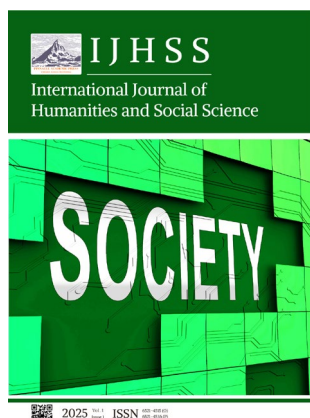




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Transformations in the Traditional Year-In Custom of the Khorchin Mongolians, Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR)

Dan Shan ^{1,*}



¹ Graduate University of Mongolia, Erdem Tower, Sukhbaatar Square 20/6 Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

* Correspondence: Dan Shan, Graduate University of Mongolia, Erdem Tower, Sukhbaatar Square 20/6 Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Abstract: The Khorchin are the largest ethnic subgroup within the Mongolian population in the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region (IMAR), with unofficial estimates placing their population at over 1.8 million, primarily residing in Tongliao City and surrounding regions. The Mongolian year-in tradition is a significant expression of intangible cultural heritage, symbolizing the natural human life cycle — birth, growth, aging, and passing into the afterlife. While individuals cannot choose their year of birth or destiny, Mongolian communities have long practiced ritual gift-giving as part of year-in celebrations. These customs are particularly evident during major events such as the Lunar New Year, weddings, and family feasts, where acts of giving and receiving gifts convey deep social sincerity and mutual respect. Among the most notable early-life celebrations are the Full Moon Ceremony and the First Birthday Ceremony, both marking critical transitions in a child's development. This paper explores the year-in gift-giving customs of the Khorchin Mongolians, with a focus on their historical roots, symbolic meanings, and contemporary transformations. Through this examination, the study aims to shed light on how traditional practices adapt within a changing social and economic context.

Keywords: Khorchin Mongolians; traditional year-in custom; transformation

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1. Introduction

The year-in tradition observed by the Khorchin Mongolians represents a distinctive aspect of Mongolian intangible cultural heritage, showcasing unique celebratory practices embedded in their cultural customs. It is a vital expression of the Mongolian people's respect for life's transitions and their reverence for ancestral values.

Human existence follows a natural cycle — birth, growth, aging, and eventual passing — which represents an immutable aspect of the human condition. While individuals cannot choose the circumstances of their birth or fate, Mongolians have long embraced customs that honor life's milestones, especially through the practice of ceremonial gift-giving. Traditional celebrations such as Tsagaan Sar (Mongolian name of the Lunar New Year), weddings, and the year-in celebration are not merely festive gatherings, but expressions of social bonds and communal sincerity. Age-related customs, including the month completion ceremony (also known as the washing celebration), the first birthday celebration, and the year-in ritual, reflect deep-rooted values passed down through generations.

Over centuries, Mongolian customs have evolved through distinctive historical processes and have become a unified cultural heritage that aligns with the nation's philosophy, worldview, language, and daily practices. As a living expression of identity, national culture serves as a reflection of societal values and a record of historical continuity. Through interactions with diverse ethnic groups, varied geographies, and historical transitions, Mongolian traditions have demonstrated remarkable adaptability and resilience.

As a prominent subgroup of the Mongolian ethnic community, the Khorchin people have developed unique cultural practices, especially in age-related ceremonies. Their year-in celebration contains distinctive regional elements shaped by their historical experiences, social values, and lifestyle. Exploring this tradition offers valuable insight into how the Khorchin Mongolians preserve their identity while engaging with broader cultural transformations. It embodies the life experiences, historical traditions, collective memories, and social practices of specific communities.

2. The Traditional Year-In Custom of the Khorchin Mongolians

The Mongolian people have a long-standing tradition of celebrating the washing celebration, an important ritual observed soon after a child's birth. Over time and due to cultural transformations, the Khorchin Mongolians now refer to this event as the month completion celebration. Traditionally, the washing celebration was held within three days after a child was born, marking an early blessing for the newborn. However, in modern practice, the Khorchin Mongolians celebrate the month completion celebration once thirty days have passed since the child's birth, symbolizing the completion of the first month of life and the child's initial stage of growth and health.

