

For discussion on
27 February 2017

Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs

**Proposed Intangible Cultural Heritage
Representative List for Hong Kong**

Purpose

This paper reports on the progress in drawing up the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Representative List of Hong Kong (the Representative List) and advises Members on the proposed items to be included in the first Representative List.

Background

Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage

2. According to the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (the Convention) adopted by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2003, ICH is defined 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 recognise as part of their cultural heritage. To qualify as ICH, the item must be 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, and provides them with a sense of identity and continuity, thus promoting respect for cultural diversity and human creativity. ICH can be manifested in the following five domains:

- (a) oral traditions and expressions, including language as a vehicle of the ICH;
- (b) performing arts;
- (c) social practices, rituals and festive events;
- (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and

- (e) traditional craftsmanship.

Intangible Cultural Heritage Inventory of Hong Kong

3. According to the Convention, each Party has to identify and define the various elements of ICH present in its territory, with the participation of communities, groups and relevant non-governmental organisations to draw up ICH inventories as the basis for the safeguarding of ICH. After the Convention came into effect in 2006, the Government planned to conduct a territory-wide survey on ICH to collect research data for drawing up the first ICH inventory of Hong Kong. In 2008, the Government set up the Intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee (ICHAC) to steer the conduct of the territory-wide survey and advise the Government on matters relating to the safeguarding of ICH. Membership and terms of reference of the ICHAC are at **Annex A**.

4. In 2009, the Government commissioned the South China Research Center of the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology (SCRC) to conduct the territory-wide survey of ICH in Hong Kong. The SCRC completed the final draft survey report in early 2013 and submitted a draft inventory of about 480 items to the ICHAC in March the same year.

5. After thorough examination of research information of the draft inventory by the ICHAC and the completion of a four-month public consultation, the Home Affairs Bureau and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) briefed the Legislative Council Panel on Home Affairs on 17 June 2014 on the first ICH inventory of Hong Kong which covered 480 items¹. Members were informed of the follow-up actions to be taken after the promulgation of the first ICH inventory, including setting up a working group under the ICHAC. According to the selection criteria and assessment methods endorsed by the ICHAC, the working group would select items of high cultural value and with an urgent need for preservation from the inventory for more in-depth studies, where the selected items would form a basis for drawing up the first ICH Representative List of Hong Kong (vide LC Paper No. CB(2)1719/13-14(04)).

¹ The distribution of the 480 items included in the first ICH inventory of Hong Kong under the five domains of the Convention is as follows: (a) oral traditions and expressions: 21 items; (b) performing arts: 34 items; (c) social practices, rituals and festive events: 292 items; (d) knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe: 6 items; and (e) traditional craftsmanship: 127 items.

Setting up of a Dedicated Office and the Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre

6. The 2015 Policy Address announced that the Government would enhance the safeguarding measures of ICH and strengthen such work as identification, documentation, research, preservation, promotion and transmission of the heritage. In May 2015, the LCSD upgraded the Intangible Cultural Heritage Unit originally under the Hong Kong Heritage Museum to an Intangible Cultural Heritage Office (ICHO) to heighten various endeavours on safeguarding ICH. The ICHO further made use of the Sam Tung Uk Museum in Tsuen Wan to house the Hong Kong Intangible Cultural Heritage Centre (IHC) upon its establishment in June 2016. As an exhibition and education centre, the IHC would enhance the public understanding and awareness of ICH through diversified educational and promotional activities including exhibitions, talks, seminars, bearer demonstrations, workshops and fun days, etc. Major activities held since the setting up of IHC include “The Oral Legacies – Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong” Exhibition introducing the ten local items on the national list of ICH, “The Art of Traditional Paper Crafting” Exhibition, the fun days of “ICH Fun@Sam Tung Uk” and “ICH Fun@Summer Time”, and the “ICH@New Year” event to tie in with the launching of public consultation on the recommended items to be inscribed onto the Representative List, etc.

Proposed Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong

7. In addition to the above safeguarding work, the Government also plans to draw up the first Representative List of local ICH based on the first ICH inventory. The Representative List will provide the Government with a basis for prioritising resources and safeguarding measures for ICH items, especially those of high cultural value and with an urgent need for preservation.

