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## The Cultural Properties Protection Law and Japan's Folk Performing Arts

### **Abstract**

The Cultural Properties Protection Law (*Bunkazai hogohō*), and in particular its provision for designating important intangible folk cultural properties, has influenced Japan's folk performing arts in three important ways. The law establishes the folk performing arts as one of Japan's "cultural properties"; it provides the impetus for nationwide surveys that help provide a comprehensive picture of the arts that exist; and it aids in their survival by stimulating the formation of local preservation societies. The article concludes by suggesting that the designation process may already have gone far enough in turning the folk performing arts into cultural icons, and that their survival may now depend on leaving room for change.

**Key words:** Cultural Properties Protection Law — important intangible folk cultural properties — folk performing arts — preservation societies — Bunkachō

JAPAN'S *Bunkazai hogohō* 文化財保護法 (Cultural Properties Protection Law) was passed in 1950 as part of a comprehensive plan to recognize and preserve Japan's cultural heritage. An important provision of this law provides for the designation of various arts as *jūyō mukei minzoku bunkazai* 重要無形民俗文化財 (important intangible folk cultural properties). Due in large part to this designation program, the impact of the law has been felt throughout traditional Japanese culture, and nowhere more so than in *minzoku geinō* 民俗芸能 (folk performing arts): the dramas, dances, and musical presentations that form an integral part of many local festivals.<sup>1</sup>

Folk performing arts, together with *fūzoku kanshū* 風俗慣習 (manners and customs), constitute the category known as *minzoku bunkazai* 民俗文化財 (folk cultural properties).<sup>2</sup> According to the law, these are the traditional events and practices (and the objects and structures associated with them) that are essential to understanding how life in Japan has changed over time (IWANAMI 1991, 1372).<sup>3</sup>

The provisions of the law are carried out by the Bunkachō 文化庁 (Agency for Cultural Affairs), a branch of the Ministry of Education.<sup>4</sup> Since 1976, when the first selections were made, approximately 160 important intangible folk cultural properties have been designated<sup>5</sup> on the recommendation of the scholars and specialists serving on the Mukei Minzoku Bunkazai Bukai 無形民俗文化財部会 (Intangible folk cultural properties subcommittee) of the Bunkachō's Bunkazai Hogo Shingikai 文化財保護審議会 (Council for the protection of cultural properties).<sup>6</sup>

Most of the designated properties are folk performing arts, like Sado Island's *ningyō shibai* 人形芝居 (puppet plays), or events that include folk performing arts, like Aichi Prefecture's *Hanamatsuri* 花祭 (flower festival). Certain of them, however, fall under the classification of "manners and customs," such as Nagasaki Prefecture's *Shimosakiyama no hetomato gyōji* 下崎山のヘトマト行事, in which sumo, rope pulling, and other contests are used to forecast luck during the new

year.

To win designation, an art must in some way provide evidence of how Japan's folk performing arts originated or evolved, or of how they have changed over time; alternatively, it must possess aspects unique to a particular locale.<sup>7</sup> Yamagata Prefecture's *Kurokawa nō* 黒川能 (the Noh of Kurokawa), which was among the first group of arts designated under the revised law in 1976, is an outstanding example of non-mainstream Noh, and, as such, is important to understanding how the art form developed. Niigata Prefecture's *Ayako mai* 綾子舞 (Ayako dance), also designated in 1976, is a type of dance that is believed to show the evolution of Kabuki, while Saga Prefecture's *Takeo no Araidori* 武雄の荒踊 (warrior dance of Takeo), designated in 1977, is a dance-based performance that exists in only one small area of Japan (NISHITSUNOI 1990, 326, 346, and 384).

The stated purpose of the Cultural Properties Protection Law is to preserve Japan's *bunkazai* as a vital element of its culture.<sup>8</sup> The value of the Important Cultural Property designations—regardless of which category they fall into—is in making the public aware of cultural objects and practices of recognized value, and in giving concrete form to the abstract criteria set forth in the law.

