

**Sub-Regional Experts Meeting in Asia on Intangible Cultural Heritage:  
Safeguarding and Inventory-Making Methodologies**  
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## **Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan**

\*This document is the updated version of the reference material which Mr. SAITO Hirotsugu, used during “2004 Workshop on Inventory-Making for Intangible Cultural Heritage Management” (6-11 December 2004, Tokyo) organized by ACCU. Mr. Saito is a Specialist for Cultural Properties, Traditional Culture Division, Cultural Properties Department, Agency for Cultural Affairs (Bunkacho), Japan.

### **Introduction**

Japan has a broad range of cultural heritage that have been preserved and handed down over the generations. Of these, there are cultural heritage that are handed down on a national scale and those that are preserved within localities. All such heritage emerged and developed within Japan’s historical and cultural setting and are important factors in understanding the history and cultural of our country and also for people to confirm their cultural identity. Moreover, the preservation of and mutual respect for cultural heritage are vital in adding scope and richness in Japanese culture in the future.

Under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, valuable intangible cultural heritage are designated as “intangible cultural properties” or “intangible folk-cultural properties”, while traditional skills and crafts that are essential in conserving cultural properties are selected as “traditional techniques for conservation of cultural properties”. Properties that are important to Japanese culture have been either selected or designated to receive support for their preservation and public exhibition. This brochure outlines the system for protecting these intangible cultural heritage and measures taken for this purpose.

Intangible cultural heritage that have developed and are preserved in various parts of the world sprang from the historical and cultural setting of the region. To effectively preserve and promote such heritage, careful attention to the respective features, nature, and current conditions of the properties is required. Hoping this brochure would be useful for one who are engaged in promoting the protection of intangible cultural heritage.

## 1. Cultural Properties Protection System

The term “*bunka-zai* (cultural properties)” has become a common word and is used frequently in Japan today. The term was defined under law for the first time in 1950 with the enactment of the Law for the protection of Cultural Properties. 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 five categories. Combined with traditional techniques for conserving cultural properties, actions are being taken to protect these heritages.

### (1) Tangible cultural properties

Cultural properties that have a concrete form, such as architectural structures, paintings, sculptures, works of applied art, works of calligraphy, classical books, ancient documents, archeological art facts, etc. which have historical, artistic, or academic value in Japan.

### (2) Intangible cultural properties

Cultural properties that do not have a concrete form such as theatre, music and craft techniques that have historical or artistic value for Japan. Intangible cultural properties denote “skills and crafts” that have handed down by people through the generations.

### (3) Folk-Cultural properties

Folk traditions and practices, folk performance arts as well as folk craft techniques, related to food, clothing, and housing, way of life, religious beliefs, annual festivals and events, etc. (intangible folk-cultural properties), and tangible objects such as clothing implements, houses and other objects used in these traditions (tangible folk-cultural properties), that represent changes in the people’s modes of life.

### (4) Monuments

The following types of cultural properties are collectively called “monuments”.

- (a) Historic sites: Shell mounds, ancient tombs, castle or fort sites, ancient homes, and other historic sites that have outstanding historical or artistic value in Japan.
- (b) Places of scenic beauty: Sites well known for scenic beauty, such as gardens, bridges, gorges, seacoasts, mountains, etc. which have outstanding artistic or scenic value in Japan.
- (c) Animals, plants, minerals, and geological features: Animals, plants, minerals, and geographical features that have outstanding academic value in Japan.

### (5) Groups of historic buildings

Historic sites, towns and villages including castle towns, post-station towns and towns built around shrines and temples that have outstanding historical value.

In addition to the five categories, traditional techniques for conserving cultural properties are defined under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties. The term denotes traditional skills and crafts that are essential in preserving cultural properties mentioned above and that require action for their preservation.

Of the cultural properties above, “intangible cultural properties,” “intangible folk-cultural properties,” and traditional conservation techniques” are intangible cultural properties.

## 2. The History of Cultural Properties Protection in Japan

Most cultural properties in Japan have traditionally been protected by the aristocracy, feudal lords, temples and shrines, etc. however, the tumultuous change in society brought about by the Meiji Restoration endangered these properties. For this reason, the Meiji government took action and registered the “Ancient Temples and Shrines Preservation Law (1897)” and

“National Treasures Preservation Law (1929)” for the protection of tangible cultural properties.

