



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 July 1, 2023)

Designation National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties			
	National Treasures	Important Cultural Properties	
Fine Arts and Crafts	Paintings	166 items	2,053 items
	Sculptures	140 items	2,732 items
	Crafts	254 items	2,475 items
	Calligraphies, Books	232 items	1,929 items
	Documents	62 items	789 items
	Archeological artifacts	49 items	660 items
	Historical materials	3 items	234 items
	Subtotal	906 items	10,872 items
Structures	(294 buildings)	(5,373 buildings)	
	230 items	2,557 items	
Total		1,136 items	13,429 items

Note: The figures for Important Cultural Properties include National Treasures

Designation Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments			
		Historic Sites	
Special Historic Sites	63 items	1,888 items	
Special Places of Scenic Beauty	36 items	Places of Scenic Beauty	427 items
Special Natural Monuments	75 items	Natural Monuments	1,038 items
Total	174 (164) items	Total	3,353 (3,239) 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)
	13,637 items
Registration	Registered Tangible Folk Cultural Properties
	49 items
Registration	Registered Monuments
	128 items
Selection	Intangible Folk Cultural Properties that need measures such as documentation
	654 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	36 items	50 persons	14 items	14 groups
Craft Techniques	34 items	52 persons	16 items	16 groups
Total	70 items	102 persons	30 items	30 groups

Designation	Important Tangible Folk Cultural Properties
	226 items

Designation	Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties
	329 items

Selection	Important Cultural Landscapes
	72 items

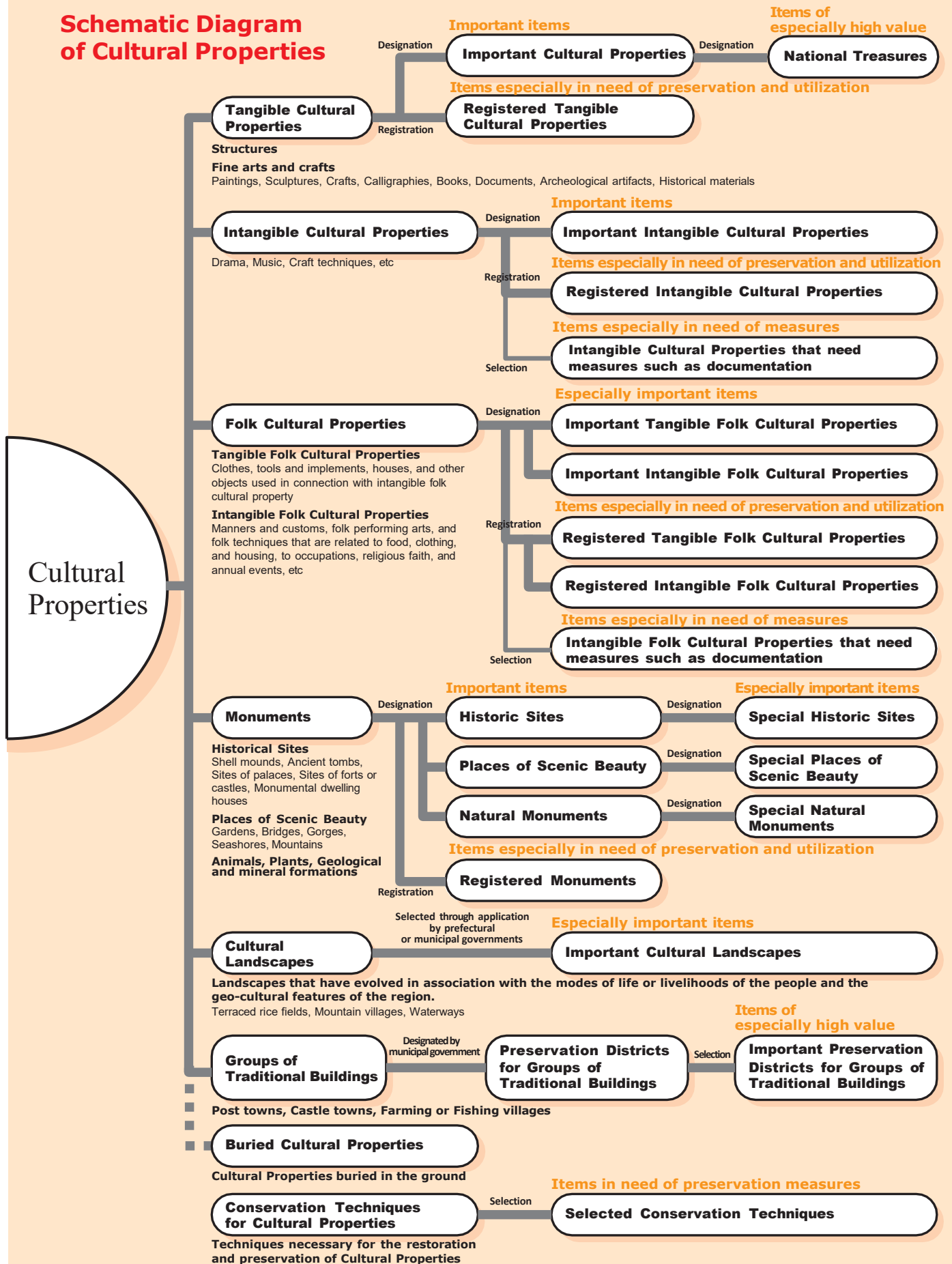
Selection	Important Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings
	126 districts