From ancient times, Mongolian culture has placed great emphasis on celebrating a person's age anniversaries, which are commonly divided into two main categories: celebrations for children and those for the elderly. The transmission of this tradition primarily occurs within families, ensuring both continuity and cultural identity. According to traditional Mongolian beliefs, a person's age increases officially at the beginning of the first month of spring, which coincides with the Lunar New Year, an event widely celebrated as part of one's birthday in Mongolia [1]. Historically, Mongolians have regarded a child's first birthday as particularly important and celebrated it with great respect and ritual, while subsequent birthdays have been marked by various other ceremonies. Nevertheless, influenced by the deep cultural exchanges with the Chinese, the Khorchin Mongolians have adopted the practice of celebrating children's twelfth birthdays with much greater extravagance and festivity than before. Moreover, unlike the Khorchin, Outer Mongolians — people from the Republic of Mongolia — do not typically observe the year-in custom. The Khorchin, however, continue to place significant importance on this celebration, maintaining its cultural vitality. In addition, traditionally, Mongolians mark advanced age milestones such as the 80th and 90th birthdays with grand celebrations that involve children, family members, relatives, and community participants, signifying respect and admiration for longevity and wisdom [2].

In Mongolian culture, gifts are seen not just as material offerings but as expressions of genuine sentiment and tokens of heartfelt affection. Mongolians believe that the true value of a gift depends less on its material worth or size and more on the sincere intention and goodwill of the giver. Typical gifts among Mongolians include khadag (a long piece of ceremonial silk scarf, usually made of silk, used in Mongolian rituals and ceremonies to symbolize respect, purity, and blessings), deel (traditional Mongolian clothing; a long garment with a high collar, typically worn on daily or ceremonial occasions by both men and women), alcoholic beverages, mutton broth, and sweets. These gifts vary according to the recipient and the specific occasion for the celebration.

Importantly, Mongolian gifts are not intended to address or solve any practical or material problems the recipient might face. Instead, the gift acts as a symbol of goodwill, representing genuine feelings of kindness and respect. In this sense, the act of giving holds

much deeper meaning and value than a simple economic exchange or material transaction. Generally, the significance of a gift is not measured by its size, price, or quantity but rather by the blessings it conveys, its symbolism, and the sincerity behind the gesture. Mongolians tend not to express their love, trust, or other feelings primarily through words. Instead, they prefer to communicate these emotions through symbolic gifts and actions. Consequently, when visiting friends or relatives, it is considered customary and respectful to bring a gift. Entering someone's home without bringing even a small gift is regarded as a serious social faux pas, considered shameful or insulting, and often described as "arriving empty-handed" or "leaving empty-handed" [3].

This is because without a gift, one cannot truly express sincere good wishes and heartfelt symbolism. Mongolians dislike expressing feelings solely through words, viewing them as "empty talk". Instead, they highly value tangible actions and appropriate symbolism. In this context, a gift serves as a representation of one's feelings and acts as an intermediary.

Historically, during the Mongolian Empire, when the army conquered a nation, they would compel the defeated to send "gifts". The delivery of these gifts was regarded as an immediate act of surrender — a practice rooted deeply in this very custom. Mongolians of that era viewed other nations through the lens of their own traditions. This custom still endures among herder Mongolians today. Individuals arriving with gifts are seen as genuinely sincere friends, since the gift symbolizes their heartfelt feelings.

Traditional Mongolian customs for celebrating age anniversaries differ greatly from modern birthday celebrations and possess unique cultural qualities. Mongolians traditionally believe that a child's age includes one year spent in the mother's womb, referred to as the "phantom age". Therefore, according to this tradition, a child is considered one year old at birth. By modern age reckoning, this means a person would be considered two years old on their first birthday. Instead of celebrating birthdays annually, Mongolians traditionally celebrate a child's first age anniversary after one full year has passed since birth.