In 1949 following the Second World War, a fire at the *Horyuji* temple *Kondo* (Golden Hall) in Nara Prefecture, a leading example of ancient Japanese architecture, destroyed invaluable murals. This promoted the government to legislate the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties the following year (1950). “Intangible cultural properties” were then recognized for the first time with the new law, promoted by the fear of loss of Japan’s arts and crafts in the face of Westernization and modernization since the Meiji Period and renewed government recognition of the importance of protection of these heritage.

The Law initially was designed to protect intangible cultural properties of significant value by subsidizing persons recognized as qualifies for preserving such properties. In 1954, the law was amended to introduce the designation of “Important Intangible Cultural Properties” and the recognition of persons skilled in such arts and crafts, to provide greater protection in this area. Priority protection of cultural properties through designation is a distinctive characteristic of Japan’s Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, covering both tangible and intangible cultural properties. In addition, traditional customs and practices have also been recognized as “intangible folk-cultural materials” to be preserved by producing records thereof.

In the amendment of 1975, “folk-cultural properties” and “traditional conservation techniques for cultural properties” were added. Intangible folk-cultural properties in this category include folk performance arts, of which important properties have been designated for active preservation efforts. In 2004, the law was amended once again to add a new sub-category “folk craft techniques” to Intangible Folk-cultural Properties.

Furthermore, traditional conservation techniques employed in repair, etc. of cultural properties require both accuracy and authenticity and have been recognized as separate from intangible cultural properties, which are values for their artistry. Active support is being provided to preserve these skills.

### **3. Administration System for Protection of Intangible Cultural Assets**

For protection of intangible cultural heritage, experts in the traditional performing arts, crafts and techniques, and folk-cultural properties are assigned to the Cultural Properties Department for designation and subsidization for Important Intangible Cultural Properties and Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Properties. The designations in these categories are reviewed by the expert panels of the Council for Cultural Affairs that consist of experts in cultural properties.

Independent Administrative Institution National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo has a Department of Performing Arts as a research body responsible for protecting intangible cultural heritage to engage in research in relevant areas and to produce records and documents.

### **4. Intangible Cultural Properties**

#### **(1) Position under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties**

Under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, “intangible cultural property” is

defined as “Art and skill employed in drama, music and applied arts, and other intangible cultural products, which possess a high historical and/or artistic value in and for Japan.” The term is used in contrast with tangible cultural properties, which denote “objects” such as architectural structures, paintings, sculptures, and works of applied art. In contrast, intangible cultural properties are performing arts, artistic skills that are held and preserved by certain individuals and organizations. In other words, the basic difference compared to tangible cultural properties is that intangible cultural properties are not works resulting from technical achievements by individuals or groups, but are actions, behaviors, and activities of people.

In addition to designation of the most important intangible cultural properties as Important Intangible Cultural Properties, the Japanese government formally recognizes individuals and groups who demonstrate artistic skills or crafts at an advanced level, and provides subsidies for projects by such skills or crafts at an advanced level, and provides subsidies for projects by such recognized individuals and groups to train successors and thus ensure the preservation of Important Intangible Cultural Properties. Persons who have been recognized as holders of these important cultural properties are called by the media as “Living National Treasures.” This more amicable, informal name has made the system of protecting intangible cultural properties widely known among the Japanese public.

In addition to designation as Important Cultural Property, similar properties that have not been designated in this category but are recognized as important for understanding the development of performing and applied arts of Japan and therefore need to be recorded and made accessible to the public, have been selected as “intangible cultural properties for which recording and other measures should be taken.” Projects to produce recordings and documentation are either conducted by the national government or through subsidies for recording and public performance exhibition projects by local governments and other organizations.

## (2) Measures for Protection of Intangible Cultural Properties

At present, designation of Important Intangible Cultural Properties and recognition of holders of such are executed in the areas of performing and applied arts. The current figures are shown in Table 1 below. To date, 116 (115) individuals have been recognized as holders of Important Intangible Cultural Properties for 84 designated intangible cultural properties. Organizations given collective recognition total 25 for 25 Important Cultural Properties.

