

INTRODUCTION



MONGOLIAN INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Working to preserve and safeguard the various biological species on our planet is a reasonable action for us to take. In a similar way, it is necessary to protect the cultural diversity of our species. The preservation and safeguarding of the world's cultural diversity and its cultural heritage constitute the most urgent task of humanity.

The Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage was established in 1972 and has been implemented largely due to the initiatives of the best known personalities in the world of culture and through the benevolent efforts of UNESCO. By 2010, 185 countries had joined the Convention and inscribed around 900 examples of cultural heritage in the World Cultural Heritage List. They enjoy protection and glorification. In Mongolia, the *Uvs Nuur Basin*-a famous Central Asian salt lake - and the *Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape* were both inscribed in the World Heritage List, in 2003 and 2004 respectively.

At its thirty-first session in 2001, the General Assembly of UNESCO unanimously adopted a Universal Declaration on cultural diversity. The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted in 2003 and the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions was adopted in 2005. UNESCO executes these Conventions. Many nations and ethnic groups attach great importance to the intangible cultural heritage-the soul of their creative mind and imagination. Mongolia has joined these Conventions in 2005 and 2007 respectively. These documents repudiate the claim that there is an inevitable clash of cultures in the twenty-first century era of globalism. They also tell us that it is worthwhile to show how meaningful the protection of languages and cultures and their diversities as well as the mutual understanding among the nations and ethnic groups can be.

ONE. On the intangible cultural heritage (ICH) and its domains

The UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage defines “**intangible cultural heritage**” (ICH) as the practices, representations, expressions, knowledge, skills - as well as the instruments, objects, artefacts and cultural spaces associated therewith - that communities, groups and, in some cases, individuals, recognized as part of their cultural heritage”.

At its core, ICH embodies the intellectual and spiritual expressions and relevant cultural artefacts of a given people. Importantly, the Convention classified the ICH into the following five domains, according to their manifestations:

1. Oral traditions and expressions, including language, as a vehicle of the intangible heritage

Today, there are more than 5,000 ethnicities and nationalities in about 220 countries in the world, and because of this our world civilizations are multilateral and becoming increasingly rich and interesting.

This domain includes our mother tongue, the Mongolian language, and its associated rich heritage, including proverbs, riddles, ritual poems, tea-libation recitations as well as praise songs, various types of charms, eulogies, and epic songs and so on.

It is noteworthy that the Mongolian script is an integral part of the Mongolian language. It is the main bearer of the Mongolian language, dialect and intangible cultural heritage, and at the same time, it helps to disseminate the intangible cultural heritage of Mongols.

2. Performing arts

This domain of the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage includes ritual songs, protracted songs, short songs, *khöömei* (overtone singing), *isgeree* (whistling), mouth harps, horse-headed fiddle, *tsuur* (three holed vertical flute), *limbe* (horizontal flute), traditional dancing art, *biyelgee* (traditional dancing), contortion, *tsam* (religious mask dance) and as well as traditional games, their performances and arts.

3. Social practices, rituals, and festive events

Traditions and customs are spiritual, socio-psychological phenomena of society, communities and ethnic groups. They are developed over long historical periods and handed down from generation to generation in societies, communities and ethnic groups.

Ceremonies and festivals are conducted by established rules, regulations and expressions of tradition

and custom. Tradition contains customs, which are an aggregate of rituals that are passed on from generation to generation.

Festivals consist of various ceremonies and rituals. Mostly they are active forms of state and civil ceremonies embracing the mass of people dedicated to the celebration of important event of nations, ethnic groups, and communities.

There are neither perpetual customs nor perpetual rituals and ceremonies. They constantly undergo change dependent upon people and their social and historical relationships. There can be problems if rituals and ceremonies do not undergo changes owing to new circumstances. In some cases the content of rituals, ceremonies, benedictions and odes has fallen into oblivion.

The principal method that people use to learn customs and ceremonies is to imitate others and to apprentice to a skilled minster and perform rituals and ceremonies.

