

Cultural Properties for Future Generations



Protection of Cultural Properties Logo

Cultural Properties Department, Agency for Cultural Affairs, JAPAN

Cultural properties in Japan

Various cultural properties in Japan

Diverse cultural properties have been created and developed throughout the long history of Japan. These have been passed down from one generation to the next, to the present day, and are a precious legacy of the Japanese people.

These cultural properties include not only tangible properties (e.g. shrines, temples, and other structures, Buddhist statues, paintings, calligraphy), but also intangible properties (e.g. skills such as performing arts and craft techniques, traditional events and festivals). Natural landscapes unchanged by time are also included as cultural properties in Japan.

Under the Japanese Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, these cultural properties are divided into the following categories.

Tangible Cultural Properties

These include tangible cultural products which are of high historical or artistic value, such as structures, paintings, sculptures, crafts, calligraphic works, classical books, and ancient documents; archeological artifacts and other historical materials of high scientific value. Objects other than structures are referred to as “works of fine arts and crafts”.

Intangible Cultural Properties

These include intangible cultural products which are of high historical or artistic value, such as drama, music, and craft techniques. The term refers to human skills themselves, which are embodied by individuals or groups who have mastered the relevant skills.

Folk Cultural Properties

These are items indispensable for understanding transition in the daily lives of the Japanese people, such as manners and customs related to food, clothing, and housing, to occupation, to religious faith, and to annual events, etc.; folk performing arts; and folk techniques, as well as clothes, tools and implements, houses, and other objects used in connection with the foregoing.

Monuments

These include shell mounds, ancient tombs, sites of palaces, sites of forts or castles, monumental dwelling houses, and other sites which possess a high historical or scientific value; gardens, bridges, gorges, sea-shores, mountains, and other places of scenic beauty which possess a high artistic or scenic value; and animals, plants, and geological and mineral formations, which possess a high scientific value.

Cultural Landscapes

These are landscapes that have evolved in association with the modes of life or livelihoods of the people and the geo-cultural features of the region, and which are indispensable to understanding the lifestyles and/or livelihoods of the people of Japan.

Groups of Traditional Buildings

These are groups of Traditional buildings of high value which form beautiful historical scenery in combination with their environs.

Of these cultural properties, the government designates, selects, and registers important items in categories such as Important Cultural Properties, National Treasures, Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments, and gives priority to their protection.

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

Number of Designated Cultural Properties

(as of June 1, 2007)

Designation National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties

		National Treasures	Important Cultural Properties
Fine Arts and Crafts	Paintings	157 items	1,952 items
	Sculptures	126 items	2,615 items
	Crafts	252 items	2,405 items
	Calligraphic works, Classical books	223 items	1,857 items
	Ancient documents	59 items	717 items
	Archeological artifacts	41 items	559 items
	Historic materials	2 items	150 items
Subtotal		860 items	10,255 items
Structures		(257 buildings) 213 items	(4,147 buildings) 2,306 items
Total		1,073 items	12,561 items

Note: The figures for Important Cultural Properties include National Treasures

Designation Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments

Special Historic Sites	60 items	Historic Sites	1,572 items
Special Places of Scenic Beauty	29 items	Places of Scenic Beauty	308 items
Special Natural Monuments	72 items	Natural Monuments	934 items
Total	161 items	Total	2,814 items

Note: The figures for Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments include Special Historic Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments

Designation Important Intangible Cultural Properties

	Individual Recognition		Group Recognition	
	No. of designations	No. of holders	No. of designations	No. of holding groups
Performing Arts	38 items	53 persons (53)	11 items	11 groups
Craft Techniques	44 items	57 persons (56)	14 items	14 groups
Total	82 items	110 persons (109)	25 items	25 groups

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

Designation Important Tangible Folk Cultural Properties

205 items

Designation Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties

252 items

Selection Important Cultural Landscapes

2 items

Selection Important Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings

79 districts

Selection Selected Conservation Techniques

Holders		Preservation Groups	
45 items	49 holders	23 items	24 groups (22 groups)

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

Registration Registered Tangible Cultural Properties (Structures)

