

Safeguarding Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan :Systems, Schemes and Activities



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Preface

- A little notice on vocabulary
 - Intangible Cultural Properties: in the Law of Japan (translation of Japanese term '*Mukei Bunkazai*')
 - Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH): under the framework of UNESCO
 - Includes wider subject than 'Intangible Cultural Properties'
 - In practical usage, ICH collectively means these categories:
 - Intangible Cultural Properties
 - Intangible Folk Cultural Properties
 - Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties

History of the Law and the Political System





History of the Law and the Political System

- 1950: enactment of the “**Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties**” (*Bunkazai Hogo Hô*)
 - ‘**Intangible Cultural Properties**’ as a category
 - Beginning of preservation of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan
 - Subjects of Intangible Cultural Properties were limited to those which are **in danger of disappearance**.



History of the Law and the Political System

- 1954: first major amendment of the Law
 - Change of definition of Intangible Cultural Properties
 - In danger of disappearance
⇒ High historical or artistic value
 - Two ways of approach
 - **‘Designation’ of ‘Important Intangible Cultural Properties’** (especially important)
 - **‘Selection’ of ‘Intangible Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures’**



History of the Law and the Political System

- 1954: first major amendment of the Law
 - **‘Folk Materials’** as a new category
 - Important for understanding the transition of ways of life of Japanese people
 - Consist of both tangible and intangible
 - **‘Intangible Folk Materials’**
 - **‘Selection’ of ‘Intangible Folk Materials requiring documentation and other measures’**
 - **No ‘designation’**, because by nature it changes its form along with social changes.



History of the Law and the Political System

- 1975: second major amendment of the Law
 - ‘Folk Materials’ changes its name to **‘Folk Cultural Properties’**
 - **‘Intangible Folk Cultural Properties’**
 - **‘Designation’ of ‘Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties’** (especially important)
 - **‘Selection’ of ‘Intangible Folk Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures’**
 - ‘Folk performing arts’
 - had been regarded as Intangible Cultural Properties before
 - placed as a type of Intangible Folk Cultural Properties hereafter



History of the Law and the Political System

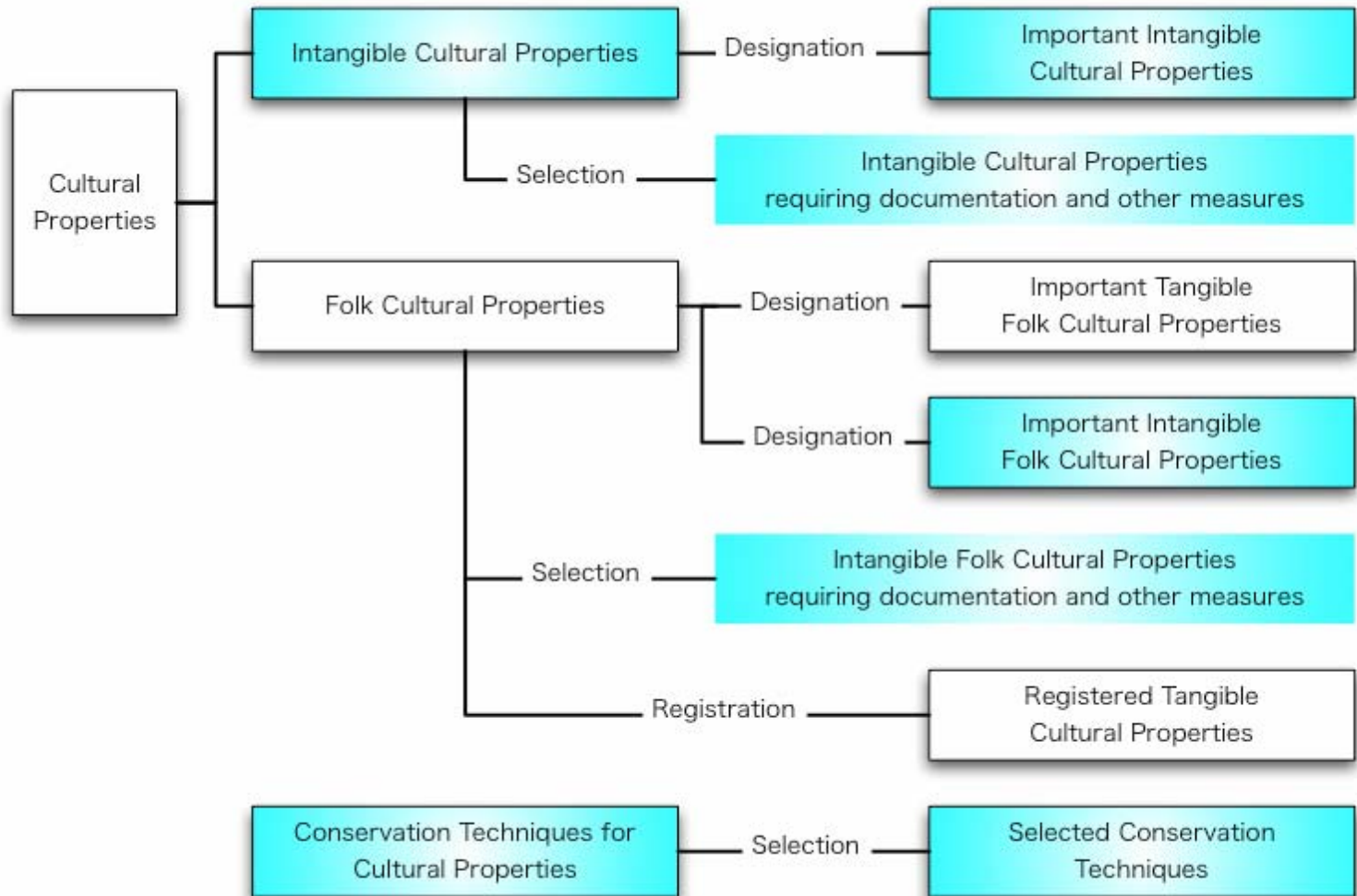
- 1975: second major amendment of the Law
 - **‘Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties’** as a new subject for preservation
 - NOT the cultural properties themselves
 - BUT important and indispensable **techniques for the conservation of cultural properties**
 - e.g. Traditional technique of gathering lacquer is indispensable for making lacquer ware*
 - * Craft technique of lacquer ware is designated as Important Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Current System and Activities for Preservation



