HAWKER CULTURE IN SINGAPORE

Community Dining and Culinary Practices in a Multicultural Urban Context

Nomination for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

KOPI-O GAO

HAWKER CULTURE IN SINGAPORE

Community Dining and Culinary Practices in a Multicultural Urban Context

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新加坡小贩文化

多元文化城市环境中的社区餐饮与烹饪习俗

——

BUDAYA PENJAJA DI SINGAPURA

Amalan Menjamu Selera Masyarakat dan Masak-memasak dalam Konteks sebuah Bandar Berbilang Budaya

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சிங்கப்பூரில் உணவங்காடி கலாசாரம்

பல கலாசார நகர்ப்புறச் சூழலில் ஒன்றுகூடி உணவருந்தலும் சமையல் பழக்கவழக்கங்களும்

TEH SIU-DAI

KOPI-O GAO

DABAO!

KOPI-O

In August 2018, Singapore announced its intention to nominate Hawker Culture in Singapore for the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. Since then, various communities, groups and individuals have contributed and participated in the preparation of the nomination.

In March 2019, Singapore submitted the nomination documents to inscribe "**Hawker Culture in Singapore: Community Dining and Culinary Practices in a Multicultural Urban Context**" on the UNESCO Representative List. The title was chosen as it represents the following characteristics of Hawker Culture in Singapore:

- Hawker centres as **community dining** spaces for everyone
- Mastery of skills by hawkers, who are the bearers of **hawker culinary practices**
- A reflection of Singapore's **multicultural society**
- A thriving culture in an **urban environment**

This document summarises the nomination form that was submitted to UNESCO in March 2019.

1

What is Hawker Culture?

Hawker Culture is an integral part of everyday life in Singapore, involving hawkers who prepare hawker food and people who dine and mingle at hawker centres. It is about people, place and food.

Hawkers play an important role in sustaining our Hawker Culture. They hold specialised culinary practices passed down over generations.

Hawker Culture reflects a living heritage through the food that represents the many cultures and ethnic groups in Singapore.

Serving as community dining rooms, hawker centres are where people from diverse age groups, genders, ethnicities and religions gather and interact over breakfast, lunch and dinner.

What are the social functions and cultural meanings of Hawker Culture?

It provides a sense of identity and continuity for people in Singapore.

It evokes familiar memories and reminds overseas Singaporeans of home.

It embraces people from all backgrounds, maintains community interactions and fosters inclusivity.

It provides affordable meals to people of different ethnicities, social strata, religions and cultures, while offering a livelihood for hawkers.

Who are the communities, groups and individuals involved?

Hawkers, associated groups and the people who dine and mingle at hawker centres are involved in the practice and safeguarding of Hawker Culture:

A Approximately 6,000 hawkers

B Hawkers' associations
Represents hawkers at respective hawker centres

C Federation of Merchants' Associations, Singapore (FMAS)
Non-profit organisation, working in cooperation with hawkers' associations and representatives to champion the interests of hawkers and safeguard Hawker Culture

D Community organisations, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), educational institutions, private and public sectors

E Population in Singapore

2

Visibility, Awareness and Dialogue

How will the nomination increase visibility and awareness of Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH)?

At the **local** level

- Inspire local communities to discover and appreciate the ICH practices surrounding their daily lives

At the **national** level

- Increase the understanding of ICH as a living and dynamic form of heritage

- Broaden understanding of heritage beyond tangible forms (e.g. historic sites and museum artefacts)

At the **international** level

- Encourage dialogue with other countries in the area of ICH and facilitate international networking and cooperation

- Demonstrate how ICH contributes to sustainable development, including enhancing social cohesion, fostering food security and sustaining livelihoods

The inscription can also encourage intercultural and intergenerational dialogue between communities, inspire culinary creativity and increase respect for cultural diversity.

3

Safeguarding Hawker Culture

What are the safeguarding measures to protect and promote this element?