6,064 items

Registration Registered Tangible Folk Cultural Properties

6 items

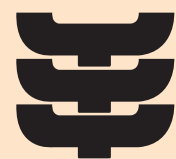
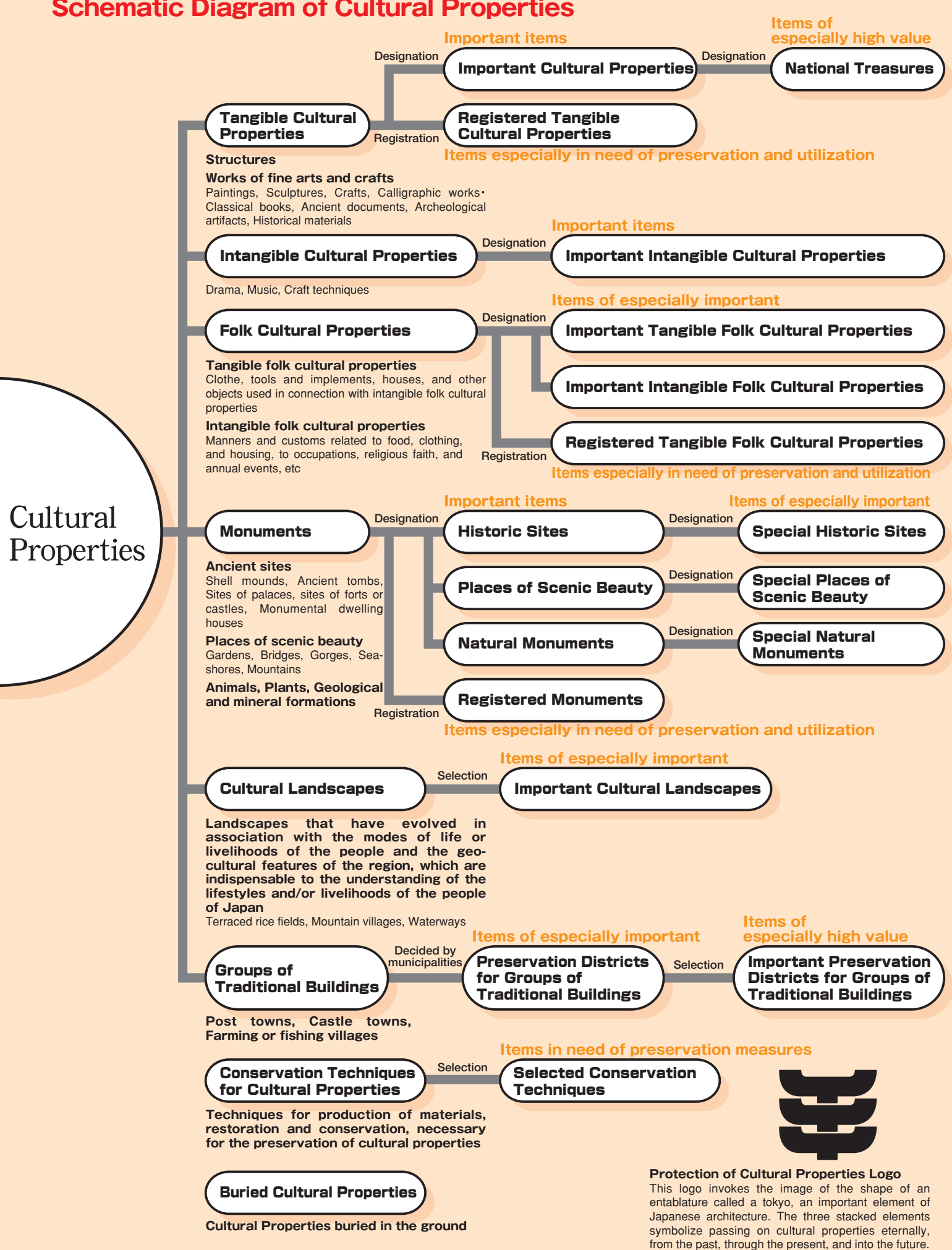
Registration Registered Tangible Cultural Properties (Works of Fine Arts and Crafts)

4 items

Registration Registered Monuments

14 items

Schematic Diagram of Cultural Properties



Protection of Cultural Properties Logo
This logo invokes the image of the shape of an entablature called a tokyo, an important element of Japanese architecture. The three stacked elements symbolize passing on cultural properties eternally, from the past, through the present, and into the future.

