1. Introduction
In Japan, there are five inventories, in which ICH is categorized according to its characteristics and methods of protection.

- **intangible cultural properties**
  There are two inventories of items such as traditional performing arts and traditional craft techniques.
  - “list of important intangible cultural properties”
  - “list of intangible cultural properties for which documentation and other measures should be taken”

- **intangible folk-cultural properties**
  There are two inventories of items such as customs and practices, folk performing arts, and traditional folk craft techniques.
  - “list of important intangible folk-cultural properties”
  - “list of intangible folk-cultural properties for which documentation and other measures should be taken”

- **conservation techniques for cultural properties**
  One inventory includes techniques needed for the preservation of other cultural heritage.
  - “list of selected conservation techniques for cultural properties”

These five Inventories of ICH are currently drawn up by a governmental organization, Agency for Cultural Affairs, in conformity with the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.

2. Historical background
The Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, covering both tangible and intangible properties, was adopted in 1950, when Japan was recovering from social confusion and destitution after the Second World War.

In 1949, the general public was stunned by the destruction by fire of the world famous mural paintings of Horyuji Temple’s Kondo (Golden Hall) in Nara prefecture. Besides that, over and above other tangible properties, Japanese specialists were concerned that people had a tendency to lose interest in traditional intangible culture as a result of the influence of westernization and modernization prevalent during the period.

All of these factors prompted stakeholders, including individuals, to consider the concept of ICH, its safeguarding, transmission, and eventually served as a driving force for the establishment of the Law and the Cultural Properties Protection Committee (former Agency for Cultural Affairs).

When the Law was first established, it provided protection measures only for the elements of ICH in danger of disappearing. In 1954, the Law was amended in such a way that traditional performing arts and craft techniques of high historical and artistic values were designated as “important intangible cultural properties”, while masters of the knowledge and skills necessary for the enactment of the
designated ICH were recognized as “holders”. It can be said that the dual structure - designating knowledge and skills, and recognizing its holders - is one of the most unique characteristics of this system. Later that same year, amendments to the Law defined “Intangible cultural properties for which documentation and other measures should be taken”, under which the elements of ICH that would illustrate a transition process of craft techniques and performing arts were designated.

Furthermore, important amendments were made in 1975, when the Law defined the designation system of “important intangible folk-cultural properties”, as well as the selection and safeguarding of “conservation techniques for cultural properties”. Since then, customs and practices that represent and display unique features of the basic lifestyle, or important elements of folk-performing arts that demonstrate the process of transition of performing arts, have been designated as “important intangible folk-cultural properties”. Likewise, traditional techniques required for repair, etc. are selected as “conservation techniques for cultural properties”. This distinct categorization for this domain was necessary, considering the fact that “accuracy” is required for the safeguarding of such knowledge and skills, rather than “artistic values” which are applied in the case of other domains of ICH, e.g. performing arts.

Further amendments were made in 2004 when the category of “folk craft techniques” was added as a distinct category of “intangible folk-cultural properties”, with the aim of safeguarding knowledge and skills required for the creation of objects deeply rooted in production and lifestyles of local communities.

3. Procedures for Designation or Selection

1). Preliminary research

At first, preliminary research by specialists of the Agency for Cultural Affairs is required. This is conducted in close consultation with practitioners concerned and experts. In the case of “intangible cultural properties” and “conservation techniques for cultural properties “, the number of objects which should be taken into consideration is comparatively restricted.

However, in the case of “intangible folk-cultural properties”, many objects exist all over the country. Within the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the specialists for intangible folk Cultural Properties are responsible for conducting surveys and preparing documents from an expert’s perspective for the designation and selection of cultural properties. There are only six such officers. It is impossible for them to conduct surveys at the initial, basic stage. However, in many cases, intangible folk-cultural properties that have been designated as cultural properties at the regional level have already undergone a specific form of assessment before they undergo evaluation at the national level. In most cases, field survey reports, visual recordings, research papers and books on the cultural property already exist, and evaluation at the national level involves a new survey based on the results of previous research. Therefore, the field survey conducted by the officer from the national government involved in designation tends by nature to be a study to confirm existing conditions on the basis of previous research data. Rather, their job is to grasp the information obtained by previous research and, on the basis of past survey results, conduct the final survey to confirm their conclusions and decide whether or not to designate the ICH as a cultural property.

2) Selection of candidates for inscription on inventories,

The following procedures are required in order to select candidates. Commissioner’s Secretariat prepares proposal → Approved within the Agency of Cultural Affairs (section chief, division manager, councilor, deputy commissioner, commissioner) → Approved within the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Deputy Commissioner, parliamentary vice-minister and vice-minister, Minister) (In the case of designation)
3) Final selection and inscription on inventories
Minister of Education, Science and Culture (In the case of designation) or Commissioner for Cultural Affairs (In the case of selection) requests the Council for Cultural Affairs to review the proposal. The Council for Cultural Affairs then refers it to the Cultural Properties Subdivision of the Council for Cultural Affairs (which is constituted by a well-informed person on a cultural property) and Investigative Sub-council of Specialists. Then, these experts deliberate carefully about the designation or selection of candidates, and report the results of their deliberations to the Council for Cultural Affairs, which in turn reports its findings to the Minister of Education, Science and Culture or Commissioner for Cultural Affairs. Then, the designated or selected ICH is officially announced by the national government.