The performance of rituals and ceremonies is practiced without the interference of children and youth. This repetition of practice produces skills and reverence. Rituals and ceremonies play an important role in the moulding of young people's characters. The content of the rituals and ceremonies are worthy to ensure the decency of humanity and to be sure that they remain congruent with the universal declaration of human rights and the principle of humanity.

4. Knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe

This domain includes traditional knowledge and practices concerning nature, weather, and livelihood, and it includes: traditional medicine, traditional veterinary, home remedies, various kinds of measurements, knowledge and wisdom related to natural phenomena, weather forecasting, and calendars, as well as cultural artefacts related thereof. Nomadic Mongolians have developed numerous intangible cultural heritage elements concerning this domain.

5. Traditional craftsmanship

All types of traditional crafts belong to this domain. National crafts depending upon cultural peculiarities are diverse. The nomadic Mongols created very specific patterns. There are many crafts of riding and loading equipment, crafts of making wooden ger frames, ornaments, hide and leather brands, gold, silver and metalwork, the carving of wood and bone, the making of Mongolian gowns, boots, wrestling tights and jackets, and the creation of books. These crafts have become perfected.

The list of Mongolian intangible cultural heritage is open to further be enriched. Those cultural domains are closely interrelated with each other as mentioned in the Convention.

TWO. Mongolian contributions to nomadic civilization

The intangible cultural heritage of any nation and ethnic group depends upon a locality, environment, business, way of life, language and condition of cultural history that is very diverse and unique. Thus, the intangible cultural heritage of any nation symbolizes their identities and constitutes an integral part of the world culture.

The Mongolian nation and her ethnic groups are an integral part of the global population. The Mongols and their ancestors have lived and moved from place to place on the vast territory from the Altai mountain ranges to those of the *Khyangan*, from Lake Baikal to the Great Wall. This area is a part of the vast and grassy Eurasian plain which stretches for several thousand kilometres from the Danube River to the Korean peninsula and on which sedentary civilizations based on agricultural farming and nomadic cultures based on the animal husbandry long co-existed.

After the domestication of camels and horses, the nomadic animal economy formed a mobile culture of Mongols on the vast steppe. They also developed metal work. They were able to exchange equally with the sedentary civilizations. From the *Hünnü* period, our ancestors unified various nomadic nations and tribes and established nomadic states. Several times these peoples brought the Eurasian peoples under their influence. There is a great deal of archaeological evidence about this.

The Mongolian Empire was established by *Chinggis Qahan*, the emperor. In this period, nomadic civilization was developed in an outstanding way and singled out. This civilization made a tremendous impact on the exchanges between the sedentary and nomadic civilizations.

Unfortunately, the prevailing social philosophy of Europe viewed nomadic culture as "barbaric" and rejected it outright. This was a great hindrance to the valuation of the nomadic culture.

But recently, the world attitude toward nomadic cultures has changed. They understand the uniqueness of the nomadic civilization, its diversity and worthy contributions to the exchange of human culture between the

West and the East. Many have started researching and analyzing nomadic cultures. Particularly at the moment when the world is in deep ecological crisis, nomadic civilizations can provide valuable information about the preservation and conservation of the nature without harming it. It is not sheer coincidence that the United Nations is now emphasizing the contribution of the nomadic civilizations to the mutual changes of culture and civilization and to the development of world cultural diversity. It issued a special resolution in 2006 to commemorate the 800th anniversary of the statehood of the Mongolian nation, the cradle of this wonderful civilization, and appealed to its member-states to take a part in this commemoration.

UNESCO inscribed the *Orkhon Valley Cultural Landscape* onto the World Heritage List in 2004. It described the development within the *Orkhon Valley* in the past two millennia as demonstrating a strong nomadic culture bearing outstanding and universal values and stated the need to preserve it and pass it on to future generations for the sake of all humanity.

