



Annex 5

Criteria requirements

for determining intangible cultural heritage bearers

S. Yundenbat

Executive Director of Intangible Cultural Heritage Center

Mongolians had practiced pastoral nomadism within vast highlands of Central Asia for centuries until XX century. Geographical isolation provides favorable conditions for Mongolian nomads' to preserve and maintain rich diversity of their unique oral literature and intangible cultural heritage intact with original integrity. At some extent, there are many tradition bearers who maintain such cultural heritage up to date. For example, 800 morin-khuur (horse-headed violin) players and 800 long-song singers came from all over Mongolia to participate in the 800th Anniversary of Mongol Great Empire in 2006. The question is what criteria requirements determine heritage bearers or who will be considered as heritage bearers? It appears that more people might raise a question like "If he is listed in 'Living Human Treasures' system, why not me?" Determining criteria requirements for registering in 'Living Human Treasures' system appears a complex issue in order to identify real heritage bearers while avoiding to uniformly register anyone. Yet, it is not easy to design common criteria suitable to all kinds of intangible cultural heritage.

Eventually, to determine the threshold higher or lower will depend on economic capacity, budget availability and funding sources. If possible, heritage bearers should be provided remuneration income, and their heritage skills and knowledge should be transmitted to next generations. Nowadays heritage bearers' work and reputation are not valued, except some certificate and title.

This year Khovd aimag has organized its cultural fair in Ulaanbaatar. The aimag authority has brought the best folklore artists from the aimag. However, folklore artists who did their best to present the Khovd aimag, were not paid any remuneration money, but were told 'coming to Ulaanbaatar without paying transportation cost from own pockets is enough reward'. This kind of practice should be changed urgently. If we do not take urgent actions to save heritage bearers' reputation and their social values, it will get late soon.

I propose the following possible criteria requirements for determining intangible cultural heritage bearers. These are not the final and complete version. It is the initial draft for discussion to get your valuable comments and recommendations.

1. Performance level of particular types of heritage must be outstanding high among others.
2. Integrity of original features, patterns and style must be preserved intact.

3. Particular heritage types in danger of disappearing must be given exclusive priority. For example, such types of heritage elements may include religious-themed traditional long and short songs banned during the socialism, religious customs and rituals, tsam (mask dance), worshipping sacred mountains and peaks, imprinting animals, fortune-telling, practice rituals for the weather, traditional medical treatment and massage, astronomy related knowledge and traditions.

Moreover, various types of traditional games involving lyrics and gestures, board games and puzzled games have been lost little by little. There is one talented artist who construct and make puzzled game-toys. Mr Tumen-Ulzii lives in Bayanzurkh District of Ulaanbaatar. He has established a museum and carries out research.

There is only one family who inherited traditional technology and methods to make archery bows. They use natural, but rare materials such as biological glue, wood, ibex horn, animal nerve vessel and vulture feather to make original (archery) bows within their family-based business while receiving reservations from archery players. When conquering the half of the world, Mongolian soldiers, horses and bows must have played crucial roles. 'Military bow arrows which can travel 500 meters to its target' (noted about Yesunge, a son of Chinggis's brother Khavt Khasar) may have been the main advantage of Chinggis Khaan's cavalries' victory. It has been 3 years since the last family-based generational tuuli artist passed away. There is no other tuuli artist like Mr. Urtnasan who can perform tuuli for 7 hours without stops. It is needed to learn his experiences from his children as soon as possible. The same concern goes to tsuur which is also in danger of disappearing after Mr. Narantsogt known as the most famous uriankhai tsuur artist passed way.

Moreover, there are traditional social practices disappearing under the banner of socialist lifestyle, westernization that need to be revived further urgently. For example, disappearing traditions and cultoms practiced by minority ethnic groups should be saved and revived when there are fewer alive practitioners now. There are very few local long singers who are invited to moderate and sing at family festive events. The current situation is not people's voluntary decision, but rather a result of forced ideology propaganda as well as modern culture influence. In any nationality, traditional customs associated with births, weddings and deaths appear very stable, conservative and endurable rituals among others. Wedding related customs and rituals create national self-identity pride and spirits reminding them 'I am a bayad person... or I am a Buryad person'. This provides youths with traditional culture education by and large. Serial wedding customs and associated rituals, praise and long songs combined with morin khuur do poster complexity of various heritage elements and provide opportunities to preserve and maintain them all.