4. Five categories of inventories and their contents

Inventory 1: List of important intangible cultural properties
Designation of important elements of ICH as “important intangible cultural properties” is accompanied by recognition of individuals or groups who possess to a very high degree the knowledge and skills required for performing or re-creating the designated elements of ICH as “individual holder” (the names of so-called “Living National Treasures”) or “group holders”. If all of the holders for a specific element die, the designation or selection of the element is annulled and the name is deleted from the inventory. Likewise, if no appropriate holder exists, no designation of ICH will be made.

No. of properties and holders in this inventory

- Individual designation
  - No. of properties 84 (performing arts 39, traditional craft techniques 45)
  - No. of holders 116 (performing arts 59, traditional craft techniques 57)

- Collective designation
  - No. of properties 25 (performing arts 11, traditional craft techniques 14)
  - No. of group holders 25 (performing arts 11, traditional craft techniques 14)

Inventory 2: List of Intangible cultural properties for which documentation and other protection measures should be taken
This inventory includes elements of ICH that are considered to be crucial in finding out the transition process of craft techniques and performing arts, and that need documentation and public disclosure.

More than 10% of the elements in Inventory 2 are also inscribed in Inventory 1, since they are designated as important intangible cultural properties or selected conservation techniques for cultural properties after being selected as intangible cultural properties for which documentation and other measures should be taken.

- No. of properties in this inventory
  - Performing arts 30
  - Traditional craft techniques 60

Inventory 3: List of important intangible folk-cultural properties
This inventory includes customs and practices (manufacturing and livelihood, formal ceremonies in life, entertainment and competition, social life, annual observances, festive ceremonies), folk-performing arts, and folk craft techniques that are especially crucial in finding out the transition process of the Japanese lifestyle.

- No. of properties in this inventory
  - Performing arts 144
  - Customs and practices 93
  - Folk craft techniques 0
Inventory 4: List of Intangible folk-cultural properties for which documentation and other protection measures should be taken

This inventory includes customs and practices, or elements of folk-performing arts, which are still crucial in finding out the transition process of the Japanese lifestyle.

More than 30% of the elements in Inventory 4 are also inscribed in Inventory 3, since they are designated as important intangible folk-cultural properties after being selected as intangible folk-cultural properties for which documentation and other measures should be taken.

- No. of properties in this inventory
  - Performing arts 343
  - Customs and practices 211
  - Folk craft techniques 0

Inventory 5: List of Holders of conservation techniques for cultural properties

This inventory includes traditional knowledge and skills that are indispensable in protecting cultural properties, and that require safeguarding measures.

As in the same way of above mentioned inventories No.1 and 2, they are recognized as “holders” of the designated elements. If all of the holders for a specific element died, the designation or selection of the element is annulled and the name is deleted from the inventory. Likewise, if no appropriate holder exists, no designation of ICH will be made.

- No. of properties and holders in this inventory
  - Individual selection
    - No. of properties 48
    - No. of holders 52

  - Preservation organization
    - No. of properties 23
    - No. of Preservation organization 24

These inventories (1~5) are normally updated once a year.

5. Measures for preservation of ICH

1) Intangible cultural properties and conservation techniques for cultural properties

To individual holders, a national subsidy (holder of important intangible properties 2,000,000 yen/year, holder of conservation techniques for cultural properties 1,106,000 yen/year) is granted to help them develop their skills or techniques, and for training prospective successors. Recognized organizations are granted partial national support for their expenses incurred training successors, etc.

In the area of traditional performing arts, there are four national theater institutions (Main Theater and National NOH- Theater in Tokyo, National BUNRAKU- Theater in Osaka, and National Theater-OKINAWA in Okinawa prefecture) in Japan. In these theaters, traditional performing arts are shown widely, and also successor training programs are carried out.

In the area of traditional craft techniques, the national government produces documentary films on the skills of important intangible cultural properties and collects works of applied art produced by the designated individual and organizations.

2) Intangible folk cultural properties

Intangible folk cultural properties have been passed down through the generations in each area by the local people. When carrying out the program for the preservation, it is required for local people to agree with the program. Therefore, the national government grants subsidies for programs by local government to preserve intangible folk cultural properties in their respective localities. National financial support is given
for the preservation program (training successors, production and repair of instruments and facilities, production of pamphlets or videos to foster wider public understanding, workshop on tradition aimed at the public, production of films or videos capturing the traditions from the expert’s perspective, etc). In addition, the subsidy outlay to one program is about 4 million yen, up from 1 million yen per year.

6. The role of the community in inventory making
Although application or permission from the community is not a necessary condition of inscription, naturally the opinions of the people in the community are consulted prior to inscribing the ICH concerned in an inventory...

Especially in the case of intangible folk cultural properties, their preservation depends on the daily involvement of preservation groups formed by local people, and the closest and direct support these groups can attain is from the local communities. If it were not for their efforts to inherit their tradition, the national government would be completely powerless to preserve it.

Since ICH is what should be protected by people in each place, in inventory- making and preservation, those people's intentions should be taken into consideration.

7. Conclusion
As shown above, Japan has had some experience in this matter. And this history was a continuation of problem generating and its correspondence. Of course, since the environment which surrounds ICH in each country differs, it may be rare for this experience to be directly helpful. If ICH is at all a symbol of the diversity of the culture in the world, the measures for its preservation should also be varied.

But, in the essence of ICH, the point that it is the culture currently held by living people is common to the world. Therefore, in the preservation of ICH, I think that the most important thought is "the respect for people who inherit ICH".