



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization



Intangible
Cultural
Heritage

Urgent Safeguarding List

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CONVENTION FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

INTERGOVERNMENTAL COMMITTEE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF THE INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE

Fifth session
Kenya
November 2010

REPORT ON THE EXAMINATION OF NOMINATION FILES NO. 00304 FOR INSCRIPTION ON THE LIST OF INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN NEED OF URGENT SAFEGUARDING IN 2010

Name of the examiner: Chun In Pyong
Name of the expert (if different):
Date of the examination: (revised on) 17 August 2010
Nomination file No. 00304 State Party: China Name of element: Meshrep
<p><i>Note: Information in italics in boxes is provided for the examiner's reference; it includes excerpts from the Operational Directives or from the explanations given to submitting States Parties in the nomination form. The examiner shall rely upon the information provided within the nomination file, including any photos, video or additional information that is made available as part of the nomination. The examiner shall bring to bear his/her personal and professional knowledge in assessing the credibility and completeness of the information provided within the nomination, but his/her report shall primarily address whether or not the submitting State, within the nomination, has adequately demonstrated that the criteria for inscription are satisfied. The examiner shall neither be a national of the State(s) Party(ies) submitting the nomination nor have any conflict of interest that could influence unduly the results of the examination.</i></p>

Excerpts from the Operational Directives

Examination of nominations:

5. *With a view to their evaluation by the Committee, nominations shall be examined by preferably more than one advisory organization accredited in conformity with Article 9.1 of the Convention. In conformity with Article 8.4, the Committee may invite public or private bodies and/or private persons with recognized competence in the field of intangible cultural heritage, in order to consult them on specific matters. No nomination will be examined by (a) national(s) of the State(s) Party(ies) submitting the nomination.*
6. *Examinations shall include assessment of the nomination's conformity with the inscription criteria.*
7. *Each examination shall include assessment of the viability of the element and of the feasibility and sufficiency of the safeguarding plan. It shall also include assessment of the risk of its disappearing, due, inter alia, to the lack of means for safeguarding and protecting it, or to processes of globalization and social or environmental transformation.*
8. *The reports of these examinations shall include a recommendation to the Committee to inscribe, or not to inscribe, the nominated element.*

Brief textual description of the nominated element

The examiner should provide a brief description of the nominated element, suitable for publication. This may draw upon item D of the Cover Sheet, but should also draw upon the nomination as a whole to provide a summary overview of the essential features of the element. The description should be prepared based on the information provided within the nomination file.

(175 to 225 words)

Meshrep contains a rich collection of traditions. A complete Meshrep event includes performances like the Uygur muqam, folk songs and dances, story-singing and drama, as well as other activities such as oral literature, tournaments and games, which people enjoy and actively take part in. Meshrep is not only an important 'stage' for folk artists to display their brilliant skills, but also a 'court' where the host mediates conflicts and ensure the preservation of moral standards.

Moreover, it is a 'classroom' where people learn about their traditional customs, nature, and different experience of economic production.

It is a 'playground' where to entertain body and soul.

In conclusion, I value that Meshrep is the most important cultural venue carrier of Uygur traditions.

However, I feel sorry that I can't describe the essential features of the element in more detail.

Criterion U.1 The element constitutes intangible cultural heritage as defined in Article 2 of the Convention.

Excerpts from the nomination form

Description of the element (Not to exceed 1,000 words)

A clear and complete description is essential to demonstrate to the Committee that the nominated element meets the Convention's definition of intangible heritage. The description should provide the Committee with sufficient information to determine:

- *that the element is among 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 recognize [it] as part of their cultural heritage’;
- that it is being ‘transmitted from generation to generation, [and] is constantly recreated by communities and groups in response to their environment, their interaction with nature and their history’;
- that it provides communities and groups involved ‘with a sense of identity and continuity’; and
- that it is not incompatible ‘with existing international human rights instruments as well as with the requirements of mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, and of sustainable development’.

The description should refer to all the significant features of the element as it exists at present, and should include discussion of its social and cultural functions at present, the characteristics of the bearers and practitioners, any special roles or categories of persons with specific responsibilities towards the element, among others. Nomination files need not address in detail the history of the element, or its origin or antiquity.

Nomination demonstrates that the element satisfies Criterion U.1:

Yes

No

Examiner’s comments regarding the element’s conformity with the definition of intangible cultural heritage in the Convention

The examiner should address whether the submitting State has adequately demonstrated that the element satisfies the Convention’s definition of intangible cultural heritage.

