



Cultural Properties for Future Generations

~Outline of the Cultural Administration of Japan~

Agency for Cultural Affairs, JAPAN

Cultural Properties in Japan

Types of Cultural Properties in Japan

Our cultural properties have been created, developed, and preserved throughout Japan's long history. They have been passed down from one generation to another, and they are now precious assets of the Japanese people.

Cultural properties include (i) structures such as shrines, temples, and private houses, (ii) Buddhist statues, (iii) paintings, (iv) calligraphy, (v) other skills called *waza* such as performing arts and craft techniques, as well as (vi) traditional events and festivals. Natural landscapes that remain after many years of history, historic villages, and townscapes are also regarded as our cultural properties.

Under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, these cultural properties are categorized as follows:

Tangible Cultural Properties

Tangible cultural properties consist of (a) those of high historical or artistic value such as structures, paintings, sculptures, crafts, calligraphic works, classical books, and ancient documents, and (b) those of high scientific value such as archeological artifacts and other historical materials. Tangible cultural properties other than structures are collectively called "fine arts and crafts."

Intangible Cultural Properties

Intangible cultural properties are defined as those that have high historical or artistic value such as drama, music, and craft techniques. They are embodied by individuals or groups who have mastered *waza*.

Folk Cultural Properties

Folk cultural properties are defined as items indispensable for understanding the transition in people's daily lives, such as (i) manners and customs relating (a) to food, clothing, and housing, (b) to occupation, (c) to religious faith, and (d) to annual events, (ii) folk performing arts, (iii) folk skills, and (iv) clothes, implements, and houses used in connection with the foregoing.

Monuments

Monuments include shell mounds, tumuli, sites of fortified capitals, sites of forts or castles, and monumental houses, which are of high historical or scientific value. They also include gardens, bridges, gorges, seashores, mountains, and other places of scenic beauty which are of high artistic or scenic value. Moreover they include animals, plants, and geological and mineral formations which are of high scientific value.

Cultural Landscapes

Cultural landscapes are defined as those that have evolved with the modes of life or livelihoods of people in Japan and with the geo-cultural features of the region. They are indispensable to the understanding of the lifestyles and/or livelihoods of the people of Japan.

Groups of Traditional Buildings

Groups of traditional buildings are defined as those that have high value and form historic scenery together with their surroundings.

Out of these cultural properties, the government designates, selects, and registers important items in respective categories as Important Cultural Properties, Important Intangible Cultural Properties, Important Tangible / Intangible Folk Cultural Properties, Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments. It gives high priority to the protection of them.

Additionally, we designate particularly valuable important cultural properties as national treasures, and particularly important historic sites, places of scenic beauty, and natural monuments as special historic sites, special places of scenic beauty, and special natural monuments.

Also protected are (a) underground cultural properties (Buried Cultural Properties) and (b) traditional skills and techniques that are necessary for the restoration and preservation of cultural properties (Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties).

Number of Designated Cultural Properties

(as of October 1, 2021)

Designation	National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties	
	National Treasures	Important Cultural Properties
Fine Arts and Crafts	Paintings	2,041 items
	Sculptures	2,723 items
	Crafts	2,471 items
	Calligraphies, Books	1,920 items
	Documents	780 items
	Archeological artifacts	652 items
Historical materials	3 items	225 items
	Subtotal	10,812 items
Structures	(291 buildings) 228 items	(5,253 buildings) 2,530 items
	Total	13,342 items

Note: The figures for Important Cultural Properties include National Treasures

Designation	Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments	
Special Historic Sites	63 items	Historic Sites 1,859 items
Special Places of Scenic Beauty	36 items	Places of Scenic Beauty 425 items
Special Natural Monuments	75 items	Natural Monuments 1,034 items
Total	174 (164) items	Total 3,318 (3,203) items

Note: The figures for Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments include Special Historic Sites, Special Places of Scenic Beauty, and Special Natural Monuments. Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments may be appointed repeatedly; the number in brackets indicates the actual number of designated items.

Registration	Registered Tangible Cultural Properties (Structures)	13,082 items
Registration	Registered Tangible Folk Cultural Properties	46 items
Registration	Registered Monuments	122 items
Selection	Intangible Folk Cultural Properties that need measures such as documentation	650 items

Designation	Important Intangible Cultural Properties			
	Individual Recognition		Group Recognition	
	No. of designations	No. of holders	No. of designations	No. of holding groups
Performing Arts	37 items	52 persons (52)	14 items	14 groups
Craft Techniques	39 items	58 persons (57)	16 items	16 groups
Total	76 items	110 persons (109)	30 items	30 groups

Note: Some holders receive multiple recognitions; the number in brackets indicates the actual number of individuals

Designation	Important Tangible Folk Cultural Properties	Designation	Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties
	224 items		323 items