UNESCO inscribed the following onto the World Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding: The Traditional Music of the *Morin khuur* (horse-headed fiddle) in 2003, the *Uriin Duu* (traditional folk long song) in 2005, the Mongolian Traditional Art of *Khöömei* and the *Naadam* (Mongolian traditional festival) in 2010, the *Mongol Tuuli* (Mongolian traditional epic), the Mongolian Traditional Music of the *Tsuur*, and the Mongolian Traditional Dance called the *Bii Biyelgee* in 2009. It proclaimed these elements as masterpieces of the intangible cultural heritage of humanity. It is clear that these elements of the unique cultural heritage of Mongolia are now highly valued and their contribution to the world cultural heritage is appreciated.

THREE. Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mongolia and its peculiarities

Our ancestors domesticated wild animals on the Mongolian territory at least 5,000 years ago as they developed a nomadic economy. Conclusions about these achievements are based on the archaeological findings. These people increased their animal population on the vast territory of Central Asia and moved from place to place and created the nomadic culture and civilization that are now recognized on the world level. These circumstances and specific cultural spaces in which the Mongols have been living, their intelligence and imagination, define the intangible cultural heritage of Mongol nation and its peculiarities. Let us quote from these peculiarities.

- **The Mongolian intangible cultural heritage is expressed in the Mongolian language, a vehicle of this specific heritage.** The Mongolian language is a cognate with the Altaic language family. Linguists agree that the Mongols spoke in a Mongolian dialect and communicated with each other even before *Hünnü* statehood. According to the estimation of scholars, there are about seven million people of Mongolian stock in the world, of which four million speak in Mongolian. This language carries myriad distinct and unique characteristics and elements of the intangible cultural heritage.

- **The mobility of the nomadic culture and economy means that the Mongols have created many items that are portable,** such as the Mongol *ger*, cart, harnesses of riding horse or camel, loading equipment, and brands. The main force of this mobility is the horse. There are many benedictions and eulogies to horses. We extol horses in our folk songs and present day songs. All of the customs and festivities are interrelated to each other, to mobility, and to our horses.

- **The nomadic people have a closer relationship with nature than the sedentary people. The life of the nomadic people is clearly dependent upon nature. Therefore, Mongolian culture venerates it and is very friendly to it. This is the peculiarity of the Mongolian culture.** Mongolians are worshippers of Heaven. That is why we speak in our benedictions about the blue sky, the father and the soil of the earth as our mother. There is a firmly established traditional system to protect the mother-land that is part of the intangible cultural heritage. Mongolian oral literature, songs, traditional musical art, folk knowledge, imagination, customs, rituals and festivals are closely connected with nature and express various natural phenomena.

- **Another peculiarity of the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage is the reverence of the domestic animals, known as the “five treasures.”** Folktales, folk art, handcrafts, folk knowledge, rituals and festivals are linked to the five kinds of domesticated animals. Food-stuffs made from animals raised by nomadic pastoralists are unique and ecologically hygienic. In addition, skin, hide, wood and cashmere wool are

inexhaustible sources for the production of Mongolian traditional art, showing a potential to produce many Mongol brands.

- **Mongolian intangible cultural heritage is closely linked to shamanism, which has been practiced for many centuries. This peculiarity is expressed in the various charms and spells, folk medicine, mountain worship, and rituals. The Mongolian cultural heritage is enriched by Buddhism, which teaches benevolence and preventing evil behaviours as well as the veneration of nature and the preservation of the organic and inorganic substances. The Mongolian intangible cultural heritage is also enriched with Buddhist art, custom, rituals and ceremonies.**

- **The world intangible cultural heritage undergoes changes from period to period. But its value remains intact and valid. It remains a living entity and can be found throughout Mongolia.** The intangible cultural heritage permanently exists in the psychology of our people and it is conveyed through their body motion, language and mind. It is possible to say that the intangible cultural heritage is a living tradition. It is intangible in comparison with the tangible heritage, such as monuments, architecture, ruined sites of towns, and works of art. It is not easy to either identify or conserve the intangible culture heritage because it is in constant change. The intangible cultural heritage is the expression of the previous periods of our nation and its ethnic groups and provides evidence of their evolution and development.

