



Intangible Cultural Heritage

Protection System for
Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan

A woman wearing a black hijab is shown in profile, looking out of a window. The background outside the window is a blurred view of trees and a building. The lighting is soft, suggesting an indoor setting. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

Intangible Cultural Heritage

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The diverse Intangible Cultural Heritage born from our history and geo-cultural climate

Diverse intangible cultural heritage has been passed down in our country, some of it passed down throughout the country and some in specific local areas. All such heritage was born and nourished within the history and geo-cultural climate of Japan, and is invaluable to understand the history and culture of Japan, and to reconfirm our identity. Transmission of this heritage, in a spirit of mutual respect for its various forms, is an indispensable element in ensuring the diversity and richness of Japanese culture in the future.

Currently in Japan, under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, items of intangible cultural heritage that are of high value are classified as "Intangible Cultural Properties" or "Intangible Folk Cultural Properties," while traditional skills and crafts that are essential for the preservation of cultural properties are classified as "Conservation Techniques for Conservation of Cultural Properties." From among these, important items, or items that should be preserved, are designated or selected, and they receive support for their transmission and public display or performance. This brochure outlines the system for protecting these intangible cultural properties, including safeguarding measures, and other matters.

There is growing worldwide interest in the protection of intangible cultural heritage, reflected in events such as the adoption of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage at the General Conference of UNESCO in the autumn of 2003. Every region of the world has precious items of intangible cultural heritage that are born, developed, and handed down in response to the history and geo-cultural climate of the area. To effectively support the transmission and promotion of such heritage, the particular characteristics, contents, and current condition of each must be studied individually, and appropriate measures put in place. It is our hope that this brochure outlining Japan's protection system for cultural properties, based on over half a century of experience, will be a useful reference for those involved in the safeguarding of cultural heritage.



Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage is indispensable for a rich and diverse culture in Japan in the future

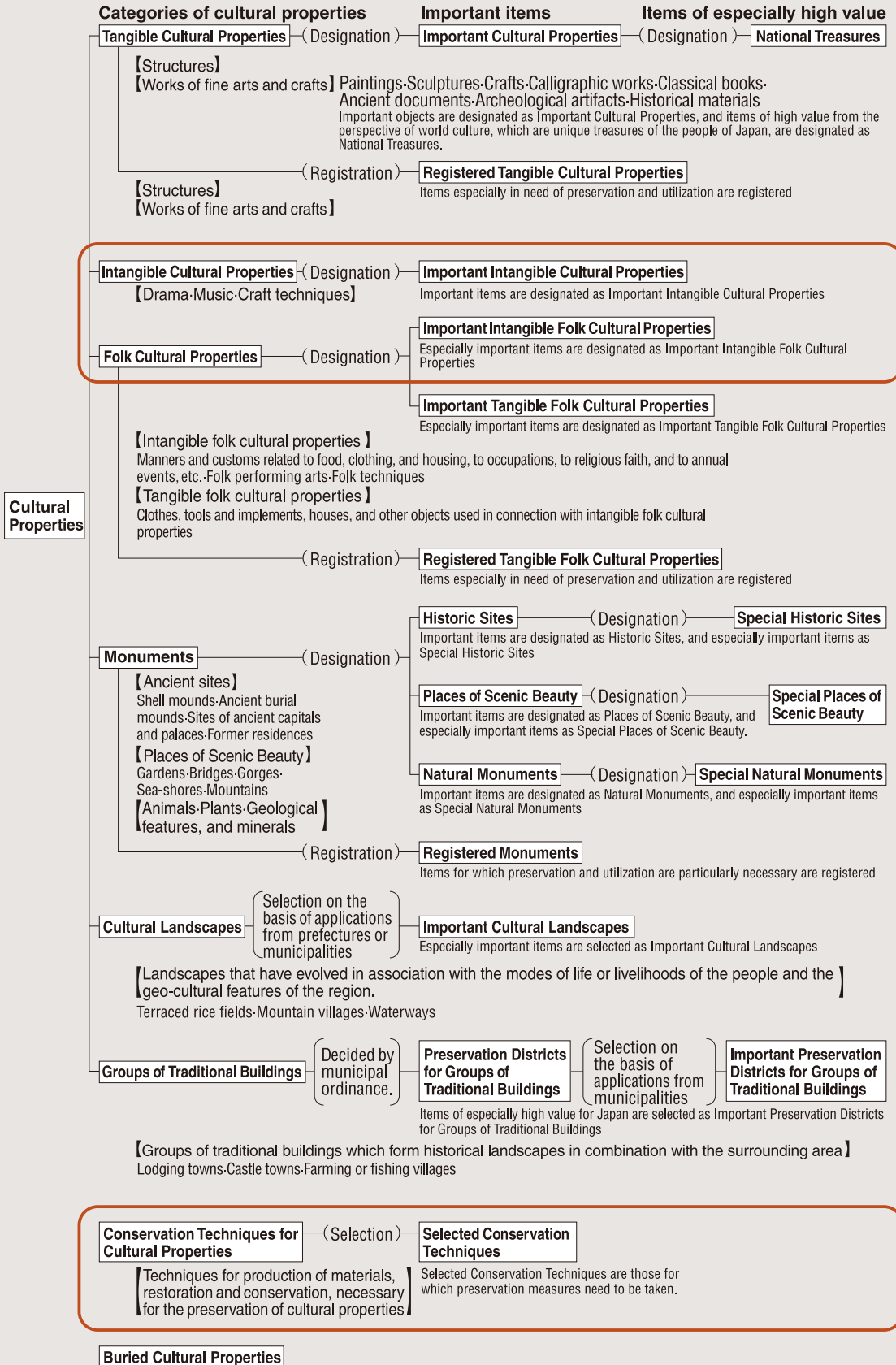
I Framework for Cultural Properties Protection

The term *bunka-zai* (cultural properties) has come into general usage, and is heard frequently in Japan today, but cultural properties received their first legal definition in 1950 when the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties was enacted and took effect. Since then, the law has undergone several amendments to become what it is today. Under the present law, cultural properties are classified into the following six categories, in addition to which a separate category exists for conservation techniques for cultural properties. Necessary measures are being taken for the protection of each.