Selection	Important Cultural Landscapes	70 items
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Selection	Important Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings	126 districts
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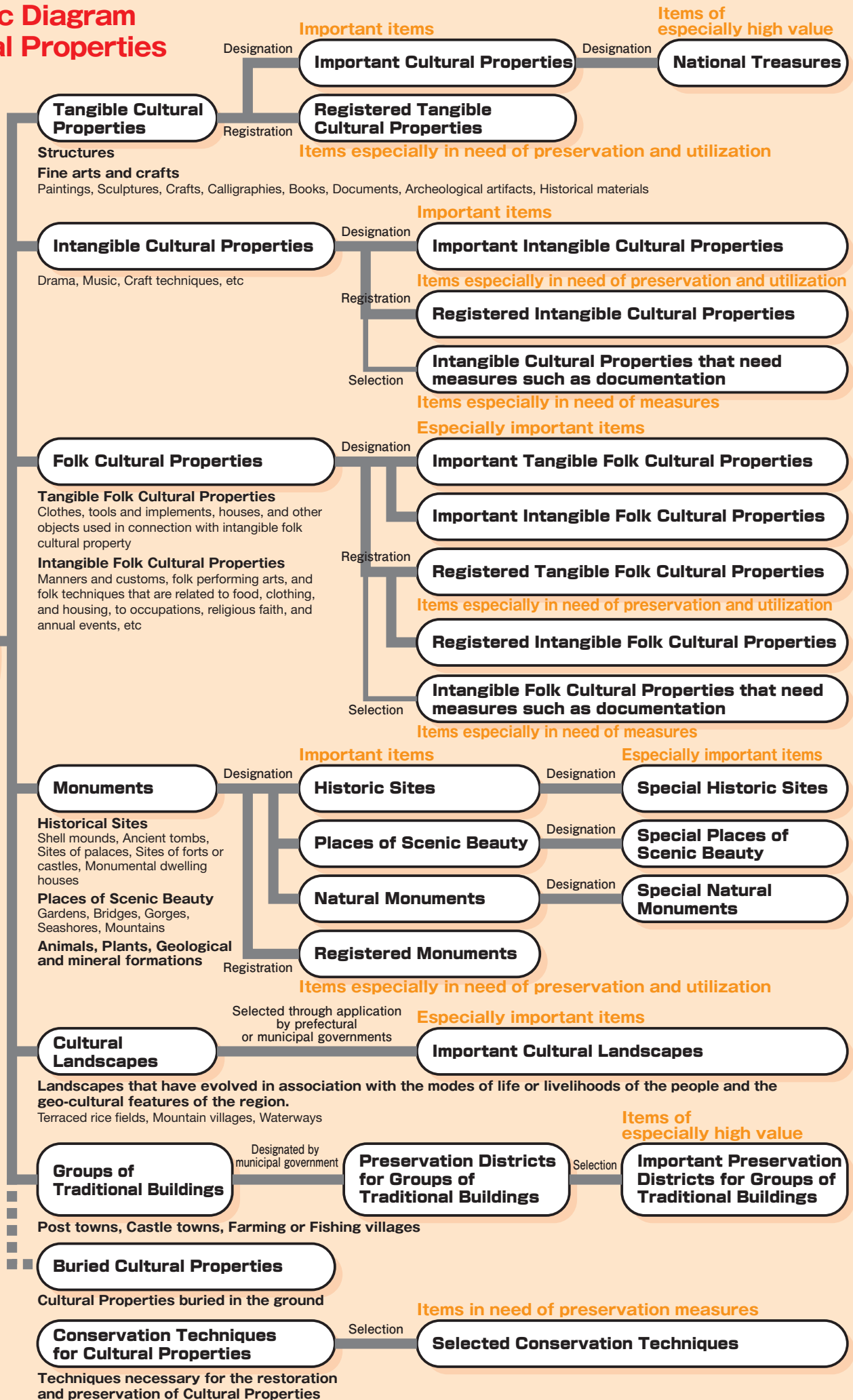
Selection	Selected Conservation Techniques	
	Holders	Preservation Groups
	48 items 53 holders	37 items 39 groups (34 groups)

Note: Some preservation groups receive multiple recognitions; the number in brackets indicates the actual number of groups

Registration	Registered Tangible Cultural Properties (Works of Fine Arts and Crafts)	17 items
Registration	Registered Intangible Folk Cultural Properties	2 items
Selection	Intangible Cultural Properties that need measures such as documentation	91 items

Schematic Diagram of Cultural Properties

Cultural Properties



History of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties

The protection system has been revised wherever necessary.

The destruction by fire of the mural paintings in the *kondo* main hall of Horyuji Temple in 1949 gave impetus to the enactment of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, which is Japan's first comprehensive legal framework for the protection of cultural properties. The new law combined “the National Treasures

Preservation Law,” “the Law regarding the Preservation of Important Works of Fine Art,” and “the Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments Preservation Law” of that time, expanding and reinforcing the existing system for protection. As the society developed, further amendments have been made since then. In the current social context, the Law is becoming more and more important year after year.

- 1871 Decree for the Preservation of Ancient Artifacts
- 1897 Ancient Temples and Shrines Preservation Law
- 1919 Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments Preservation Law
- 1929 National Treasures Preservation Law
- 1933 Law Regarding the Preservation of Important Works of Fine Arts

1950

Enactment of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties

Committee for the Protection of Cultural Properties established

Amendment of a designation system (division into two-grade categories of National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties)

..... Important Cultural Properties that are especially important are designated as National Treasures; Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments that are especially important are designated as Special Historic Sites, Special Places of Scenic Beauty, and Special Natural Monuments.

Establishment of a system for protection of Intangible Cultural Properties and Buried Cultural Properties

..... Addition of intangible cultural products and buried cultural properties as objects to be protected

1954 Amendments

Expansion of a system for Intangible Cultural Properties

..... Establishment of a system for designation of Important Intangible Cultural Properties, and for documentation of selected intangible cultural properties

Expansion of a system for Buried Cultural Properties

..... Established as a separate category from Tangible Cultural Properties; a system of advance notice implemented for excavation in land known to contain cultural properties

Expansion of a system for Folk Materials

..... Establishment of a designation system for Important Tangible Folk Materials separate from Tangible Cultural Properties; establishment of a system for documentation of selected intangible folk materials

1968 Amendments

Agency for Cultural Affairs established

Council for the Protection of Cultural Properties established

1975 Amendments

Development of a system for Buried Cultural Properties

..... Establishment of system of exemptions for excavation of ruins by the national government and development of system for the protection of ruins discovered in the course of construction

Expansion of a system for Folk Cultural Properties

..... Folk materials renamed Folk Cultural Properties; establishment of a system for designation of Important Tangible Folk Cultural Properties and Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

Establishment of a system of Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings

Establishment of a system for protection of Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties

1996 Amendments

Establishment of a system of Registered Cultural Properties

..... Establishment of a registration system for the preservation of structures other than those designated by the national or local governments

1999 Amendments

Transfer of authority to prefectures and designated cities

Reform to Council for Cultural Affairs

2004 Amendments

Establishment of a system for protection of Cultural Landscapes

..... Establishment of a selection system for Important Cultural Landscapes

Expansion of a system of Folk Cultural Properties

..... Addition of folk techniques

Expansion of a system of Registered Cultural Properties

..... Expansion of registration system to include Tangible Cultural Properties other than structures, Tangible Folk Cultural Properties, and Monuments