- **Any national cultural heritage, particularly the intangible cultural heritage, should be seen as evidence of a “creative industry” and a source of unique art creation and energetic effort. It is a source for unique features and creative minds. In another words, the intangible cultural heritage is vital and important for progress and development. The Mongolian national intangible cultural heritage is an expression of Mongolian creative thought and its uniqueness.**

- **Nomadic Mongolians maintained constant relations with nomadic nations and ethnic groups in the Central Asia and other nationalities of the sedentary civilization, including those in India, Manchuria, Tibet, China, Iran, Russia, and Korea, throughout history. Therefore, Mongolian culture was familiar with the West and the East. There was even cultural change with the sedentary cultures and civilizations, from which they learned about each other and mutually influenced each other, and this has become another peculiarity of present day Mongolian culture.**

Buddhism spread over Mongolia. Indian and Tibetan culture influenced the Mongolian mentality, custom, ceremony and art. Scholars and researchers wrote about the Indian and Tibetan cultural penetration. Mongolians maintained constant relations with their territorial neighbours, Russia and China, and, of course have constantly been exchanging cultural and artistic values with them. But there are almost no Russian and Chinese influences in the Mongolian mentality, particularly in Mongolian rituals, customs and festivities.

It is necessary to analyze the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage from the various aspects of mutual dependences and mutual influence of these neighbours.

FOUR. Some thoughts on the evolution, development, preservation and conservation of the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage

There were considerable obstacles to the evolution, development, preservation and conservation of the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage in the long span of time of the history. Since the collapse of their Empire, Mongols have split and warred with each other many times. The Mongol nation came under the rule of the Manchu empire for two hundred years. These events restrained our spiritual and aesthetic sense, including the development and prosperity of the national intangible cultural heritage. In addition, Mongolia was subjected to the world communist ideology. Because of it, there was a forward step in certain fields of the society. But under the motto of a “Proletarian new culture,” the traditional culture, customs, and national sentiment were suppressed as old, backward, obsolescent, and superstitious. The ideological campaigns against nationalism worked to interrupt the natural succession of the intangible cultural heritage. National items were mostly ignored. The folklore, folk art, traditions, customs, folk knowledge and traditional technologies were banned or destroyed. It was great tragedy for the Mongolians. It is not exaggeration to say that the practices of good national rituals, customs, ceremonies, and festivities were limited or fell in oblivion in that period.

After this victimization of the Mongolian culture came urbanization and the spread of globalization into

Mongolia. In these conditions, modern popular culture has come to occupy the spaces that traditional culture used to hold and to make traditional cultural ways increasingly irrelevant in the lives of our people.

The Mongolian intangible cultural heritage has survived this difficult road of development and continues to maintain its rich content and artistic and aesthetic value. It remains worthy of art and literature of Mongolia. Mongolian language, folklore, traditional art, craft, traditional treatment, knowledge and wisdom are still being maintained.

Since 1990, Mongolia has opened to the rest of the world and embarked on a new path of development. Our national pride has been revived. We have re-animated our traditional culture and heritage and there is now a favourable condition to preserve and safeguard our national culture.

The Mongolian government attaches great importance to the preservation of the cultural heritage. Mongolians feel inspired with warm enthusiasm to protect and promote their national identity. This enthusiasm flows. We have done a number of projects to safeguard and develop the intangible cultural heritage.

First of all, the Mongolian Parliament adopted the Law on the Protection of Cultural Heritage. The President of Mongolia issued decrees on the reverence and protection of the horse-headed fiddle, long song, and *khöömei*. The government also approved national programmes to develop folk art, the horse-headed fiddle playing, long song and *khöömei* singing, and *biyelgee* dancing, all of which play significant roles in developing folk art.