To individual holders, a special subsidy (2million yen year) is granted to help them develop their skills or arts, and for training prospective successors. Recognized organizations are granted partial support for their expenses incurred in training successors, public access projects, etc. organized by such organizations or local governments, etc.

A typical example of the combination of recognition of individual holders of Important Intangible Cultural Property and as a collective organization is *Nohgaku*. This form of traditional performing art consist of a “Noh” musical play in which performs sing and dance to the accompaniment of Japanese flutes and drums, combined with “*Kyogen*”, a straight play characterized by wit and humor. The entire genre consists of various individual skills such as “*shite-kata*” (dramatic skills of the leading character) in Noh and “*hayashi-kata*” flute (flute performance skills). Individuals possessing each of such skills

have been recognized as holders of important intangible cultural properties, and performers and musicians in the form of art have also recognized collectively. For preservation as collective theatrical art, each of these individual holder and collective group receive separate subsidies for successor training programmes, etc. to ensure that the skill are passed on to future generations.

Similarly, individuals who possess outstanding skills in the area of craft techniques are also recognized as holders of important intangible cultural properties. Because various possesses involved in traditional crafts of pottery-making, dyeing, lacquerwork, and handmade “*washi*” paper must be preserved for completion of finished products, preservation is being promoted by recognizing the organizations to which individuals possessing such skills are affiliated.

**Table 1 Designation as Important Intangible Cultural Properties and Number of Recognized Holders (As of Nov. 30, 2005)**

	Type	Individual Designation		Collective Designation	
		No. of properties	No. of individuals	No. of properties	No. of organizations
Performing arts	Gagaku	0	0	1	1
	Nohgaku	7	12	1	1
	Bunraku	3	5	1	1
	Kabuki	5	10	1	1
	Kumi-odori	2	2	1	1
	Music	19	25	6	6
	Dance	1	3	0	0
	Engei	2	2	0	0
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>11</b>
Craft Techniques	Ceramics	12	12	3	3
	Textile weaving and dyeing	13	16(15)#	7	7
	Lacquerwork	5	7	1	1
	Metalwork	7	10	0	0
	Wood and bamboo work	2	6	0	0
	Doll making	2	2	0	0
	Doll making	3	3	3	3
	Paper making	1	1	0	0
Cut-gold leafing					
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>57(56)</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>116(115)</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>25</b>

#Figures in parentheses show actual numbers. The same individual may be a recognized holder in two areas.

In the area of performing arts, traditional arts are shown to the public and relevant documents are gathered and shown at the National Theatre (opened in 1966), which was set as a national centre for preserving and promoting Japan's traditional performing arts. It also organizes training for successors in *Nohgaku*, *bunraku*, *kabuki*, and *engei* arts. These training programmes are generally designed to train neophytes. Persons who have completed 2 to 3 years of training enter their respective fields as junior performers that support the arts.

In craft and 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. Exhibitions under the title "The Skills and Beauty of Craftsmanship in Japan Important Intangible Cultural Properties and Traditional Conservation Techniques" are held at museums nationwide.

Items selected as Intangible Cultural Properties for which recording and other measures should be taken are shown in Table 2. The number of properties selected totals 90, of which 30 are in the area of performing arts and 60 in applied arts. Records are being produced for each property either by national government or through subsidies for recording projects organized by local governments and organizations.

In like with financial support by the national government, prefectural and municipal

governments have also designated local important intangible cultural properties. The number totals 992 (as of 2002), the governments provide support for preservation, etc. depending on the conditions in each area.

**Table 2 Number of Intangible Cultural Properties for which Recording and other Measures Should be Taken. (As of Nov. 30, 2005)**

	Type	Number
Performing Arts	Nohgaku	1
	Kabuki	3
	Music	23
	Engei	3
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>30</b>

	Type	Number
Craft Techniques	Ceramics	15
	Textile waving and dyeing	14
	Lacquerwork	7
	Metalwork	10
	Woodwork	2
	Doll making	1
	Paper making	7
	Gold plating	1
	Others	3
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>60</b>