2018 Amendments

Establishment of a planning system for cultural property protection and utilization

..... Establishment of a certification system for prefectural principles and municipal regional plans relating to the protection and utilization of cultural properties
Establishment of a certification system for protection and utilization plans

Development of structure for participation of diverse inheritors

..... Establishment of a designation system for Cultural Property Protection and Utilization Support Organizations
Easing of appointment requirements of the custodian system

Enabling the transfer of cultural property protection administration to departments of local government heads

2021 Amendments

Expansion of a system of Registered Cultural Properties

..... Expansion the registration system to include Intangible Cultural Properties and Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

Establishment of a system for local registration

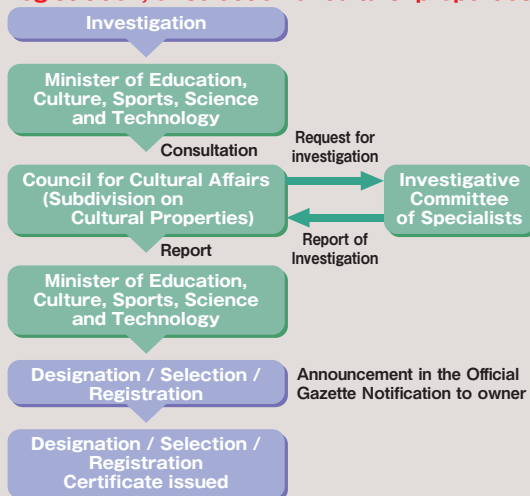
..... Establishment of a registration system of cultural properties by local governments

System and measures for the protection of cultural properties in Japan

“Cultural Properties” are thus preserved and utilized.

Cultural properties thus categorized under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties are protected in a way most appropriate to them.

The process leading to designation, registration, or selection of cultural properties:



Designation and other

Cultural properties are designated, selected, or registered after the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has consulted the Council for Cultural Affairs and received its report.

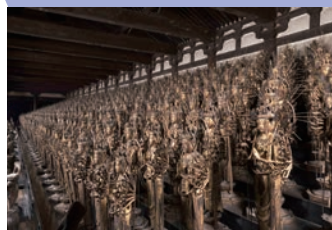


National Treasure:
Nyorai-do hall and Mieido hall,
Senjuji Temple
(Tsu City, Mie Pref.)

(Photo: Courtesy of Senjuji Temple)

Preservation

- Guidance and subsidies concerning repair and maintenance to owners and municipalities
- Subsidies for municipalities to purchase land or structures which are cultural properties
- Regulations on alterations to current state, restrictions on export
- Establishment of tax exemptions
- Preparation of required documents and their publicity
- Environmental preservation



National Treasure:
Standing Thousand-Armed Kannon,
wood
(enshrined in main hall of Rengeoin Temple)
(Myohoin Temple)

Utilization

- Subsidies, recommendations, orders, and directives to owners or municipalities regarding the public display of cultural properties
- Establishment and operation of museums, theaters, and other public facilities, and centers for cultural properties research



Higashinomiya Kofun (tomb)
(Inuyama City, Aichi Pref.)

Examples of Preservation and

National Treasure and Important Cultural Property (Structures)

Himeji Castle's Main Keep and Other Structures

Ideally, cultural property structures are utilized actively, not only as architectural objects of viewing, but also as sites for tourism and community activities. In order to promote the use of such structures while harnessing their value as cultural property, there is a growing movement to establish a protection and utilization plan, develop an approach for public utilization, and carry out maintenance accordingly.

Himeji Castle, also known as White Heron Castle, is located in the center of Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture. Eighty-two structures, including the main keep, constructed in 1601-1617, are designated a National Treasure or Important Cultural Property, and the area of Nakakuruwa (main compound) is designated a Special Historic Site. The area including Nakakuruwa and the periphery is registered a UNESCO World Heritage Site (Cultural Heritage).

Himeji Castle has been open to the public since 1912. In 2015, preservation and repair work at the main keep was completed. In parallel with this work, a protection and utilization plan for the structures was formulated, and a new public utilization initiative was taken to improve the castle's exhibits. Existing display cases were removed to make the wooden structure of the main keep more visible, and explanatory signs in the castle were given a unified design and enriched content. An AR guide app was also developed. Himeji Castle has continued to enhance its explanatory exhibits, displaying restored costumes from the 17th to 19th centuries while holding hands-on exhibits and making use of items that were previously not shown to the public. It is expected that the parallel effort for preservation and utilization will contribute to passing on the legacy of Himeji Castle to future generations.



Exhibit inside the main keep



AR guide app sample image
(Photo: Courtesy of Himeji City)

Monument (Historic Site)

Nirayama Reverberatory Furnaces

Monuments such as historic sites are maintained through various methods so that people can have a deeper understanding of their history, culture, and nature on site, while retaining their value as cultural property.

The Nirayama Reverberatory Furnaces, located in Izunokuni City, Shizuoka Prefecture, were constructed by the decision of the Edo shogunate and completed in 1857 by Egawa Hidetatsu (Tannan) and others. Iron cannons and bronze field artillery were cast at these reverberatory furnaces. They were designated a Historic Site in 1922 for they were the only surviving, formerly operational reverberatory furnaces in Japan, and still stand today following several repairs.

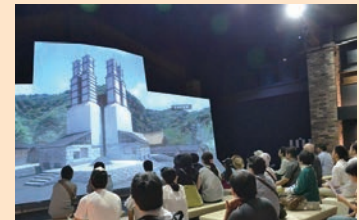
In light of the recent noticeable deterioration of the bricks, the city established by a council of experts in 2011 to review their repair methods, with the repair work being completed by the end of 2021. The preservation and repair effort ensured authenticity by keeping the existing bricks as much as possible and classifying the bricks into three categories based on their deterioration depth survey: replacement with new brick; attachment of brick on surface; and filling with plaster.

At the Guidance Center built on an adjacent site, a large screen introduces past casting work, the story of Governor Tannan, and the changes underwent by the ruins, using both projection mapping and stage lighting.