Selection Selected Conservation Techniques			
Holders		Preservation Groups	
51 items	61 holders	40 items	42 groups (36 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 Cultural Properties
	4 items
Registration	Registered Intangible Folk Cultural Properties
	4 items
Selection	Intangible Cultural Properties that need measures such as documentation
	91 items

Schematic Diagram of 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

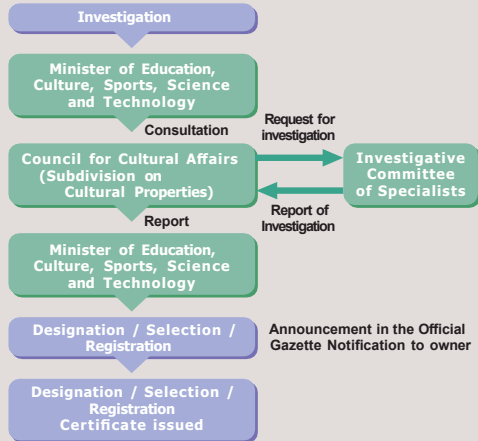
- Establishment of a registration system of cultural properties by local governments

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

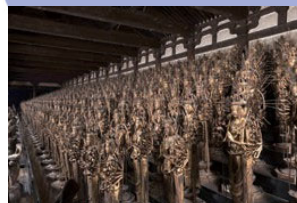
Cultural properties are designated, selected, or registered after the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology has consulted the Council for Cultural Affairs and received its report.



National Treasure:
Nyorai-do hall and Mie-do 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.

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)

Project to Hold Traditional Art and Crafts Exhibitions in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area

Due to changes in lifestyles, and changes in social structures, such as the falling birthrate and the aging population, the shortage of successors to intangible cultural properties (craft techniques) is becoming more and more serious. In order to secure and foster successors, it is necessary to create new opportunities for demonstrating traditional craft techniques.

In light of such circumstances, the Agency for Cultural Affairs has been implementing the Project to Hold Traditional Art and Crafts Exhibitions at easily accessible venues in the Tokyo Metropolitan Area, thereby carrying out PR activities broadly targeting tourists (including foreign visitors) and people at all levels of society, not limited to local residents, to disseminate highly-unique Japanese culture and raise people's awareness and understanding.

In this project, unconventional approaches are adopted for exhibitions, such as the use of installations and demonstrations by holders of craft techniques of Important Intangible Cultural Properties. In addition, through posting related videos on SNS, the Agency aims to carry out multifaceted PR activities to convey the charms of Japanese traditional art and crafts domestically and globally, instead of holding each event merely as a single event.



R3 Exhibited work "Connection: Infinity by Chikuunsai IV Tanabe"
(Photo: Courtesy of I setan Mitsukoshi Ltd.)



R4 Venue
(Photo: Courtesy of Q UALIART Co., Ltd.)

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, with the aim of creating a whole list of cultural heritage in Japan, which contains various cultural properties, be it designated or undesignated, tangible or intangible.

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 heritages by age and field, as well as those related to specific cultural heritages using associative retrieval. They can also perform searches and display search results based on periods and regions. 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 such contents as “World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Heritage” and “Intangible Cultural Heritages 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: Imajojuku, Minamiechizen-cho
(Photo: Courtesy of Minamiechizen-cho 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.