(250 to 500 words)

The Meshrep is an organized folkloric event that follows certain procedures and is often held in a spacious outdoor venue on seasonal and traditional holidays, or according to the needs of the people’s life and work.

The event is normally attended by hundreds of people and all of them participate in the activities.

Being a cultural space for the practice of Uygur people’s traditions, Meshrep has already become a part of their culture and folk customs.

It provides the Uygur people with abundant knowledge about their traditions and sustains their cultural identity.

Hence, it is considered one of the most important cultural heritages of the Uygur nation.

To rescue and safeguard Meshrep not only meets the demands for mutual respect among communities, groups and individuals, but it also answers to the need for improving its viability and achieving its sustainable development.

<p>Criterion U.2 The element is in urgent need of safeguarding because its viability is at risk despite the efforts of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals and State(s) Party(ies) concerned.</p>	
<p><i>Excerpts from the nomination form</i></p>	
<p><i>Viability assessment</i> (Not to exceed 500 words)</p> <p><i>Describe the current level of viability of the element, particularly the frequency and extent of its practice, the strength of traditional modes of transmission, the demographics of practitioners and audiences and its sustainability.</i></p> <p><i>Threat and risk assessment</i> (Not to exceed 500 words)</p> <p><i>This section should identify and describe the threats to the element's continued transmission and enactment and describe the severity and immediacy of those threats.</i></p>	
<p>Nomination demonstrates that the element satisfies Criterion U.2:</p>	<p>Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p>No <input type="checkbox"/></p>
<p>Examiner's comments regarding whether the nomination demonstrates that the element is in urgent need of safeguarding</p> <p>The examiner should address whether the submitting State has adequately demonstrated that the element's viability is at risk, that the community, group or, if applicable, individuals and State(s) Party(ies) concerned have made efforts to ensure its viability, and that it is consequently in urgent need of safeguarding.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(250 to 500 words)</i></p>	
<p>A standard Meshrep is spontaneously organized by the people according to customs and traditional principles.</p> <p>The format of a performance is decided on the basis of the specific purpose intended.</p> <p>Usually, after meticulous preparation, the people from a village or a community belonging to this ethnic group (the number may vary, from dozen to hundreds people), invite each other or announce the event in which villagers freely take part.</p> <p>Considering these spontaneous and improvisatory characteristics of Meshrep, to inscribe this nominated element could transform these performing arts into a set and artificial form of arts, which is very different from its essence.</p> <p>We will need to observe this in its natural form of performance for certain years to come.</p>	
<p>Examiner's assessment of the viability of the element</p> <p>The examiner should address whether the submitting State's assessment of the element's viability is accurate, realistic and complete.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(150 to 300 words)</i></p>	
<p>The younger generation is influenced by modern and foreign cultures.</p> <p>They do not have sufficient understanding of the traditional form, the cultural significance and the social function of this heritage.</p> <p>They lack interest and seldom take part in it.</p>	

As a result, the vitality of this tradition is greatly diminished.

Meshrep's outstanding hosts and folk artists do not find transmitters since young people are more attracted to the latest fashions and progressively distancing themselves from tradition.

As a result, the chain of transmission is facing the great risk of being broken.

Therefore, Meshrep is gradually losing its traditional appearance and social functions.

The vitality of this heritage is weakening and its survival and sustainability are now under serious threat.

Examiner's assessment of the risk of the element's disappearing, due, inter alia, to the lack of means for safeguarding and protecting it, or to processes of globalization and social or environmental transformation

The examiner should address whether the submitting State's assessment of the risk of the element's disappearing is accurate, realistic and complete.

(150 to 300 words)

Chinese government has made great efforts to bring the transmitters and the people to Meshrep.

It also took the urgent measures.

Thanks to this, people tend to be active in participation.

Especially education of younger generation in many ways will be very helpful for them to understand the tradition of their own and find their identity in it.

If it is continued, this heritage could be sustained thrive in the future.

However, intervening too much into this form of arts by inscribing the nominated element as an intangible cultural heritage could make the situation worse.

Criterion U.3 Safeguarding measures are elaborated that may enable the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned to continue the practice and transmission of the element.

Excerpts from the nomination form

Safeguarding measures

Items 4.a. to 4.c. request the elaboration of a coherent set of safeguarding measures as called for in Criterion U.3. The safeguarding measures, if effectively implemented, should be expected to contribute substantially to the safeguarding of the element within a time-frame of approximately four years. They should include measures aimed at ensuring the viability of the element by enabling the community to continue its practice and transmission.