System and measures for the protection of cultural properties in Japan

How cultural properties are preserved and utilized

Cultural properties are divided into categories based on the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, and the best-fitting protection measures are taken for each category.

Designation and other

Cultural properties are designated, selected, or registered after the Minister of MEXT has consulted the Council for Cultural Affairs and received their report.



National Treasure Chion-in Temple San-mon Gate
(Kyoto City, Kyoto Prefecture)

This is one of the main facilities of the Chion-in Temple grounds located at the foot of Mt. Higashi-yama in Kyoto. This magnificently-decorated structure, a culmination of the techniques of early modern architecture, is the largest existing two-storey, double-roofed gate. As a symbol of the headquarters of the Jodo ("Pure Land") Buddhist sect, which has wide influence in Japanese society, the building is of profound cultural and historical significance.

Utilization

- Recommendation, orders and directives to owners or municipalities, regarding public display of cultural properties
- Establishment and operation of museums, theatres, and other public facilities, and centres for cultural properties research



Place of Scenic Beauty Futamiura
(Ise City, Mie Prefecture)

With its beautiful white-sand shoreline facing Ise Bay, this site has been widely known since ancient times as a place associated with waka poetry. In particular, since the late middle ages, it has been a sacred place for worship of the gods of the sea, focused on the two rocks, one large and one small, known as the "Husband and Wife", which jut out of the ocean. This place is highly valued both as an object of religious respect, and for its scenic beauty. (photo courtesy of Ise City)

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



Preservation

- Guidance and subsidies concerning repair and maintain 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
- Documentation as necessary, making documentation available to public
- Environmental preservation



Important Cultural Property: Haniwa of young girl holding a sword (tachi), discovered at the group of ancient burial mounds in the Kouzuketsumakawari kofun

A haniwa figure from the kofun period. The figure is holding her left hand to her breast, and has a sword (tachi) in her right hand. The sash she wears across her shoulder signifies that she is a holy priest serving at funeral rites.

History of the Law for the Cultural Properties

Half a century of improvements to the system

The destruction by fire of the mural paintings in the golden hall of Horyuji Temple in 1949 provided the impetus for the establishment of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, Japan's first unified 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 Arts", the "Historical Sites, Places of Scenic Beauty, and Natural Monuments Preservation Law" and other existing laws, expanding and reinforcing the protection system. As changes occurred in society, further amendments were made, and facilities were improved, leading to the system we have today.

- 1871 Law for the Preservation of Ancient Artifacts
- 1897 Ancient Temples and Shrines Preservation Law
- 1919 Historical 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 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 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 system for intangible cultural properties

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

Expansion of 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 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 system for Buried Cultural Properties

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

Expansion of system for folk cultural properties

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

Establishment of system of Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings

Establishment of system for protection of Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties

1996 Amendments

Establishment of 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, etc.

Reform to Council for Cultural Affairs

2004 Amendments

Establishment of system for protection of Cultural Landscapes

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

Addition of Folk Techniques as objects of protection

..... Folk techniques added to definition of Folk Cultural Properties

Expansion of system of Registered Cultural Properties

..... Expansion of registration system to include Works of Fine Arts and Crafts, Tangible Cultural Properties, Tangible Folk Cultural Properties, and Monuments

Examples of Preservation and

Important Cultural Property (structure)

Kumagai Family Residence

Ohda City, Shimane Prefecture

In recent years, public activities facilitating the “conservation in use” of cultural property buildings have increased in number and diversity throughout Japan. Through these activities, cooperation among stakeholders is expanded and strengthened. In particular, property owners and local authorities are building partnerships with local citizens’ groups in order to organize a wide variety of events.

The promotion of “conservation in use” is expected to raise public awareness and understanding of the cultural values of the buildings, encourage public participation in protection activities, and thus contribute to the achievement of the fundamental goals of the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties.

When Ohda City conducted a series of restoration projects on the Kumagai Family Residence in 2001-2005, the city also organized a team called “Women of the House”. The members of this group take care of daily maintenance, administration, information services, displays and exhibitions, and act as interpretive guides for visitors to the house. During the restoration projects, Ohda City conducted a program to train the women in management of the house.

The Kumagai Family Residence has been open to the public since the completion of all repair works in April 2006. In cooperation with Ohda City, the “Women of the House” develop suitable ways to use and manage the house, incorporating ideas from local residents in order to contribute as much as possible to the community.



