to the traditional practice, especially if their partner is Ori.

The Ori SafeCom is wondering whether to present Ori New Year and Ori cooking together for inclusion in the national inventory, or as two separate items.

Ori fortune-telling and traditional healing

Fortune-telling is transmitted within families by older women to middle-aged women who have the gift. Traditionally they read tea leaves left in the cups of their clients. Blika Ori fortune-tellers also read palms, a practice adopted from the Traveller minority. Between 50 and 100 women may be actively engaging in these practices. Ori fortune-tellers discourage marriages between people wearing the same tattoo.

In certain families fortune-telling is combined with traditional healing, in particular for problems such as headache, backache, allergies, sleeplessness, and grief after separation. Healers are usually specialized in a few of these evils. During healing, hands are laid on the patients, Ori songs are sung, often improvised.

Many women practice a kind of fortune-telling when they are invited to tell the fortune of children, one-by-one, at name-giving celebrations or at New Year celebrations. They only predict positive developments, often jokingly, but they do imitate the gestures and the singing of more professional fortune-tellers.

In Kvetana traditional healing was forbidden by law for being non-scientific. Blika tax authorities would like to know whether fortune-tellers and healers among the Travellers and the Ori make money from their art. The Ori SafeCom members, who all know people who consult fortune-tellers and healers, understood that there is much opposition among the practitioners against any proposal to have these elements included in the future inventory of ICH in Blika. They aren’t even interested in a discussion about the proposal. The same goes for Ori tattooing.

Ori midwifery

While most women in Blika have their babies in a clinic or hospital, about two-thirds of Ori mothers still prefer to give birth at home, unless their doctor foresees complications. Ori women are assisted in home births by trained midwives, who have usually helped them throughout pregnancy and who know when to send a mother to hospital or call in the doctor.

Once the baby is born, the doctor comes to check on the bady and mother; the midwife (usually Ori) leaves and a nurse helps the young mother for up to six days. Any other children are taken care of for a day or two by relatives or friends. Ori women are happy to remain in their own surroundings for childbirth, where they can invite a friend, mother or sister to support them and where they can also have post-birth ceremonies. They receive guests in a relaxed way and give them the traditional Ori birthday snacks like biscuits with aniseed crumble. While the maternal and perinatal mortality rate in cases of home birth is similar to the rate in Blika’s general population, perinatal mental health problems among young Ori mothers are lower.

The public health authorities in Blika nevertheless want to reduce home births as they consider specialized clinics and hospitals as safer places for giving birth. Members of the Ori SafeCom think that it is a tradition that should be left alone.

Ori improvised poetry

The Ori in Blika have continued to perform their improvised poetry, which was a common practice in Kvetana. This oral form of poetry conforms to few rules, with alliteration being more important than rhyme. It is not written down; the poets (men and women) may improvise on the spot, making extensive use of stock sentences and set expressions. There are no restrictions as to subject matter or style. Poems cover current, past, real or imagines events; love stories; deceased persons; jokes and riddles.

In Blika between the 1960s and the mid-1990s, there were always at least twenty Ori men and women who were skilled in this art and who were regularly invited to perform at name-giving parties and other social events. Since the 1990s the number of poets has been decreasing. Now there are only seven or eight semi-professional poets left. They get paid for their performances, though not enough to make a living out of it. Many more people perform improvised poetry less professionally at family functions, which contributes greatly to their cheerfulness and to the appreciation of this art. Some young adults follow private courses by experienced poets. Youngsters have developed a freestyle rap version, called Ori-Ori-Rap.

Improvised poetry is a fixed part of the programme of the New and Old Citizen Autumn Festival. The Ori Student Association also organizes improvised poetry contests with Blika and Ika participation on the expert and on the amateur level. Some of the winners – from both levels – have done well in recent years in contests in Kvetana. Recordings can be acquired on the internet, both from Blika and Kvetana. The Ori SafeCom believes that this art, which is performed by men and women alike, is endangered.