### (3) Examples of Important Intangible Cultural Properties

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

#### Performing Arts – Collective Recognition

- (a) “*Gagaku*” developed in Japan from music and dance that came to the country from China and Korea around the Nara Period (710-793 AD). As ancient music of Japan, it has been performed chiefly at courts and shrines at important events.
- (b) “*Nohgaku*” flourished in Muromachi Period (1392-1573). It consists of “Noh” that express dramatic content in highly condensed and formalized movements to the accompaniment of flutes and drums, combined with the humorous, non-musical “*Kyogen*.”
- (c) “*Ningyo-joruri bunraku*” is based on older traditions in puppet plays and reaches its zenith in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Backed by *Gidayu* songs to the shamisen (a stringed instrument), each puppet is manipulated by three persons to produce delicate, sensitive expressions of emotions.
- (d) “Kabuki” dates back to the early Edo Period (1603-1868), when various forms of music and performing arts that existed earlier were combined. It is designated by “*onna-gata*” (male impersonators performing female roles), formalized movements, and aesthetic form of stage choreography and it became immensely popular during the Edo Period.
- (e) “*Kumi-odori*” was established as a performing art in Okinawa during the reign of Ryukyu dynasty in the early 18<sup>th</sup> century. It adapts dances of Japan and China, with speech, song and dance performed as the play unfolds, to the accompaniment of Okinawa’s distinctive traditional music.

- (f) In shamisen music, “*gidayu-bushi*,” “*tokiwazu-bushi*,” and “*itshu-bushi*” have been designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties, and holders of such properties are recognized collectively.

#### Performing Arts-Individual Recognition

In *Nohgaku*, “*shite-kata*” (performance by leading character), “*waki-kata*” (performance by supporting character), and “*kyogen-kata*” (performance in *kyogen*) have been designated. In music for *Nohgaku*, performance skills in the flute, small drums, large drums, and floor drums have been designated, and holders of such skills are recognized accordingly. In Kabuki, *Ningyo-joururi bunraku* and dramatic, dance, and musical performances, the respective skills have been designated, and holders of such skills are recognized as well.

#### Craft Techniques in Applied Arts

- (a) Ceramics and pottery in Japan have been influenced by art and skills from China and the Korean Peninsula. As ceramics-related skills dating from around the 17<sup>th</sup> century, “*Iroe-jiki*” and “*Saiyu-jiki*” known for their exquisite colorings and “*Hakuji*” distinguished for depth of whiteness have been designated, and masters of such skills have been recognized as holders of Important Intangible Cultural Properties. Also, “*Kakiemon (Nigoshide)*” and “*Iro-nabeshima*” have also been given group recognition. Individual recognition has also been given to individuals for “*Neriage-de*” for the creation of pottery by combining soils of different colors and shades; “*Tetsuyu-jiki*,” which is designated for its unique blacks, browns, and persimmon reds created using iron-rich glazes; and “*Bizen-yaki*” has been given group recognition.
- (b) In textiles, “*Yushoku-orimono*” that developed in the Japanese style in the Heian Period after coming from China in the Nara Period, Ra “known for its very fine wave, “*Tsumugi-ori*” silk distinguished for its rustic finish, Tsuzure-ori “used to produce a wider range of complex pictorial narratives, “*Yuzen*” known for its beauty of shade and aesthetic dyeing skills, and “*Edo-komon*” that shows patterns based on elaborate stencil with a single colour, all have skilled individuals recognized as holders of Intangible Cultural Properties. As distinctive local dyeing and waving arts, “*Yuki-tsumugi*,” “*Kurume-kasuri*,” “*Miyako-jofu*,” etc. have been given group recognition.
- (c) In lacquerwork, “*Makie*” that portrays pictures with powdered gold and silver on lacquer, “*Raden*” art that inlays lustrous mother-of-pearl on lacquer, “*Chinkin*” in which fine sheets of gold are embedded into engraved grooves on lacquer, and various other lacquerwork skills have been designated as Intangible Cultural Properties, and holders of these skills recognized. Also, “*Wajima-nuri*” has been given designation and group recognition.
- (d) In metalwork, “*Nihonto*”, the Japanese sword and based on sword smithery not found elsewhere in the world “*token-kenma*,” “*chukin*” forging in which molten metals is poured into a mold, “*chanoyu-gama*,” that employs this forging skills in the manufacture of pots for tea ceremonies, and “choking” decorating on techniques employed for ornamental purposes have been designated, and holders of these skills have been recognized.
- (e) Wood and bamboo work in Japan reflect that rich natural environment with its wide range of trees and bamboos. “Woodwork craftsmanship” such as cabinet making and lathing utilizing the characteristics and distinctive features of various types of wood and “Bamboo work technique” for producing baskets, etc. utilizing the strength, resilience, and rustic beauty of bamboo have been designated, and holders of traditional skills have been recognized.
- (f) Dolls were made in ancient times as toys or religious symbols but began to be produced for art appreciation in the modern age, achieving artistic refinement. “*Isho-ningyo*”

created with wood and solidified paulownia-wood powered and clothed in various customs have been designated as Intangible Cultural Property, and a holders has been recognized.