Accordingly, it is a tradition to add an extra year, representing the "phantom age" from the womb, every time a full twelve-year cycle is completed, starting from the thirteenth year (i.e., 13, 25, 37, 49, 61, 73, 85...).

According to tradition, the "small years", such as 13, 25, 37, and 49 — which occur during childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood — are not celebrated on a grand scale. Instead, these are modestly observed, mainly by receiving gifts from older relatives and close kin.

Conversely, the "great years", like 61, 73, 85, and 97, are celebrated on a much grander scale. During these years, the individual's children and family host special feasts, inviting siblings, relatives, neighbors, and community members from their homeland.

This tradition reflects respect for the elderly, serving not only as a celebration of longevity but also as a way to recognize and commemorate their significant contributions and achievements within society.

Among the Khorchin Mongolians, the year-in celebration typically takes place in the lead-up to Tsagaan Sar (the Lunar New Year), from the 23rd day of the final month of winter to the 15th day of the first month of the new lunar year. This tradition, reflecting the agricultural calendar and local customs, is sometimes also observed during the harvest season. In rural areas, celebrations are often tied to familial milestones, such as a child's second birthday, when families prepare traditional milk products and share mutton broth, while elders offer blessings. Additionally, at the anniversary of a child's first year, relatives give gifts, often fluffy white lambs or horses, as auspicious symbols.

Cui Wang Xing, an 85-year-old male, recalls that on the first day of the new lunar year, children would go to the elders, bow down, and offer what they had. "They bow to receive blessings," he explains, "because it symbolizes the good fortune of hearing elders' wishes." This gesture of respect underscores the importance of familial bonds and inter-generational connections. He also reflects on the simplicity of wedding ceremonies in the

past, when material scarcity meant that such events were modest. During this time, it was common for the bride to return to her mother's home with a small gift, usually a few kilograms of rice or some cookies, to show respect and gratitude. Both the New Year and wedding traditions reflect the deep cultural values of respect, humility, and familial ties."

The customs associated with age and the year-in celebration have retained their unique characteristics up to the present day. These longstanding practices not only distinguish the Khorchin from other cultures but have also evolved and adapted through time while maintaining their essential cultural essence and spirit. When Khorchin families bring gifts to a year-in celebration, they always prioritize this occasion over other festivities and make sure to deliver the gifts in a traditionally appropriate manner. In the past, the khadag (a ceremonial silk scarf) was used as the highest offering to express the greatest appreciation and respect. Family members, relatives, and neighbors present a khadag alongside gifts such as alcohol, money, horses, oxen, sheep, traditional clothing, and boots, depending on their personal living situation and financial status. Guests arriving to celebrate the year-in are welcomed warmly and treated lavishly, as hospitality is a key aspect of Mongolian culture.

In recent years, with improvements in living standards, the types of gifts have gradually shifted towards money, health products, and luxury items, reflecting changing tastes and economic conditions. When celebrating the year-in milestone, the Khorchin select a favorable day, invite guests, set up tables, and host a grand feast, often referred to as "an annual treat". During the celebration, invited reciters, storytellers, and oral performers recite epic poems, tales, traditional stories, and perform various traditional arts, significantly increasing the festive atmosphere, which can last anywhere from half a day to a whole month. Thus, hosting a grand celebration and spending significant money on the milestone year-in is sometimes viewed as a way to dispel the hardships and misfortunes of the past year, symbolizing a fresh and auspicious start.

This belief is rooted in the Khorchins' view that a person entering the new year-in will face obstacles, difficulties, and hardships during that coming year. When giving birthday gifts, elders offer their blessings while presenting their gifts, and the child respectfully extends both hands, bows, and expresses sincere appreciation. If the gift is given by a peer or someone of the same age, it is either handed over directly or placed on a closet or shelf, followed by a handshake, the exchange of greetings, and the sharing of blessing words for the New Year.