4.a. Current and recent efforts to safeguard the element (not to exceed 500 words)

Describe the current and recent efforts of the concerned community, group or, if applicable individuals to ensure the viability of the element. Describe efforts of the concerned State(s) Party(ies) to safeguard the element, taking note of external or internal constraints such as limited resources.

4.b. Safeguarding measures proposed (not to exceed 2,000 words)

This section should identify and describe a coherent set of safeguarding measures that, within a time-frame of approximately four years, could substantially enhance the viability of the element, if implemented, and provide detailed information as follows:

- a) *What primary objective(s) will be addressed and what concrete results will be*

expected?

- b) *What are the key activities to be carried out in order to achieve these expected results? Please describe the activities in detail and in their best sequence, addressing their feasibility.*
- c) *Management and implementation: describe the mechanisms for the full participation of communities, groups or, if appropriate, individuals in the proposed safeguarding measures. Describe the implementing organization or body (name, background, etc.) and the human resources available for implementing the project.*
- d) *Timetable and budget: provide a timetable for the proposed activities and estimate the funds required for their implementation, identifying any available resources (governmental sources, in-kind community inputs, etc.).*

4.c. Commitments of States and of communities, groups or individuals concerned
(not to exceed 500 words)

The feasibility of safeguarding depends in large part on the aspirations and commitment of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and the support and cooperation of the State Party concerned. This section should demonstrate that the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned have the will and commitment to safeguard the element if conditions are favourable and that the State Party concerned has the commitment to support the safeguarding effort by creating favourable conditions for its implementation.

Nomination demonstrates that the element satisfies Criterion U.3:

Yes

No

Examiner's assessment of the feasibility and sufficiency of the safeguarding plan

The examiner should address whether the submitting State has elaborated a coherent set of safeguarding measures that can reasonably be expected to strengthen the viability of the element within the coming four years, and assess whether they reflect the priorities and aspirations of the communities concerned, whether the measures are feasible, and whether the communities and States are adequately committed to their implementation.

(250 to 500 words)

The nomination files show that Xinjiang Culture Department with the relevant non-governmental organizations established the Meshrep Rescue Team. They took the measures such as the nomination of three different types of Meshrep for inscription on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage from 2006 to 2007; They made audio and visual recordings of 31 Meshrep with different cultural connotation from 2007 to 2008. In 2008, the Xinjiang Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding Research Centre had Meshrep selected as one of China's national research projects.

Some institutes of higher learning in Xinjiang have listed Meshrep among their research subjects. Xinjiang TV and other media also increased publicity on Meshrep.

According to this file, it made a lot of efforts. But the measures such as videotaping seem rather temporary, because it seems that the Xinjiang Culture Department didn't do much for the improvement of the environment of the performance for the transmitters. It seems that it lacks a systematic support such as improving rights of the transmitters and supporting them with tuition fee and scholarship for young generation, which is an ultimate and sustainable measure for safeguarding it.

Although the file does not succeed in demonstrating the feasibility and sufficiency of the safeguarding measures, I would like to judge the criterion positively as the measures are described in a detailed manner and show the effort of the Chinese authorities to safeguard Meshrep.

Criterion U.4	The element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned and with their free, prior and informed consent.
Excerpts from the nomination form	
<p>a. Participation of communities, groups and individuals</p> <p><i>Describe how the community, group and, if applicable, individuals concerned have participated in the nomination process at all stages, as required by Criterion R.4. States Parties are further encouraged to prepare nominations with the participation of a wide variety of other concerned parties, including where appropriate local and regional governments, neighbouring communities, NGOs, research institutes, centres of expertise and other interested parties.</i></p> <p>b. Free, prior and informed consent</p> <p><i>The free, prior and informed consent of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned may be demonstrated through written or recorded concurrence, or through other means, according to the legal regimens of the State Party and the infinite variety of communities and groups concerned. The Committee will welcome a broad range of demonstrations or attestations of community consent rather than specifying any single standard.</i></p> <p>c. Respect for customary practices governing access</p> <p><i>Demonstrate that inscription and implementation of the safeguarding measures fully respects customary practices governing access to specific aspects of such heritage, if such practices exist (cf. Article 13). Describe any specific measures that might need to be taken to ensure such respect.</i></p>	
<p>Nomination demonstrates that the element satisfies Criterion U.4:</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/></p> <p style="text-align: right;">No <input type="checkbox"/></p>	
<p>Examiner's assessment of the participation of the community, group or, if applicable, individuals concerned</p> <p>The examiner should assess whether the community, group or individuals concerned have participated fully in the nomination process at all stages and whether the nomination reflects their participation.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><i>(150 to 300 words)</i></p>	
<p>The people of the concerned communities of Xinjiang (such as Kashgar District, Aksu District, Hami District, Yili Prefecture etc.) and Xinjiang Intangible Cultural Heritage Safeguarding and Research Centre request that the application for the nomination of Meshrep in the Urgent Safeguarding List be presented.</p> <p>They also have taken active part in the work of the application.</p> <p>Nine main experts and scholars such as Zhang Zhentao took part in the workshops. They have unanimously declared that nomination of Meshrep on the Urgent Safeguarding List is their common wish.</p> <p>Thus, work on this application has received their strong support and active participation.</p> <p>In all, I think that the element has been nominated following the widest possible participation of the community.</p>	