Historic Site

Historic Site: Jizoden Ruins

Akita City, Akita Prefecture

After ensuring that Historic Sites are preserved in such a way as to maintain their value as cultural properties various means of utilization are then planned in order to deepen understanding of history and culture among the local people.

The remains of a Yayoi period village surrounded by a wooden fence were discovered at the Jizoden Ruins Historic Site. Based on the results of the excavation research, the pit dwellings, wooden fence, and pottery-firing site are being recreated. The actual process of construction is unique: under the direction of craftsmen, numerous citizens participate in all aspects of construction, from cutting trees, to building the wooden fence and pit dwellings. Gradually, a Yayoi era village is taking shape. Local junior high and high schools, technical and junior colleges are also enthusiastic participants. This is a new model of utilization for a historic site, in which citizens play an active part from step one.



Utilization of Cultural Properties

Important Tangible Folk Cultural Properties

Activities at Tokamachi Museum

Tokamachi, Niigata Prefecture

Although utilization of Important Tangible Folk Cultural Properties has traditionally consisted mainly of exhibition in museums, recent years have seen an increase in more active utilization practices.

The Important Tangible Folk Cultural Properties preserved at the Tokamachi Museum, such as the Echigo chijimi weaving equipment and related materials, or tools used during the heavy snows of Tokamachi winters, are not only utilized as display exhibits, but attempts are being made to utilize them as materials for the “Children’s Museum” held at the museum, and for other events where people can try actually using the tools. By handling and trying to use historical objects the same size and shape as the Designated Cultural Properties, people come to a concrete understanding of how these cultural properties are actually used.

In addition to the Children’s museum, the museum organizes other activities, such as projects where games and traditional events are recreated, or the Snow Festival Museum Square, where Cultural Properties are utilized in workshops offering people a chance to experience these historical objects directly.



Important Cultural Properties (Fine Arts and Crafts)

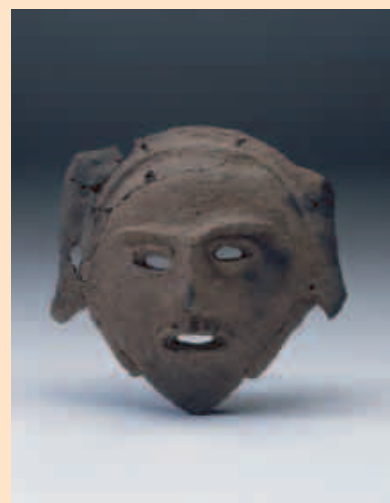
Providing opportunities to enjoy Important Cultural Properties (Fine Arts and Crafts)

In order to preserve cultural properties which are the common legacy of the people, and to pass them down to the next generation, the government designates works of fine arts and crafts which are of particularly high historical, artistic, or academic value as National Treasures or Important Cultural Properties. At the same time, efforts are made to provide appropriate management for objects which are in danger of being lost or scattered, making them national property, and loaning them for exhibition purposes so that people have plentiful opportunities to enjoy these valuable cultural properties.

In addition, every year since 1951, the Agency for Cultural Affairs has held exhibitions of classical Japanese art overseas in order to promote understanding of Japan’s history and culture, and to advance international friendship, by introducing outstanding cultural properties from Japan to other countries.

In 2006, the “Hidden Faces: The Art of Japanese Masks” was held at the Asian Civilizations Museum, Singapore where 48 masks from ancient Japan, and 20 Noh costumes and other items were displayed. Included in these was an earthen mask, an Important Cultural Property (discovered at the Mamachi site, Chitose City, Hokkaido; owned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs). The mask, a valuable archeological artifact from the Jomon period, was used as an accessory at festivals.

The Agency for Cultural Affairs will continue to actively promote the exhibition of National Treasures and Important Cultural Properties both domestically and overseas.



Important Intangible Cultural Properties (Performing Arts)

Kabuki Efforts by the Organization for the Preservation of Kabuki

Nohgaku, Ningyo Joruri Bunraku, Kabuki, Gidayubushi, and other traditional performing arts that have been designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties receive government funding for successor training projects, and for National Theatre projects including public performances, successor training projects, and collection of materials.