- (g) *Bachiru* is a skill of engraving in ivory after dyeing in red, blue, green, etc. that came from China to Japan in Nara Period. After waning for some time, it resurged and gained designation, with skilled master receiving recognition.
- (h) Paper-making is a traditional that has existed in Japan since ancient times: the paper is made with fiber from the break of such trees as paper mulberry and *ganpi*. Designation has been given to “*Echizen-hosho*” and “*Tosa-tengujoshi*”, to skilled papermaking are recognized. Other local distinctive skills in this area that have won designation and recognition of holders are “*Hosokawa-shi*,” “*Honmino-shi*,” and “*Kekishu-banshi*.”

## 5. Intangible Folk-Cultural Properties

### (1) Position under the law for the Protection of Cultural Properties

Under the Law, “folk-cultural properties” are defined as “manners and customs related to foods, clothing, and housing, to occupations, religious faiths, festivals etc., to folk-entertainments and clothes, implements, houses, and other objects used therefore, which are indispensable for understanding of changes in our people’s modes of life.” These folk practices and performing arts described in the above-mentioned definition are “intangible” folk-cultural properties that are regard as especially important in understanding the development of Japanese lifestyle.

Of intangible folk-cultural properties, customs and practices regard typical in representing basic lifestyle culture and important folk performing arts that represent the evolution of performing arts in Japan have been designated Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Properties to promote preservation for future generations.

In contrast to the designation of craftsmanship and skills where holders of such skills are recognized intangible cultural properties, the intangible folk-cultural properties are only designated. This is due to the fact that intangible folk-cultural properties are the lifestyles and customs of the popular folk and are preserved through close links to everyday living and hence so not require recognition of successors to carry on these traditions. If a role in a certain annual festivity or folk performing arts must be performed by a child, for example, the chills must be replaced by another of the right age each year, in which case the recognition of a successor would have to be altered accordingly.

As for intangible cultural properties, intangible folk-cultural properties other than Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Properties are selected as requiring measures to produce recordings and documentation either by the national government or through subsidies for recording or public access programmes organized by local governments and other organizations.

### (2) Measures for Protection of Intangible Folk-Cultural Properties

At present, there are 237 Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Properties and 554 intangible folk-cultural properties for which recording and other measure should be taken. These properties are classified by customs and performing arts and can be organized as shown in Table 3, depending on the distinctive features of each cultural property.

**Table 3 Designation and Selection of Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Properties  
(As of Nov. 30, 2005)**

	Type	Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Property	Intangible Folk-Cultural Property Requiring Recording, etc.
Customs and practices	Manufacturing and Livelihood	6	49
	Formal ceremonies in life	6	15
	Entertainment and competition	6	13
	Social life (folk wisdom)	2	13 (4)
	Annual observances	23	34
	Festive ceremonies (beliefs)	50	87 (32)
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>93</b>	<b>211</b>
Folk performing arts	Kagura	27	58
	Dengaku	24	40
	Furyu	32	115
	Katarimono & Shukufuku-gei	5	8
	Ennen & Okonai	7	14
	Torai-gei & Butai-gei	34	76
	Others	15	32
	<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>144</b>	<b>343</b>
	<b>Total</b>	<b>237</b>	<b>554</b>

For preservation of these intangible folk-cultural properties, successors must be trained to hand them down to future generations. Also, intangible folk-cultural properties require assurance of “venue” to demonstrate the importance of their existence, since they appear in front of viewing public only when performed in the appropriate setting. Moreover, it is essential that people other than the protectors of the folk-cultural property, especially in the local community, need to understand the importance of preservation for the cultural property to be kept alive. Also, evolution of intangible folk-cultural properties in step with changes in lifestyle makes it necessary to conduct studies and publish reports such changes and to produce video and audio recordings of folk-cultural properties.