8. The first Representative List aims to select items of comparatively high historical, literary, artistic, scientific and technological values from the 480 items on the ICH inventory. When devising the assessment criteria, the actual status of transmission of these items in Hong Kong is a key factor for consideration. After making reference to the criteria devised by overseas countries and nearby regions as well as the SCRC’s report on the territory-wide survey, the ICHAC

deliberated on and endorsed the selection criteria of the Representative List as follows:

- (a) the item has been inscribed onto the ICH inventory of Hong Kong;
- (b) the item embodies local traditional culture and carries significant historical, literary, artistic, scientific, technological or arts and crafts values;
- (c) the item is transmitted from generation to generation and has a dynamic and living nature;
- (d) the item possesses the distinct traits of an ethnic group or a region, or manifests the characteristics of the local living culture as a typical example of that culture; and
- (e) the item exerts significant influence on the community, reinforces community ties and provides communities or groups with a sense of identity and continuity.

The ICHAC also agreed that the ten local items² already inscribed onto the national list of ICH on a higher threshold, viz. Cantonese opera, herbal tea, the Cheung Chau *Jiao* Festival, the Tai O dragon boat water parade, the Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow community, the Tai Hang fire dragon dance, the arts of the *Guqin* (the craft of *qin* making), *Quanzhen* temples Taoist ritual music, the Hakka unicorn dance in Hang Hau, Sai Kung and Wong Tai Sin belief and customs, would be automatically included in the Representative List.

9. It is proposed that in addition to the above ten national items, another ten items should be selected from the 480 items on the ICH inventory for inclusion in the first Representative List. In other words, the first Representative List will be made up of a total of 20 items.

10. Seven meetings were held by the working group under the ICHAC in 2016. Thorough examination and overall assessment were conducted on individual items on the inventory based on the criteria set

² At the invitation of the Ministry of Culture, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government submitted applications on three occasions and ten local ICH items of high cultural values had been successfully inscribed onto the national list of ICH. Among these items, Cantonese opera was inscribed onto the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2009, making it a world ICH item.

out in paragraph 8 above to determine whether they should be included in the Representative List. After deliberation, the ICHAC resolved to recommend the following ten items:

ICH Domain	Item
Performing Arts	(1) <i>Nanyin</i> (Southern Tunes)
Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events	(2) Spring and Autumn Ancestral Worship of Clans (3) Tin Hau Festival (or Birthday of the Goddess of Heaven) in Hong Kong (4) Mid-Autumn Festival - The Pokfulam Fire Dragon Dance (5) The Taoist Tradition of the <i>Zhengyi</i> (Orthodox Unity) School (6) <i>Sek Pun</i> (Basin Feast)
Traditional Craftsmanship	(7) Hong Kong-style Milk Tea Making Technique (8) Paper Crafting Technique (9) The Sewing Techniques of Hong Kong-style <i>Cheongsam</i> and <i>Kwan Kwa</i> Wedding Costume (10) Bamboo Shed Theatre Building Technique

Brief description of the ten items above and the proposed items for the first Representative List are at **Annexes B** and **C** respectively.

Public Consultation

11. LCSD is now gauging public views on the ten items recommended by the ICHAC for inclusion in the Representative List. A media briefing was held by the ICHO at the ICHC on 12 February 2017 to announce the launching of a three-month public consultation. Bearers of ICH items including *nanyin* (southern tunes), Hong Kong-style milk tea making technique, paper crafting technique and bamboo shed theatre building technique were invited by the ICHO to give demonstrations on the same day to let the public understand the heritage value of the items on the proposed Representative List. The Government is now collecting public views through various channels including issuing press releases, distributing leaflets and comment forms. The contents of the proposed list and comment form are also uploaded to the ICHO's website to facilitate the submission of views or further information on individual

proposed items by the public. The consultation will end on 11 May 2017.

12. The Government would collate the public views and submit them to the ICHAC for discussion upon the conclusion of the consultation with a view to promulgating the first Representative List in mid-2017.

The Way Forward

13. Upon promulgation of the first Representative List, the LCSD will closely liaise and collaborate with the respective organisations and bearers to step up efforts on the education, promotion, transmission and safeguarding of items on the Representative List through exhibitions, talks, seminars, bearer demonstrations, workshops, in-depth research and publications to enhance the public awareness and understanding of these ICH items.

14. Separately, to respond to future invitations from the Ministry of Culture for application for inscription onto the national list of ICH, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government could select suitable items on the Representative List of ICH after consultation with the ICHAC.

15. Based on the experience on drawing up the first Representative List and the results of public consultation, the Government will embark on the selection exercise in 2018 for inscribing the second batch of ICH items onto the Representative List. In the meantime, the ICHO will also update the ICH inventory when appropriate.

Advice sought

16. Members are invited to note the above progress in drawing up the Representative List and the related safeguarding work.