Kimono
"SEIKA" yuzen dyeing
MORIGUCHI Kako

Intangible cultural heritage





II History of Cultural Properties Protection in Japan

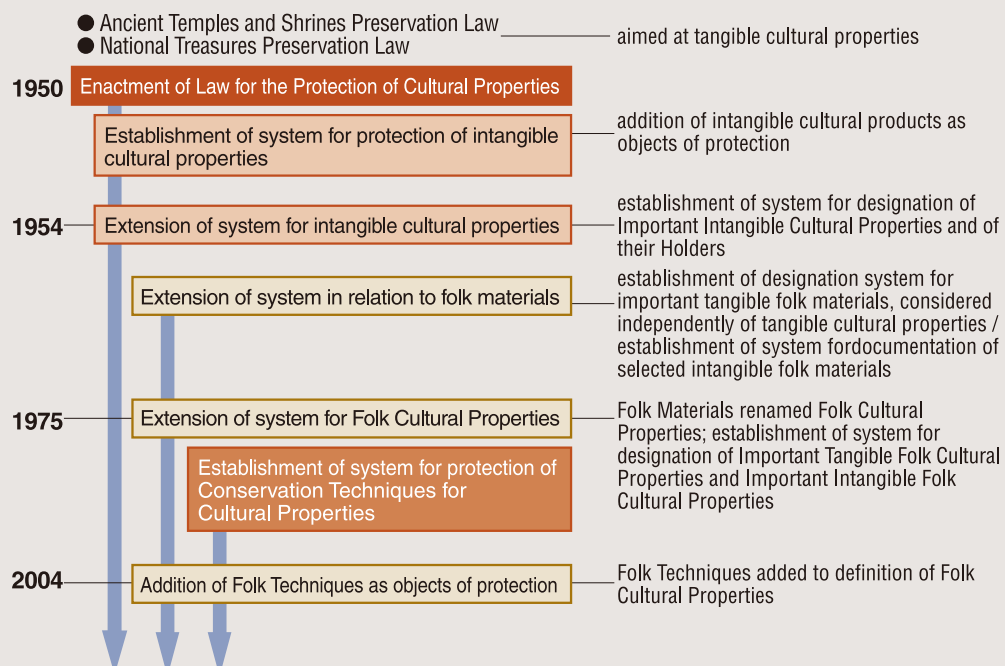
In the past, most cultural properties in Japan were preserved by the aristocracy, samurai families, temples and shrines, and others; however, with the tumultuous changes in society brought about by the Meiji Restoration, these properties were endangered. The Meiji Government therefore took action and legislated the Ancient Temples and Shrines Preservation Law (1897) and National Treasures Preservation Law (1929) with the aim of protecting tangible cultural properties.

In 1949, a few years after the end of the Second World War, valuable murals were destroyed in a fire at *Kondo* (Golden Hall) of the *Horyuji* temple in Nara Prefecture, a leading example of the ancient Japanese architecture. This tragedy prompted the government to enact the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties the following year (1950). For the first time, intangible cultural properties were given a legal definition, a result of the renewed recognition of the importance of protecting cultural heritage in the face of the threat posed to Japan's traditional performing arts and craft techniques by the trend toward westernization and modernization since the Meiji Period.

Under the initial law before amendments, the system for protection of cultural properties consisted mainly of support for intangible cultural properties of especially high value, and which would be at risk of extinction without governmental protection. In 1954, the law was amended to establish the system of designation of Important Intangible Cultural Properties and recognition of their Holders, in order to extend more active protection. Intensive protection of cultural properties through the designation system is a distinctive characteristic of Japan's Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties for both tangible and intangible cultural properties. At the same time, the designation system of Tangible Folk Cultural Materials was established as an independent category while documentation was introduced as a method of preserving Intangible Folk Materials.

With the further amendment of 1975, "Folk Materials" were renamed "Folk Cultural Properties"; in addition, Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties were defined under the law. The category of Folk Cultural Properties includes Intangible Folk Cultural Properties, of which important items are designated and active measures taken to promote their transmission. Restoration skills and other conservation techniques for cultural properties require a high degree of accuracy and fidelity of transmission, and are therefore considered from a different point of view from intangible cultural properties, for which greater emphasis is placed on artistic value. Active support is provided for the transmission of these various conservation techniques, which have been passed on the present day.

The Law was amended again in 2004, defining Folk Techniques as a category within Folk Cultural Properties, and protection measures are to be taken as for Folk Cultural Properties.



III Institutions for Intangible Cultural Heritage Protection

1 National Government Protection for Intangible Cultural Heritage

In order to protect the intangible cultural heritage, the government of Japan assigns specialists with expert knowledge of the traditional performing arts, craft techniques, and folk cultural properties to the Cultural Properties Department in the Agency for Cultural Affairs, where they are charged with the designation and support for Important Intangible Cultural Properties, and Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties. Designations in these categories are first submitted to the Council for Cultural Affairs by the Minister of Education, Culture, Science, Sports and Technology (MEXT). Designation is made following the report of the Council.

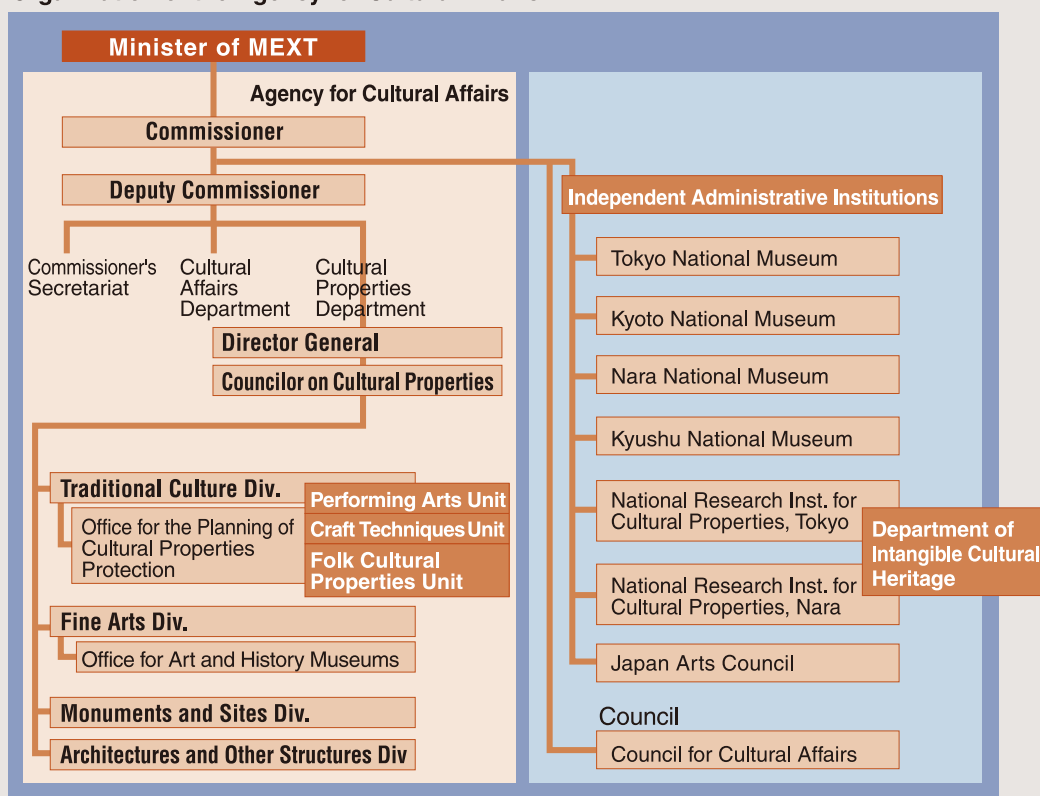
As a body responsible for research related to the protection of intangible cultural heritage, the Department of Intangible Cultural Heritage was set up within the Independent Administrative Institution National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo. It conducts research and documentation in related fields.

