



Paris, 23 March 2021

Mr Tim CURTIS
Secretary of the 2003 Convention
for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage
Chief, Living Heritage Entity
UNESCO

Dear Mr Curtis,

With reference to your letter (Ref. No: CLT/LHE/20/0168400017) dated 29 July 2020, on the communication of the Islamic Republic of Iran regarding the nomination file "Hüsn-i Hat, Traditional Art of Islamic Calligraphy" and in conformity with established guidelines for the treatment of correspondence, I would like to share herewith a copy of the letter of reply, signed by the Vice Director General of the General Directorate of Research and Training of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Republic of Turkey.

Yours sincerely,

Altay CENGİZER
Ambassador, Permanent Delegate

Encl: 4 pages



Republic of Turkey
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Mr. Tim Curtis
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Chief,
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Ankara, 25 November 2020

Sub: Response Letter of Republic of Turkey about I.R. of Iran's Letter submitted to Secretary, Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Chief dated 28 July 2020 with Reference Number: 992500/9721 concerning nomination file no:1684, Hüsni Hat, traditional art of Islamic Calligraphy.

Dear Sir,

Turkey has become a State Party to the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage of UNESCO in 2006 and since then displayed a devoted approach to the spirit and principles of the Convention at the national and international level.

Turkey gives importance to the Intangible Cultural Heritage Lists which are being conducted by UNESCO in order to make visible the intangible cultural heritage, increase public awareness and support the dialogue with due regard to the cultural diversity. Turkey also strictly place emphasize on the empowering mutual cultural appreciation and understanding environment.

Turkey, considering the presentation of multinational nomination files as one of the most important actions, took part in the 6 multinational files along with the countries sharing similar and common cultural values. 4 of these files are inscribed and the other 2 will be evaluated at the fifteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage. In this regard Turkey is grateful for the collaboration with Iran in the field of intangible cultural heritage and will be happy to increase the mutual cooperation of both countries sharing a wide range of cultural values in the future.

"Hüsni Hat, traditional art of Islamic calligraphy" strongly continues its existence as a living heritage through hattats - the practitioners of this art, their apprentices - whom they transfer the art through master-apprentice relationship, paper craftsman, academicians working on the subject, NGOs, research centers and private art studios. "Hüsni Hat, traditional art of Islamic calligraphy" has been submitted to the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by Turkey in 2021 period with reference number 1684 to be registered as national nomination file.

Along with our kind respect for the opinions of Islamic Republic of Iran on the "Hüsn-i Hat, traditional art of Islamic calligraphy" nomination file, we do not agree with the opinions and evaluations expressed on the letter dated 28 July 2020 with reference number 992500/9721. I would like express our opinions on this matter:

- The geographical location and range of the element stated in the nomination file is prepared fully based on the "Representative List ICH-02-Form". On the "Geographical Location and Range of the Element" section of the form, the preparers of the file are required to pay attention to this clause: "... Nominations should concentrate on the situation of the element within the territories of the submitting States, while acknowledging the existence of same or similar elements outside their territories..."

When we examine each part of the nomination file, including attached documents (such as inventory, consent letter etc.), it can be easily observed that the nomination file solely concentrates on domestic issues as a whole and no statement referring to any individual, group or community outside of Turkey can be encountered.

As a requirement of respect for the artists who practice "Islamic Calligraphy" within the scope of spirit and fundamental principles of the Convention, it is primarily stated that the element is sustained through the artists and the element's location throughout Turkey is explained.

In addition, in the sections 2(i.c) and 2 (ii) of the second part of the nomination file, it is emphasized that the inscription of the element will strengthen multilateral understanding and cooperation environment among concerned persons, communities and groups from various parts of the world.

In conclusion, it is considered that the nomination file doesn't include any issue conflicting to the Article 1 (b) and 1 (d). Due to the referenced article in the letter is formed as: Article 3 - Relationship to other international instruments (b) (affecting the rights and obligations of State Parties deriving from any international instrument relating to intellectual property rights or to the use of biological and ecological resources to which they are parties.), the relation of this article to the nomination file and the reason of referencing this article is not understood.

- As it is well known, in the nomination files prepared for UNESCO, it is commonly encountered that State Parties express the element through same voices as in the native language, then beginning with a comma, to put down the English and French explanations about the element. For instance, this method can be observed in the "Ebru, Turkish art of marbling" file of Turkey inscribed in 2014; and in the files of Islamic Republic of Iran "Naqqâli, Iranian dramatic storytelling" inscribed in 2011 and "Chogân, a horse-riding game accompanied by music and storytelling" registered in 2017.

