



United Nations
Educational, Scientific and
Cultural Organization




Intangible
Cultural
Heritage

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The Committee

1. Takes note that Japan has nominated **Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan** (No. 01059) for inscription on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity:

In cities and towns throughout Japan, float festivals are held by communities annually to pray to the gods for peace and protection from natural disasters. The element of Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals encompasses 33 representative examples in various regions throughout Japan showcasing the diversity of local cultures. They involve the collaborative efforts of various sections of the community and as a traditional practice are an important aspect of the cultural identity of participants. Men, women, the young and elderly from cities and other parts of the area share responsibility for the organization and running of the festivals. This includes every step from the design and construction of the floats that reflect the diversity of local culture, to the accompanying music and overall event coordination. The Takaoka Mikurumayama Festival, for example, involves residents from the city centre assembling the floats while those from surrounding areas are in charge of pulling the constructs and playing the music. Tasks cater for specific ages with senior bearers providing guidance to those less experienced and classes run for young people. For instance, for the Ueno Tenjin Festival participants first learn how to play the music (they are referred to as hayashikata), they then progress to steering the floats (tekogata), guarding them (keigoyaku) and finally, managing the festival (saihaiyaku).

2. Decides that, from the information included in the file, the nomination satisfies the following criteria:

R.1: The float festivals are cultural social practices, rituals and festive events in which all members of the communities get together to pray for peace in the communities and for protection from disasters. The festivals provide the bearers and practitioners of the element (all inhabitants of the 33 cities/towns where the selected float festivals take place) with a sense of identity and continuity and artistic creativity. Transmission is ensured through families and 'safeguarding associations' in each of the 33 locations. Community members are involved since adolescence, gradually mastering the required skills. Efforts to plan for the environmental sustainability of the element could provide an example of best practice: the file describes how the communities concerned secure the necessary trees for float-making in a sustainable manner and how to restore the landscape of the area once the trees are felled: in Hita City, for example, the municipal authorities, the safeguarding association, forestry associations and citizens planted 1,000 red pine saplings in 2008 to be used for the wheels of the floats in the next 100 years. The file also presents an example of the float festival helping the community recover from some of the after-effects of the Great East Japan Earthquake of March 2011;

R.2: The file indicates that inscription would show how elements of intangible cultural heritage could develop teamwork, creativity and mutual understanding within and among communities. At the national level, inscription would raise awareness of the importance of safeguarding other similar events in Japan. The file states that the participatory nomination process has in itself promoted understanding among communities concerned and that inscription would encourage them in further

cooperation in diversity – given the peculiarities of each of the 33 festivals. The float festivals provide an example of artistic diversity and creativity. Its inscription would promote respect for human creativity;

- R.3: The file indicates that communities have long ensured the viability of the element, with their efforts led by the ‘safeguarding associations’, implemented by the communities concerned in cooperation with state actors (e.g. publicity, classes for children, archival research, preservation and protection). No changes are foreseen in terms of future safeguarding measures and the National Association for the Preservation of Float Festivals will monitor the impact of inscription. The file states that the communities concerned have been directly involved in the planning of the proposed measures and that they will remain actively involved in implementing them, with governmental support;
- R.4: The communities concerned and local governments related to the 33 float festivals actively participated throughout the entire process of elaborating the extended nomination of the float festival and consented to the nomination out of their own free will. The statements certifying the consent of the communities concerned are attached to this nomination. There are no restrictions on access to any aspects of the festivals;
- R.5: The 33 float festivals were included between 1977 and 2015 in the national inventory with the active participation of communities concerned. The Japanese Agency for Cultural Affairs is responsible for maintaining the inventory and every year, the inventory is updated with the participation of members of the community concerned. The inventory appended to this nomination file provides documentary evidence of the dates on which all 33 festivals were registered.
3. Inscribes **Yama, Hoko, Yatai, float festivals in Japan** on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity;
 4. Commends the submitting State for resubmitting this nomination as an extension at the national level of an element previously inscribed on the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity;
 5. Further commends the submitting State for the attention given to the environmental impact of the proposed element and for highlighting measures taken to ensure the sustainable use of natural resources associated with the element;
 6. Takes note that the present inscription replaces the 2009 inscriptions respectively of **Hitachi Fuyumono** and that of **Yamahoko, the float ceremony of the Kyoto Gion festival**, in conformity with Chapter I.6 of the Operational Directives.