Current System and Activities for Preservation

Schematic Diagram of Intangible Cultural Heritage





1) Intangible Cultural Properties

■ Types of properties

– **Performing Arts**

Gagaku, Noh, Bunraku, Kabuki, Kumiodori, Music, Dance, Engei

* *Noh* (*Nôgaku* theatre: 2001), *Bunraku* (*Bunraku* puppet theatre: 2003) and *Kabuki* (2005) are proclaimed as 'Masterpiece of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity' by UNESCO

– **Craft Techniques**

Ceramics, Textile weaving and dying, Lacquer work, Metalwork, Wood and bamboo work, Doll making, Papermaking, Cut-gold leafing

■ Definition

- intangible cultural assets, which possess a **high historical or artistic value** in and for this country



1) Intangible Cultural Properties

- Two ways of approach
 - ‘**Designation**’ as ‘**Important Intangible Cultural Properties**’ (especially important)
 - ‘**Selection**’ as ‘**Intangible Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures**’
- Three ways of ‘**recognition**’ of holder or holders
 - Individual recognition (a person recognized as individual holder commonly called ‘**Living National Treasure**’)
 - Collective recognition
 - Group recognition



1) Intangible Cultural Properties

- Activities for preservation
 - Special grant for recognized individual holders
 - Subsidy for training of successors
 - Subsidy for the activity of opening the properties (or records of properties) to the public
 - Training workshop of traditional performing arts at the National Theatre of Japan
 - Audio-Visual documentation of Selected Intangible Cultural Properties.

etc...

1) Intangible Cultural Properties

Numbers of designation and recognition (As of March 1, 2007)

	Individual recognition		Collective or group recognition	
	No. of designation	Holders	No. of designation	Collectives /groups of holders
Performing arts	38	53	11	11
Craft techniques	44	57	14	14
Total	82	110	25	25



2) Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

■ Types of properties

– **Manners and customs**

- related to food, clothing, housing, occupation, belief, annual events, etc.

– **Folk Performing Arts**

– **Folk Techniques***

* Newly added in 2005

■ Definition

- indispensable for understanding the transitions of ways of life of the people in this country



2) Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

- Two ways of approach
 - ‘**Designation**’ as ‘**Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties**’ (especially important)
 - ‘**Selection**’ as ‘**Intangible Folk Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures**’
- **NO recognition** of holder or holders
 - Because most of Intangible Folk Cultural Properties are transmitted by the ordinary people
 - Just identify the group which is appropriate for taking care of its preservation (commonly called ‘preservation group’ or, in Japanese, ‘*Hozonkai*’)



2) Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

■ Activities for preservation

– National government can give financial support to the programs for the preservation of Important Intangible Cultural Properties such as:

- Restoration, or disaster prevention of facilities
- Repair and production of instruments
- Post-disaster recovery of facilities
- Training of successors
- On-site presentation

etc...



2) Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

■ Activities for preservation

- National government can subsidize a part of expenses of programs for preservation, even the absence of designation, such as:
 - Familiarization activities
 - Holding of training workshops, lectures, etc.
 - Field research
- National government can conduct by himself, or can subsidize a part of expenses of programs for preservation such as:
 - Documentation by means of written materials, photos, notations, etc.
 - Audio-Visual documentation
 - * These measures should be taken especially for the selected Intangible Folk Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures

2) Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

Numbers of designation (As of March 1, 2007)

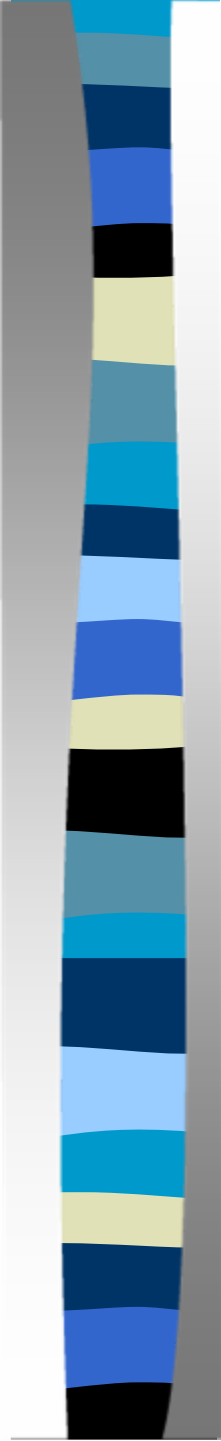
	No. of designation
Manners and customs	97
Folk performing arts	146
Folk techniques	3
Total	246

Numbers of selection (As of March 1, 2007)

	No. of designation
Manners and customs	214
Folk performing arts	346
Total	560



Shiramazu Festival (Chiba Prefecture)
Designated as Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties
(Manners and Customs)



Hanamatsuri (Aichi Prefecture)
Designated as Important
Intangible Folk Cultural Properties
(Folk Performing Arts)





Kazusabori (Chiba Prefecture), Designated as Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties (Folk Techniques)

Organizations for Preserving Intangible Cultural Properties





Organizations

■ Agency for Cultural Affairs (ACA)

- Established in 1968
 - By merger of the Cultural Bureau of the Ministry of Education and the Commission for Protection of Cultural Properties
- Two major assignments
 - Promoting culture and arts
 - Preserving and utilizing cultural properties
- **Take initiative** of the policy for preserving ICH in Japan



Organizations

■ National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo

- History
 - Established in 1930 as the institute of art research
 - Reorganized in 1952 as the institute for cultural properties
 - Reorganized in 2001 as an Independent administrative institution
- Engaging the basic and applied research for preserving cultural properties (both tangible and intangible)
- Only research institute which has the **department of Intangible Cultural Heritage** in Japan



Organizations

■ National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo

- Conducting various research projects in order to preserving ICH in Japan
- Undertaking the task for preservation of ICH such as:
 - Documentation
 - Consultation
 - Collecting related materials
 - Making databases
 - Awareness raising
 - International cooperation



Organizations

■ National Theatres

- Managed by **Japan Arts Council**
- 5 theatres concerning traditional performing arts
 - **National Theatre**
 - **National Engei Hall**
 - **National Noh Theatre**
 - **National Bunraku Theatre**
 - **National Theatre Okinawa**



Organizations

■ National Theatres

- Put the traditional performing arts on stage
- Manage the **successor-training course** of traditional performing arts
- **Traditional Performing Arts Information Centre**
 - As an annex of the National Theatre



Organizations

■ Museums

National museums, local museums and non-governmental museums

- Permanent exhibition of traditional art craft
- Special exhibition of traditional art craft
- Workshops and demonstrations of craft techniques

■ **‘Exhibition of Japanese Traditional Art Craft’**

- Started in 1954, 54th exhibition will be held in 2007.
- Contest style, nationwide touring exhibition.



Organizations

■ Local government

– As implementing bodies of the activities for preserving Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

- Most of the local government, both at prefectural and municipality level, have their own person in charge of preserving Cultural Properties (usually in the Board of Education)
- Many of the local government have their own ‘Museum of History and Folklore’

* **Regional characteristics** are one of the biggest significance of Intangible Folk Cultural Properties.

Conclusion





Conclusion

- Characteristic of preservation activities in Japan
 - **Encouragement**
 - **Indirect support** (financial, opportunity, place, resources, etc.)
 - **Emphasis of documentation**
- * Intangible Cultural Heritage is embodied, expressed, and ensured by the living people.
 - Don't restrict their independent activities.
 - Think about what we can do for living with heritage, in cooperation with holders of heritage.



Conclusion

NOT to order the people who hold those heritage to conserve it,

BUT to help the people to hand their heritage down to the next generation by themselves.



For further information...

- Agency for Cultural Affairs

www.bunka.go.jp/english/

- National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Tokyo

www.tobunken.go.jp/index_e.html

- English translation of the “Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties” in Japan (not authorized, for personal use)

www.tobunken.go.jp/~kokusen/ENGLISH/DATA/Htmlfg/japan/japan01.html

- National Theatre of Japan

www.ntj.jac.go.jp/english/index.html