This must be primarily underlined that the term of "Islamic Calligraphy" is commonly used in the literature of world art history. Through a basic web search about the term of "Islamic Calligraphy" which is written by Arabic originated letters, includes a specific sense of esthetics, religious understanding, calligraphic styles transmitted from generation to generation, hundreds of scientific books, thousands of articles/research papers can be encountered. In most of these scientific works, the element known as Hüsn-i Hat in Turkey is described with the term of "Islamic Calligraphy". Moreover, taking into consideration the requirement that countries can submit elements which are registered to their national inventory, this element stated as "Islamic Calligraphy" in our national inventory is also used in the nomination file.

Additionally, as mentioned in the sections 3(iii) and 4.a. of the nomination file, during the preparation of the file, a working group formed in 2018-2019 which is composed of related community representatives and heritage bearers. A nationwide file preparation meeting is held in 19 February 2020 with the attendance of concerned communities, groups, individuals and NGOs. In this meeting, the bearers of the element stated the followings: Arabic origin letters were part of everyday life in the Ottoman period. However at the moment Turkey is using Latin origin letters, Arabic origin letters are not being used in everyday life for almost a century. There is also a particular calligraphy performed with Latin originated letters in Turkey, Hüsni hat expresses sophisticated meanings for the performers and related individuals as this cultural heritage is an excellent cultural means of expression for reflecting their world of belief. As a result of these statements, they strongly insist the element's submission as "Hüsni hat: traditional art of Islamic calligraphy" along with the assertion that the tradition's inseparable existence from the notion of "Islam".

As it is well known in terms of the essence and the principles of the Convention, other than intellectual, historical, artistic or political disputes, the important thing is that how the relevant community describes the element.

From all reasons above, the name of the nomination file is considered correctly chosen from the aspects of its scientific position in the history of art as well as related community's own definitions and from this point of view it is considered unacceptable to remove the word "Islamic".

- Various numbers of calligraphic styles with different types, technics and terms are developed in the Islamic world through centuries. Some of them (such as Nestalik) are being commonly practiced in some other countries. However in the nomination file "Hüsni Hat: traditional art of Islamic calligraphy", among tens of calligraphic styles, only the ones practiced in Turkey are mentioned.

It is not possible to observe even an indication that in any part of the nomination file these calligraphic styles are practiced "only", "best" or "richest way" in Turkey. There is no such claim of Turkey anyway. It should be considered very natural that as one of the countries of which cultural accumulation and heritage of Ottoman and Seljuq Empires sustained intensely, various calligraphic styles are sustained alive from generation to generation in Turkey.

Ignoring some of the calligraphic styles which are practiced fewer in Turkey compared to other fonts (such as Nestalik) and not mentioning of them in the nomination file will result deficiencies in terms of safeguarding measures. For that reason all of the calligraphic style names which are determined living in the national inventory are mentioned in the nomination file regardless of how wide the application field is.

In addition, Mahmut Şahin, as one of the well-known hattats who practice Nestalic calligraphic style in Turkey, attended to file preparation national meetings and contributed to the nomination file with his free, prior and informed consent letter. Mentioning various calligraphic styles in the nomination file is not an indicator of "over inclusiveness" but an indicator of technical sensitivity of the file preparation process.

As it is already mentioned in the nomination file, the element named as Hüsni Hat has been inscribed on UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage National Inventory of Turkey since 2014. Moreover, in the field of Hüsni Hat; Uğur Derman with inventory number 02.0009, Hasan Çelebi with inventory number 02.0010, Fuat Başar with inventory number 02.0013 are identified as Living Human Treasures and registered to the Living Human Treasures National Inventory of Turkey in 2010.

Nomination file preparation process of "Hüsn-i Hat, traditional art of Islamic calligraphy" which has been successfully conducted since 2018, has continued with the active participation of the element's related community as well as during the globally effective New Coronavirus Pandemic (Covid-19). After the letter dated 28 July 2020 with the reference number 992500/9721 during the talks with the concerned community, they requested to complete the nomination process and finish the evaluation process in order to register the element to the Representative List.

Turkey, since becoming State Party to the Convention, has acted in a constructive and sharing manner internationally. Within this framework, Turkey is ready to take common action with the countries in which Hüsn-i Hat is practiced and start the joint multinational file preparation process after a possible inscription in accordance with the aspects mentioned above.

Thank you in advance for your kind attention to this matter.
Please accept, Sir, the assurances of my highest consideration.



Vildan SATIK
Vice Director General
Republic of Turkey
Ministry of Culture and Tourism
General Directorate of Research and Training

Cc:

- Permanent Delegation of Turkey to UNESCO
- Turkish National Commission for UNESCO