In view of these circumstances, the Japanese government grant subsidies for programmes by local governments to preserve Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Properties in their respective localities. Specifically, subsidies are granted for the programmes for training successors, production and repair of instruments and facilities essential for preservation and public access of such traditions, production of pamphlets and videos to foster wider public understanding, and workshops on tradition aimed at the public in general. Financial support is also given for the production of films and videos capturing the traditions from the expert’s perspective.

For designation of various cultural properties, meticulous research is necessary from a national perspective. The large number of intangible folk-cultural properties found in Japan (numbering thirty thousand at least) are basically “dynamic and living” traditions and hence need research on specific properties and nation wide research and assessment.

For this reason, the national government conducts direct studies and plans nationwide survey to be implemented by the various local governments with national government subsidies.

Because of the close links with everyday living, customs designated as intangible folk-cultural properties arts are meant to be seen by the public. Although it is important for public performances to be held at designated times of year, greater public access through performances at theatres, etc. helps stimulate the desire to preserve the tradition among successors and foster public understanding of folk-cultural properties. For this reason, the Agency for Cultural Affairs subsidizes various programmes assembling folk performing arts from across Japan. In addition, unique performing arts are invited from overseas for exhibition alongside Japanese folk performing arts in the annual International Folk Performing Arts Festival to promote mutual and international goodwill.

### (3) Examples of Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Properties

Examples of Important Intangible Folk-Cultural Properties are shown below.

#### Customs and practices

- (a) In customs and practices related to manufacturing and livelihood, designation has been given to “*Sado no Kuruma-taue*” (Niigata Prefecture) and “*Mibu no Hana-taue*” (Hiroshima Prefecture), among others. These are ceremonies held in designated rice paddies to pray to the god of the fields, in which girls dressed in attractive clothing plant rice seedlings according to protocol while the rice-planting song is sung. The ceremonies thus preserve the old rice-planting traditions of various parts of Japan.
- (b) Ceremonies in life are traditional protocols and ceremonies held to mark certain stages of life such as coming of age. In “*Izuyama no Tohai gyoji*” of Aomori Prefecture, boys of the village aged 7 to 9 climb a certain mountain, while “*Kawamata no genpuku-shiki*” of Tochigi Prefecture is designated as a unique coming-of age ceremony.
- (c) In entertainment and competition, various forms of tug-of-war competition are held at certain times of the year as a way to predict the harvest or encourage of success in fishing. Examples are “*Wariwano no O-tsunahiki*” (Akita Prefecture) and “*Tajima-Kutani no Shobu Tunahiki*” (Hyogo Prefecture).
- (d) In social customs (folk wisdom), “*Joshu-shirakubo no ochakou*” (Gunma Prefecture) has been granted designation. In the ceremony, the local resident welcome the gods and drink each other’s tea to read the tea and hence predict bounty in their lives.
- (e) Designation in annual observances is given to traditional events that typify the season. In “*Oga no namahage*” of Akita prefecture, young men dressed as ogres visit homes at the start of the New Year to bless them. Also, “*Shimakamogogou no Bonmatsuri Gyoji*” of Mie Prefecture is a typical “bon” event organized to welcome the spirits of ancestors, pray to them, and to send them off at the end.
- (f) In festival ceremonies (beliefs), typical traditional have been designated. An example is “*Kyoto Gion Festival’s Yamaboko Gyoji*” (Kyoto Prefecture), which is a festival known for its 1,000-year history and lavishly decorated “yamaboko” float and is the origin of similar festivals in other parts of Japan. “*Hirosaki nebuta*” (Aomori Prefecture) and “*Aomori neputa*” (Aomori Prefecture) have gigantic samurai dolls made of “*washi*” paper pasted on bamboo and wooden frames which are paraded in grand ceremony.