Since 1997 Mongolia has more closely cooperated with UNESCO. Mongolian experts and specialists actively participated in UNESCO programmes and projects to safeguard the intangible cultural heritage. The "Central Asian Epic" international symposium and festival was held in Mongolia in 1998. At this moment, Mongolian cultural figures and artists established the National Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage and started truly virtuous activities for the registration of artists, audio and audio-visual recordings and other types of documentation in the newly established centre.

For the last few years, thanks to the generous support from the Cultural Heritage Administration of the Republic of Korea and Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre for Asia and the Pacific in the Republic of Korea, we have been implementing a series of projects aimed at safeguarding the intangible cultural heritage of Mongolia. Within the implementation of these projects, major measures have been taken to form a favourable legal background, establish an inventory fund of the ICH, and bring UNESCO's Living Human Treasures System into Mongolia.

In addition, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of Mongolia, the Cultural and Arts Committee, and other NGOs organize traditional art festivals as well as contests and exhibitions on traditional performing arts and craftsmanship on a regular basis. These organizations have also taken other measures to promote traditional culture and the arts in all provinces and cities in Mongolia, which also shows progress.

Moreover, public campaigns have started to celebrate traditional festive events, such as the "Three Manly Sports" (*Eriin Gurvan Naadam*) not only in Mongolia but also abroad; to organize social practices such as the worshipping of sacred sites, new ger warming fests and weddings; to encourage household customs such as wool beating, felt making, milking mares, branding horses in accordance with respective traditional ways; and to learn and disseminate the traditions of the long song, *morin khuur* music (horse-headed fiddle) and *khöömei*. These and other activities are being targeted towards civil associations, unions, foundations, ensembles, groups, schools, training courses, factories, and companies. They show the progress Mongolia has achieved in safeguarding and promoting its intangible cultural heritage.

Mongolia has experienced rapid globalization and urbanization. The space of the intangible cultural heritage has undergone dramatic change. The modern trends of mass culture and art are invading Mongolia. There is a real possibility that the traditional intangible cultural heritage could be eliminated in a short span of time. The trends of urbanization, the flow of human population from the countryside to the cities, globalization, popular culture, standardized education, and arbitrary tourism are having a bad influence upon the rising generations. They reduce the interest and reverence of youth toward the national cultural heritage. This is a matter of concern.

FIVE. What to do?

In my view, undertaking the following measures to preserve and promote the intangible cultural heritage of Mongolia could have a positive effect.

1. The main bearer of intangible cultural heritage of any nation is the national language. **Therefore, the protection, promotion and development of our national language must be the sacred duty of Mongolians. Without the Mongolian language, the Mongolian nation and its population are nothing.** The parents are obligated to let their children acquire a good knowledge and skill of their own language. Previously, Mongolia had such a tradition. The children who were born and grew up hearing their mothers' lullabies and their native melodious language are not liable to forget their native language, are they not? But, at present, eternally busy mothers do not sing lullabies to their children. Instead of such acts of tenderness, television screens and popular cultural trends influence our children. The family is not only the bearer of one's native language but it also absorbs the national intangible cultural heritage; it is a marvelous centre for the revival of tradition. That is why the national government and every citizen should work to hand down the intangible cultural heritage to the rising generation. First of all, the role of parents and family should be enhanced. This is vitally important.

2. Along with the family unit, other important protectors and supporters of the intangible cultural heritage are the nation, ethnic groups, and communities. Their roles are emphasized in a convention of UNESCO. The system of transmission of the intangible cultural heritage is the root of the existence of the nation and ethnic group. Around 17%-18% of the Mongolian population is *Buriad, Dörvöd, Bayad, Uriankhai (Altain Uriankhai, Tuva Uriankhai, Arig Uriankhai, Tsaatan Uriankhai) Zakhchin, Torguud, Ööld, Myangad, Darhad, Barga, Uzemchin, Khamnigan, and Chantu*. These ethnic groups speak Mongolian each with different dialects. In their being and culture they are different from each other and from the majority population of *Khalkha*, which composes 82% of the Mongolian population. In the future, the government of Mongolia needs to create a favourable condition to pursue a policy to encourage the dialectical speakers to hand down their language to the coming generations. It is vitally important to reinvigorate the Mongolian script, the only unique bearer of the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage. Most Mongolians believe that the decree issued by the President of Mongolia in 2010 to intensify the use of the Mongolian script can give an impetus to this cause.

