

The skills and techniques for restoring traditional buildings in Japan involve the use of delicate natural materials such as wood, grass and earth to create earthquake- and typhoon-resistant structures with rich architectural spaces. Conservative restoration is indispensable for historic heritage buildings such as Horyu-ji Temple. This represents advanced skills and techniques for realizing harmony and unity between a building's existing wooden parts and those that must be replaced with new ones. While keeping tradition alive, it has developed through creative efforts under an organization spanning multiple fields of expertise and revolving around a *toryo* (master craftsman).

Conservative restoration is carried out at appropriate intervals, thus realizing the transmission of historic heritage buildings and techniques, and also serving as an event for confirming community ties and history. Cycles of growing and harvesting materials such as timber, Japanese cypress bark, thatching, lacquer and rush realize the conservation of diverse forests and grasslands, and contribute to sustainable development.

Through Inscription on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, "Traditional skills, techniques and knowledge for the conservation and transmission of wooden architecture in Japan" promises to serve as an example of the conservation and transmission of intangible cultural heritage supporting Japan's wooden architecture and architectural culture, promote technical exchange and closer dialogue with architectural craftsmen and experts around the world, and contribute significantly to efforts in international society for the conservation of intangible cultural heritage.

Inscribed on the
Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity

Traditional skills, techniques and knowledge

for the conservation and transmission of
wooden architecture in Japan

- Roofing with Japanese cypress bark and wooden shingles
- Roofing with *kawara* tiles (*Hon-gawarabuki*)
- Harvesting of Japanese cypress bark
- Production of wooden roofing tiles



- Conservative restoration techniques for mounts



- Production of joinery

- Production of *tatami* mats

- Restoration of traditional buildings

- Traditional woodworking techniques for structures

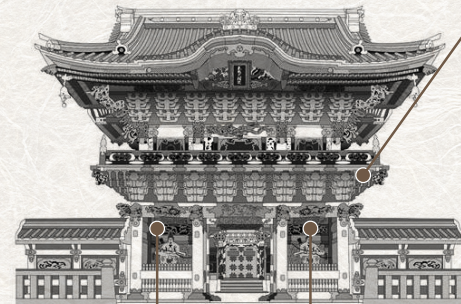
- Decoration of traditional structures

- Thatching
- Harvesting of plants for thatch



- Sakan* plastering (*Nihon Kabe*)

- Lacquer painting of traditional structures
- Production and refinement of Japanese *urushi* lacquer



- Coloring of traditional structures

- Production of *entsuke* gold leaf



Agency for Cultural Affairs,
Government of Japan



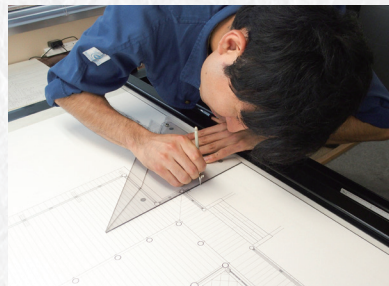
Protection of
Cultural Properties

Techniques of traditional architectural craftsmen

The wisdom of making the best use of natural materials such as wood, grass and earth. The harvesting and reuse of materials with an eye to periodic conservative restoration. And the attainment of harmony and unity between wooden parts. Traditional architectural techniques in Japan were transmitted from antiquity together with the nation's architectural heritage and further developed through creative efforts.

Restoration of traditional buildings

Structures designated as Cultural Properties in Japan start with ancient temples and cover all periods, fields, and construction methods. Restoration involves the supervision of conservative restoration work including surveys, repair and design, and technical guidance.



Harvesting of Japanese cypress bark

Japanese cypress bark is stripped off living trees at least 80 to 100 years of age and processed into the *hiwadabuki* roofing often seen in shrines and temples.



Traditional woodworking techniques for structures

Traditional woodworking techniques transmit the ancient approach to Japanese architecture in which wood is the main construction material.



Production of wooden roofing tiles

Timber is split and shaped by hand to produce the tiles employed in *kokerabuki* and *tochibuki* roofing, and the *doibuki* base for *kawarabuki* roofing.



Roofing with Japanese cypress bark and wooden shingles

Traditional roofing in Japan that employs Japanese cypress bark (*hiwadabuki*) and wooden shingles (*kokerabuki*) can be seen in many shrines and temples.



Harvesting of plants for thatch

Maiden silvergrass, common reed and other materials are grown and harvested for use in the *kayabuki* thatching often seen in private houses in rural Japan.



Thatching

Thatching (*kayabuki*) is a grass roofing technique that has been used broadly since ancient times in various structures and regions throughout Japan.



Decoration of traditional structures

Techniques such as lacquer painting, coloring, ornamental metal fittings, casting and smithing allow elaborate decoration while serving to protect the wooden parts of traditional structures.



Coloring of traditional structures

The magnificent coloring applied as both interior and exterior decoration of traditional structures originated in techniques transmitted directly from China, which then developed levels of sophistication and splendor unique to Japan.



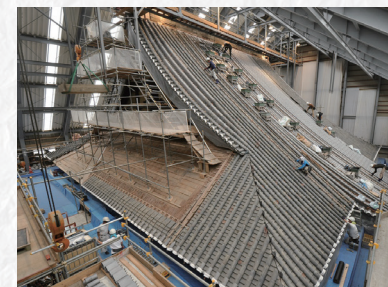
Lacquer painting of traditional structures

Techniques from mixing to painting produce the distinctive color and luster of Japanese *urushi* lacquer, which is essential for adding an air of solemnity to traditional structures.



Roofing with *kawara* tiles (*Hon-gawarabuki*)

Hon-gawarabuki is a roofing technique that started with ancient temple architecture in order to attain harmony between old and new *kawara* tiles, wind and rain resistance, and an elegant wavy roof.



Production of *tatami* mats

Tatami mats are a floor covering unique to Japan. Production involves taking precise measurements of the room size and shape; weaving the mats from rice straw, hemp yarn, or rush grass; and binding the borders while ensuring a beautiful alignment of patterns.



Conservative restoration techniques for mounts

The restoration of pictures on partitions involves filling in the damaged areas of the paper, preventing the paint from peeling, and replacing the multiple layers of lining paper with new sheets.



Production and refinement of Japanese *urushi* lacquer

Japanese *urushi* lacquer is an essential coating and gluing material. Production involves planting and managing the lacquer trees, making cuts in the bark using a sickle, and tapping the sap for refinement.



Sakan plastering (*Nihon Kabe*)

Sakan plastering is the set of techniques from material selection to application employed in producing strong, beautiful *Nihon Kabe* (Japanese-style walls), comprising the nuanced *Koshiki Kyokabe* of tearooms and the lustrous *shikkui kabe* of castles.



Production of *entsuke* gold leaf

The production of *entsuke* gold leaf involves placing a block of gold between *haku-uchi-gami*, processed from special handmade *washi* paper, and beating it to create a foil measuring 1/10,000 millimeter thick.



Production of joinery

Joinery is recreated and restored using various tools to preserve both the design employing diverse delicate timber materials and the function of being movable by hand.

