

## INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE IN JAPAN

### Development of the LPCP regulations on intangible cultural heritage<sup>1</sup>

To clarify the terminology used in this article, the word ‘heritage’ is a broader term referring to items protected in general, that can be defined as tangible and intangible manifestations of human life, which represent a particular view of life and witness the history and validity of that view,<sup>2</sup> while items specifically protected under the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties (hereinafter referred to as the LPCP) are named accordingly to the vocabulary used in the act.<sup>3</sup> It is worth mentioning, that despite the name of the Act suggesting focus on the provisions regarding items falling under the category of Cultural Properties, preservation measures regulated in the LPCP also concern other instances of tangible and intangible cultural heritage in separate categories.

Out of the three categories of Cultural Properties (other being Tangible Cultural Properties and Monuments) laid down with the introduction of the LPCP in 1950, the concept of Intangible Cultural Properties was the only one to be established for the first time in the history of Japan’s cultural heritage protection system, despite the first instances of heritage protection manifesting themselves even back in the 8th century and first provisions aimed at conducting surveys, registering and collecting antiques grouped in categories being stipulated in the Proclamation for the Protection of Antiques and Old Properties in 1871.<sup>4</sup> Performing arts or crafts must

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<sup>1</sup> Entire section based off of K. Kikuchi, *Japanese Administrative System for Safeguarding ICH* [in:] *The Training Course for Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage 2011 Final Report*, National Institutes for Cultural Heritage, Tokyo – Osaka – Shiga 2011, unless other citation provided.

<sup>2</sup> The definition introduced in: L. Prott, P. O’Keefe, ‘*Cultural Heritage*’ or ‘*Cultural Property*’?, “*International Journal of Cultural Property*” 2007, vol. 1, issue 2, p. 307.

<sup>3</sup> Additional indication of legal terminology being the use of capital letters, especially in case of specific categories of cultural heritage listed in the LPCP; translation of legal vocabulary based on research papers written in English by cited native speakers.

<sup>4</sup> E. Kakiuchi, *Cultural heritage protection system in Japan: current issues and prospects for the future*, “*Gdańskie Studia Azji Wschodniej*” 2016, no. 10, pp. 8–9, 12.

have met the criteria of especially high value and possibility of extinction without the protection by the nation in order to be selected as Intangible Cultural Properties. Furthermore, despite appropriate measures for protection, such as subsidization, rendering of materials etc. being applicable to Intangible Cultural Properties, the *designation* system linked to the sub-category of Important Cultural Properties, imposing restrictions on repairs, export, and alterations to existing appearance and guaranteeing additional measures for protection including preservation and utilization<sup>5</sup>, has been reserved for the tangible heritage only. At the time, the separate category of Folk Cultural Properties has not been introduced yet, items of folk nature belonging to either Tangible or Intangible Cultural Properties.

With the amendment of the LPCP in 1954, the criteria of the possibility of extinction were abolished, basing the selection of arts and crafts solely on particularly high historical or artistic value. The possibility of designating especially important arts and crafts as Important Intangible Cultural Properties was introduced along with the *recognition* system concerning persons of exceptional knowledge and talent embodying and maintaining those arts as Holders.<sup>6</sup> The designation as Important Folk Materials became allowed as well, in case of Tangible Folk Materials, which became now a separate category from the Tangible Cultural Properties. For Intangible Folk Materials, however, as the *designation* system was still unavailable, the *selection* system was established with specific criteria for special protection measures, such as the creation of records. According to those criteria, the folk materials applicable for protection were: 1) intangible folk materials showing the characteristics of Japanese people's basic life and culture in their origin, contents, etc., that were typical and belonged to one of the 11 sub-categories covering specific aspects of lifestyle, for instance clothing, food, and housing, production and occupation, social life, folk performing arts, entertainment, games and hobbies etc. 2) intangible folk materials not belonging to the first category but especially necessary for understanding the characteristics of important folk materials and 3) intangible folk materials prescribed in the above two items concerning other ethnic groups, that were especially necessary in relation to Japanese people's lives and culture.

The system for designating Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties has finally been introduced in 1975, along with renaming Folk Materials (both tangible and intangible) to Folk Cultural Properties. Additionally, Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties, that is "techniques for production of materials, restoration and conservation necessary for preservation of cultural properties",<sup>7</sup> were intro-

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<sup>5</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 12.

<sup>6</sup> S. Miyata, *Preservation and Inventory-Making of ICH in Japan* [in:] The Training Course for Safe-guarding..., p. 18.

<sup>7</sup> Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, *Intangible Cultural Heritage: Protection System for Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan* pamphlet, Asia/Pacific Cultural Centre for UNESCO (ACCU), p. 6; undated, the state of legal system described in the pamphlet as of 1.04.2006.

duced together with the selection system for skills considered in particular need of protection, and the recognition system for Holders. While being a separate category of heritage from Cultural Properties, techniques under the protection of the law are being considered intangible cultural heritage, along with Intangible Cultural Properties and Intangible Folk Cultural Properties,<sup>8</sup> and Selected Conservation Techniques meet the definition of intangible cultural heritage formulated in art. 2 para. 1 and 2 of the Intangible Cultural Heritage Convention.<sup>9</sup>

The final, currently in force, 2004 amendment added folk techniques to the category of Intangible Folk Cultural Properties (which since 1975 has only been listing customs and performing arts), extending the appropriate protection measures to them.

The development of LPCP and continuous extensions of protection measures established in the act showcase not only the progressing awareness of the importance of intangible cultural heritage but also the great attention to the variety of items in which the tradition subjected to maintenance manifests itself, acknowledging the specific needs of each category of cultural heritage, which demand individual measures and approaches, and fulfilling those needs through adequate provisions.