Communities, Groups and Individuals

Transmission

- **Hawkers**
  pass on culinary practices to family members or apprentices, and lead apprenticeship programmes

- **Culinary and training institutions (e.g. Institute of Technical Education)**
  organise programmes for students to learn about operating hawker stalls and encourage aspiring hawkers to join the practice
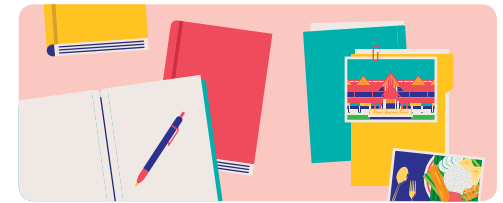
Research and Documentation

- **Local food advocates and community organisations**
  produce publications, editorials and videos to document Hawker Culture

- **Academia and experts**
  document and research on Hawker Culture

Protection

- **FMAS, hawkers' associations and representatives**
  safeguard interests of hawkers and monitor issues at hawker centres

Promotion and Raising Awareness

- **NGOs (e.g. Slow Food Singapore)**
  raise awareness on food and Hawker Culture by organising workshops and programmes

National Environment Agency (NEA)

- Plan and build hawker centres to provide a clean environment for hawkers and patrons

- Develop hawkers' policies to ensure affordable food options

- Encourage new entrants to the trade through programmes such as the "Incubation Stall Programme"

- Enhance hawker centres as social spaces through the "Vibrant Hawker Centres" programme

- Engage stakeholders on issues concerning hawkers and hawker centres

鸭饭 · 鸭粥
DUCK RICE · DUCK PORRIDGE

National Heritage Board (NHB)

- Collaborate with individuals and community groups to document and raise awareness on Hawker Culture through publications, community trail booklets and exhibitions

- Feature Hawker Culture in cultural programming (e.g. Singapore Heritage Festival)

- Support community groups and universities on research and documentation through grants

Schools

- Foster appreciation of Hawker Culture through the curriculum and projects

4

Participation of Communities

How have the community groups and individuals been involved in the preparation of the nomination?

Hawkers, Hawkers' Associations and FMAS

Hawkers displaying decals about the nomination at their stalls.

Sharing session by FMAS to hawkers' associations on the nomination.

Photo credit: Liu Ying, @liuying.photos

Photo credit: Amrita Chandradas, @amritachandradas

Hawkers were part of a social movement, where many of their personal stories were featured on social media, including how their parents, mentors and friends had inspired them to join the trade. Many people also contributed photos and heartfelt messages on social media, and showed appreciation for their favourite hawkers.

Nomination Committee

The multi-sectoral committee, which includes hawker and NGO representatives, was involved in preparing the nomination effort, including discussion of safeguarding measures and advising on initiatives to encourage community participation.

Schools, Community Groups and Private Organisations

Photo Credit: First Toa Payoh Primary School

Students and teachers from Pei Chun Public School and First Toa Payoh Primary School worked on a collaborative project on Hawker Culture.

A drawing by a student from Riverside Secondary School, depicting the variety of food and common terms heard at hawker centres.

Students from St Gabriel's Primary School dressed up as hawkers to engage visitors at the "Our SG Hawker Culture" travelling exhibition at the National Museum of Singapore.

Students from Ngee Ann Polytechnic volunteering at the "Our SG Hawker Culture" travelling exhibition.

In a Snapshot

OVER

850000*

Pledges Garnered in Support of the UNESCO Nomination

*This is across the website, mobile pledging stations and travelling exhibition, as of 17 March 2019

OVER
810,000*

"Likes" and "Comments" on Social Media for #OurHawkerCulture

*This is between 17 Dec 2018 to 17 Mar 2019

OVER
200

Letters of Support from Schools, Hawkers' Associations, NGOs, Community Groups and Private Organisations

110

Hawker Centres Indicated Their Support for the Nomination

I SUPPORT

OVER

200

People Participated in Focus Group Discussions Related to the Nomination Between April 2018 to March 2019

OVER

3,500*

Photo Contributions Sharing the Public's Appreciation for #OurHawkerCulture

*As of 17 March 2019

5

Inventory of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Singapore

Inventorying Efforts

Singapore launched the ICH inventory in April 2018, which comprises various traditions, rituals, crafts and food heritage found in Singapore. Hawker Culture was identified and included into the inventory as it reflects the Singaporean way of life and our multicultural society.

6

Conclusion

We would like to thank the many Singaporeans, hawkers, non-government organisations, associations, organisations, institutions and schools that supported the nomination of Hawker Culture in Singapore since it was announced in August 2018.

The nomination documents, comprising the nomination form, photographs, a video and supporting evidence of consent by the community, groups and individuals, were submitted in March 2019 to UNESCO.

The results will be announced at the end of 2020 at the UNESCO Intergovernmental Meeting on Intangible Cultural Heritage.

A Collaborative Effort by:

National Heritage Board

National Environment Agency

新加坡全國商聯總會
THE FEDERATION OF MERCHANTS' ASSOCIATIONS, SINGAPORE

Supported by:

mccy
Ministry of Culture, Community and Youth

Ministry of the Environment and Water Resources

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