Rural landscape of Ogata River and Ogata Basin
(Photo: Courtesy of Bungo Ono City, Oita Pref.)

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.



Folk Performing Arts Event
(Photo: Courtesy of Hyogo Prefectural Board of Education)

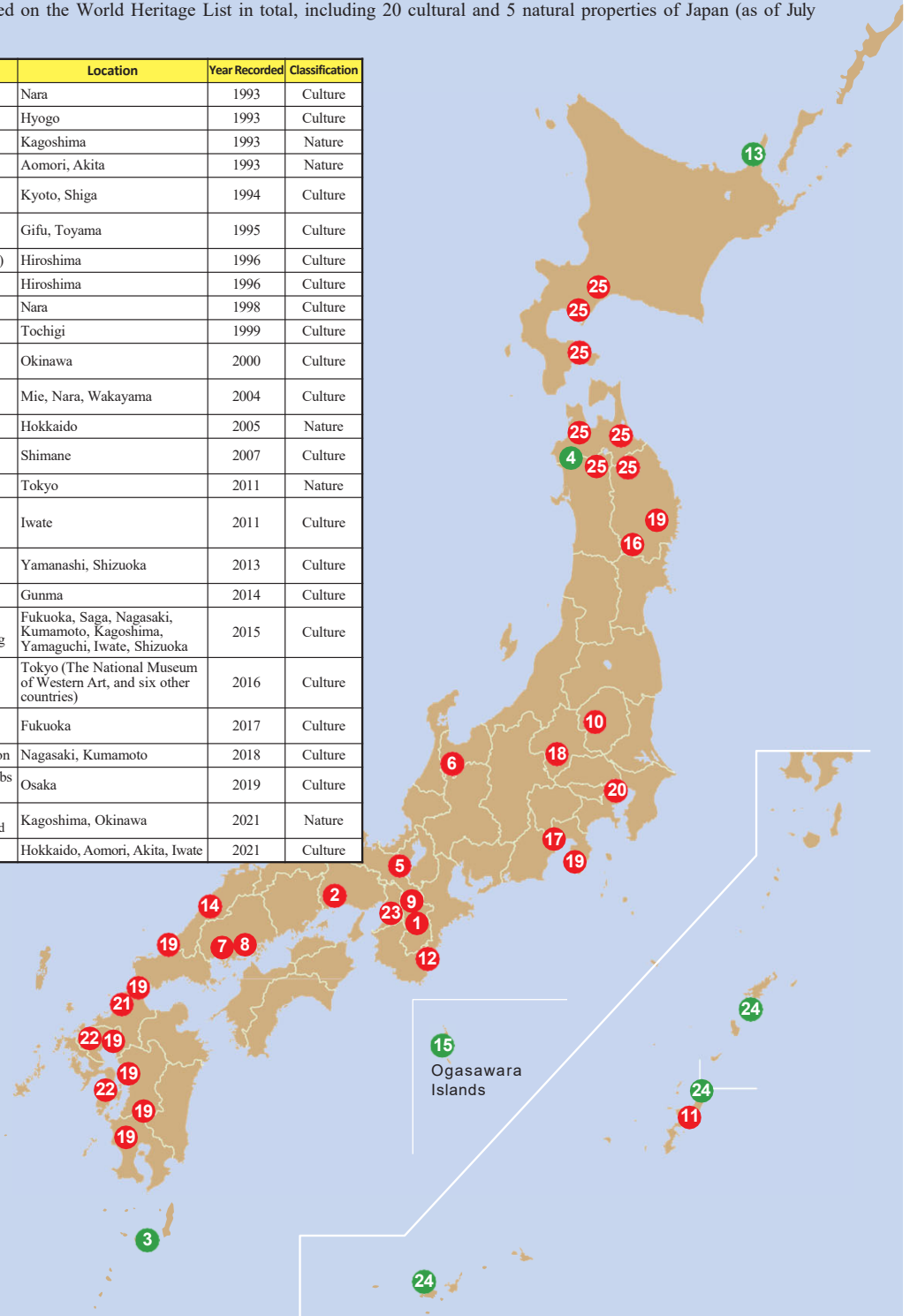
From Japan's Properties to World Cultural World Heritage

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, 1,157 properties are inscribed on the World Heritage List in total, including 20 cultural and 5 natural properties of Japan (as of July 2023).