When giving gifts for an elder's year-in milestone, the recipient sits at the head of the gathering and solemnly says, "We acknowledge your entry into the new year". Sometimes, when marking the year of someone turning 61, they respectfully say, "I bow to you in your 73rd year", and for someone turning 73, they say, "I bow to you in your 85th year", thereby respectfully extending the person's age beyond its actual number. The individual welcoming the New Year receives gifts and offers blessings, wishing for their longevity and health.

The Khorchin year-in birthday gift customs and beliefs have naturally evolved over time, reflecting changing perspectives on life, tradition, and social relationships.

Since the year 2000, the Khorchin people have faced challenges due to cultural influences and modernization affecting their daily lives. As a result, the year-in customs and traditions have undergone significant changes and are increasingly at risk of being lost or forgotten. For example, the longstanding tradition of distinguishing between "great years" and "small years" has been disrupted. Nowadays, people celebrate ages such as 37 and 49 by inviting guests and hosting grand feasts, which was traditionally uncommon.

In this context, the variety and symbolism of gifts given have decreased considerably, and presenting khadag, fabrics, clothing, and boots has become less frequent. Instead, cash gifts have become increasingly preferred, often sent conveniently via WeChat. It has also become common for those who send gifts not to attend the year-in celebrations in person. This form of intangible heritage represents a living culture characterized by oral transmission and contextual adaptation. This shift has led to a decline in genuine interpersonal relationships, as many now consider sending money or digital red envelopes via

WeChat as sufficient. While this method saves time compared to buying and delivering traditional gifts, it also reduces opportunities to express genuine feelings and affection, making the gesture more superficial and formal rather than heartfelt and meaningful.

This leads to a lack of mutual respect and genuine feelings between people, resulting in a decline in trust, confidence, respect, and gratitude. Consequently, the traditional good manners of honoring elders and the virtuous morals and ethics of the Mongolian people are being eroded, fostering a mindset focused on seeking temporary gains. This creates significant obstacles and challenges to preserving and passing down traditional culture.

Mongolians have a long-standing tradition of gift-giving dating back to ancient times. It was customary for individuals to hold a khadag and place a gift on it when presenting their gifts. Based on this tradition, the following five types of gifts were commonly presented during New Year's celebrations, weddings, birthdays, and other special holidays, as summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Gift Customs and the Meaning of Different Types of Gifts [4].

No.	Type	Meaning	To whom? For what?
1	Khadag	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -The khadag is the most commonly used and meaningful gift among Mongolians, traditionally held in the fingertips. -It embodies the best blessings and auspicious symbols. -It is common for Mongolians to exchange, give, and send khadags during special occasions and celebrations. -A traditional blessing gift that Mongolians have cherished since ancient times. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It is given to fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, elders, and teachers. -It is presented during Lunar New Year, weddings, birthdays, and year-end celebrations.
2	Deel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -As a garment with an upward-pointing collar, it symbolizes rising and progress, making it a highly valued and meaningful gift of good fortune. -If sewing a deel is not possible, the silk or fabric of the deel is folded widthwise, with the folded edge facing outward, and given as a respectful gift. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It is given to fathers, mothers, and elders. -It is presented during weddings, birthdays, and Lunar New Year celebrations.
3	Belt	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Mongolians have long valued the belt as a protector of the heart, body and life of a person -Exchanging belts as gifts is a common practice among close friends, comrades, and brothers-in-arms. Giving a belt to a disciple symbolizes offering one's heart and sincere feelings. -A symbol of endless continuous goodness -It is recorded in the Secret History that Genghis Khan gifted his golden belt to Jamuqa as a sign of close friendship. -A belt is presented to the closest person -A father-in-law presents a new belt to his son-in-law -A new belt brings good luck and all good fortune. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -An elder gives gifts it to children, people younger than him, and people of his generation -During weddings, the bride's side presents a belt as a gift to the groom (full attire) -Men gifts to each other symbolizing thier new friendship -During lunar new year, weddings