Recently, opportunities for elementary schoolchildren and others to experience these traditional performing arts have been developed along with other activities aimed at improving transmission to the future.

In 2001, the Organization for the Preservation of Kabuki, a group made up of holders of the Important Intangible Cultural Property Kabuki started a “Kabuki Workshop” for junior high school students, and from the following year, began a project for elementary students, sponsored by the Agency for Cultural Affairs, which has been held every year since then.

In 2006, the Kabuki workshop for elementary students was held at the National Theatre and the Edo Tokyo Museum over 10 days between July 9th and August 9th. Under the direction of Kabuki actors and musicians, the students observed Kabuki and the stage mechanisms, tried on wigs and yukata, and learned poses. In addition, after practicing the actions and the lines, on the last day they give a performance on stage at the National Theatre showing what they have learned, wearing costumes, wigs, and make-up, and using the stage devices and props.



Important Intangible Cultural Properties (Craft Techniques)

Holding the “Japanese Artistry and Beauty Exhibition — Important Intangible Cultural Properties and the People who sustain them”

The purpose of the exhibition is to raise understanding among the Japanese people of cultural properties protection, through a broad-ranging display of ceramics, weaving, dyeing, lacquer work, and other traditional craft techniques that have been designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties, along with tools and materials for production which are indispensable for the expression of these craft techniques and which have been specially selected as Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties.

From its collection, the Agency for Cultural Affairs displays representative works by Intangible Cultural Properties holders (known as Living National Treasures), and holding groups for such properties, along with related materials and other items. Documentary films planned and produced by the Agency for Cultural Affairs illustrating craft techniques are also shown.



Activities for protecting and raising awareness of cultural properties

Cultural Properties Protection Week

Every year, the week from November 1 to November 7 is “Cultural Properties Protection Week.” This event was prompted by the fire that broke out on January 26, 1949 in the Kondo Hall of Horyuji Temple (Ikarugacho, Nara Prefecture), destroying wall murals. The fire, which damaged the Kondo Hall of Horyuji Temple, the world’s oldest existing wooden structure and destroyed more than half of the wall murals, was a great shock to the people of Japan. Leading to increased public concern about the threat posed to cultural properties protection by fire and other disasters, and resulting in the establishment the following year (1950) of a unified body of legislation in the Law for the Protection for Cultural Properties. The Kondo Hall of Horyuji Temple was repaired, and work was completed on November 3, 1954. In order to mark the date, and to raise awareness of the concept of cultural properties protection, the first week of November, centered on November 3, was chosen as “Cultural Properties Protection Week.” In 2006, the 53rd annual Cultural Properties Protection Week was held.

In order to protect cultural properties and pass them on to the next generation, the cooperation of all the people of the country is indispensable. It is necessary to deepen understanding of, and nurture a spirit of respect for cultural properties. During this week, prefectural and municipal Boards of Education take the lead in organizing exhibitions of historical structures and works of fine arts and crafts, tours of historical sites, performances of traditional performing arts, and various events held at locations around the country, providing opportunities to get in touch with Japan’s history and culture.



Visit to Historical Site Wakayama Castle: See and know traditional skills (photo courtesy of Wakayama Board of Education)



Tomiya Furusato Festival (photo courtesy of Miyagi Prefecture Board of Education)

Fire Prevention Day for Cultural Properties

In 1955, January 26 was set as “Fire Prevention Day for Cultural Properties,” prompted by the fire that destroyed wall murals at the Kondo Hall of Horyuji Temple on January 26, 1949. Since then, the ACA, the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, owners of cultural properties, prefectural and municipal Boards of Education, fire departments, and local residents work together in cooperation to organize annual fire prevention activities for cultural properties throughout the country. In 2006, for the 52nd annual Fire Prevention Day, fire drills and other activities were held where cultural properties are located at very places throughout the country from mid- to late-January. On January 26, the Commissioner of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, and the Commissioner of the Fire and Disaster Management Agency, attended large scale drills at Kokubunji Temple in Hofu City, Yamaguchi Prefecture. Over 200 people from Kokubunji Temple, Kokubunji regional government, the local fire departments and squads, the Board of Education, the police department, Ground Self Defence Forces, participated in large scale drills.