For folk performing arts the designations have an added significance: the law specifically gives prefectural and local governments the right to select their own intangible folk cultural properties from among those not already designated by the national government (IWANAMI 1991, 1379).<sup>9</sup> Unlike Japan's mainstream traditional performing arts (Noh, *kyōgen*, Kabuki, and *bunraku*), which have homes in established national theaters, more localized *minzoku geinō* often lack an official framework of support and recognition. The above-mentioned national, prefectural, and local designation programs help fulfill this role.<sup>10</sup>

In this paper I will first look at the three ways in which the Cultural Properties Protection Law and its designation of folk cultural properties have had an impact on Japan's folk performing arts: 1) by placing the folk performing arts squarely among Japan's recognized cultural properties; 2) by providing the impetus—and wherewithal—to conduct nationwide surveys so that a comprehensive picture of the surviving folk performing arts could be gained; and 3) by stimulating the formation of preservation committees as the first line of defense in the survival of the folk performing arts. I conclude by suggesting that the designation process may already have gone far enough in turning the folk performing arts into cultural icons, and that their survival now depends on leaving room for change.

## FOLK PERFORMING ARTS AS CULTURAL PROPERTIES

The Cultural Properties Protection Law gave folk performing arts a place among Japan's recognized cultural properties. First, however, an evolution of the very concept of folk performing arts had to occur. As the law stood before its revision in 1975, folk objects and practices were swept together under the term "manners and customs" in a category labeled *minzoku shiryō* 民俗資料 (lit. "folk materials"). With the revision, *minzoku shiryō* was replaced by the expression *minzoku bunkazai*, and folk performing arts were specifically mentioned for the first time as an entity separate from "manners and customs."<sup>11</sup>

That the term *minzoku geinō* was not specifically mentioned in the original version of the law is not surprising. Though research into the performance components of festivals dated back to the early part of this century, it was not until after World War II that the term *minzoku geinō* was widely accepted as a way to identify those components and to label what was emerging as a lively scholarly field.

In the prewar years the terms *minzoku geijutsu* 民族芸術 (folk arts) and *kyōdo buyō* 郷土舞踊 (local dances) were frequently used, though neither proved adequate: the former included too many other art forms and the latter was too narrow in scope. The postwar *Geinō jiten* [Dictionary of performing arts; KAWATAKE 1953] employed the label *kyōdo geinō* 郷土芸能 (local performing arts) for festival performances, though *minzoku geinō* and even *minkan geinō* 民間芸能 (which also means "folk performing arts," and was earlier used in YANAGITA 1951) were cited as alternatives.

With its emphasis on the geographical identity of the performances, the term *kyōdo geinō* seemed to have the edge for much of the 1950s. The annual showcase of the folk performing arts, supported by the Ministry of Education and launched in 1950 as a reborn version of an earlier project,<sup>12</sup> was called the Zenkoku Kyōdo Geinō Taikai (National convention of local performing arts). However, in 1958 it was renamed the Zenkoku Minzoku Geinō Taikai (National convention of folk performing arts), the name by which it has been known ever since. In the same year GUNJI Masakatsu published his book *Kyōdo geinō*, in which he devoted several pages to a discussion of the relative merits of the terms *kyōdo geinō* and *minzoku geinō*, observing that the connotation of rusticity in the case of the former term made it somewhat inappropriate when speaking about those forms found within cities. *Kyōdo geinō*, Gunji wrote, is more "general and familiar," while *minzoku geinō* is more "scholarly" (GUNJI 1958, 13).

The final stage in the evolution of *minzoku geinō* as both concept and term came with the publication in 1960 of HONDA Yasuji's *Zuroku*

*Nihon no minzoku geinō*, in which he set forth the categories of *minzoku geinō* for the growing numbers of researchers who were going out into the field. Honda's system of classification—which, in effect, defined the subject—employed the categories of *kagura* 神楽 (Shinto music and dance), *dengaku* 田楽 (performances that accompany the planting of rice), *fūryū* 風流 (a variety of presentations that range from *bon* 盆 dances to processions), *shukufukugei* 祝福芸 (auspicious presentations), and *gairaimyaku* 外来脈 (performances whose origin can be traced back to Chinese performing arts). His categories remain the most widely used today. In using the term *minzoku geinō* Honda made it clear that performances by the residents of a community at festivals are to be viewed as part of a continuum that includes mainstream theatrical forms, and that they possess aesthetic value in their own right. It is a mistake, he wrote, to think that aesthetic expression and artistic intention are not characteristic of *minzoku geinō* (HONDA 1960, 42). But how did Honda and others fit *minzoku geinō* into the universe of Japan's performing arts, in contrast to the professional stage arts—Noh, *kyōgen*, Kabuki, and *bunraku*—which are classified by the law as *mukei bunkazai* 無形文化財 (intangible cultural properties)?