Home Affairs Bureau
Leisure and Cultural Services Department
February 2017

**Membership of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Advisory Committee
2017-2018**

Chairman:	Professor Cheng Pei-kai, MH
Members:	Dr Dominic Chan Choi-hi, MH Professor Sidney Cheung Chin-hung Dr Stephen Cheung Kwok-hung Professor Chiu Yu-lok Professor Choi Chi-cheung Professor Chu Hung-lam Mr Berry Chu Kim-hung Ms Fanny Iu Kai-fan Mr Ronald Kan Yu-him Professor Lai Chi-tim Professor Lau Chor-wah Ms Lee Mei-yin Professor Liu Tik-sang Professor Joshua Mok Ka-ho Mr Thomas Pang Cheung-wai, SBS, B of H, JP Professor Poon Shuk-wah Professor Henri Yeung Wing-on Representative of the Home Affairs Bureau Representative of the Leisure and Cultural Services Department
Secretary:	Head, Intangible Cultural Heritage Office, Leisure and Cultural Services Department

Terms of reference:

1. To advise on the compilation and, where necessary, updating of the inventory of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in Hong Kong
2. To advise the Government on the selection and nomination of Hong Kong's ICH items for application for inscription onto the national list or the UNESCO's list;
3. To advise on the measures for the safeguarding of ICH including research on and promotion, enhancement, transmission and revitalisation of ICH; and
4. To advise on any other issues related to ICH as proposed by the Government.

Brief Description of the Ten Recommended Items for Inclusion in the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong

(1) Nanyin (Southern Tunes)

Nanyin or “southern tunes” is a narrative song art presented in the Cantonese vernacular. Together with *yue’ou* (“Cantonese vernacular singing”), *longzhou* (“dragon boat shaped woodblock”), *myyu* (“fish-shaped woodblock”) and *banyan* (“percussive beat patterns”), they form the vernacular ballad system of Guangdong popular in the Pearl River Delta region.

Nanyin grew in popularity in Hong Kong during the early 20th century. It was mostly performed by blind artists who performed narrative singing accompanied on the *zheng*, the *yehu*, and with the clapper for the beat. The lyrics often told the demise of the lowest stratum of society at the time.



Today, *nanyin* is blended into Cantonese opera and tunes as part of their singing features.

In the olden days, the ballad singing genre of *dishui nanyin* was mostly performed by blind artists (male blind artists are called *gushi* while female blind artists are called *guji* or *shiniang*). Pictured here is To Woon (1910-1979), a representative *gushi* of the *dishui nanyin* genre in Hong Kong. Photo courtesy of the Department of Music, The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

(2) Spring and Autumn Ancestral Worship of Clans

Clans in the New Territories consider the ancestral worship ceremony an important clan and village activity. At every vernal and (or) autumnal equinox, or during the fourth and the ninth lunar months, members of the clan will gather together either to hold an ancestral worship ceremony at the ancestral hall, or visit their ancestors’ graves up on the hills to observe filial piety and pay tribute to their ancestors.

Spring and autumn ancestral worship of clans has been practised in the New Territories for centuries. Today some local clans still follow the practices of “eating on the hillside” (to cook and eat the food after the offering ceremony at the graves), distributing sections of pork to clan members and speaking in the “walled village dialects” during the rituals.



This tradition of bi-annual ancestral worship has important social functions and meanings, as it maintains a bond within the clan and offers the younger members of the clan the opportunity to reaffirm their lineage.

Members of the Tang clan in the New Territories at the ancestral cemetery grounds performing autumn sacrificial rituals of prayer and libation.

(3) Tin Hau Festival (or Birthday of the Goddess of Heaven) in Hong Kong

Tin Hau temples all over Hong Kong are main venues of worship for followers of the deity, Tin Hau (Goddess of Heaven). This has been a practice since 18th century mid-Qing, which serves to bond villagers and the fishing communities through communal worship. Every year, on the 23rd day of the third lunar month – or on a date determined by the community – people would celebrate the birthday of the Goddess with a diverse programme of activities. The neighbourhood organising



Paper floral tribute associations celebrate the Tin Hau Festival at High Island in Sai Kung with paper floral tributes and lion dance.

committees would organise Cantonese opera performances as an act of thanksgiving to the Goddess, and exchange the *fa pau* (paper floral tributes). Some may also hold parades on land or at sea.