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| <p>4 Khavtaga</p> | <p>-It is made by hand embroidery.</p> <p>-Before the girl leaves her home to get married, she sews several embroidered bags. She then offers these as gifts to her future father-in-law, mother-in-law, brother, sister-in-law, and other relatives when she first visits them after the wedding.</p> <p>-These embroidered bags require a great deal of skill, talent, patience, and heartfelt effort, making them a highly treasured and valuable type of gift.</p> <p>-She says she is giving her heart.</p> | <p>-To father, mother, and elders</p> <p>-It is customary to express oneself feelings by giving a gift to her close friend, your unmarried, future husband.</p> |
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The Mongolian "gift exchange tradition" also carries deep symbolic meaning. In line with this symbolism and customs, people favor using "odd numbers" to represent growth and prosperity, and "white or light colors" to symbolize purity and clarity. For example, the variety of gift types has expanded, accompanied by an increasing number of symbolic shapes and directions that promote the appreciation of homemade dairy products such as aaruul (a dairy-based Mongolian food made by drying fermented curds, widely consumed for its portability and nutrition), cheese, and butter, as well as hunting furs and lamb skins. Additionally, traditional deels with collars, and symbols representing "square and round shapes", have become more prominent, while there is a growing taboo against giving items with a downward-facing opening.

Today, traditional dairy products have evolved into "tablets" and "eeven" (cookie-shaped treats), while silk items have mostly been replaced by silk scarves. Clothing with collars has been largely replaced by monetary gifts, and upward-facing pots have been substituted by dishes and electrical appliances. Over time, the types of gift items have changed, and the significance of gifts varies across generations. This reflects cultural progress within Mongolian gift traditions, showing a shift beyond mere consumerism and profit-driven motives [5].

3. The Current Way in Which the Khorchin Mongolians Are Celebrating Their Year-In Anniversary

The Khorchin Mongolians celebrate the birth of a child by holding a special feast when the child reaches one month old. This celebration, often referred to as the "full moon", marks the completion of the first thirty days of life. On this day, families gather to host a feast and present gifts to the newborn. Over time, the types of gifts exchanged during the full moon celebration have evolved. Traditionally, people would offer items such as coins, clothing, woolen blankets, and silver bracelets. However, in contemporary times, a broader variety of gifts has become common, reflecting changes in economic conditions and social customs.

When a child turns one year old, the Khorchin Mongolians hold a significant celebration known as "Oin Bayar (the first birthday celebration)". For this occasion, relatives, close friends, and members of the community are invited to take part in the celebration. Guests typically bring gifts such as cloaks, belts, and traditional clothing to present to the child and their family, signifying their blessings and goodwill (see Figure 1).



Figure 1. Table for a Child's First Year Birthday Party.

The most important part of the first-year anniversary celebration is the preparation of a special table for the child. This table serves a symbolic purpose, as it is meant to predict the child's future interests, personality traits, and potential career path. Carefully selected and meaningfully arranged on the table are a variety of items, including books, axes, sickles, brushes, incense, needles, butter oil, candies, cookies, tobacco pouches, whips, money, and coins. The items are laid out in an orderly fashion, allowing the child to make a selection.

According to tradition, the first item the child picks up is believed to represent their childhood, the second indicates their path in young adulthood, and the third suggests traits or fortunes in their old age. These three selections are thought to reveal the trajectory of the child's life, reflecting a deep cultural belief in destiny and symbolism. By categorizing these items into three distinct life stages — childhood, youth, and old age — the Khorchin Mongolians continue to practice and preserve a meaningful and time-honored cultural ritual [6].

It is said that if a boy first picks up a book and a brush and then puts them back; secondly, he picks up a bow and arrows; and finally, he chooses butter oil, it is foretold that he will study diligently in his childhood, serve in the army and become a hero in his youth, and in his old age, rejoice in his virtues and blessings.