This site offers an example of a new approach to information dissemination while ensuring preservation. With the proactive participation of local volunteer guides, this monument is expected to make further contributions to the community.



Repairing the bricks of the reverberatory furnace



The history being explained at the Guidance Center

Important Tangible Folk Cultural Property

Kishimi Stone Bath

Kishimi Stone Bath, located in Kishimi, Tokuji, Yamaguchi City, Yamaguchi Prefecture, is said to have been built by the Buddhist priest Chogen Shonin during the Kamakura period (1185-1333). Stones are heated by burning firewood inside a chamber made of stacked stones. After removing the ashes, wet straw mats are laid to make a heated air bath. In early July every year, the stone bath is prepared on the anniversary of the death of Chogen Shonin, known as "Ishiburo Kaisanki." Prior to bathing, bathers pray to a statue of Chogen Shonin enshrined in the resting room, according to custom.

The facility currently belongs to Yamaguchi City and is maintained and managed by the local Kishimi Stone Bath Preservation Society. In the past, the Society prepared the bath at irregular intervals upon receiving advance reservations. However, it was decided that the bath would be prepared at regular intervals with the belief that this will contribute to the bath's maintenance and management. The Society has been commissioned to prepare the bath once a month since September 2018. The bathing sessions are publicized on websites and other means.

During the ongoing trial phase, between ten to twenty people have participated each time, with more people gradually participating from other communities, including areas outside of Yamaguchi Prefecture. It is hoped that the bathing sessions will continue to attract people and evolve further. Going forward, efforts will be made to utilize the stone bath safely and sustainably while collecting the necessary maintenance data, and contribute to raising awareness about protection of cultural property.



Important Tangible Folk Cultural Property Kishimi Stone Bath

Utilization of Cultural Properties

Important Cultural Property (Fine Arts and Crafts)

Local Cultural Heritage Exhibition Support Projects

The Agency for Cultural Affairs works to preserve valuable cultural properties, such as National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties, and to utilize cultural properties by increasing opportunities for viewing them through exhibitions and other mediums.

As part of these efforts, support is provided for exhibitions held by local Japanese museums featuring local cultural assets on loan from the Agency for Cultural Affairs, national museums, the Museum of the Imperial Collections, and other museums.

In the Local Cultural Heritage Exhibition Support Projects, the Agency supports the efforts of local museums to display and explain the history, culture, and atmosphere of the region in an attractive manner, thereby creating a virtuous cycle of regional revitalization by encouraging more foreign tourists to visit Japan, raising their consumption, and improving their satisfaction.

The Agency for Cultural Affairs will continue to actively showcase valuable cultural properties at exhibitions in Japan and overseas.



Exhibition at the Kanagawa Prefectural Museum of Cultural History



Exhibition at the Matsue History Museum

Important Intangible Cultural Property (Performing Arts)

Special Appreciation of *Kumiodori*

The Agency for Cultural Affairs subsidizes successor training projects which are conducted by performers' groups of traditional performing arts such as *Nohgaku*, *Ningyo Joruri Bunraku*, and *Kabuki*, which are designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties. Since it is the appreciation of the audience that can ensure the transmission of such performing arts into the future, the Agency for Cultural Affairs also supports a performance project which aims to provide the public with more opportunities to enjoy them and to feel the attractiveness of them.

Kumiodori, an Important Intangible Cultural Property, is a singing and dancing drama which has been transmitted in Okinawa Prefecture. Even though it is the compilation of sophisticated music, dances, and arts and crafts techniques of the Ryukyu Kingdom period and it is a traditional performing art that has value for its importance in art and in the history of performing arts, it had not been known outside Okinawa. Thus, since fiscal year 1995, the Traditional Kumiodori Preservation Society and the Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education have provided special opportunities to appreciate *Kumiodori* for six areas outside Okinawa every year. They are good opportunities for people to appreciate *Kumiodori* with elaborated commentaries.



(Photo: Courtesy of Traditional Kumiodori Preservation Society)

Important Intangible Cultural Property (Craft Techniques)

Japanese Artistry and Beauty Exhibition

The Agency for Cultural Affairs holds an exhibition, which is entitled "Japanese Artistry and Beauty: Important Intangible Cultural Properties and Their Supporters" every year with a view to showing the public *waza* of important intangible cultural properties and to introduce skills that sustain them.

The aim of this exhibition is to increase people's understanding for the protection of cultural properties through a broad-ranging display of ceramics, textiles, lacquer works and other traditional craft techniques that have been designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties, along with tools and materials for production that are indispensable for the embodiment of these craft techniques, which have been specially selected as Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties.

Representative works by holders of *waza* of Important Intangible Cultural Properties (known as Living National Treasures) and holding groups of such properties, along with related materials and other items, are displayed mainly from among the Agency's collection. Documentary films are also shown, planned and produced by the Agency, illustrating craft techniques.



Japanese Artistry and Beauty Exhibition
(Venue: Fukushima Museum)

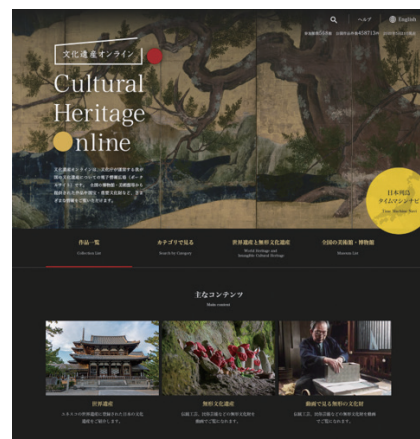
Communicating information about Cultural Properties

Cultural Heritage Online

“Cultural Heritage Online” is a portal site that enables people to search for and browse information on cultural heritages in Japan, regardless of their official designation. The site is operated in collaboration with a number of galleries, museums, municipal governments, and other groups. This site aims to create a whole list of cultural heritage in Japan, which contains various cultural properties, be it designated or undesignated, tangible or intangible, with the cooperation of museums and local governments for the collection of such information.