3. It became a pressing task to work out a national program to teach the Mongolian language and national culture to pupils and students at the primary and general education school levels. The presidential decree to include the compulsory lessons on the themes of Mongolian traditional thinking methods, wisdom and philosophy, all within the frame-work of the civil education syllabus in the school curriculum, was made with the goal of making the general education school pupils familiar with the national values, culture, customs, and traditional thinking. This decree was approved and is being implemented nationwide. Our people consider it timely and support its implementation. It is significant to bring all the educational establishments, cultural organizations, government and non-government organizations, informal educational centres, the media, entertainments, cultural industries and travel agencies, and every citizen into this campaign.

4. The survey conducted says that the Mongolian traditional intangible cultural heritage has basically decreased and has almost disappeared in some regions of Mongolia due to the aforementioned historical reasons. Even in some provinces, it was hard to find the performer who was able to play a horse-headed fiddle or to sing a long song, both of which are the most important domains of the intangible cultural heritage. The skilled craftsmen who make the frames of *gers* and saddles are very few. A few people in settled area, especially Ulaanbaatar, make clumsy *ger* frames and saddles in great numbers. Since 1990, *Tsagaan sar* (the Lunar Month holiday) has been celebrated at the national level. This has helped to revive some other customs and rituals. Felt-making, mare-milking, foal and colt branding celebrations are starting to be revived, for example. The survey also says that religious practices and rituals are being revived for recent years. This is the result of the religious freedoms since 1990, which gave Mongolians the freedom to enjoy religion and to worship it. Many temples and monasteries have been restored and favourable conditions have been created to conduct religious rituals. Such evidence tells us that it is necessary to pursue a policy to revive rituals, customs and festivities concerning the animal pastoralism and agricultural farming among the livestock breeders and farmers at the bag level (a unit of local administration) or sum level (an administrative unit subordinate to a province), and even at the family level. With the purpose of familiarizing schoolboys and schoolgirls with the significance of the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage, we need to groom young and talented teachers to master and teach civil customs, festivities and their rules and regulations as well as different traditions of various localities together with the folklore, oral literature, and games at the national level.

5. For the past fifty years, the number of practitioners of customs and ceremonies, masters of the traditional treatment of animals, long-song performers, fiddlers, performers of traditional dances, and craftsmen has decreased rapidly. Now our primary task is to select good practitioners of the intangible cultural heritage, to encourage them and bestow them with honours, and to raise public awareness to broaden apprenticeship trainings. It is recommended that we establish a system of rewards for ICH bearers to make it worth of their efforts to transmit their unique knowledge and skills to the next generation. The youth in this training should be awarded stipends. Also, substantial financial incentives, equal to that given to professional artists who successfully participated in international contests and festivals, can be bestowed upon those who bear outstanding and exceptional ICH elements and effectively transmit them to future generations.

6. It is fitting to pursue a policy to propagate and disseminate Mongolian intangible cultural heritage at the national and world level. The propagation of one's culture means to learn about other cultures and world classics. It is incumbent upon us that the state and government of Mongolia attract the attention of Mongolians to be a centre or cradle of the world Mongol studies and studies of the world nomadic intangible cultures. Life demands that we promote Mongolian Studies on the broad scale, inscribe the various ICH elements on the lists of cultural heritage of humanity, propagate Mongol culture in the itineraries of tourism at the national and world levels, and introduce new cultural products and establish new cultural sites. The Mongolian people stand a good historical chance to make contributions to cultural change in the West and East by developing our culture with the novel knowledge and novel technologies of the modern age, just like the contributions made to the world culture in twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