Similarly, if a girl first picks up flowers, then needles and thread, and finally candies, it is believed that she will blossom like a flower in her childhood, become skilled in needlework during her youth, and enjoy good food and drink in her old age. These beliefs reflect the idea that individual interests and talents are innate and can be revealed through symbolic actions at an early age.

Among the customs associated with a child's first birthday, the Khorchin people hold both the full moon (first-month) celebration and the first-year anniversary with great reverence. These traditional practices are performed to bless the child with good health, peace, and future prosperity. Today, the Khorchin continue to celebrate a child's first birthday with widespread joy and familial harmony.

The Khorchin people celebrate the year-in ceremony together with their relatives, family members, and neighbors. This celebration is typically held during the Lunar New

Year festivities and must be completed before the festival concludes. Like other Mongolian groups, the Khorchin follow the traditional twelve-year lunar calendar.

After twelve years have passed and a child reaches the age of thirteen, this is considered the beginning of a new life cycle, marked by the year-in celebration. The time spent in the mother's womb is traditionally regarded as one year, so the child's age is counted as one year from the moment of birth. Hence, the age of year-in formally begins at thirteen.

Accordingly, it is said:

"When you reach the age of thirteen, you enter the first year-in."

"When you leave childhood and gain the strength of a tiger, you enter the twenty-fifth year."

"When you pass the age of forty-nine, you reach the age of discipline and maturity."

These sayings reflect the traditional belief that each new year-in marks not only the passage of time but also a new stage of life, filled with new responsibilities and virtues. Those who enter a new year-in stage often wear a red belt, symbolizing the vitality of age and the transition into a new phase of life.

Unlike older generations, youth do not celebrate their year-in ceremonies on a large scale. Instead, when a person reaches the age of sixty-one — by which time their hair has typically turned white — they hold a commemorative ceremony to mark this important milestone.

In Chinese tradition, the year-in anniversary is considered distinct from a birthday. Rather than observing a year-in celebration every twelve years, it is common practice — starting from age sixty — to celebrate milestone birthdays once every ten years, such as at ages seventy, eighty, and ninety.

However, the Khorchin people attach great significance to year-in anniversaries and celebrate them with ceremonies that are considered just as important as birthdays, reflecting both the reverence for elders and the deep-rooted cultural meaning of life stages in their tradition (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Year-In Celebration.

The birthday of an elderly person is celebrated with great joy and festivity by their children and relatives. Among various life events, birthday gifts for elders hold more significance and meaning than those given on other occasions, such as weddings.

Depending on their living circumstances, children, extended family members, and local residents from different aimags (provinces) observe the event with deep respect. They often bring valuable gifts such as money, horses, oxen for carts, sheep, clothing, and shoes, symbolizing affection as well as wishes for the elder's continued health and prosperity.

The "Year-In" ceremony among the Khorchin Mongolians embodies both familial intimacy and collective cultural continuity. Comparative studies of Mongolic rituals show that such ceremonies serve not only as markers of biological age but also as socio-cultural initiations that connect the individual to their lineage, the livestock economy, and cosmological beliefs. Traditionally, livestock offerings like lambs or horses symbolized vitality and prosperity, while dairy products represented purity and blessings.

Over time, these practices have undergone transformations. Urbanization, shifts in intergenerational values, and the advent of consumer goods have led to the replacement of traditional items with store-bought gifts and symbolic cash offerings. Nevertheless, despite changes in material forms, the core ethos remains — honoring the individual, reinforcing kinship bonds, and performing communal ties. Many contemporary families still frame the celebration with ritualistic elements, preserving a sense of sacred timing, seasonal alignment, and spatial decorum, thereby echoing deeply rooted cultural patterns.