The site consists of a Gallery, which shows users photos of cultural heritages, and a Cultural Heritage Database, which enables users to search for information about all kinds of cultural heritages. Gallery users can browse cultural assets by age and field, as well as those related to specific cultural heritages using associative retrieval, as well as search and identify those using maps. The Cultural Heritage Database allows users to perform full-text searches, including searches by the institution storing the cultural heritage or searches by description.

Furthermore, it has thematic contents, such as information of museums and galleries, notifications, and event information, in addition to “World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage” and “Intangible cultural properties seen on video.”



Cultural Heritage Online (image of website)
<https://bunka.nii.ac.jp/>

Protecting Cultural Properties from Fire and Disasters

Disaster Risk Preparedness for Cultural Properties

Following the fires at Notre-Dame Cathedral and Shuri Castle Ruins, the Agency for Cultural Affairs developed guidelines on fire protection for cultural properties and formulated a five-year plan on fire protection for World Heritage Sites, National Treasures, and other cultural properties. Based on this plan, from the perspective of preserving cultural properties and ensuring the safety of visitors, the Agency provides subsidies with priority on installing fire control systems for structures which are World Heritage Sites and National Treasures, as well as for museums that store fine arts and crafts which are National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties.

In addition, fire control and seismic resistance measures for cultural properties were included in the “Five-Year Acceleration Plan for Disaster Prevention, Disaster Mitigation, and Building National Resilience” (Cabinet decision of December 11, 2020). Accordingly, the government is accelerating efforts for the installment of disaster control systems, which are indispensable for protecting cultural properties from disasters.



Seismic reinforcement for the keep, Matsue Castle, National Treasure

Fire Prevention Day for Cultural Properties

(Every January 26th)

Since January 26 is when the mural paintings at the *kondo* main hall of Horyuji Temple were destroyed by fire (in 1949), the “Fire Prevention Day for Cultural Properties” was set on this date. The Agency for Cultural Affairs, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, prefectural and municipal boards of education, fire departments, owners of cultural properties, and local residents cooperate to organize an annual fire prevention campaign for cultural properties throughout the country centered on this date with a view to protecting them from fire, earthquakes, and other kinds of disasters.

The sixty-sixth Fire Prevention Day for Cultural Properties on January 26, 2020 at Himeji Castle in Himeji City, Hyogo Prefecture was attended by the Commissioner for Cultural Affairs and the Commissioner of the Fire and Disaster Management Agency. A large-scale drill was carried out, with participation of the Himeji City Fire Department, the Himeji East Fire Brigade, and the Himeji Castle Self-Defense Fire Station.



Sixty-sixth Fire Prevention Day for Cultural Properties, Fire Prevention Drill (Himeji Castle)

Efforts for the Protection of Cultural Properties by Local Authorities

Enactment of Ordinances for the Protection of Cultural Properties, Designation and Registration of Cultural Properties under Ordinances

As with the national government, local governments also enact ordinances for the protection of cultural properties under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties and designate and register local cultural properties. Such local governments preserve and utilize their cultural properties, subsidizing expenses necessary for management, repair, and exhibition of them.

In addition, prefectural boards of education have committees for the guidance of cultural properties protection, that inspect cultural properties and provide owners with instructions and advice on the protection of cultural properties.



Long bottle with handle, Sanage ware, ash glaze
(Photo: Courtesy of Aichi Pref.)

Preservation and Utilization of Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings

The system of Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings was established in 1975 in order to maintain the historic and cultural character of local towns and villages. In this system, municipalities designate Preservation Districts and develop preservation plans.

The national government classifies Important Preservation Districts from among those Preservation Districts. Within the Important Preservation Districts, municipalities promote their own plans to maintain historic towns and villages, while the national and prefectural governments give financial support and technical instruction to preservation projects executed by municipalities.



Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings: Kanayamachi, Takaoka City
(Photo: Courtesy of Takaoka City Board of Education)

Preservation and Utilization of Cultural Landscapes

Cultural Landscapes are defined as areas of landscapes which have been formulated by the life and livelihood of a region and in its geo-cultural features. The local government of the region investigates the areas and formulates a protection and utilization plan with a view of preserving the cultural landscapes in those areas.

The local government promotes various activities to preserve and utilize the cultural landscapes and to transmit them to the next generation. When selected as Important Cultural Landscapes by the national government, national technical and financial supports are provided to the local government for conducting its relevant projects.



Cultural Landscapes of coastal fishing and agricultural communities with terraced fields in Karihama District along the Uwakai Sea
(Photo: Courtesy of Seiyo City Board of Education)

Preservation and Utilization of Buried Cultural Properties

Many buried cultural properties that can tell us the irreplaceable local history remain in every region of Japan. Approximately 5,500 experts are employed by local governments and municipalities for the preservation arrangement, the implementation of excavation surveys, and the preservation and utilization of sites in connection with development projects.

Each local government is engaged in building a community and training human resources through the utilization of buried cultural properties, such as improvement of preserved sites, display of earthenware vessels discovered during excavation, and dissemination of findings of its history and culture.



Utilization event at Hirota Ruins, Minamitane Town

Comprehensive Preservation and Utilization of Cultural Properties and Town Planning

The Agency for Cultural Affairs approves the "Regional Plan for the Protection and Utilization of Cultural Properties," a comprehensive plan for the preservation and utilization of cultural properties in municipalities. The Agency provides support for the preparation of the regional plan as well as for the development of sightseeing areas centered around cultural properties under the plan. The Agency also works with the Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries to approve "Plans for the Maintenance and Improvement of Historic Landscapes." Regions whose plans were approved are eligible to receive intensive support for town planning that takes advantage of their historic landscapes.



Regional Plan for the Protection and Utilization of Cultural Properties training workshop
(Venue: Hirado City, Nagasaki Pref.)

Comprehensive Project for Promoting the Use of Cultural Properties

Japan has rich and diverse cultural heritage in each local region, which collectively constitutes its nationwide *takara* treasure. In recent years, people have begun to recognize the role of cultural heritage in contributing to the revitalization of communities, as well as conscientiously preserving heritage and passing them down to the next generation. Based on plans formulated by local governments, the Comprehensive Project for Promoting the Use of Regional Cultural Properties aims to support comprehensive efforts utilizing local cultural heritage, such as (i) holding of traditional events and performing arts for the public, (ii) training of successors, and (iii) activities to familiarize people with classical arts and performances. These projects foster cultural promotion and revitalize local communities.