4. The proposed heritage element must have outstanding values and quality worth to be considered to classify for the outstanding heritage category, according to Law on Protecting cultural heritage of Mongolia which divides heritage elements in three categories; outstanding, valuable and ordinary. The Law also states to set up a committee to determine classification rankings. Among those categories, 'outstanding' heritage elements should be safeguarded under the state protection means, and 'valuable' heritage elements should be subject to local government protection while necessary budgets allocated from the general revenues.
5. The heritage bearer must be known and respected by the local community and region. For example, M. Dovchin, a morin-khuur player is famous not only in Western Mongolia, but all Mongolia. He has over 100 students.

6. The heritage must have specific scholarship style, main representatives and distinct etalon quality patterns. For example, Dadisuren, a Khalkha long singer Dadisuren (a.k.a Deren) has a rich collection, while his songs have unique quality and patterns.
7. The heritage bearer must have ability and experiences to conduct trainings (at certain extent). If there are two similar heritage bearers with similar skills and techniques, then this requirement may serve as supplementary indicator for consideration. It is important that heritage bearers must have apprenticeship students to replace them in the next generation. The training forms may vary. For instance, traditional apprenticeship trainings provide on-the-job teaching and learning environment compared to classroom environment where explanation and illustration dominate.
8. Surrounding environment and cultural heritage must be inseparably linked as whole complexity. For example, Borgigin festive events associated with stallions and horses, airag (fermented mares' milk), festive parties, long songs, morin khuur, praise songs all compliment one another. Moreover, uriankhai archery which is traditionally performed during Tsagaan Sar – Lunar New Year celebration should be preserved based on the community.

There is a strong tendency that all intangible cultural heritage types, including oral literature has moved from the social environment to the theatrical stage. The protection means and approaches may have influenced to it, organizing festival, fair, contest etc. Now it is time to re-introduce to their original environment and social practices while advertising from the stage simultaneously. 'Ovgon shuvuu' (old bird) song has 32 sections, while 'Bor borin byalzuukhai' (grey little chick) 36 sections. However, at concerts only 2 lines of first section of Kherlen barya. This conflicts with the original environment and timing. The traditional unwritten rule requires to sing songs and tuuli fully. Livestock and animal call-imitations, livestock herding techniques, feeding small animals all contain skills to influence animal psyche and reflex. In addition, there are kazakhs' eagle-training traditional customs, associated skills and heritage.

Finally, there are many periodical needs that field exploration teams should work on-site in the countryside in order to study and identify intangible cultural heritage, or carry out monitoring activities during trainings. However, the existing per diem for working in soums was set at 4,500MNT (about 4US\$) by the Ministry of Finance several years ago and remains still up to date. This is definitely not enough for hotel and food costs, but may buy one dish meal only. In case of working in aimag and towns, the per diem goes up. Oppositely, working in soums should be paid higher. Isn't it so? Thus, it is difficult to find any highly specialized experts who agree to work in the countryside. The Ministry of Finance should consider its old tariffs set years ago, and modify rural mission per diem realistically. We also should take actions and present proposals in such regards.

Currently, the emerging intense change in the Mongolian society appears shifting from nomadism to settled lifestyle so that increased urbanization caused irreversible collapse of nomadic civilization. As of statistics data, two thirds of the Mongolia's entire population live in settlements; of them more than half reside in Ulaanbaatar – the capital city.

Mongolia's urbanization process is simply internal migration from one place to another, but rather from one lifestyle to another – from nomadic lifestyle to urban lifestyle. As a result of urbanization, not only life space changed, but also life style patterns, social practices, traditional and cultural heritage values change fundamentally. Therefore, intangible cultural heritage elements derived from pastoral nomadism, including herding technology, livestock related knowledge, skills and experiences, nomadic culture and traditions, ethical and aesthetic values, as well as long songs, fairy tales, traditional dance such as bii bielgee, games and toys have been pushed away by modern pop culture, like show business, commercialized consumption and alike. In this alarming circumstances, we should take urgent actions aimed at preserving, maintaining and transmitting intangible cultural heritage knowledge and skills to our next generation, before it is too late soon.

Criteria for Determining Intangible Cultural Heritage Bearers

- ① The heritage bearers' skills and techniques must be at outstanding high level.
- ② The given heritage must have original integrity, unique features and traditional elements.
- ③ Particular heritage types in danger of disappearing must be given exclusive priority.
- ④ The proposed heritage element must have outstanding values and quality worth to be considered to classify for the 'outstanding' heritage category.
- ⑤ The heritage bearer must be known and respected by the local community and region.
- ⑥ The heritage must have specific scholarship style, main representatives and distinct etalon quality patterns.
- ⑦ The heritage bearer must have ability and experiences to conduct trainings (at certain extent).
- ⑧ Surrounding environment and cultural heritage must be inseparably linked as whole complexity.