7. There are certain rising tendencies of popular enthusiasm and initiatives amongst the Mongolian people that revere the national language, preserve and promote the national cultural heritage, and learn to perform and disseminate them. In comparison with the previous years, now it is important to create favourable condition to encourage and enhance these patriotic initiatives, including promoting talented culture-bearers and performers and promoting our national culture and psychology. It is also necessary to issue an act on the preservation, promotion and dissemination of the intangible cultural heritage. The government of Mongolia ought to take further measures for the revival, propagation, and dissemination of the intangible cultural activities by providing the necessary financial and professional resources. We need to establish training-centres for the intangible culture at local and national level, nomadic cultural villages at the *bag* (local administrative unit subordinate to a sum) and *sum* (territorial administrative unit subordinate to a province) levels, museums of folk art and Information, and pedagogical centres for the intangible culture heritage.

Six. On this book and acknowledgements

Many Mongolian scholars and researchers made tremendous contributions to this book on the intangible cultural heritage. There are also contributions from other individuals and organizations. So I owe to all the scholars, researchers, institutions and individuals a debt of gratitude. In order to compose this book we drew upon the famous "The Secret History of Mongols" and abundant sources concerning Mongolian intangible cultural heritage that were written by domestic and foreign scholars and researchers. We also drew upon the abundant sutras left by the past centuries and the efforts to analyze them. Together with these we also studied live traditions of the present Mongolian people and ethnic groups.

We also relied on the valuable works of prominent researchers and scholars, such as Ts.Damdinsuren, B.Rinchin, Kh.Perlee, D.Gongor, Ch.Dalai, G.Sükhbaatar, Sh.Bira, P.Khorloo, L.Tudev, J.Badraa, D.Tserensodnom, Kh.Nyambu, S.Badamkhatan, Kh.Sampildendev, Ts.Shagdarsüren, G.Tserenkhand, D.Tseveendorj, J.Batsuuri and others who significantly contributed to the studies of Mongolian culture, and especially the intangible cultural heritage.

The creation of this reference book, "The Intangible Cultural Heritage of the Mongols" sticks to the vision, principle and classifications of the UNESCO Convention of the ICH. This book consists of five chapters, each dealing with a domain of the ICH and explaining every episode. The national language and dialect, romantic oral literature, folk knowledge, wisdom and method, tangible art, delicately inventive and traditionally undying crafts, folk art, national toys and games, human feelings, decencies, solemn ceremonies and festivities of Mongolia are inexhaustibly rich sources and have subtle differences in nuance.

It is quite impossible to include all the forms of the intangible cultural heritage and their expressions in one book. Only living traditions of the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage, those that still exist among the

ordinary Mongolian people, and cultural practices and expressions that are being revived are included in this book. There is a considerable number of explanatory notes and over 600 photos, illustrations, pictures of patterns and various symbols included in this book.

This book about the Mongolian intangible cultural heritage was composed with a great deal of effort. The main contributors are scholars and researchers. They are Doctors L.Batchuluun, G.Gongorjav, T.Dorjdagva, S.Dulam, N.Urtnasan, S.Yüندنbat, cultural researchers L.Molomjamts, Ts.Samdan, and Z.Tümen-Ölzii. The editors of this book are Doctors D.Amarbayasgalan, B.Boldbaatar, T.Dorjdagva, N.Jantsannorov, Ts.Tseveendorj and S.Chuluun. My particular thanks are due to the above-mentioned contributors and for their commitments and meticulous work.

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We owe a deep debt of gratitude to all the staff members of the UNESCO accredited NGO, The Foundation for the Protection of Natural and Cultural Heritage responsible for composing and publishing this book for their outstanding work and highly appreciate the moral, psychological and logistical supports of Mongolian Culture and Arts Committee, an implementing agency of the Government of Mongolia. It is a great pleasure for me to present this book embodying an intangible cultural heritage that has been created and developed by our Mongolian people over many centuries.

Dear readers! Your suggestions and comments on the inaccuracy and oversight are welcome.

May the remarkable benevolence of this book shine forever!

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