"Hayashi Music and Lion Dance" performed as part of the "Kanagawa Re-Classics Project in Kamakura"
(Photo: Courtesy of Kanagawa Traditional Culture Succession and Creation Project Executive Committee)

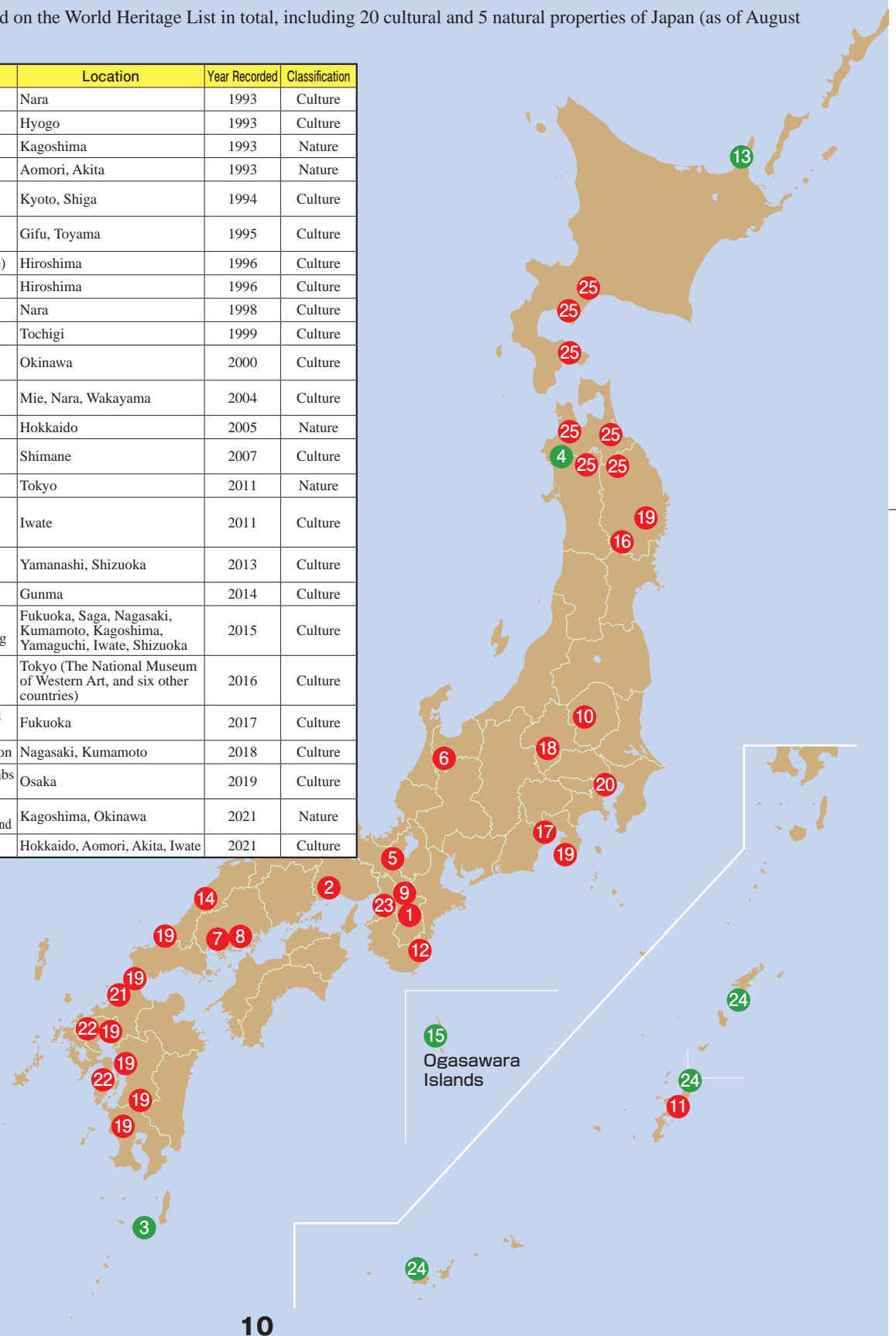
From Japan's Properties to World Cultural World Heritage

Protection of the precious heritage of humanity for future generations

In 1972 UNESCO adopted the World Heritage Convention at its General Conference in Paris. The purpose of the convention is to encourage international cooperation and support with a view to protect all of humanity's cultural and natural heritages, which have outstanding universal value, from damage, destruction and other threats.

Today, 1,154 properties are inscribed on the World Heritage List in total, including 20 cultural and 5 natural properties of Japan (as of August 2021).

	Name Recorded	Location	Year Recorded	Classification
1	Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area	Nara	1993	Culture
2	Himeji-jo	Hyogo	1993	Culture
3	Yakushima	Kagoshima	1993	Nature
4	Shirakami-Sanchi	Aomori, Akita	1993	Nature
5	Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto (Kyoto, Uji and Otsu Cities)	Kyoto, Shiga	1994	Culture
6	Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama	Gifu, Toyama	1995	Culture
7	Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome)	Hiroshima	1996	Culture
8	Itsukushima Shinto Shrine	Hiroshima	1996	Culture
9	Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara	Nara	1998	Culture
10	Shrines and Temples of Nikko	Tochigi	1999	Culture
11	Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu	Okinawa	2000	Culture
12	Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range	Mie, Nara, Wakayama	2004	Culture
13	Shiretoko	Hokkaido	2005	Nature
14	Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine and its Cultural Landscape	Shimane	2007	Culture
15	Ogasawara Islands	Tokyo	2011	Nature
16	Hiraizumi – Temples, Gardens and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land	Iwate	2011	Culture
17	Fujisan, Sacred place and Source of artistic Inspiration	Yamanashi, Shizuoka	2013	Culture
18	Tomioka Silk Mill and Related Sites	Gunma	2014	Culture
19	Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining	Fukuoka, Saga, Nagasaki, Kumamoto, Kagoshima, Yamaguchi, Iwate, Shizuoka	2015	Culture
20	The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement	Tokyo (The National Museum of Western Art, and six other countries)	2016	Culture
21	Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region	Fukuoka	2017	Culture
22	Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region	Nagasaki, Kumamoto	2018	Culture
23	Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group: Mounded Tombs of Ancient Japan	Osaka	2019	Culture
24	Amami-Oshima Island, Tokunoshima Island, Northern Part of Okinawa Island, and Iriomote Island	Kagoshima, Okinawa	2021	Nature
25	Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan	Hokkaido, Aomori, Akita, Iwate	2021	Culture