In addition, the Independent Administrative Institution Japan Arts Council established and operates the National Theatre, the National *Engei* Hall, the National *Noh* Theatre, the National *Bunraku* Theatre, and the National Theatre Okinawa. The Japan Arts Council holds performances of traditional performing arts, conducts training for successors, and carries out surveys, research and other activities.

2 Local Protection for Intangible Cultural Heritage

Given that cultural properties are located in various parts of the country, it is essential that the national government and local governments join together to promote the administration of cultural properties protection in a unified way. Many local governments have passed ordinances in order to promote the protection of cultural properties other than nationally designated items (as of May 1, 2001, 97% of local governments in Japan had enacted ordinances for protection of cultural properties). Based on these ordinances, local governments designate cultural properties which are of value for the region, and take measures to promote preservation and utilization.

Organization of the Agency for Cultural Affairs





IV Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan

As stated above, intangible cultural heritage in Japan is classified under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties in the categories of Intangible Cultural Properties, Intangible Folk Cultural Properties, and Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties. Taking into account the unique characteristics of each, protection measures are carried out as follows.

1 Intangible Cultural Properties

(1) Definition under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties

Under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, "Intangible Cultural Properties" are defined as "drama, music, craft techniques, and other cultural products, which possess a high historical or artistic value for Japan." This term "Intangible Cultural Properties" corresponds to "Tangible Cultural Properties", which denotes objects such as structures, paintings, sculptures, and works of craft. In contrast, Intangible Cultural Properties are performing arts, craft techniques, or other skills that are embodied and transmitted by specific individuals and groups. In other words, the fundamental difference between Intangible and Tangible Cultural Properties is that Intangible Cultural Properties are not the products of the techniques practiced by individuals or groups, but are skills, behaviors, and actions of people.

(2) Designation and Selection

In addition to designating important items among Intangible Cultural Properties as Important Intangible Cultural Properties, the Japanese government at the same time recognizes as Holders or Holding Groups those individuals and groups who embody to an outstanding degree the relevant skills or crafts, in order to promote the transmission of Japan's traditional skills and crafts. Recognition of Holders and Holding Groups is divided into three categories: Individual Recognition, Collective Recognition, and Group Recognition. Individuals recognized as Holders are popularly known as "National Living Treasures", and the system for the protection of Intangible Cultural Properties has become widely known through this familiar term. The objects of each form of recognition are as follows:

Objects of Recognition of Important Intangible Cultural Property Holders

Category		Objects of Recognition
Holder	Individual Recognition	Those who embody outstanding skill in performing arts designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties; those who possess outstanding skill in craft techniques designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties
	Collective Recognition	Members of a group consisting of two or more people who together embody outstanding skill in the performing arts; or members of a group of people who possess outstanding skill in a craft technique with unique characteristics shared by two or more
Holding Groups	Recognition of Holding Groups	A group mainly consisted of holders of a technique which by its nature is not characterized by strong distinctions between individual holders

These three categories of recognition were devised in order to allow appropriate support measures to be put in place, suited to the skills to be protected. The categories apply as follows.

In Individual Recognition, Important Intangible Cultural Properties are individually designated, and, for each technique, those holders who embody or possess the skill to an outstanding degree are recognized individually as holders.

Collective Recognition is also recognition of holders; however, this is not separate recognition of individual performers, but a collective recognition of a number of performers. It applies to cases where the designated Intangible Cultural Property to be protected consists, as with the performing arts of *Nohgaku*, *Kabuki*, or *Ningyo Johruri Bunraku*, of two or more specialized performers, such as puppet-masters who only act or manipulate the puppets, performers who only sing, or performers who only play musical instruments, each of whom displays individuality, and who work together as a whole. Not

every performer involved with the particular artistic technique is recognized, rather, out of the many performers, those who possess outstanding skill in the technique are recognized. Holders who are so recognized become members of the group of holders.

Recognition of Holding Groups applies to cases where a technique, such as the preparation of pottery clay or glaze, is displayed by many craftspeople, and, although the technique requires a high degree of mastery, there is little need to display individual characteristics. Rather than recognizing each holder individually, groups made up mainly of holders of such technique are recognized as Holding Groups. Regarding admission or resignation from membership, the independent judgment of each group is respected.

To illustrate the above three categories of recognition in more detail, we can take the traditional performing art of *Nohgaku* as an example. *Nohgaku* consists of (i) the acting techniques of the *Noh shite-kata*, *Noh waki-kata*, and *Kyogen-kata* and (ii) the music performance techniques of *Noh hayashi-kata* flute, *kotsuzumi* shoulder drums, *otsuzumi* knee drums, and *taiko* floor drums, together with the performers who specialize in mastering one of the techniques and displaying it in performance. In order to ensure that this art of *Nohgaku* is transmitted in good condition to future generations, it is necessary both that each technique be appropriately passed down, and that the combined display of these techniques in *Nohgaku* as a whole also be appropriately transmitted. Therefore, along with Individual Recognition of those who embody to an outstanding degree particular skills such as *Noh shite-kata*, members of a group consisting of highly-skilled performers of each of these roles are recognized collectively as holders.