### Folk performing arts

- (a) Kagura is a collective name for performing arts held from ancient times to invite the gods. As Kagura plays on mythical tales, “*Ohmono Kagura*” (Shimane Prefecture) and “*Bichu Kagura*” (Okayama Prefecture) have been designated as intangible folk-cultural properties. In addition, “*Hanamatsuri*” (Aichi Prefecture) in which hot water is sprayed on on-lookers and “*Tnryu-mura no Shimotsuki Kagura*” (Nagano Prefecture) have been designated. There are also “*Hayachine Kagura*” (Iwate Prefecture) featuring the sacred animal “*shishi*” and “*Ise Dai-Kagura*” (Mie Prefecture).
- (b) *Dengaku* is a form of performing art that was popular from the late Heian Period to Kamakura Period (12<sup>th</sup> century) and is a collective name for all performances that succeeded these traditions or are related to rice cultivation. For example, “*Mikawa no Dengaku*” (Aichi Prefecture) that preserves the performing art of the 12<sup>th</sup> century and “*Nhishiura no Dengaku*” (Shizuoka Prefecture) have been designated. Those related to rice farming are “*Itabashi no ta-asobi*” (Metropolis of Tokyo) in which rice cultivation work for the entire year is performed with song and movements and “*Fujimori no ta-asobi*” (Shizuoka Prefecture), as well as “*Sumiyoshi no Otaue*” (Osaka Prefecture) in which rice planting and various planting and various art performances are conducted in the shrine paddy and “*Aki no Hayashi-da*” (Hiroshima Prefecture) in which rice planting is done to the rhythm of drums.
- (c) *Furyu* denotes the elegant and sophisticated, and is collective term that refers to group performances by dancers in lavish attire. Intangible folk-cultural properties designated in this area are “*yoshihirogaku*” (Fukuoka Prefecture) in which group dancer is performed to the rhythm of drums, “*Shiraishi Odori*” (Okayama Prefecture) in which dancers dance at bon festivals and while praying, and “*Takinomiya no nenbutsu odori*” (Kagawa Prefecture) and “*Niino no bonodori*” (Nagano Prefecture). There are dances that were popular in the middle ages such as “*Chakkirako*” (Kanagawa Prefecture) and “*Ayako-mai*” (Niigata Prefecture) and dances performed in parades and in various customs such as “*Yamakita no Omineiri*” (Kanagawa Prefecture) and “*Yasurai-bana*” (Kyoto Prefecture).
- (d) *Katarimono* and *shukufuku-gei* are performances in which stories are told in singsong fashion and performances which are held at New Year, etc. To pray for the happiness of people while chanting fortuitous words. This stems from the old Japanese belief in the “*koto-dama*” that word have spiritual power and will take concrete form once they are vocalized. Designated intangible cultural properties include “*Daimoku-tate*” storytelling (Nara Prefecture) and “*Kouwaka-mai*” (Fukuoka Prefecture) and New Year celebrations of visiting homes in “*Echizen Manzai*” (Fukui Prefecture), “*Mikawa Manzai*” (Aichi Prefecture), and “*Owari Manzai*” (Aichi Prefecture).
- (e) *Ennen* and *okonai* are grand performances that were held at large temples between the late Heian Period and Kamakura-Muromachi periods (12<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> centuries). These traditions are handed down as “*Motsuji no ennen*” (Iwate Prefecture) and “*Nagataki no ennen*” (Gifu Prefecture).
- (f) *Torai-gei* and *butai-gei* are performing arts that derived from ancient China and took root as “*gigaku*,” “*bugaku*,” and performing arts originally based on *Nohgaku*, puppet plays, and kabuki that evolved into local performing arts. Examples designated as folk-cultural properties are “*Kiraigo*” (Chiba Prefecture), “*Dainichido bugaku*” (Akita Prefecture), “*Kurokawa-noh*” (Yamagata Prefecture), “*Mibu-kyogen*” (Kyoto Prefecture), and “*Awaji Ningyo Jyoururi*” (Hyogo Prefecture).
- (g) Others include collective traditions in which various performing arts are shown in succession and those that defy classification. Examples are “*Tarama no Honen*”

*Matsuri*” (Okinawa Prefecture), “*Kaminari-matsuri*” (Nagano Prefecture), “*Ainu Koshiki Buyo*” (Hokkaido), and “*Iejima no Muraodori*” (Okinawa Prefecture).

## 6. Cultural Property Conservation Techniques

### (1) Position under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties

The Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties states that “The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology may select as traditional conservation techniques these traditional techniques and craftsmanship which is indispensable for the conservation of cultural properties and must be preserved with positive measures”.

