

DECISION 13.COM 10.b.19

The Committee

1. Takes note that Japan has nominated **Raiho-shin, ritual visits of deities in masks and costumes** (No. 01271) for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

Raiho-shin rituals take place annually in various regions of Japan – especially in the Tohoku, Hokuriku, Kyushu and Okinawa regions – on days that mark the beginning of the year or when the seasons change. Such rituals stem from folk beliefs that deities from the outer world – the Raiho-shin – visit communities and usher in the new year or new season with happiness and good luck. During the rituals, local people dressed as deities in outlandish costumes and frightening masks visit houses, admonishing laziness and teaching children good behaviour. The head of the household treats the deities to a special meal to conclude the visit, and in some communities the rituals take place in the streets. In some communities, men of a certain age become the Raiho-shin, while in others women play such roles. Because the rituals have developed in regions with different social and historical contexts, they take diverse forms, reflecting different regional characteristics. By performing the rituals, local people – notably children – have their identities moulded, develop a sense of affiliation to their community, and strengthen ties among themselves. In accordance with their ancestors' teachings, community members share responsibilities and cooperate in preparing and performing the rituals, acting as the practitioners responsible for transmitting the related knowledge.

2. Decides that, from the information included in the file, the nomination satisfies the following criteria for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

R.1: The file provides a very clear description of the element, highlighting its strong family and community nature as well as the diversity of its forms. The element plays an important role in children's upbringing; it teaches them about moral behaviour, strengthens bonds with other family members and promotes respect for local traditions. Through collaboration and sharing, community identity is fostered and continually transmitted.

R.2: The inscription of the element would raise awareness about the inclusiveness of intangible cultural heritage and its ability to transcend gender divisions and bring generations together. Raiho-shin is practised in different regions of Japan and respects local historical, natural and social contexts; cultural diversity is therefore intrinsic to it. As such, it also testifies to human creativity, as illustrated by the diverse forms the masks and local rituals take.

R.3: The past and current efforts to safeguard Raiho-shin rituals attest to the long-term commitment of the local communities to protecting and transmitting the element, with local safeguarding associations and the National Council for the Safeguarding and Promotion of Raiho-shin Rituals taking the lead role. The well-defined safeguarding measures proposed draw on past initiatives and include the transmission, identification and promotion of the element. The file clearly demonstrates the communities' involvement in planning the proposed safeguarding measures and their central role in their implementation.

R.4: The nomination file clearly describes the participation of community members at all stages of its preparation, highlighting the discussions and meetings held. The local communities are represented by their associations, local governments and the National Council for the Safeguarding and Promotion of Raiho-shin Rituals and they all granted their free, prior and informed consent.

R.5: As Raiho-shin is practised in ten distinct locations and known by different names, the ten ritual visits of deities in masks and costumes were included separately in the Inventory of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan between 1977 and 2017. The description of the element is sufficient and documentary evidence from the national inventory is provided, covering all the necessary information. The community members were actively involved in creating and updating the inventory.

3. Inscribes **Raiho-shin, ritual visits of deities in masks and costumes** on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity;
4. Congratulates the State Party for submitting a well-prepared, clearly structured nomination file and commends it for delivering a video which reflects all the key aspects of the element and allows viewers to understand the element in detail;
5. Takes note that the present inscription replaces the 2009 inscription of **Koshikijima no Toshidon**, in conformity with Chapter I.6 of the Operational Directives.