Together with designation of Important Intangible Cultural Properties such as those mentioned above, Intangible Cultural Properties which are not designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties but which are valuable for understanding the process of transition in the performing arts, craft techniques of Japan, and for which documentation and public display are required, are selected as "Intangible Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures". The government, in addition to carrying out documentation on its own, funds projects for documentation or public display conducted by local governments, or by organizations qualified to carry out surveys or documentation.

The following chart (Figure 1) shows the current state with regard to designation of Important Intangible Cultural Properties and recognition of Holders and Holding Groups divided into the fields of performing arts and craft techniques. As of April 2006, there were 114 Individual Recognitions (National Living Treasures) for 83 designated items; 11 groups given Collective Recognition for 11 designated items; and 14 Holding Groups recognized for 14 designated items.

Figure 2 shows items selected as Intangible Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures. A total of 90 items have been selected, of which 30 are performing arts, and 60 are craft techniques.

In accordance with the national government policy, prefectures and municipalities designate intangible cultural properties within each administrative district. There were a total of 992 such items designated as of 2003, and each regional government provides support for transmission and other measures as required by the particular circumstances of each case.

(Figure 1)
Current state of designation of Important Intangible Cultural Properties and recognition of Holders (as of April 1, 2006)

Division	Category	Holders				Holding Groups	
		Individual Recognition		Collective Recognition		Number of designations	Number of groups
		Number of designations	Number of holders	Number of designations	Number of groups		
Performing arts	<i>Gagaku</i>	0	0	1	1		
	<i>Nohgaku</i>	7	12	1	1		
	<i>Bunraku</i>	3	5	1	1		
	<i>Kabuki</i>	5	10	1	1		
	<i>Kumi Odori</i>	1	1	1	1		
	Music	19	24	6	6		
	Dance	1	3	0	0		
	<i>Engei</i>	2	2	0	0		
	Subtotal	38	57	11	11		
Craft Techniques	Ceramics	12	12			3	3
	Textile	13	16 (15)*			7	7
	Lacquerwork	5	7			1	1
	Metalwork	7	10			0	0
	Woodwork & Bamboowork	2	6			0	0
	Doll making	2	2			0	0
	Paper making	3	3			3	3
	<i>Kirikane</i>	1	1			0	0
	Subtotal	45	57 (56)*			14	14
	Total	83	114 (113)*	11	11	14	14

*the figure in brackets shows the actual number of people. One individual is recognized in two categories.

(Figure 2)
Number of Intangible Cultural Properties selected as requiring documentation and other measures (As of April 1, 2006)

	Category	Number of items		Category	Number of items
Performing arts	<i>Nohgaku</i>	1	Craft Techniques	Ceramics	15
	<i>Kabuki</i>	3		Textile weaving & dyeing	14
	Music	23		Lacquer work	7
	<i>Engei</i>	3		Metalwork	10
	Total	30		Woodwork & Bamboowork	2
				Doll making	1
				Paper making	7
				<i>Kirikane</i>	1
				Others	3
				Total	60

(3) Measures for the Protection of Intangible Cultural Properties

- Individual Holders receive a special subsidy of two million per year for further development of their own skills or art, and for training successors.
- Partial funding is provided for the cost of projects for successor training, or for public performances, carried out by Holding Groups, groups that have received collective recognition, local governments, or other approved groups.

【For performing arts】

- At the National Theatre, performances of traditional performing arts, making video documentation of performances and other activities, collection and exhibition of related materials, training programmes for successors in arts such as Nohgaku, Bunraku, Kabuki, and Engei.

【For craft techniques】

- Making documentary films of techniques designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties
- Collecting works produced by Holders and Holding Groups, and displaying them at exhibitions titled "The Skills and Beauty of Craftsmanship in Japan - Important Intangible Cultural Properties and the People who support Them". These exhibitions are held at two municipal museums per year.

(4) Examples of Important Intangible Cultural Properties

The following are examples of performing arts and craft techniques designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties.

〈Performing Arts〉

① *Gagaku*

Gagaku refers to music and dance that came to Japan from China and Korea around the Nara Period (710-793 AD), and to music and dance which developed in Japan based on those, as well as to ancient music of Japan. *Gagaku* has been performed chiefly at ceremonies at court or at shrines and temples.



Gagaku

② *Nohgaku*

Nohgaku flourished in the Muromachi Period (1392-1573). It consists of a combination of *Noh*, which expresses dramatic content through highly condensed and formalized movements to the accompaniment of flutes and drums, and humorous *Kyogen* plays.



Nohgaku

③ *Ningyo-Johruri Bunraku*

Ningyo-Johruri Bunraku, which flourished in the 18th century, grew out of an older tradition of puppet theatre. The *gidayu-bushi* story teller is accompanied by *shamisen* music, while the characters are played by puppets. Each puppet is manipulated by three handlers, who work together to produce delicate, sensitive expressions of emotion.



Ningyo-Johruri Bunraku

④ *Kabuki*

Kabuki began in the early Edo Period (1603-1868) through the innovative combination of various existing forms of music and performing arts. It is distinguished by *onna-gata* (male actors performing female roles), formalized movements, and picturesque stage sets, and became immensely popular among the common people during the Edo Period.

*Kabuki*⑤ *Kumi Odori*

Kumi Odori was established as a performing art in Okinawa during the reign of the Ryukyu dynasty in the early 18th century. Drawing on performing arts from both Japan and China, it tells a story through speech, song, and dance to the accompaniment of Okinawa's distinctive traditional music.

*Kumi Odori*

⑥ Music

Of Japanese traditional music, the following items have each received individual recognition: "*Shaku-hachi*" (playing the bamboo recorder), "*So-kyoku*" (music accompanied by the 13-stringed instrument called *So*, or to the three-stringed *shamisen*). Among the wide variety of *shamisen* music such as "*nagauta* songs", "*nagauta shamisen*", "*nagauta narimono*", "*gidayu-bushi johruri*", and "*gidayu-bushi shamisen*", separate designations have been made for the techniques of singers and of *shamisen* players. The unique music of the Okinawa Prefecture region is also designated as "*Ryukyu Classical Music*". Collective recognitions include the designation of "*Gidayu-bushi*", "*Tokiwazu-bushi*", and "*Itchu-bushi*", and recognition of highly-skilled singers and *shamisen* players who belong to preservation organizations as Holders.