Ori traditional dancing

At present, the Ori in Blika only practice two types of traditional dance, the popular circle dance and the less frequently practised chain dance. Both can involve mixed or single-sex groups of people holding hands, and both are danced at weddings and other social events. Back in Kvetana the chain dance was danced at village festivities: long chains would wind through courtyards of a neighbourhood with people endlessly repeating a few special songs. In Kvetana, Ori dancing is still widely practiced.

Nowadays in Blika, Ori circle dances may involve anything from less than ten to hundreds of dancers, who usually sing Ori – and sometimes Blika – songs, accompanied by live or recorded music. In smaller settings, the Ori circle dance is practiced indoors. In Carkal, when there are many people together, the circle dance is often danced by several concentric circles of men and women that move in opposite directions. Older Ori remember that more types of circle dance were practiced in the first decades after the migration to Blika.

The Ori chain dance is rarely danced in Blika, partly because it used to be performed outdoors and in Blika official permission is still required – and not easily given – for dancing in public spaces. Occasionally some older Ori (but not enough for a good chain dance) indulge in chain dancing at wedding parties. The Ori Cultural Association in Carkal has a dancing club, which tries to popularize a highly stylized version of the Ori chain dance for small groups. Many Ori in Blika would like to reintroduce more diversity in their dance practice by revitalizing the chain dance and by bringing back some of the other types of circle dance.

Ori traditional music and singing

The Ori traditionally used a wide array of musical instruments. Of these the Ori accordion, the Utur flute and the Ori wooden clappers are still used in Blika. These instruments are not made locally, they are ordered nowadays from Kvetana.

A few composers, both of Ori and non-Ori descent, are inspired by Ori musical traditions, thus creating ‘modern’ classical Ori or Ori-inspired music. There are less than ten professional or semi-professional musicians and singers among the Ori in Blika (the Harkal tea garden owner is one of them); they usually consider themselves as belonging to Ori as well as to Blika traditions. When playing traditional Ori music in the chromatic tetrachord tradition, the musicians often use non-Ori instruments.

Around the year 2000, revitalization of Ori singing and instrumental music started thanks to the increasing number of Ori choral clubs within cultural organizations.

In spite of reasonable numbers of amateur singers and musicians, improvisation in singing and music making is declining nowadays. Traditional lullabies, choral wedding songs and polyphonic naming ceremony songs are still appreciated and often sung by the average Ori in Blika, but many of them realize that the repertoire of traditional songs is declining rapidly.

The main problem is, however, with the (semi-)professional musicians and dancers that people want to invite to perform at Ori weddings, festivals and functions; there are just not enough of them to meet the demand. Live music and singing with good musicians and lead singers dancers is what the Ori want for their wedding parties.

Ori archery

Around the year 1900 archery had become a common pastime for men in Kvetana and archery societies were everywhere. The design of the Kvetana flat bows (made of hickory), and the arrows with wooden heads, was said to originate from the hunting weapons of the distant past. That may be true, although the modern tradition only started to develop after 1850. The Ori used bows that were smaller than the Kvetana type. Ori archers would parade through their communities during Ori festivities.

Blika has no archery tradition among the majority population. Many Ori immigrants brought their bows to Blika; and some of them started producing Ori bows there from imported hickory wood. Industrial aluminium arrows with steel arrowheads gradually replaced the traditional arrows. Most Ori in Blika consider Ori archery as part of their heritage, though some actually consider it a Kvetana tradition.

Ori people created the first archery clubs in Blika in the early 1970s; their members train and practice vertical and/or horizontal shooting in wooden structures attached to Ori coffee houses. Women train with men. Some contests and competitions are for women only, but they may also participate in general contests. There are complicated safety rules and regulations, and outdoor shooting is not allowed. In Ika, biennial peninsular outdoor championships are organized.

The 14 existing Ori archery clubs receive more requests for membership than they can accept; up to 25% of their membership comes from outside the Ori community. Most of their practice halls are in a bad state: occasionally people in Mainkal and Carkal have advocated demolishing the structures. Carkal Municipal authorities announced they might have to close down two badly maintained venues.