The main distinction is that the *minzoku geinō* are defined as being tied to a community's religious beliefs (*shinkō* 信仰). Honda uses the term *shinkō no niwa* 信仰の庭 (the garden of belief) as a metaphor for the community setting into which folk performing arts were born or introduced and made integral to the community's festivals (HONDA 1990, 3). The Cultural Properties Protection Law explicitly states that folk performing arts—as well as the customs and manners with which they share the title of *minzoku bunkazai*—are related to the conventions and occupations of daily life and to the beliefs and the annual observances (*nenjū gyōji* 年中行事) that are manifestations of those beliefs.

What happens when the community and its beliefs change? The need for preservation in the face of change is, after all, what created the Cultural Properties Protection Law in the first place. As Honda says, the folk performing arts flourish and are passed along as long as the beliefs that sustain them survive, or—and this is important—as long as the arts themselves remain compelling (HONDA 1990, 3). And, indeed, what has happened is that the more folk performing arts are identified as cultural properties, the more they take on a life of their own apart from the festival occasions of which they are traditionally a part.

At present the festival settings are occasionally dispensed with entirely, as when, for example, the performing arts are presented to audiences at the various folk performing arts conventions held through-

out Japan every year.<sup>13</sup> Even on home soil there is a tendency to focus on the performance and not spend time on all the ceremonials that traditionally go with it.<sup>14</sup>

With the upsurge in recent years in the number of conventions and other showcases, the folk performing arts are often treated like stage arts: choreographed, rehearsed, and presented on skillfully set stages just like professional entertainments. At the end of a piece the audiences clap just as they would in an ordinary theater. In the process, though, viewers are reminded that these are not really stage performances. Like festivals—and unlike regular theater—the conventions charge no admission fees, and the shows are held on weekends or holidays in recognition of the fact that the performers are ordinary people with livelihoods to earn the rest of the time.

Nevertheless, a rather schizophrenic relationship has been created between festivals and their context, of which there is no better proof than the tremendously detailed programs that accompany every convention. The notes are filled with information on the content, history, and original geographic setting of each presentation as if it were the function of the words themselves to fill in for whatever may be lacking in terms of festival context. While the folk performing arts can be described on one level as *oragamura no geinō* おらがむらの芸能 (the performing arts of “my village”) (NISHITSUNOI 1990, 263), they have been transformed by the designation programs from local events into cultural properties significant to the country as a whole.

Entire communities are affected when their traditional arts are catapulted into the spotlight. Kojima Tomiko noted the great effect national designation had on local pride when Miyazaki Prefecture’s *Shiiba kagura* 椎葉神楽 was given that distinction in 1991 (KOJIMA 1991, 58). Some communities have even found ways to benefit economically from their recognition. The town of Fukura on the island of Awaji, Hyōgo Prefecture, serves the tourist trade with regularly scheduled demonstrations of *Awaji ningyō-jōruri* 淡路人形浄瑠璃 (Awaji puppet plays accompanied by *jōruri* narrative), designated in 1976. At the Nagasaki Dentō Geinōkan 長崎伝統芸能館 (Nagasaki museum of traditional performing arts), a wide-screen video, resonant sound system, and a variety of displays give visitors a sense of the *Nagasaki kunchi* 長崎くんち festival and its dances, which were designated in 1979.