⑦ *Buyo* Dance

Individual recognition for *buyo* has been given to "*Kabuki Buyo*" (a dance technique which grew out of *Kabuki*, and later came to be performed independently), which was designated, and those who embody an outstanding level of skill have been recognized.

⑧ *Engei*

Individual recognitions among the *Engei* arts include: Classical *rakugo* (a story-telling art established in the Edo period (17th-19th century), where a single narrator takes on the role of different characters to tell stories of everyday life of ordinary people, or comical tales), and *kodan* (in which an individual story-teller narrates stories about heroes and other tales, carrying on a tradition inherited from the middle ages). These are designated, and those who embody an outstanding level of skill are recognized.

Box, circle design, *hyomon* (metal leaf decoration) and *maki-e*
OOBA Shogyo

< Craft Techniques >

① Ceramics

This is the technique of making ceramics, porcelain, stoneware, or pottery. Potter's clay is used as the main material. There are several ways of shaping the clay, including on a potter's wheel, slab-building, or hand-pinching. The object is glazed, if necessary, and then fired. Distinctive pottery techniques have developed in various regions of Japan based on the characteristics of local material and techniques.

(Examples of Designations)

Individual Recognition:

"Iroe-jiki", "Saiyu-jiki", "Haku-ji", "Tetsuyu-toki"

Group Recognition:

"Kakiemon (Nigoshi-de)", "Ironabeshima", "Onta-yaki"



Sei-ji

② Textile (Weaving, Dyeing, Embroidery, and others)

These are the techniques of weaving thread on a loom, dyeing using various materials, embroidery, and other techniques. The wide variety of textile materials in Japan reflects the climate of the various regions, and diverse dyeing and weaving techniques utilizing these materials have been passed down through the generations.

(Examples of Designations)

Individual Recognition:

"Yusoku-orimono": a style that was brought to Japan from China in the Nara Period, the Japanese version of which developed in the Heian Period;

"Ra": a complex gauze known for its extremely fine weave;

"Tsumugi-ori" (pongee weaving): woven silk with a plain finish;

"Tsuzure-ori": featuring a wide range of complex pictorial patterns

"Yuzen": characterized by beautiful colours and a pictorial style of dyeing

"Edo-komon": featuring detailed patterns made with elaborate stencils in a single colour

Group Recognition:

"Kurume-kasuri", "Miyako-jofu", "Ise-katagami", "Kumejima-tsumugi"



Embroidery

③ Lacquerwork

In this craft technique, *urushi* (lacquer sap) collected from the *urushi* (lacquer) tree and refined, is used to make craft objects. Techniques include those which bring out the beauties of the lacquer itself, as well as "Maki-e", "Raden", "Chin-kin", and various other decorative techniques.

(Examples of Designation)

Individual Recognition:

"Maki-e": Beautiful decoration with powdered gold and silver on lacquer

"Raden": Lustrous mother-of-pearl inlay on lacquer

"Chin-kin": Fine foil/powder of gold embedded into engraved patterns on lacquer

Group Recognition:

"Wajima-nuri"



Chin-kin



④ Metalwork

In this technique, the unique properties of metal, the fact that it can be melted, and its ductility, are utilized to make objects. The main metalwork techniques in Japan, namely casting, forging, and chasing, developed using the five major metals of gold, silver, copper, tin, and iron, as well as alloys made from combinations of these.

(Examples of Designation)

Individual Recognition:

"Casting": the technique of making objects by pouring molten metal into casts;

"Chasing": Decorative techniques for metal such as engraving or inlaying.

"Forging": the technique of making objects by hammering metal.

"*Chanoyu-gama*": the technique of making pots used for the tea ceremony;



Chasing

⑤ Wood and Bamboo work

The rich natural environment of Japan with its wide variety of trees and bamboo is reflected in this craft.

(Examples of Designation)

Individual Recognition:

"Woodworking": Cabinets and other wooden ware in which the characteristics and distinctive features of various types of wood are used to their best advantage.

"Bamboowork": The strength, resilience and rustic beauty of bamboo are used to make flower baskets and other objects.



Bamboowork

⑥ Doll-making

In ancient times, dolls were made as toys, or as religious objects, but in the early modern age, they came to be produced and appreciated as decorative objects, and became more sophisticated artistically.

(Examples of Designation)

Individual Recognition:

"*Isho-ningyo*"

"*Touso-ningyo*": Dolls made of wood and solidified paulownia wood powder, clothed in various costumes.



Touso-ningyo

⑦ Paper-making

The traditional techniques of paper-making have existed in Japan since ancient times, using bark fibre from trees such as paper mulberry or ganpi as the material.

(Examples of Designation)

Individual Recognition:

"*Echizen-hosho*", "*Tosa-tenguji*", "*Najio-ganpishi*"

Group Recognition:

"*Hosokawashi*", "*Honminoshi*", "*Sekishu-banshi*"



Tosa-tenguji

⑧ *Kirikane*

Kirikane is the art of cutting gold or silver foil into strips or small pieces and pasting them to the surface of objects to form beautiful patterns. From the Asuka period (late 6C- early 8C), it developed with a focus on paintings and statues of Buddha. In early modern times, however, it came to be used for decoration of craft objects, and is now designated, and its holder is recognized.



Kirikane

2 Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

(1) Definition under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties

Under the Law, "folk cultural properties" are defined as "manners and customs related to food, clothing, and housing, to occupations, to religious faiths, and to annual events; folk performing arts; folk techniques together with clothes, implements, houses, and other objects used therein, which are indispensable for the understanding of transition in the modes of life of the Japanese people." The former are intangible cultural properties, namely (i) manners and customs related to "food, clothing, and housing annual events", (ii) folk performing arts, and (iii) folk techniques which are indispensable for the understanding of transition in the modes of life of the Japanese people; the latter are tangible folk cultural properties, namely "apparel and other objects used therein". The national government takes measures for the protection of folk cultural properties that are regarded as especially important in understanding transition of Japanese lifestyles.

So far, especially important folk cultural properties have been designated and measures taken to promote their transmission, such as manners and customs that typically represent unique features of basic lifestyle and culture, and folk performing arts that represent transition in the performing arts in Japan.

In addition, an amendment to the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties in May 2004 added the category of Folk Techniques under Folk Cultural Properties, and protection measures were taken as for existing Folk Cultural Properties.