Heritage



Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara
Photo: Courtesy of Nara Prefectural Board of Education



Tomioka Silk Mill and Related Sites
Photo: Courtesy of Tomioka City



Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area
Photo: Courtesy of Horyuji Temple



Shrines and Temples of Nikko
Photo: Courtesy of Tochigi Prefecture



Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining
Photo: Courtesy of The World Heritage Council for the sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution



Himeji-jo
Photo: Courtesy of Himeji City Board of Education



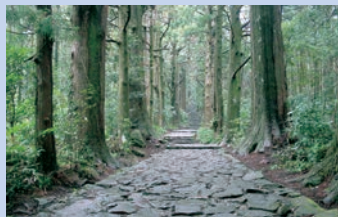
Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu
Photo: Courtesy of Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education



The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement
Photo: Courtesy of The National Museum of Western Art



Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto (Kyoto, Uji and Otsu Cities)
Photo: Courtesy of Motorikyu-Nijojo Office, Kyoto City Hall



Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range
Photo: Courtesy of Wakayama Prefectural Board of Education



Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region



Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama
Photo: Courtesy of Shirakawa Village Board of Education



Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine and its Cultural Landscape
Photo: Courtesy of Shimane Prefectural Board of Education



Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region
Photo by Ikeda Tsutomu



Hiroshima Peace Memorial (Genbaku Dome)



Hiraizumi - Temples, Gardens and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land
Photo: Courtesy of Kawashima Printing Co. Ltd.



Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group: Mounded Tombs of Ancient Japan
Photo: Courtesy of Sakai City



Itsukushima Shinto Shrine
Photo: Courtesy of Hiroshima Prefectural Board of Education



Fujisan, Sacred place and Source of artistic Inspiration
Photo: Courtesy of Fuji City



Jomon Prehistoric Sites in Northern Japan
Photo: Courtesy of Council for the Preservation and Utilization of World Heritage Jomon Prehistoric Sites

Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted at the UNESCO General Conference in October 2003, and came into force in April 2006. Japan became the third state party to the Convention in June 2004. There are 180 States Parties to the Convention as of August 2021.

This Convention stipulates that the States Parties take measures for safeguarding intangible cultural heritage in their territories, for example by identifying elements of intangible cultural heritage within their territory and making inventories of them. It also stipulates international safeguarding measures, including the establishment of the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity (Representative List) and the List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding (Urgent Safeguarding List) in order to increase awareness of intangible cultural heritage and promote intercultural dialogue.

Today 492 elements are inscribed on the Representative List in total, including 22 elements in Japan (as of August 2021).

At the fifteenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held online in December 2020, “Traditional skills, techniques and knowledge for the conservation and transmission of wooden architecture in Japan”, nominated by Japan, was inscribed on the Representative List. This nomination consisted of 17 groups of skills selected by the government for preservation (along with associations certified to safeguard the skills).

More than a decade since its entry into force, discussions are underway on reviewing the implementation of the Convention. Japan, which has been making efforts domestically to safeguard intangible cultural heritage from early on, is contributing to such discussions.

Japan’s Intangible Cultural Heritages
Inscribed on the Representative List (22 items)

Name	Year Inscribed
Nohgaku theatre	2008
Ningyo Johruri Bunraku puppet theatre	2008
Kabuki theatre	2008
Gagaku	2009
Ojiya-chijimi, Echigo-jofu	2009
Oku-noto no Aenokoto (Ishikawa Pref.)	2009
Hayachine Kagura (Iwate Pref.)	2009
Akiu no Taue Odori (Miyagi Pref.)	2009
Chakkirako (Kanagawa Pref.)	2009
Dainichido Bugaku (Akita Pref.)	2009
Daimokutate (Nara Pref.)	2009
Traditional Ainu dance (Hokkaido Pref.)	2009
Kumiodori	2010
Yuki-Tsumugi	2010
Mibu no Hana Taue (Hiroshima Pref.)	2011
Sada Shin Noh (Shimane Pref.)	2011
Nachi no Dengaku (Wakayama Pref.)	2012
Washoku, traditional dietary cultures of the Japanese	2013
Washi: craftsmanship of traditional Japanese hand-made paper	2014
Yama, Hoko, Yatai, Float Festivals in Japan	2016
Raiho-shin, ritual visits of deities in masks and costumes	2018
Traditional skills, techniques and knowledge for the conservation and transmission of wooden architecture in Japan	2020

Traditional skills, techniques and knowledge for the conservation and transmission of wooden architecture in Japan

*17 groups of skills selected by the government for preservation



Roofing with Japanese cypress bark and wooden shingles



Thatching



Harvesting of Japanese cypress bark



Restoration of traditional buildings



Traditional woodworking techniques for structures



Decoration of traditional structures



Coloring of traditional structures



Lacquer painting of traditional structures



Production of wooden roofing tiles



Harvesting of plants for thatch



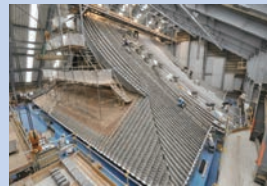
Production of joinery



Production of *tatami* mats



Conservative restoration techniques for mounts



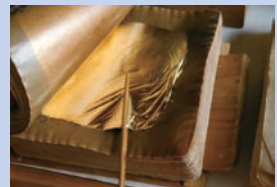
Roofing with *kawara* tiles
(*Hon-gawarabuki*)



Sakan plastering (Nihon Kabe)



Production and refinement of Japanese *urushi* lacquer



Production of *entsuke* gold leaf

Promoting International Exchange and Cooperation

International Cooperation

With a view to protecting cultural heritage that is the common heritage of humanity, Japan works together with other countries and international organizations, collaborating on (i) research exchanges, (ii) conservation and restoration projects, and (iii) training of experts.