Displays similar to the one in Nagasaki include the Takayama Yatai Kaikan 高山屋台会館 (Takayama festival float exhibition hall) in Gifu Prefecture, the Chichibu Matsuri Kaikan 秩父祭会館 (Chichibu festival exhibition hall) in Saitama Prefecture, and the Karatsu Hikiyama Tenjijō 唐津曳山展示場 (Karatsu festival float exhibition center)

in Saga Prefecture. All are showplaces for designated events that incorporate performing arts (such as Takayama's mechanical-puppet plays and Chichibu's Kabuki). Invariably containing a glass case proudly displaying the certificate of designation from the Ministry of Education, these establishments testify to the pride the communities feel in having been recognized, as well as to the fact that such recognition can contribute to community revenues by attracting visitors at festival time as well as throughout the year to see the permanent displays and other attractions.

Even if people no longer hold the beliefs that once made festivals and their performing arts a necessary part of life, the Cultural Properties Protection Law seems to have succeeded in shifting the focus so that the performances are now seen as traditions worthy of preservation in themselves. In a sense, the preservation of tradition seems itself to be a new kind of belief being espoused by the Cultural Properties Protection Law.

#### SURVEYS

In its publications, the Bunkachō communicates a palpable sense of urgency regarding Japan's folk performing arts, sounding the alarm that a number are on the verge of disappearing altogether (see, for example, BUNKACHŌ 1988, 413). With its mandate to shore up these arts, the Bunkachō spearheads surveys in order to get information on the arts' current state and determine which of them need help to survive and which should be recorded for posterity (BUNKACHŌ 1988, 413).

Though the purpose of the surveys is not academic, the Bunkachō welcomes their use by specialists in the field. The more the information is disseminated, the more it raises appreciation of the folk performing arts among the population in general, thus creating an environment conducive to their preservation (SAITAMA-KENRITSU 1992, 4).

The surveys started at the time the Cultural Properties Protection Law was passed. In 1950 and again in 1954 the Ministry of Education's Bunkazai Hogo Iinkai 文化財保護委員会 (Cultural properties protection commission) enlisted the cooperation of the prefectural boards of education in investigating what kind of folk performing arts existed and where they were located. In a broad sense the surveys were to be like latter-day *Fudoki* 風土記 (lit. "records of wind and earth"), gazetteers that provincial officials were ordered to compile early in the eighth century by a government interested not just in geographical information but in local customs and traditions as well.

Unfortunately, the early attempts at gathering information were not very successful—the prefectures managed to identify no more than

a handful of events (MISUMI 1972, 39). Of course, conducting a survey is always difficult: even if people are willing to cooperate they may not know how to respond to the requests for information. The problem was compounded by the open-ended nature of many of the questions in the early surveys. When asked, for example, What kind of performing arts do you have in your area?, people may have assumed that the government and its specialists could not possibly want to know about their amateur Bon dances or *ta-ue odori* 田植踊 (dances performed during rice planting to pray for good crops), although this was precisely the type of information that was being sought (MISUMI 1972, 40).

The attempts of the 1950s were followed by a new series of surveys entitled *Minzoku shiryō kinkyū chōsa* 民俗資料緊急調査 (Emergency surveys of folk materials) that began in 1962 (BUNKACHŌ 1988, 413–14). The first survey devoted entirely to folk performing arts (the *Minzoku geinō kinkyū chōsa* [Emergency survey of folk performing arts]) was launched in 1988 and is expected to take ten years to complete. Each prefecture is given a two-year period within this time frame to do the survey and publish the results.

The new survey, which underscores the law's focus on traditional performing arts by limiting coverage to those arts already established as part of a local culture prior to World War II, makes up for the lack of specificity in the earlier surveys. Each prefecture is provided with a detailed outline of the categories and subcategories the Bunkachō wants covered (based on Honda's system of classification) and given concrete examples of each. They are asked to compile, first, a list of all the arts that exist within the prefecture and, second, a detailed report on selected arts that lack records and that are in danger of dying out or changing (Saitama Prefecture, one of the first to complete its survey, identified nearly 1,100 separate folk performing-art events, of which it chose twentyone for the detailed report [SAITAMA-KENRITSU 1992]).<sup>15</sup> The surveys are now designed to elicit the detailed information being sought. The earlier ones asked, for example, What kind of folk performing arts do you have? The present survey asks, Do you have *kagura*, and, if so, what kind? Is it *miko* 巫女, *yudate* 湯立, or one of several other varieties?