(4) Mid-Autumn Festival - The Pokfulam Fire Dragon Dance

Every Mid-Autumn Festival (on the 15th day of the eighth lunar month), the residents of Pokfulam Village would hold a fire dragon dance. Dozens of athletic men would wield the fire dragon with agility as they parade through the streets and lanes in the village to invoke blessings for well-being and peace. The parade would end at Waterfall Bay, where the fire dragon would be sent into the water in a ritual known as “the dragon returning to the sea”. The entire process, which consists of crafting and modelling of the dragon, consecration, conducting the



dragon dance and sending the fire dragon to the sea, involves active participation of residents of the neighbourhood. So it is a highly bonding activity for the local community.

Led by the fiery “dragon’s pearls”, athletic players of the fire dragon dance in animation.

(5) The Taoist Tradition of the *Zhengyi* (Orthodox Unity) School

Taoist doctrines and rituals in Hong Kong are by and large conducted by two schools, namely the *Zhengyi* (Orthodox Unity) and the *Quanzhen* (Complete Perfection). The *Zhengyi* school is subdivided into two systems, that of the New Territories and that of the urban areas. The chanting and ritualistic routines of the *Zhengyi* school are perpetuated by Taoist priests commonly called “*nahm mouh*” masters.

The “*nahm mouh*” tradition of the New Territories can be traced back to the Dongguan and Xin’an regions of Guangdong during the Ming and Qing periods. In Hong Kong, these masters are active among the walled village communities, conducting rituals and almsgiving services for the villagers on birthdays of the deities, the *jiao* festivals, *kaiguang* (rituals for dedication, consecration and sanctification) and for salvation of the souls of the departed from purgatory.

As for the “*nahm mouh*” masters in the urban areas, they follow the Taoist tradition of the Taoist altar halls of Canton during the Republican Period of China in the early 20th century. The rituals are categorised into two types, “blue altar”



and “yellow altar”. The former is for celebrating auspicious occasions, while the latter is for funerals and burials. Today, these masters mainly work in funeral homes, being hired to perform rites for the repose of the dead.

Taoist priests of the *Zhengyi* school invoking deities to attend the festivities in a ceremony called “presenting the third petition” during the *Jiao* Festival of Fanling Wai, North District.

(6) *Sek Pun* (Basin Feast)

The basin feast tradition has been around for hundreds of years in the villages of the New Territories. The villagers would hold basin feasts or *sek pun* for occasions such as religious offerings, *jiao* rituals, weddings, the “lantern lighting” ritual to mark the birth of a baby boy and the inauguration of the ancestral hall. As a symbol of unity, clansmen will gather together at the table to eat at a basin feast.



Basin feast is part of a unique food culture preserved by villages in the New Territories. In addition to the bonding and reinforcement of lineage, it also serves the social function of recognising the status of members of the clans.

A happy mass gathering at a basin feast at Fanling Wai to celebrate the Chinese New Year.

(7) Hong Kong-style Milk Tea Making Technique

The Hong Kong-style milk tea is also known as “silk stocking milk tea”. The tea-making process involves setting the ration of different kinds of tea leaves, boiling and infusing the tea, force-pouring the tea, infusion and force-pouring the milk. The resulting beverage is a firm favourite among the Hong Kong locals.

When the British brought their tea-drinking habit to Hong Kong more than a hundred years ago, the locals soon learned to create a “localised” version of tea-with-milk, from ingredients, tea ware and utensils, to preparation process, that catered to the down-to-earth taste.



Their version of milk tea making reflected the East-West fusion trends of Hong Kong as well as the lifestyle and food culture of the local people.

Ingredients and utensils for making “Hong Kong-style milk tea” include assorted tea leaves, evaporated milk, aluminium kettle, tea strainer and hot plate.

(8) Paper Crafting Technique

Paper crafting is a kind of Chinese folk handicraft with a long history which plays an important role in the traditional culture of Hong Kong. It embodies the history and culture of different ethnic groups and carries significant social and cultural values. Craftsmen in their capable hands can, with just superb crafting techniques and fine painting skills, turn simple materials such as bamboo splints, rice paper strips, coloured papers, silk fabrics, etc. into all kinds of crafted products.

Today, Hong Kong still retains the tradition of using crafted paper models for festive celebrations and rituals, such as thanksgiving, decoration or performance, or as funerary offerings to ancestors and the recently deceased. The crafted products include *fa pau* (paper floral tributes), effigies of the Ghost King, lanterns,



dragons, lions and unicorns for ritual dance, and paper offerings.