Folk techniques refers to techniques related to food, clothing, housing (techniques used in daily life), or techniques related to occupations by which people make a living. These techniques are protected as intangible folk cultural properties, and the tools, facilities, and other objects used in connection with them also come under protection as Tangible Folk Cultural Properties.

(2) Designation and Selection

In contrast to intangible cultural properties, where designation of skills and recognition of holders or holding groups of such skills are carried out simultaneously, in the case of intangible folk cultural properties, there is only designation. This is because intangible folk cultural properties are in fact lifestyles and customs of ordinary people, and their transmission is tightly interwoven with daily life. Hence, in many respects, it would be impractical to specify successors to carry on these traditions. If a role in an annual festivity or folk performing art must be performed by a child, for example, the child must be replaced by another of the right age each year. Certain groups, however, are specified as protection groups carrying out activities for protection and transmission of the relevant important intangible folk cultural properties, and subsidies are provided for these activities.



Ornamental box,
"Vision of Silk Road", *kirikane*
ERI Sayoko



In the same way as for intangible cultural properties, certain Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties other than those designated as such are selected as "Intangible Folk Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures", and documentation is carried out by the national government. Subsidies are granted to documentation or public exhibition projects conducted by other organizations suitable to perform such activities.

At present, there are 246 Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties and 560 Intangible Folk Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures. These Intangible Folk Cultural Properties are classified as either manners and customs, or performing arts, and can be categorized according to the distinctive features of each, as shown in Table 3 below.

Table 3 Designation and Selection of Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties (as of April 1, 2006)

Field	Category	Important Intangible Folk Cultural Property	Intangible Folk Cultural Property requiring documentation or other measures
Manners & Customs	① Production & livelihood	6	49
	② Rites of passage	6	15
	③ Entertainment & competition	6	13
	④ Social life (knowledge of folk customs)	2	13
	⑤ Annual events	25	36
	⑥ Festivals(Beliefs)	52	88
	Subtotal	97	214
Folk performing arts	① <i>Kagura</i>	28	58
	② <i>Dengaku</i>	24	41
	③ <i>Furyu</i>	33	117
	④ <i>Katarimono & Shukufuku-gei</i>	5	8
	⑤ <i>Ennen & Okonai</i>	7	14
	⑥ <i>Torai-gei & Butai-gei</i>	34	76
	⑦ Others	15	32
Subtotal	146	346	
Folk techniques		3	0
	Total	246	560

(3) Measures for the Protection of Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

- National subsidies are provided for part of the cost of projects conducted by protection groups for Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties, such as successor training projects, local public performances, and repair of facilities or repair and replacement of props and other items essential for public performances.
- National subsidies are provided for part of the cost of transmission, utilization and other projects run by local governments in areas where the Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties are located ('production of information pamphlets or videos in order to broaden public understanding of folk cultural properties, participatory workshops where ordinary people can learn how the heritage is transmitted, and exhibitions where the results of the workshops are displayed; projects for making videos and other documentation including commentary by specialists on intangible cultural properties.

- National subsidies are provided for part of the costs of survey projects carried out by local governments on a particular Intangible Folk Cultural property. The government also plans nationwide surveys on intangible folk cultural properties, and provides national subsidies to local governments to carry out the surveys. In addition, the government carries out surveys as necessary on the current state of intangible folk cultural properties in various regions. The results of these surveys provide valuable documentation of the various intangible folk cultural properties, and serve at the same time as reference material when planning measures for preservation and transmission.
- The government subsidizes projects for the repair and replacement of tools and implements, and for documentation projects, which are carried out by preservation associations for various folk cultural properties, etc., based on the plan for the preservation of traditional culture made by the prefectural government.
- The government subsidizes a folk performing arts festival, where performers of diverse traditional arts from various regions throughout Japan gather together to perform under one roof.
- Performers of unique folk performing arts from other countries are invited to the International Festival of Folk Performing Arts, along with domestic performers. These performances serve to increase public awareness of the value of folk performing arts, and to promote international exchange.

(4) Examples of Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

Examples of Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties are shown below.

<Manners and Customs>

① Production and livelihood

These are customs or ceremonies related to work or activities such as fishing or farming which support daily life.

(Examples of Designation)

● *Sado no Kurumataue* (Niigata Prefecture)

A rice planting tradition in which seedlings starts from the centre of the rice field in a circular pattern. It presents the ancient form of rice farming.

● *Mibu no hanataue* (Hiroshima Prefecture)

Young girls, known as *saotome*, wearing peasant hats and brightly coloured clothes, seed to the rhythm of *hayashi* music.

② Rites of passage

Ceremonies and events that mark some important stages in life, from birth to death.

(Examples of designation)

● *Izumiyama no Tohai Gyoji* (Aomori Prefecture)

Boys aged seven to nine climb a local mountain to pray for health and growth.

● *Kawamata no genpuku-shiki* (Tochigi Prefecture)

Also known as *Nazuke*, this ceremony marks community recognition of a boy's coming of age.



Mibu no hanataue



Izumiyama no Tohai Gyoji



③ Entertainment and competition

Activities that have been carried on as entertainment in the course of everyday life, and games in which winning or losing is taken as a sign of good or bad fortune (Examples of designation)

● *Kariwano no O-tsunahiki* (Akita Prefecture)

A tug of war competition using two ropes over 50 meters in length. The outcome predicts whether or not the harvest will be good.

● *Tajima-Kutani no Shoubu Tsunahiki* (Hyogo Prefecture)

A tug-of-war competition held on Boys' Festival Day in May between adults and children to ward off ill fortune.



Joshu-shirakubo no ochakou

④ Social life (Knowledge of folk customs)

Ceremonies which are carried on by local social groups or which are based on traditional wisdom.

(Examples of designation)

● *Joshu-shirakubo no ochakou* (Gunma Prefecture)

Local people gather together to drink and compare various types of tea, trying to correctly guess each type.



Oga no namahage

⑤ Annual events

Events which are held on an annual basis, traditionally repeated at the same season or date every year.

(Examples of designation)

● *Oga no namahage* (Akita Prefecture)

Participants wearing unusual costumes, including masks and straw coats, visit houses to wish people good fortune at New Year.

● *Shimakamogogo no Bonmatsuri Gyoji* (Mie Prefecture)

A sacred pillar called the pillar pine is raised to welcome the spirits of dead during the Obon fire festival held to honour ancestors.

⑥ Festivals (Beliefs)

Events or customs related to religious beliefs of the people in Buddha or other gods, and shrine festivals featuring parade floats.