One of the biggest problems is with nomenclature, since different areas have their own names for the particular events. Thus the Bunkachō lists six subcategories under *fūryū*, for example, from *taiko odori* 太鼓踊 (drum dances) to *gyōretsu fūryū* 行列風流 (processionals), with specific examples given under each. The respondents are cautioned to note which elements take precedence. A category of *fūryū* includes presentations using festival floats, for example, but if plays are performed



on the floats then the presentations are listed under a different heading.

While a national survey is a tremendous task that can be undertaken only infrequently, the prefectural boards of education have followed the Bunkachō's lead in sponsoring their own individual survey projects. Tokushima Prefecture, for example, has produced TOKUSHIMA-KEN MINZOKU GEINŌ CHŌSAHAN 1972 and TOKUSHIMA-KEN KYŌIKU IINKAI BUNKAKA 1985. There are also works, such as HIRAI 1981, by individual specialists whose projects were encouraged or supported by the prefectural boards of education. Also, some prefectures produce compendia of all of their nationally and prefecturally designated cultural properties. NAGASAKI-KEN 1992 is one such compendium; filled with high-quality photographs, this periodically updated work is an excellent example of how the law is used both to disseminate information and to promote an area's cultural resources.

While serving as a means of identifying folk performing arts worthy of attention, the surveys are also, in effect, a search for the next potential recipient of the important intangible folk cultural property designation. To a degree, respondents are competing to present their folk performing arts in the best possible light, as if to say to the Bunkachō, "Pick this one next!"

#### PRESERVATION SOCIETIES

A direct result of the designation system has been the creation of groups called *honzonkai* 保存会 (preservation societies). The societies, whether organized by a shrine or temple or by members of the community at large, are associations of performers and supporters of a particular event. Their responsibility is to see that the performance is carried out each year (or whatever its particular schedule)<sup>16</sup> and that it gets passed along to future generations (NAKAMURA 1989, 64 and KADOYA 1989, 15). The *honzonkai* serve as the first line of defense in preserving Japan's folk performing arts.

The preservation societies take up the work that youth groups and other community organizations used to do (MISUMI 1969, 210). While *honzonkai* exist for certain folk performing arts even before they win designation, in many cases it is this designation that leads to the creation of the society (NAKAMURA 1989, 62). Indeed, this is part of the purpose of the designation program: designation at the local or prefectural level ideally results in the establishment of a *honzonkai*, which, in turn, ensures the preservation of the performing art. For those arts that possess some particularly noteworthy feature, the process may continue until they achieve national designation. Chiba Prefecture's *Shiramatsu* festival dances, for example, were prefecturally designated

in 1955 and received national designation in 1992.

Communities that create preservation societies prior to designation often do so in the hope this will enhance the chances of their local performing art being designated. While *honzonkai* can usually request that their arts be considered at the local or prefectural level, the national committee does not consider applications as such.

The 1992 issue of the journal *Minzoku geinō* provides an interesting glimpse into the workings of the preservation societies and the problems they face. Published annually on the occasion of the National Convention of Folk Performing Arts, the journal is a valuable source of information on the presentations featured at the convention. The 1992 edition is particularly enlightening because it also focuses on the groups responsible for the presentations by printing the answers to the questionnaire given to each of the five preservation societies participating that year (MINZOKU GEINŌ 1992).

At the heart of the questionnaire is a section devoted to the ongoing activities and future prospects of each group. Details relating to the time, place, and occasion for rehearsals and performances naturally differ from group to group, but the respondents are unanimous in indicating that they face a shortage of new people to carry on the performance traditions.

Asked what they are doing to cultivate successors, they give answers that range from organizing clubs in the local schools to simply doing their best to recruit people. One group notes that it is now willing to let females take roles that heretofore have been restricted to males, while another laments that it must deal with the fact that young people nowadays seem more interested in sports than cultural pursuits.

The *honzonkai* for Kagoshima Prefecture's *Yoron jūgoya odori* 与論の十五夜踊り (The fifteenth-night dance of Yoron) seems to be in the most difficult situation of the five groups, since the roles are passed from father to son, and the number of sons is shrinking. (As in other parts of Japan, the young men of Yoron are having trouble finding marriage partners, because large numbers of women are choosing jobs and careers in the big cities over life in the small towns.) The group states that it is considering breaking with its 450-year tradition and allowing certain dance roles to be taken by school students outside of the hereditary families.