4. From Reverence to Profit: The Changing Nature of Traditional Mongolian Festivals in Contemporary Society

The year-in celebration among Khorchin Mongolians is not only a marker of an individual's age but also a vital social ritual that strengthens family and community ties. Traditionally, the event serves as an occasion for reaffirming kinship networks, expressing collective blessings, and maintaining social harmony. During the celebration, family members and neighbors come together to share food, gifts, and good wishes, reflecting the deeply embedded value of reciprocity in Mongolian culture. Furthermore, the choice of gifts — ranging from livestock to dairy products and clothing — carries symbolic meanings associated with prosperity, purity, and longevity. In recent decades, however, these traditional gift practices have adapted to contemporary circumstances. Urban influences and economic changes have introduced new forms of gifts, such as monetary offerings and commercially produced goods, yet the underlying cultural significance endures. This evolution illustrates how Mongolian communities negotiate modernization while preserving their ancestral heritage through ritual and celebration [7].

Nevertheless, alongside the preservation of cultural significance, the year-in celebration has increasingly exhibited signs of commercialization and social transformation, which raise concerns about its evolving role in contemporary Khorchin society.

4.1. Excessively Holding Year-In Celebrations May Contribute to Social Decline

Traditionally, year-in celebrations are intended to honor the elderly, express gratitude, commemorate social contributions, and symbolize that children are healthy, thriving, and living prosperous lives. However, in practice, the Khorchin people often utilize these occasions as a means to strengthen relationships with officials and high-ranking individuals under the pretense of presenting gifts to elders. Such behavior transforms the celebration into a gift-centered event, encouraging selfish greed rather than sincere respect. As a result, this trend may contribute to social deterioration by fostering corrupt practices and increasing self-serving tendencies among officials.

4.2. Year-In Celebrations May Undermine Moral Integrity

The practice of holding year-in celebrations has also led to phenomena that erode the moral foundation of society. For example, some individuals ignore the genuine wishes of their elders and instead organize elaborate celebrations with the sole intent of gaining personal benefit. Such behavior disregards the original purpose of the tradition, leading to a loss of respect for elders and diminishing the celebration's ethical and cultural value. This not only weakens social values but also fails to set a good example for the younger generation.

4.3. Year-In Celebrations Among Young People May Damage Interpersonal Trust

Traditionally, year-in celebrations among the Khorchin are considered a means of promoting longevity and demonstrating respect for the elderly. However, there is an increasing trend of middle-aged and even young individuals holding such celebrations for themselves. On the one hand, this deviates from traditional customs and reduces the cultural significance and popularity of the event. On the other hand, it fosters a mentality where interpersonal relationships are exploited for personal gain, leading to a decline in mutual trust and weakening the social fabric of the community.

In summary, while the year-in celebration remains a cherished cultural tradition that fosters social cohesion and honors family bonds, its contemporary manifestations present challenges that require thoughtful reflection. Balancing respect for tradition with the realities of modern life will be essential to preserving the celebration's meaningful role within Khorchin Mongolian society.

5. The Social Impact of the Khorchin People's Age Anniversary Celebrations

The year-in celebration among the Khorchin Mongolians is not only a marker of an individual's age but also a vital social ritual that strengthens family and community ties. Traditionally, the event serves as an occasion for reaffirming kinship networks, expressing collective blessings, and maintaining social harmony. During the celebration, family members and neighbors come together to share food, gifts, and good wishes, reflecting the deeply embedded value of reciprocity in Mongolian culture. Furthermore, the choice of gifts — ranging from livestock to dairy products and clothing — carries symbolic meanings associated with prosperity, purity, and longevity. In recent decades, however, these traditional gift practices have adapted to contemporary circumstances. Urban influences and economic changes have introduced new forms of gifts, such as monetary offerings and commercially produced goods, yet the underlying cultural significance endures. This evolution illustrates how Mongolian communities negotiate modernization while preserving their ancestral heritage through ritual and celebration. The Year-in celebration among the Khorchin Mongolians remains a vital tradition that supports cultural continuity and social unity. At the same time, its evolution in contemporary society reflects a mix of benefits and drawbacks worth considering [8].

5.1. Positive Aspects of the Year-In Traditional Custom

1) Cultural Heritage Preservation

The year-in custom is a significant traditional practice that plays a vital role in preserving and transmitting Mongolian cultural identity across generations. It embodies one of the key ethnic forms that shape cultural expressions and social cohesion. Ethnic forms emphasize cultural identity and collective memory, reinforcing intergenerational values.