Since most of the work of art and architectural structures in Japan are made of relatively weak materials such as wood, paper lacquer, etc., they have been preserved through regular and ad hoc repairs. For this reason, the preservation of tangible cultural properties requires highly competent craftsmen to perform routine repairs. Moreover, there are special implements and materials necessary for repair, and hence techniques for producing such tools and materials are needed. For intangible cultural properties, skills to produce and repair musical instruments, costumes, and stage props are needed for exhibition and preservation of the performing arts. Similarly, techniques for making tools used in the production of works of applied arts and production of raw materials are necessary.

Traditional skills and techniques vital for the preservation of cultural properties are easily lost due to social and economic changes, decline in demand, change in industrial structure, and changes in social concepts. Hence, the national government has selected techniques and skills necessary for preservation, and recognizes individual who have acquired the correct skills and are versed in the art as the holders of such skills and organizations that are dedicated to preserving such selected techniques and which can organize suitable programmes to promote preservation of techniques, etc.

Regarding implements and materials that support properties cultural properties, protection is not necessary adequate. Tools and raw materials are also being endangered and the number of workers involved in their protection is declining, and proactive measures to secure the supply of tools and raw materials are necessary. For this objective, the Agency for Cultural Affairs commenced studies on such implements and materials in 1997 to study methods of securing their supply.

### (2) Measures to protect selected conservation techniques

The state of selection and recognition of cultural property conservation techniques is shown in Table 4.

**Table 4 Number of cases and conservation technique selection and recognition of technique holders. (As of Nov. 30, 2005)**

67 cases	52 individual technique holders
	24 (22) Preservation organizations

\*Some organizations are given multiple recognition. The figure in parentheses is the actual number of organizations.

To protect these selected techniques, the national government engages in recording and

training successors, etc. and subsidizes programmes for mastering skills and training successors organized by technique holders and preservation organizations.

### (3) Examples of Selected Conservation Techniques

The following are examples of selected techniques.

#### <Architecture-related techniques>

Traditional architectural technologies include “structural woodwork craftsmanship,” “structural coloring” skill, “roof tile production” for forging tiles to cover roof of traditional structures, “measurement” skills for producing hinges and joints of traditional structures, and “*hinoki* and *Kaki* roofing” on traditional structures.

#### <Techniques related to works of fine art>

Selected techniques include skills for repairing paintings and works of calligraphy that are leading cultural properties of Japan, “*washi*” paper production for traditional interior furnishings, ancient method of producing furnishings, production of traditional interior furnishings, “*karakami*” production, and skills in producing furnishing repair paper tools, as well as skills in replacing traditional sculptures and works of applied arts (woodwork, lacquerware, armor, etc.) and production wood boxes for storing works of fine art.

#### <Techniques related to intangible cultural properties>

In the area of performing arts, skills for producing musical instruments, such as *gagaku* instrument repair, flute production and repair, and string production, as well as skills in repairing *Nohgaku* masks essential for *Nohgaku* performances have been selected. In applied arts, many skills are identical to those employed for tangible cultural properties but also include the production of “*makie*” brushes and lacquer brushes used in lacquerwork; traditional lacquer production and refining, and tools needed to gather lacquer. Others include production of handmade paper making tools and “*tamahagane*” production for production of manufacturing for Japanese swords.

## Conclusion

As shown above, outstanding intangible cultural heritage in Japan are produced under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties as “intangible cultural properties,” “intangible folk-cultural properties,” and “cultural property conservation techniques.” Of these, those regarded as important have been designated and selected by the State for protection and financially assisted in order to preserve the traditions. The law protecting intangible cultural properties marks its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary five years ago, and the protection of intangible folk-cultural properties and conservation techniques was initiated 30 years ago in the present form. In understanding of these traditional culture must be instilled in children to enrich their lives. For this reason, classes on traditional culture and the use of Japanese musical instruments in music classes has been started in school education from April 2002.

Intangible cultural properties face numerous obstacles brought on by industrial changes, diversification of values, etc. that have weakened the foundation for preserving traditions, as well as the need to promote international exchange. In order to promote these cultural heritage as individual properties that must be handed down to future generations, Japan will continue to study appropriate protection measures in line with the times, based on good practices found in the rest of the world.