These questionnaires make clear that the Bunkachō is not alone in feeling a sense of urgency regarding the possible demise of the folk performing arts. In many communities the preservation societies have become clubs for senior citizens, especially in areas where depopulation has left relatively few young adult residents. Though an

increasingly common strategy is to establish strong ties with local schools in order to teach the arts to children, it is too soon to tell how many young people will become full-fledged performers in the future.

#### LEAVING ROOM FOR CHANGE

The folk performing arts are community activities, and are thus not static objects that can be shielded from change like the historic buildings and works of art that are also covered by the Cultural Properties Protection Law. But implicit in the designation process is the assumption that, whatever changes a particular folk performing art has undergone in the past,<sup>17</sup> once designated it will be regarded as a cultural icon to be carried forward unaltered into the future. Though relatively few folk performing arts have been nationally designated (fewer than two hundred out of the thousands that still take place throughout Japan), there is now a tendency to view all such arts in this manner.

The law's very success in establishing the notion of folk performing arts as fixed cultural properties may itself make their survival more difficult by discouraging fresh approaches that might attract newcomers. On the other hand, there is evidence that certain innovations—new events and departures from customary practice—are being looked upon with interest, although they are clearly not yet regarded as ready for inclusion in the “cultural property” category.

For example, the annual Zenkoku Seinen Taikai 全国青年大会 (National youth convention), which limits performances to groups of young adults, hosts a program encompassing both traditional presentations (labeled *minzoku geinō*) and works without historical pedigree (labeled *sōsaku geinō* 創作芸能, innovative performances), hoping in this way to strengthen regional culture. Another example along these lines concerns a group of university music specialists dedicated to introducing electronic music into the traditional arts. The group has attracted attention with recitals that include *Bitchū kagura* 備中神楽 done to the beat of a synthesizer. Takahashi Hideo devoted considerable space to the effects of the synthesizer group in an essay he wrote when traditional *Bitchū kagura*, an important intangible folk cultural property, was presented at the 1992 National Convention of Folk Performing Arts (TAKAHASHI 1992, 42–43). In an earlier article, in which he had also referred to the experimental group, Takahashi expressed the opinion that there would be more attempts like this to invigorate the performing arts by treating them as “living culture” rather than solely as “cultural properties” (GOJŌ, HAGA, and TAKAHASHI 1991, 11).

In an essay commemorating the fortieth anniversary of the Cul-

tural Properties Preservation Law, the head of the Bunkachō noted that the passage of time and further social change will produce an ever-increasing number of “cultural properties” demanding the attention of the agency (UEKI 1990, 5). As the Bunkachō seeks the best ways to protect the country’s cultural heritage, it may find that the law and its designation process have already gone far enough in turning folk performing arts into cultural icons. More emphasis may have to be placed on making them vital elements of the culture (an emphasis that, along with preservation, forms part of the stated intention of the law). This will mean leaving open the possibility of change, even in forms that have already been designated important intangible folk cultural properties. Of course, how much change is acceptable will be up to each community to decide. The efforts to save the folk performing arts from extinction, important as they are, should be just the first step in ensuring the vitality of these community-based arts.

#### NOTES

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1. The word “festival” is used here in a broad sense to mean both shrine-based *matsuri* and ceremonials in general.

2. This category was created when the Cultural Properties Protection Law was revised in 1975. The other four categories are *yūkei bunkazai* 有形文化財 (tangible cultural properties, including paintings and sculptures); *mukei bunkazai* 無形文化財 (intangible cultural properties, including theater, music, and applied arts); *kinenbutsu* 記念物 (monuments, a broad category that includes man-made and natural sites as well as plants and animals); *dentōteki kenzōbutsugun* 伝統的建造物群 (traditional building groups). For the text of the law see IWANAMI 1991. For a discussion of how the 1975 revision of the law, as well as earlier revisions, affected the folk performing arts, see TAKAHASHI 1990, 10–11. See also NAKAMURA 1989, 44–45.