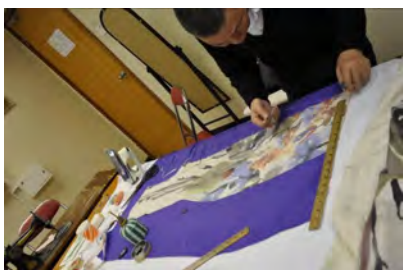
Main materials for traditional paper crafting include bamboo splints, rice paper strips, silk fabrics and glue. Craftsmen bind bamboo splints with rice paper strips and secure them with glue. The bamboo splints are then tied up one by one to form a frame.

(9) The Sewing Techniques of Hong Kong-style *Cheongsam* and *Kwan Kwa* Wedding Costume

This item covers the *cheongsam* (as men's and women's wear), and the *kwan kwa*, the embroidered wedding costume which consists of a top and a skirt.

The prototype of *cheongsam* first gained popularity in Shanghai during the 1920s, and the trend was soon caught up in Hong Kong. There was a huge influx of tailors from Shanghai and Guangdong to Hong Kong after the Second World War. They started their business here, taught apprentices the sewing techniques, continued to improve their skills and blended Western design concepts with the traditional form. Their ongoing efforts paid off, and slowly *cheongsam* with a distinctly local style emerged.

The custom for the bride to wear *kwan kwa* as a gown on her wedding day first emerged as a trend in the 1930s, and reached its height of popularity during the



1960s and 1970s. *Kwan kwa*, mostly decorated with dragons and phoenixes, is handmade traditionally, and its value commensurate with the embroidery patterns and their density on the fabric.

A *cheongsam* tailor is cutting the fabric.

(10) Bamboo Theatre Building Technique

During the birthdays of deities, the *Jiao* Festival or the Yu Lan Festival, various communities and neighbourhoods of Hong Kong would have a temporary bamboo structure erected at the venue, for the purposes of staging Chinese opera performances as thanksgiving to the deities and for rituals.

The makeshift structure is made up of bamboo poles and fir beams, erected as standards and ledgers to form frameworks. Covered with metal sheets, the gigantic “tent” can keep out the sun and the rain. It is adaptable to the land formation, size of the venue ground, and the number of spectators it is expected to seat. It can be as small as to accommodate only a hundred or more, or big enough for thousands. The makeshift bamboo theatre is exemplary of the age-old wisdom of Chinese architecture.

The technique has existed in the New Territories for hundreds of years. It is a legacy well preserved in Hong Kong and is therefore a cultural heritage of high value.



Bamboo theatre erected for the *Jiao* Festival of Kam Tin in 2015, with floral decorative panels in the exterior.

**Proposed Items for the First Representative List of the
Intangible Cultural Heritage of Hong Kong**

Item No.	ICH Domain	Item
1	Performing Arts (4 items in total)	Cantonese Opera *^
2		Hakka Unicorn Dance in Hang Hau, Sai Kung *
3		<i>Quanzhen</i> Temples Taoist Ritual Music *
4		<i>Nanyin</i> (Southern Tunes)
5	Social Practices, Rituals and Festive Events (10 items in total)	Cheung Chau <i>Jiao</i> Festival *
6		Tai O Dragon Boat Water Parade *
7		Yu Lan Ghost Festival of the Hong Kong Chiu Chow Community *
8		Mid-Autumn Festival – The Tai Hang Fire Dragon Dance *
9		Wong Tai Sin Belief and Customs *
10		Spring and Autumn Ancestral Worship of Clans
11		Tin Hau Festival (or Birthday of the Goddess of Heaven) in Hong Kong
12		Mid-Autumn Festival – The Pokfulam Fire Dragon Dance
13		The Taoist Tradition of the <i>Zhengyi</i> (Orthodox Unity) School
14		<i>Sek Pun</i> (Basin Feast)
15	Knowledge and Practices Concerning Nature and the Universe (1 item)	Herbal Tea *

Item No.	ICH Domain	Item
16	Traditional Craftsmanship (5 items in total)	The Arts of the <i>Guzin</i> (The Craft of <i>Qin</i> Making)*
17		Hong Kong-style Milk Tea Making Technique
18		Paper Crafting Technique
19		The Sewing Techniques of Hong Kong-style <i>Cheongsam</i> and <i>Kwan Kwa</i> Wedding Costume
20		Bamboo Theatre Building Technique

* The ten local items already inscribed onto the national list of ICH would automatically be included in the Representative List of Hong Kong.

^ Cantonese opera was inscribed onto the UNESCO's Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, making it a world ICH item.