Examiner’s comments on their free, prior and informed consent

The examiner should assess whether the submitting State has provided satisfactory evidence of the free, prior and informed consent of the community, group or individuals concerned.

(150 to 300 words)

According to the file, work towards the nomination of this element must have been carried out with support and spontaneous approval of groups and representative transmitters from the Uygur communities of Xinjiang who have been previously informed.

Also, they have unanimously declared that nomination of Meshrep on the Urgent Safeguarding List is their common wish.

Therefore, I guess that the consent was freely made and the work on the application has received their strong support and active participation.

Examiner’s comments on respect for customary practices governing access to the element, if applicable

The examiner should comment on whether the submitting State has adequately addressed the question of any customary practices that might govern access to the element.

(not to exceed 300 words)

According to the file, they must have shown respect for the following customary practices when accessing the element: (1) in the course of practice, obeying the directions of the Meshrep host, not violating the traditional rules and procedures of Meshrep; (2) the parties will take turns according to certain rules in hosting the Meshrep, and the hosting party is to provide food to the participants, who in their turn will offer their help either materially or physically; (3) the participants are to clean themselves in the Muslim way before Meshrep and be properly dressed.

Criterion U.5 The element is included in an inventory of the intangible cultural heritage present in the territory(ies) of the submitting State(s) Party(ies) as defined in Articles 11 and 12.

Excerpts from the nomination form

The submitting State should identify the inventory in which the element has been included and the office, agency, organization or body responsible for maintaining that inventory. The description also should demonstrate that the inventory has been drawn up in conformity with Articles 11 and 12, in particular Article 11(b) that stipulates that intangible cultural heritage shall be identified and defined ‘with the participation of communities, groups, and relevant non-governmental organizations’ and Article 12 requiring that inventories be regularly updated.

The nominated element’s inclusion in an inventory should not in any way imply or require that the inventory(ies) should have been completed prior to nomination. Rather, a submitting State Party may be in the process of completing or updating one or more inventories, but has already duly included the nominated element on an inventory-in-progress.

Nomination demonstrates that the element satisfies Criterion U.5:

Yes

No

Examiner’s comments on the nomination’s conformity with Criterion U.5

The examiner should comment on whether the submitting State has adequately demonstrated that the element is included within an inventory, and has shown that the inventory was drawn up in conformity with the Convention, especially Article 11(b) requiring the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organizations.

(100 to 200 words)

I received a document of ‘Explanations on the Revisions and Supplements of the Nomination Files for Meshrep’ which the responsible person in charge at the State Party as of April 21, 2010. And I made an affirmative final decision by taking notice of the following statement of the document in particular, which reads: ‘. . . enhancing the measures to safeguard the transmitters, making the responsibilities of the Government at various levels more definitive, and also increasing relevant budget and made more statement on the expected effect of the measures taken.’ Although the document was not sufficient and had some problems, I would nevertheless like to judge the criterion as positive in recognition of their efforts for the Meshrep.

OVERALL RECOMMENDATION

The examination report shall include ‘a recommendation to the Committee to inscribe, or not to inscribe, the nominated element’.

Recommend to inscribe:

Recommend not to inscribe:

Examiner’s comments on the overall recommendation

To be inscribed on the Urgent Safeguarding List, an element must satisfy all of the criteria. If the examiner concludes that any criterion is not satisfied, the overall recommendation cannot be to inscribe the element. The examiner may wish to offer further explanation of any such negative conclusions, or may wish to suggest to the Committee certain conditions it might consider attaching to a favourable decision to inscribe the element.

(150 to 300 words)

I learned through my study that a great number of Uyghur people still have been practicing Meshrep in Almaty, Khazakhstan. I think it is reasonable and desirable to designate jointly and research in cooperation such cultural heritage as various regions keep in common.

I received a document of ‘Explanations on the Revisions and Supplements of the Nomination Files for Meshrep’ which the responsible person in charge at the State Party as of April 21, 2010. And I made an affirmative final decision.