3. There are two types of designated folk cultural properties: the *jūyō mukei minzoku bunkazai* and the *jūyō yūkei minzoku bunkazai* 重要有形民俗文化財 (important tangible folk cultural properties). In addition, the law makes provision for the selection of *kiroku sakuseitō no sochi o kōzu beki mukei no minzoku bunkazai* 記録作成等の措置を講ずべき無形の民俗文化財 (intangible folk cultural properties for which records should be kept and other measures taken). These are events and performances that do not rank as important folk cultural assets but are nevertheless judged sufficiently noteworthy to have steps taken to ensure their survival (IWANAMI 1991, 1375). As of January 1994, 445 such selections had been made.

4. For information on the establishment and organizational structure of the Bunkachō, see BUNKACHŌ 1988, 32–33.

5. NISHITSUNOI 1990, 390–98, gives a list of the nationally designated important intangible folk cultural assets, current as of the publication of his book. The selections are reported annually in the *Gekkan bunkazai*. Between 1970 and the revision of the law in 1975 approximately 250 events and performances had been selected as *kiroku*

*sakuseitō no sochi o kōzubeki mukei bunkazai*, some of which have been designated *jūyō mukei minzoku bunkazai* since 1976. As mentioned in note 3 above, these selections continue to be made under the provisions of the revised law.

6. The names of the committee members are listed in the *Shokuin roku*, published annually. See, for example, ŌKURASHŌ 1992, 1128.

7. These criteria are spelled out in *Jūyō mukei minzoku bunkazai shitei kijun* 重要無形民俗文化財指定基準 [Criteria for designating important intangible folk cultural properties], the title of *Monbushō kokuji dai 156 gō* 文部省告示第156号 [Ministry of Education Regulation #156], reprinted in FUKUOKA-KEN 1980, 4.

8. The law begins with a statement of purpose in which two important terms are used: *hoxon* (preservation) and *katsuyō* 活用 (lit. "practical application"). The latter indicates that the government, under the law, is to aim at making the cultural properties part of Japanese life—which, of course, would help ensure their preservation.

9. Because its purpose is preservation, there is provision for the designation to be rescinded if the performing art ceases to be performed. Though this has not happened among the nationally designated folk performing arts, it has occurred at the prefectural level. The *Negata no ningyō shibai* 根形の人形芝居 (puppet plays of Negata), designated by Chiba Prefecture in 1954, lost its designation in 1977; the *Inō no kabuki* 伊能の歌舞伎 (Kabuki of Inō), which was designated by the same prefecture in 1961, lost its designation in 1980. In both cases the arts died out from a lack of people to carry them on (CHIBA-KEN 1991, 50).

10. There is no financial windfall, but the group administering the event may be eligible for stipends and special grants (to repair costumes, for example) from the level of government that granted its designation.

11. Before the creation of the *minzoku bunkazai* category, important folk performing arts, such as Niigata Prefecture's *Ayako mai*, had been designated as *jūyō mukei bunkazai* (important intangible cultural properties), a designation that also covered professional theatrical forms. The designation was changed to important intangible folk cultural properties when the law was revised (see TAKAHASHI 1990, 10–11).

12. The Kyōdo Buyō to Min'yō no Kai 郷土舞踊と民謡の会 (Convention of local dance and folk music) had been held annually from 1925 to 1936.

13. Examples are the *Zenkoku Minzoku Geinō Taikai* (already mentioned) and the *Burokku Betsu Minzoku Geinō Taikai* ブロック別民俗芸能大会 (Regional folk performing arts conventions), which are also held annually. There are also a number of prefectural and local events.

14. See GOJŌ, HAGA, and TAKAHASHI 1991, in which Takahashi Hideo describes a performance he saw in Shizuoka Prefecture where the performers arrived just before the presentation and left as soon as it was over. They had dispensed with the preliminary purification rituals that had been part of the event in the past.

15. The Bunkachō's instructions are reprinted in SAITAMA-KENRITSU 1992, 4–10.

16. While most take place once a year, there are varying schedules. The *Shiramatsu* festival in Chiba Prefecture, for example, takes place every four years.

17. See, for example, HOFF 1978, 204–205, which identifies three phases of change in *kagura*. See also GRAPARD 1992, 146–47 on change in *matsuri* performances.

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