Law on the Promotion of International Cooperation for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Abroad

“The Law on the Promotion of International Cooperation for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Abroad” was enacted in June 2006. This law stipulates, for Japan’s international cooperation on cultural heritage, (i) the duties of the government and research institutions, (ii) the reinforcement of ties among related bodies, and (iii) the formulation of basic guidelines. The law establishes in Japan a system for cooperation and facilitates effective promotion of international cooperation on cultural heritage through reinforced ties among related organizations.

International Cooperation for Cultural Heritage

In order to provide emergency support for cultural heritage damaged by natural disasters and war, Japan provides support for conservation and restoration programs by partnering with cultural heritage preservation organizations overseas. In addition, Japan promotes international cooperation through capacity building of young experts and those specializing in the protection of cultural heritage by implementing training focusing on those in charge of protecting cultural heritage in the Asia Pacific region. Furthermore, in 2006 the “Japan Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage” was launched with domestic government bodies, research groups, NGOs, and other groups. The consortium carries out research, collects and provides information, and constructs a network between each domestic research group.



Human Resource Development Program for Protection of Cultural Properties in Cambodia
(Photo: Courtesy of University of Tsukuba)



Japan Consortium for International Cooperation in Cultural Heritage Program
(29th Seminar)

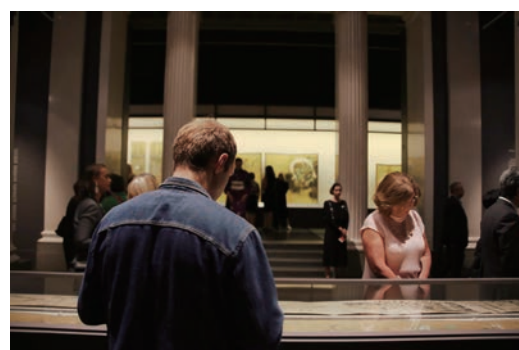
International Communication

Ancient Japanese Art Overseas Exhibition

International communication through cultural properties contributes to advances in mutual understanding and communication between each of our cultures. The Agency for Cultural Affairs introduces the excellent cultural properties of Japan. In order to deepen the understanding of Japanese history and culture, and to promote international cultural communication, the Ancient Japanese Art Overseas Exhibition has been held continually since 1951, and features important cultural properties and national treasures.

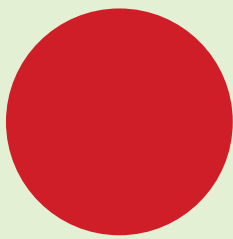
In addition, since 1996, in addition to an exhibit in Europe, the Asian Friendship Ancient Japanese Art Exhibition is also held in Asia to mark fifty years since the end of World War II.

In fiscal year 2018, the exhibition “KIZUNA: Japan/Wales/Design” was held at the National Museum Wales in the United Kingdom, “Masterpieces of Edo Paintings and Prints” at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts in Russia, “ROSETSU—Ferocious Brush” at Museum Rietberg in Switzerland, and “Jomon—Birth of art in prehistoric Japan” at the House of Culture of Japan in Paris in France.



Fiscal year 2018 Ancient Japanese Art Overseas Exhibition “Masterpieces of Edo Paintings and Prints”
(Venue: Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts)

Japan Heritage



JAPAN HERITAGE

日本遺産

“Japan Heritage” refers to places or objects certified by the Agency for Cultural Affairs that tell a traditional story of the country’s culture through regional historical charms or special properties.

The region becomes the main actor in maintaining and utilizing in a comprehensive manner the tangible and intangible cultural properties overflowing with charms that are vital to telling the story and in promoting the stories strategically both domestically and abroad. By doing so, we aim to revitalize the regions where these sites and objects are located. There are currently 104 items certified as “Japan Heritage” stories (as of January 2022).

Conventional administration of cultural properties

Designate and preserve heritage for their individual worth

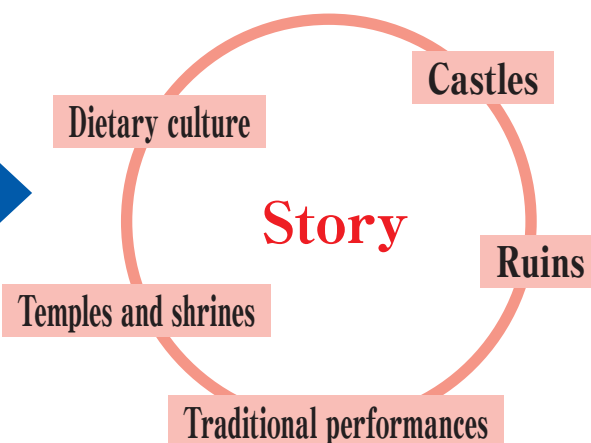


Importance is attached to preservation

→ The attractiveness of the regions is not adequately conveyed

Japan Heritage

Utilize and promote heritage as collective spaces



Importance is attached to utilization

→ Integrated promotion of cultural properties that are grouped collectively
Encourages regional branding and reaffirmation of identity

Visit the website below for more information on Japan Heritage across the country.

Japan Heritage Official Site

<https://www.japan.travel/japan-heritage>





Takaoka: Flourishing Folk Culture Under the Maeda Clan

Toyama Prefecture



Wakasa Heritage - Connecting the Sea and Kyoto

Fukui Prefecture



The Founding of Japan

Nara Prefecture



Islands Linking Japan and Asia

Nagasaki Prefecture



The Daisetsuzan Mountains and Kamikawa Ainu Mountain Deities and the Sacred Land of the Indigenous Ainu

Hokkaido Prefecture



The Unbroken Legacy of the Ryukyu Kingdom

Okinawa Prefecture



Protection of Cultural Properties Logo

In order to spread the basic regional protection activities of cultural properties to the nation, the “Cultural Property Protection Symbol” was selected through public invitation for designs made on the proclamation day of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties on May 30, 1966.

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