	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



Buddhist Monuments in the Horyu-ji Area

Photo: Courtesy of Horyuji Temple



Himeji-jo

Photo: Courtesy of Himeji City Board of Education



Historic Monuments of Ancient Kyoto
(Kyoto, Uji and Otsu Cities)

Photo: Courtesy of Motorikyu-Nijojo Office, Kyoto City Hall



Historic Villages of Shirakawa-go and Gokayama

Photo: Courtesy of Shirakawa Village Board of Education



Hiroshima Peace Memorial
(Genbaku Dome)



Itsukushima Shinto Shrine

Photo: Courtesy of Hiroshima Prefectural Board of Education



Historic Monuments of Ancient Nara

Photo: Courtesy of Nara Prefectural Board of Education



Shrines and Temples of Nikko

Photo: Courtesy of Tochigi Prefecture



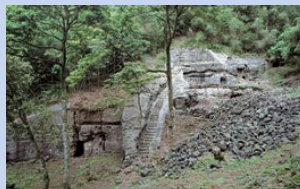
Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryukyu

Photo: Courtesy of Okinawa Prefectural Board of Education



Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range

Photo: Courtesy of Wakayama Prefectural Board of Education



Iwami Ginzan Silver Mine and its Cultural Landscape

Photo: Courtesy of Shimane Prefectural Board of Education



Hiraizumi – Temples, Gardens and Archaeological Sites Representing the Buddhist Pure Land

Photo: Courtesy of Kawashima Printing Co. Ltd.



Fujisan, Sacred place and Source of artistic Inspiration

Photo: Courtesy of Fujii City



Tomioka Silk Mill and Related Sites

Photo: Courtesy of Tomioka City



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



The Architectural Work of Le Corbusier, an Outstanding Contribution to the Modern Movement

Photo: Courtesy of The National Museum of Western Art



Sacred Island of Okinoshima and Associated Sites in the Munakata Region



Hidden Christian Sites in the Nagasaki Region

Photo by Ikeda Tsutomu



Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group: Mounded Tombs of Ancient Japan

Photo: Courtesy of Sakai 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 181 States Parties to the Convention as of July 2023.

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 567 elements are inscribed on the Representative List in total, including 22 elements in Japan (as of July 2023).

At the seventeenth session of the Intergovernmental Committee for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage held in Rabat, Morocco, in November 2022, “Furyu-odori,” nominated by Japan, was inscribed on the Representative List. This nomination consisted of 41 officially designated significant intangible folk cultural assets, while grouping them as “Furyu-odori” by expanding the “Chakkirako dance” that was inscribed on the list in 2009.

More than fifteen years has passed since its entry into force, and 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
Furyu-odori	2022

Furyu-odori List

Name	Prefecture	Name	Prefecture
Dainenbutsukenbai in Nagai	Iwate Prefecture	Sanyare-odori in Ohmi Konan	Shiga Prefecture
Onikenbai		Naginata-furi of the Kenketo Festival in Ohmi	
Bon-odori in Nishimonai	Akita Prefecture	Rokusai-nenbutsu in Kyoto	Kyoto Prefecture
Bon-odori in Kemanai		Yasurai-bana	
Kashima-odori in Ogoh-uchi	Tokyo	Hanagasa-odori in Kuta	Hyogo Prefecture
Oh-odori in Nijjima		Furyuu oh-odori ko-odori in Ama	
Ho-oh no mai in Shimohirai		Oh-odori in Totsukawa	Nara Prefecture
Chakkirako	Kanagawa Prefecture	Sagimai at Yasaka Shrine in Tsuwano	Shimane Prefecture
Omineiri in Yamakita		Shiraishi-odori	Okayama Prefecture
Ayakomai	Niigata Prefecture	Ohmiya-odori	
Dai no saka		Jindai-odori in Nishiiya	Tokushima Prefecture
Dainenbutsu in Mushoh-no	Yamanashi Prefecture	Ayako-odori	Kagawa Prefecture
Odorinenbutsu in Atobe	Nagano Prefecture	Nenbutsu-odori in Takinomiya	
Bon-odori in Niino		Kannoh-gaku	Fukuoka Prefecture
Nenbutsu-odori in Wagoh		Jangara in Hirado	Nagasaki Prefecture
Gujoh-odori	Gifu Prefecture	Okita-odori and Kuromaru-odori in Ohmura	
Kanomizu-kakeodori		Tsushima no Bon-odori	
Bon-odori in Tokuyama	Shizuoka Prefecture	Nobara hachimangu furyu	Kumamoto Prefecture
Bon-odori in Utougi	Aichi Prefecture	Yoshihiro-gaku	Oita Prefecture
Yonenbutsu and Bon-odori in Ayado		Ara-odori in Gokase	Miyazaki Prefecture
Shinji-odori at Katte Shrine	Mie Prefecture		