2) Promotion of Social Cohesion

The year-in celebration serves as a culturally embedded social practice, often expressed through gift-giving and communal gatherings. These rituals foster warmth, mutual respect, and stronger ties among relatives, friends, and community members. Such interactions enhance social harmony and cohesion.

3) Stimulation of Economic Activity

The modern year-in tradition has also evolved into a consumer-driven practice. People now tend to offer practical and high-value gifts — such as electronics, pearl earrings, jewelry, and ornaments — based on the recipient's needs. This shift promotes consumption, stimulates local economic growth, and benefits regional businesses and industries.

5.2. Negative Aspects of the Year-In Traditional Custom

1) Erosion of Traditional Cultural Elements

With the advancement of society and the transformation of daily lifestyles, the year-in tradition has undergone notable changes. Some traditional rituals and symbolic meanings have gradually faded, resulting in a dilution of cultural authenticity.

2) Increased Financial Burden

Modern celebrations of the year-in often involve considerable expenses in organizing elaborate events and purchasing costly gifts. For low-income families, these social expectations can become a heavy financial burden, leading to economic stress and social inequality.

3) Decline in Ethical Norms

In some cases, year-in celebrations have been misappropriated as occasions for exchanging money and gifts for corrupt or self-serving purposes. Such practices deviate from the original intent of the custom and contribute to the deterioration of public ethics and moral standards.

While the transformation of the Khorchin year-in celebration brings about positive cultural and economic benefits, it also introduces negative consequences that cannot be ignored. A balanced approach is essential — one that respects cultural heritage, promotes social well-being, and mitigates individual and societal excesses.

In conclusion, societal development has significantly influenced people's perceptions and practices. The cherished traditions of the year-in continue to be passed down, but their evolving forms are facing increasing challenges. Originally intended to celebrate health, peace, and prosperity, the year-in today has become not only a reflection of traditional cultural values but also an important social tool to reinforce interpersonal relationships. However, its misuse for personal gain presents serious obstacles to the preservation and transmission of Mongolian cultural traditions and undermines their sustainable development.

6. Conclusion

The year-in tradition of the Khorchin Mongolians embodies a deeply rooted cultural practice that reflects the Mongolian people's reverence for life, community bonds, and intergenerational values. From the full moon celebration to the symbolic rituals performed at a child's first birthday and the grand year-in ceremonies for elders, each stage in the life cycle is marked with rituals that express aspirations for health, longevity, and prosperity. These customs not only strengthen familial ties and community solidarity but also serve as important vessels for the transmission of intangible cultural heritage.

As Mongolian society continues to evolve, the Khorchin year-in tradition has undergone visible transformations. While traditional symbols and meanings are still preserved in various forms, the celebration has increasingly adapted to modern social expectations, economic conditions, and consumer habits. The inclusion of modern items as gifts, the emphasis on economic exchange, and the changing age groups participating in the ceremonies reflect both cultural adaptation and societal transition. In the context of globalization, heritage forms continue to maintain their vitality within diverse cultural landscapes, as seen in the way this tradition incorporates contemporary practices while retaining its cultural core.

However, with these changes come challenges. On one hand, the year-in tradition supports cultural preservation, social cohesion, and economic vitality. On the other hand, its commercialization and deviation from original values may lead to the dilution of its cultural significance, reinforce materialistic tendencies, and even create social inequality or corruption under the guise of gift-giving.

Traditions adapt to new social realities while retaining their core cultural significance. Therefore, it is imperative to strike a balance between preserving the spiritual and cultural essence of the tradition and embracing its adaptive capacity in a modern context. Cultural heritage like the Khorchin year-in celebration should not only be safeguarded through documentation and academic research but also be revitalized through public awareness, ethical guidance, and policy support. In doing so, this living tradition can continue to thrive as a meaningful part of Mongolian identity, offering cultural continuity amid social change.

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