(Examples of designation)

● Float Event of Kyoto-Gion Festival (Kyoto Prefecture)

This historical festival, featuring a parade of lavishly decorated yamahoko floats, has influenced summer festivals throughout Japan.

● *Aomori no Nebuta* (Aomori Prefecture)

This lively parade features huge lantern-like floats decorated with historical or mythical scenes and samurai dolls which are carried through the streets.



Float Event of Kyoto-Gion Festival

<Folk Performing Arts>

The folk performing arts carried on by local people in various regions of Japan can be classified for the most part into the following categories based on the purpose and content of each tradition.

① Kagura

Kagura is a general term for performing arts dating back to ancient times in which dances are performed to call the gods, and to pray for things such as a bountiful harvest and freedom from disease.

(Examples of designation)

● "*Ohmoto kagura*" (Shimane Prefecture), "*Bichiu kagura*" (Okayama Prefecture):

In this *kagura*, a ceremonial dance is performed to call the gods, who, when they appear, act out Japanese myths.

● "*Hanamatsuri*" (Aichi Prefecture), "*Tenryu-mura no Shimotsuki Kagura*" (Nagano Prefecture):

In this *kagura*, a large pot of water is heated in the middle of the performance space, and, after a dance to call the gods, the water is sprinkled on the gathered people and the surrounding area to purify them.

● "*Hayachine Kagura*" (Iwate Prefecture), "*Ise Dai-Kagura*" (Mie Prefecture):

This *kagura* centers on a lion which is worshipped as the god.

② Dengaku

Dengaku is a general term for folk performing arts related to rice cultivation, including performances by local people to pray for a bountiful harvest, and performances which carry on the tradition popularized by professional entertainers from the late Heian to the Kamakura period (12th century).

(Examples of designation)

● "*Mikawa no Dengaku*" (Aichi Prefecture), "*Nishiure no dengaku*" (Shizuoka Prefecture)

These performing arts preserve traditions that have been passed down from the 12th century.

● "*Itabashi no Ta-asobi*" (Tokyo), "*Fujimori no Ta-asobi*" (Shizuoka Prefecture):

In these traditions, the yearly cycle of rice cultivation is acted out in song and movement, previous to the actual rice-planting, to pray that the year's harvest will likewise be successful.

● "*Sumiyoshi no Ontaue*" (Osaka):

Rice-planting and various performances are held in a rice field belonging to a shrine, to pray for a successful harvest.

● "*Aki no hayashi-da*" (Hiroshima Prefecture):

Local people play drums and cheer while rice is being planted, so that the music will awaken the life force of the rice.



Hayachine Kagura



Sumiyoshi no Ontaue



The Float Event of Karatsu-Kunchi Festival



③ *Furyu*

Furyu, which means elegant and sophisticated, is a general term for folk performing arts in which groups of dancers in lavish attire carry on popular traditions from the 12th to 16th centuries. The dances are performed to pray for rain, for a rich harvest, or to honour ancestors. (Examples of designation)

- "*Yoshihirogaku*" (Fukuoka Prefecture):

Groups of dancers perform while beating drums carried at chest level.

- "*Shiraishi Odori*" (Okayama Prefecture), "*Takinomiya no Nenbutsu Odori*" (Kagawa Prefecture), "*Niino no Bonodori*" (Nagano Prefecture):

Many people dance in a circle to songs of the singers, to pray for the spirits of ancestors.

- "*Chakkirako*" (Kanagawa Prefecture), "*Ayako-mai*" (Niigata Prefecture):

These dances give us an idea of what popular dances in the Middle Ages looked like.

- "*Yamakita no Omineiri*" (Kanagawa Prefecture), "*Yasurai-bana*" (Kyoto):

In these performing arts, people wearing diverse costumes dance and parade through the streets.



Chakkirako

④ *Katarimono* and *shukufuku-gei*

Katarimono and *shukufuku-gei* refer generally to performing arts in which a series of stories is told, or auspicious words are chanted on occasions such as New Year to pray for good fortune. This stems from the old Japanese belief that words spoken will be realized.

(Examples of designation)

- "*Daimoku-Tate*" (Nara Prefecture), "*Kouwaka-Mai*" (Fukuoka Prefecture):

These traditions are mainly story-telling

- "*Echizen Manzai*" (Fukui Prefecture), "*Mikawa Manzai*" (Aichi Prefecture), "*Owari Manzai*" (Aichi Prefecture):

Traditional New Year visits which bring good fortune to each home.

⑤ *Ennen* and *okonai*

These performing arts carry on the tradition of grand performances that were held during religious ceremonies at large temples between the late Heian Period and Kamakura-Muromachi periods (12th to 15th centuries).

(Examples of designation)

- "*Motsuji no Ennen*" (Iwate Prefecture), "*Nagataki no ennen*" (Gifu Prefecture).



Kouwaka-Mai

⑥ *Torai-gei* and *butai-gei*

These include various performing arts that were brought to Japan from China and other countries in ancient times, as well as arts originally performed on stage, such as *Nohgaku*, puppet theatre, and *Kabuki*, that have been carried on as local folk performing arts.

(Examples of designation)

● "*Kiraigo*" (Chiba Prefecture), "*Dainichido bugaku*" (Akita Prefecture), "*Kurokawa-Noh*" (Yamagata Prefecture), "*Mibu-Kyogen*" (Kyoto Prefecture) "*Awaji Ningyo Johruri*" (Hyogo Prefecture)

⑦ Others

Other designations include traditions in which various performing arts are carried on collectively, and performed in succession, as well as others that cannot be classified into the categories above.

(Examples of designation)

● "*Tarama no Honensai*" (Okinawa Prefecture), "*Yuki-Matsuri*" (Nagano Prefecture), "*Ainu Koshiki Buyo*" (Hokkaido), "*Iejima no Muraodori*" (Okinawa Prefecture).



Japanese ship-building

<Folk Techniques>

These are techniques which have been carried on in close connection with activities related to production and daily life in a community, such as traditional occupations as well as clothing, food, and housing.

(Example of designation)

● "Techniques from the Tsugaru Straits and surrounding area for making Japanese boats"

These are the techniques for making the distinctive wooden fishing ships used in the area from the northern part of the Tohoku region to Hokkaido. The Japanese ship-building techniques that are passed on cover a broad range of levels, from dug-out canoes to structural ships.