Chakkirako



Ayako-odori

Promoting International Exchange and Cooperation

With a view to protecting cultural heritage, which is the common heritage of humanity, Japan works together with other countries and international organizations, (i) research exchanges, (ii) conservation and restoration projects, (iii) training of experts, and (iv) implementing controls over illicit imports and exports of cultural properties.

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

Japan dispatches experts as emergency support for cultural heritage damaged by natural disasters or in conflicts, and provides support for conservation and restoration programs by partnering with cultural heritage preservation organizations overseas as the Cultural Heritage International Cooperation Base Exchange Program. In FY2022, Japan newly implemented programs such as the “Exchange Program for Technology Transfer for Scientific Research of Archaeological Heritage in Uzbekistan,” “Exchange Program for Human Resources Development for the Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Republic of Armenia,” and “Program for Sustainable Conservation of the Old Town in Cairo / Development of Communities with the Participation of Residents.”

In the Program to Promote Cooperation in Protection of Cultural Heritage in the Asia Pacific Region targeting those in charge of protecting cultural heritage in the region, Japan promotes international cooperation for the purpose of capacity building of young experts and those specializing in the protection of cultural heritage by implementing training. In FY2022, group training under the theme of conservation and restoration of wooden structures, individual training under the theme of three-dimensional recording for ancient remains, workshop on cultural heritage, etc. were held. 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 continues to run programs under which it carries out research, collects and provides information, and constructs a network between each domestic research group.

Controls over Illicit Imports and Exports of Cultural Properties

In order to prevent illicit transactions of cultural properties and protect cultural properties of individual countries from risks of being illicitly imported or exported, Japan concluded the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property and enacted the Act on Controls on the Illicit Export and Import and Other Matters of Cultural Property.

This Act prohibits the import of cultural property stolen from overseas museums, etc. and extends the period during which a victimized person can make a claim for recovery to 10 years as a special measure on condition of compensation for the price as prescribed in the Civil Code.

Furthermore, in order to protect cultural property upon an armed conflict, imports of cultural property from a territory occupied by another country in an armed conflict (occupied territory) are regulated under the Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols (1954 and 1999), the Act on Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, etc. Such conduct as destroying or damaging cultural property in an armed conflict as a hostility, and using cultural property for military purposes is subject to punishment.



Training for conservation and restoration of dyed fabric in Armenia

(Photo: Courtesy of Saga University)



On-site training for using dry sieves and the flotation sorting method in Uzbekistan

(Photo: Courtesy of Nara National Research Institute for Cultural Properties)



Guidance on facilitation in Cairo

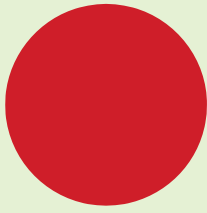
(Photo: Courtesy of Japan Commission for Appropriate Architecture and the Built Environment)



Training on the site of restoring Kaidando Hall, Todaiji Temple

(Photo: Courtesy of Asia-Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO)

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

Armor



National Treasure, Important Cultural Property

Temples and shrines, castles, ruins



Historic Site, Place of Scenic Beauty, Natural Monument

Traditional performances



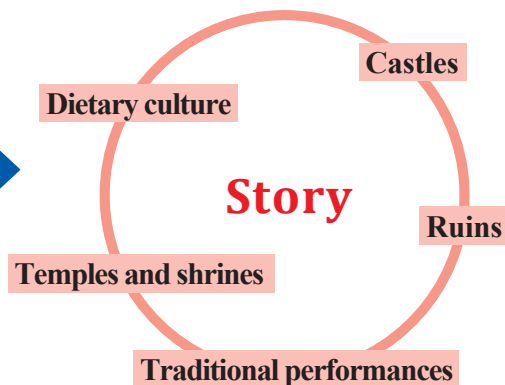
Intangible Cultural Property, Folk Cultural Property

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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