Cultural properties, born and nurtured in our country’s long history, and protected and passed down to the present day, are the valuable common property of the Japanese people. These properties face risks such as fire, earthquake, and typhoons; the understanding and cooperation of a wide range of people are needed in order to pass these properties on to the next generation.



Important Cultural Property Kokubunji Temple’s Kondo Hall is sprayed with water from fire hoses.

Efforts for the Protection of Cultural Properties by Local Authorities

Most regional governments have established ordinances for the protection of cultural properties

Recently, along with rising public interest in cultural properties, regional governments are playing an increasingly important role in the protection of cultural properties that are familiar at the local level. Ninety-seven percent of regional governments in Japan have established ordinances for the protection of cultural properties and have accordingly made independent designations of cultural properties located in the area. Regional governments themselves undertake the management, repair, and exhibition of these cultural properties, as well as providing support for management, repair and support projects carried out by owners. With the amendments to the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties in 1975, committees for the direction of cultural properties protection were set up within prefectural Boards of Education. Local cultural properties were visited, and detailed directions given for their protection.



Old Fukiya Elementary School Main Building, designated as an Important Cultural Property by Okayama Prefecture

Completed in 1909, this school is a two-story wooden structure; with an entryway at the front bordered by wings extending to the left and right, the building is mostly symmetrical. It gives us an idea of what Meiji Era schools looked like, and is still used as a school today.

Municipalities administer the system of Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings

The conservation system of Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings was established in 1975, in order to preserve historic landscapes of villages and towns rich in local history and culture. Preservation districts are defined by municipalities. The national government selects Important Preservation Districts for Groups of Traditional Buildings (hereinafter “IPD”) from applications submitted by municipalities. Relevant national and prefectural authorities provide a broad range of support, including technical instruction and financial assistance, for preservation projects implemented by the municipalities within the IPD. Projects include repair of traditional buildings, enhancement of historic landscapes, and installation of disaster prevention facilities.



Uda City Matsuyama Preservation District for Groups of Traditional Buildings

The Uda City Matsuyama area was the political and economical center of the Uda region. With many houses dating back to the late Edo — early Showa Period, it preserves the historical atmosphere of a merchant neighbourhood. (Photograph courtesy of Uda City Board of Education)

Local Authorities work actively toward the protection and utilization of Buried Cultural Properties

Every region of Japan has a rich store of irreplaceable buried cultural properties which tell the history of the area. Approximately 7,000 experts are employed by prefectures and municipalities to implement preservation regulations in connection with development projects, to carry out excavation surveys, for the preservation and utilization of ruins. Local authorities in each area work to provide facilities for preserved ruins, and to display earthenware and other objects discovered during excavation, in order to spread local history as it is uncovered. Through these activities, Buried Cultural Properties play a role in the revitalization of the town and its people.



Scene from a project to familiarize children with Buried Cultural Properties

Local authorities and other bodies throughout Japan have a vast store of results from excavation surveys. Innovative ways are found to use these in public displays and to make people more familiar with these properties. (Photo courtesy of Gunma Prefecture Buried Cultural Properties Corporation)

Communicating information about Cultural Properties

The “Cultural Heritage Online” Plan

The Agency for Cultural Affairs and the Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications have been working closely together to push forward the “Concept of Cultural Heritage Online”. This plan aims to: 1) actively provide information-via broadband connection-about tangible cultural heritage on the national and local levels; 2) encourage both the utilization of copyrighted works and other cultural properties.

In order to promote the plan, a test version of cultural heritage online has been available since April of 2004, and we are working towards full-scale operation.



test version of Cultural Heritage Online (image of home page)
<http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/>

Information available on the test version

The information currently available on the test version is divided into three broad categories:

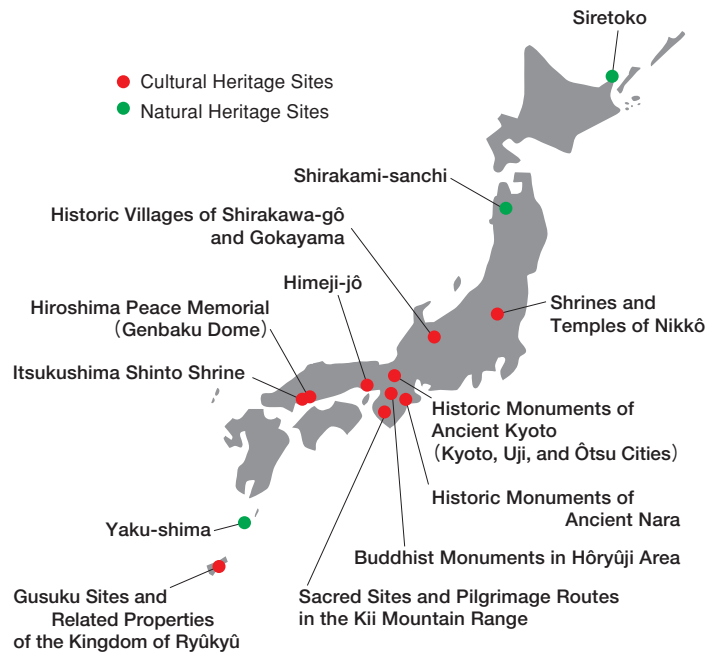
- ① Links to museums and art galleries throughout the country
- ② Information about exhibitions at museums and art galleries throughout the country
- ③ Information provided by museums and art galleries throughout the country

From Japan's Cultural Properties

World Heritage

Towards the transmission of the precious heritage of humanity

The World Heritage Convention was adopted at the UNESCO General Conference in Paris in 1972. The purpose of the convention was to establish a system of international cooperation and support to protect cultural and natural heritage which is clearly of universal value, and to safeguard this as the world cultural heritage for all humanity from damage, destruction, or other threats. Japan ratified the convention in 1992, and there are now a total of 13 sites listed within the country, including the Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range, and Shiretoko. Ten of these are cultural heritage sites, and three are natural heritage. (as of September 2006)



Itsukushima Shinto Shrine



Himeji-jō



Gusuku Sites and Related Properties of the Kingdom of Ryūkyū



Shires and Temples of Nikkō



Historic Villages of Shirakawa-gō and Gokayama



Sacred Sites and Pilgrimage Routes in the Kii Mountain Range

to World Cultural Heritage

Intangible Cultural Heritage

The Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage was adopted at the UNESCO General Conference of 2003, and came into force in April 2006. In June 2004, Japan became the third country to ratify the convention, and there are now 59 States Parties (as of July 25 2006). At the first General Conference of Member States was held at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris in June 2006, Japan was chosen from among the States Parties as a member of the Intergovernmental Committee. Japan will continue to work through the Intergovernmental Committee to develop operational directives for the implementation of the convention.

Prior to entry into force of the convention, UNESCO established the list of Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity, with the aim of recognizing masterpieces of oral and intangible heritage and promoting their development and transmission. Starting in 2001, candidates were put forward by Member States, and, from among these, every second year, items meeting UNESCO criteria were chosen and declared “Masterpieces of the Oral and Intangible Heritage of Humanity.” To date, 90 items have been declared masterpieces, including Noh,

Ningyo Joruri Bunraku, and Kabuki (Kabuki performed in the traditional style of acting and direction) from Japan. Since the entry into force of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage, those items of Intangible Cultural Heritage previously declared “Masterpieces” will be registered on the Representative List of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity.



Third Proclamation Masterpiece
“Kabuki (Kabuki performed in the traditional style of acting and direction)”

System for International Cooperation

In order to protect within a framework of international cooperation the cultural heritage which is *the common heritage of humanity*, Japan works together with other countries, international institutions, and research institutions, to collaborate on conservation and restoration projects, training of specialists, and other activities.

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

In June 2006, the Law on the Promotion of International Cooperation for the Protection of Cultural Heritage Abroad was passed as a multi-partisan member’s bill. This law stipulates the duties of the government and of research institutions, strengthens ties among related bodies, and formulates basic guidelines for Japan’s international cooperation on cultural heritage. The law establishes the legal standing of activities for international cooperation on cultural heritage, builds a domestic framework for cooperation, and facilitates effective implementation of international cooperation on cultural heritage through strengthened ties among related institutions.

International Consortium on Cultural Heritage

In order to make international cooperation on cultural heritage even more effective and efficient, a consortium was set up in June 2006, with the participation of government branches, research institutions, NGOs, and other domestic groups. This consortium builds a network of domestic research institutions and other bodies, collecting and providing information, carrying out surveys and research, and implementing other projects.



Cleaning wall paintings at Bamiyan heritage sites

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