3 Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties

(1) Definition under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties

The Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties states that "The Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology may select, as Selected Conservation Techniques, such traditional techniques or skills as necessary for the preservation of cultural properties and for which preservation measures need to be taken."

Since most of the works of art and architectural structures in Japan are made of relatively weak materials such as wood, paper, and lacquer, they have been preserved through appropriate repairs carried out regularly over time. It follows that in order to preserve these tangible cultural properties for the future, highly competent craftsmen who are able to perform appropriate repairs on a regular basis are needed. Moreover, special implements and materials are also necessary for repairs; hence, techniques for producing and making such tools and materials are needed. In addition, for intangible cultural properties, techniques involved in producing and repairing musical instruments, costumes, and stage props are needed for the transmission and performance of performing arts. Similarly, techniques for making the tools used to produce objects, and techniques for the production of materials, are indispensable in the field of craft techniques.



(2) Selection

The traditional techniques and skills that are indispensable for the preservation of cultural properties are at serious risk of disappearing rapidly due to social and economic changes, decline in demand, and changes in industrial structure and social conventions. The national government has therefore selected techniques and skills which are particularly in need of preservation measures, and promotes their preservation by recognizing individuals who have mastered the techniques and skills, and who have a thorough understanding of them, as holders, and by recognizing as Preservation Organizations those groups that are dedicated to the preservation of Selected Conservation Techniques, and which are able to carry out appropriate projects for that purpose.

The current number of Selected Conservation Techniques and recognized Preservation Organizations is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Numbers of Selected Conservation Techniques and recognized Holders and others (As of April 1, 2006)

Holders		Preservation Organizations	
46 cases	50 persons	23 cases	24 (22) organizations

*Some organizations receive multiple recognition. The figure in parentheses is the actual number of organizations.

(3) Measures for the Protection of Selected Conservation Techniques

- Subsidies are provided for part of the cost of projects run by Holders or Preservation Organizations for the purpose of allowing holders to further refine their techniques, training successors, or for documentation projects.
- Conducting surveys related to the tools and raw materials that are needed to support cultural properties, and studying measures to secure their supply.(from 1997 on)
- Implementing plans for a meeting where Preservation Organizations come together to introduce their various techniques, in order to broaden public awareness of the importance of Selected Conservation Techniques, and to contribute to the training of successors and other projects.

(4) Examples of Selected Conservation Techniques

Conservation Techniques for Tangible Cultural Properties

"Kayabuki (Roof-thatching)"

"Kayabuki" refers to the technique of thatching a roof using reeds or straw, such as *kaya* (micanthus) or *yoshi* (ditch reed). Thatch has been used throughout Japan since ancient times in a variety of structures ranging from private houses to temple and shrine architecture, and the technique has been passed down to the present day. Many different technical styles developed, with regional variations that are still carried on to produce the thatched roofing symbolic of the traditional landscape in Japan.



Kayabuki

"Making brushes used in mounting"

These are the techniques used in making brushes which are indispensable for applying glue rapidly and evenly when backing a painting or piece of calligraphy on silk or paper (applying paper or cloth to the back in order to strengthen it), or when preparing a mount.



Making brushes used in mounting

Conservation Techniques for Intangible Cultural Properties

"Making and repair of wind instruments for *Gagaku*"

These are making and repair techniques for wind instruments used in the Important Intangible Cultural Property *Gagaku*, namely *sho*, *hichiriki*, the *ryuteki* recorder, *komabue*, and *kagurabue*.



Making and repair of wind instruments for *Gagaku*

"Producing and refining Japanese lacquer"

These are techniques for producing the materials indispensable for the art of making Japanese lacquer work. Lacquer trees are cultivated, then the lacquer sap is extracted from the trunk of the grown tree and refined.



Producing and refining Japanese lacquer

V International Efforts for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage

The General Conference of UNESCO in 2003 adopted the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, creating for the first time an international legal framework with binding force for the protection of the intangible cultural heritage, which entered into force on April 20, 2006. In June 2004, Japan became the third country to ratify the convention in order to promote its rapid entry into force. States Parties are required to cooperate within an international framework for the protection of intangible cultural heritage worldwide, as well as to work for the protection of intangible cultural heritage in their own countries.

The 1st General Assembly of States Parties was held from June 27 to 29, 2006, at UNESCO headquarters in Paris, where Japan was chosen from among the States Parties as a member of the Intergovernmental Committee. As such, Japan will participate in the preparation of operational directives for the implementation of the Convention.

Before the Convention was formulated, UNESCO proclaimed biennially a list of Masterpieces, made up of candidates meeting UNESCO criteria, chosen from among those submitted by UNESCO Member States. The Proclamation, beginning in 2001, was intended to extol the Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, as well as to promote their transmission and development. The proclaimed Masterpieces submitted from Japan are *Nohgaku*, at the first Proclamation; *Ningyo Johruri Bunraku*, at the second Proclamation; and *Kabuki* (*Kabuki* performed in the traditional style of acting and direction), at the third Proclamation. After the Convention enters into force, items of intangible cultural heritage that were previously proclaimed as Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity will be included on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



Third Proclamation of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity
Kabuki (*Kabuki* performed in the traditional style of acting and direction)

International Efforts for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage / Afterward

As shown above, Japan promotes the transmission of valuable elements of intangible cultural heritage under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, classifying the Intangible Cultural Heritage into the categories of Intangible Cultural Properties, Intangible Folk Cultural Properties, and Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties, designating or selecting important items in each category, and providing subsidies for projects for successor training and related projects. A half century has passed since the term "intangible cultural properties" first appeared in the law. During that time, public interest in traditional culture has grown, but it is of particular importance to instill an understanding of Japanese traditional culture in children in order to enrich their lives. To that end, classes on traditional culture and the use of Japanese musical instruments in music classes are being promoted as part of school education.

There remain numerous issues concerning intangible cultural properties, brought on by industrial change, diversification of values and the accompanying weakening of the foundation on which traditions are transmitted, as well as to response to international exchange. In order to promote the intangible cultural heritage, and ensure its transmission to future generations, Japan will continue to study appropriate protection measures in accord with the changing times, and based on good practices found in the rest of the world.

Afterward



Protection System for Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan

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Front cover: The Float Event of Kyoto-Gion Festival

Back cover: Bowl, drooping cherry blossom design, overglaze enamels nigoshide body / SAKAIDA Kakiemon XIV