## Current legal status

### 1. Legal definitions

As stated in art. 1 of the LPCP, the act aims to contribute to the progress of world culture by preserving and utilizing cultural properties, as well as contributing to the cultural improvement of the people. Out of total 6 categories of items enumerated as Cultural Properties in art. 2, Intangible Cultural Properties are defined as theater, music, craftsmanship and other intangible cultural products of high historic or artistic value to the state, while Folk Cultural Properties consist of customs, folk performing arts and folk techniques concerning food, clothing and housing, occupation, religion, annual events and so forth, as well as clothes, utensils, houses and other properties used therein, which are indispensable for understanding the transition of the lives of people. Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties, described as traditional techniques and skills indispensable for the preservation of cultural properties as well as those requiring preservation measures (art. 147(1) of LCPC), and Buried Cultural Properties are established as additional categories of cultural heritage other than Cultural Properties.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>9</sup> T. Kono, *The Basic Principles of the Convention for Safeguarding of Intangible Heritage: A Comparative Analysis with The Convention for Protection of World Natural and Cultural Heritage and Japanese Law*; The keynote speech given in a symposium on the protection of cultural heritage, January 2012, p. 42. [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=1988870](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=1988870) (accessed: 13.02.2021).

## 2. Designation and selection<sup>10</sup>

It is no surprise that the international interest in intangible cultural heritage of individual states is usually focused on items inscribed on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. The placement on the List celebrates the value of those items as surpassing the exclusively local importance and stepping into the position of a treasure at the global level, thus enhances both their promotion and recognition. Japan's List of inscribed items, currently reaching the number of 22<sup>11</sup> positions, overlaps with categories of Important Intangible Cultural Properties and Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties, however, the range of properties protected under the LPCP goes way beyond those most internationally representative instances, currently including 106 items designated as Important Intangible Cultural Properties and 318 items designated as Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties.

The designation as Important Intangible Cultural Properties or Important Folk Intangible Cultural Properties falls within the competence of the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology when particular items of cultural heritage are acknowledged as especially important (art. 71 and 78 of LPCP). Analogically, in the case of Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties, instead of the designation system, there exists the category of Selected Conservation Techniques for techniques and skills in particular need of preservation measures (art. 147 of LPCP).

Important Intangible Cultural Properties split into domains of performing arts and craft techniques, dividing each into categories. Performing arts include *gagaku* (classical court music and dances), *nōgaku* (traditional theater composed of lyric drama and comic theater), *bunraku* (traditional puppet theater), *kabuki* (a classical heavily stylized dance-drama), *kumi odori* (traditional Okinawan narrative dance), music, *buyō* (wide genre of classical Japanese dances) and entertainment. Items included in those categories are usually the elements composing related performing arts, such as narration styles, music genres, types of dances, instrumentals etc. Craft techniques include ceramics, textile arts (literally: dyeing and weaving), lacquer arts, metalwork, bamboowork and woodwork, doll making and handmade *washi* (traditional Japanese paper), each category listing particular products of those techniques.

Important Intangible Folk Cultural Properties consist of customs, folk performing arts and folk techniques specific to certain regions. Customs concern particular

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<sup>10</sup> Numbers and contents of items registered under relevant LPCP categories based on Database of Registered National Cultural Properties, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Government of Japan (in Japanese), as of February 2021; <https://kunishitei.bunka.go.jp/bsys/index> (accessed: 13.02.2021).

<sup>11</sup> According to list published on United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization website: [https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=&country\[\]=00112&multinational=3&display1=inscriptionID#tabs](https://ich.unesco.org/en/lists?text=&country[]=00112&multinational=3&display1=inscriptionID#tabs) (accessed: 13.02.2021).

elements of lifestyle: manufacture and livelihood, life rituals, recreation and competition, social life (folk knowledge), annual events, religious festivals and faith. Folk performing arts include instances of *kagura* (ceremonial Shinto dances), *dengaku* (ritual rice planting celebrations), *furyu* (ritual dances often accompanied by large processions and props), narrative and *shukufuku-gei* (messages of blessings and congratulations), *ennen* (Buddhist temple entertainments performed at the end of Buddhist services) and *okonai* (Buddhist New Year celebrations), entertainment from abroad and stage performances, as well as other folk performing arts not classified as the aforementioned types. Finally, folk techniques are regional techniques used either in manufacturing and livelihood or in creation of necessities of life, specifically food, clothing and housing.

Additionally, for Intangible Cultural Properties not designated as Important there is a dedicated category of “Intangible Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures,” applicable to items valuable for understanding the transformation of performing arts and craft techniques throughout the history and requiring the documentation and public display,<sup>12</sup> currently comprising 132 positions. On analogical terms exists the category of “Intangible Folk Cultural Properties requiring documentation and other measures”<sup>13</sup> with 647 positions.

As for Selected Conservation Techniques, there are currently 46 registered techniques concerning tangible cultural properties, 30 techniques concerning intangible cultural properties and 5 techniques used for preservation of cultural properties in both categories. Among the techniques for intangible cultural properties, aside from the manufacture of materials and tools, there could be found skills such as styling Kabuki wig, the production of Kabuki stage scenery or the production of ramie plant.

### 3. Recognition of Holders and Holding Groups<sup>14</sup>

As mentioned earlier, the characteristic of the Japanese legal system is the duality of the institution of designation and recognition, which tends to be described as “one of the most salient features of the system of protecting intangible cultural properties in Japan”.<sup>15</sup> It is another instrument of intangible cultural protection originating in Japan, which made an impact on the international approach to the preservation of heritage – followed by the regulations of similar recognition mechanism in South-Korean 1962 Act No. 961<sup>16</sup> and creating grounds (along with strong advocacy on the South-Korean part) for the establishment of UNESCO’s “Living

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<sup>12</sup> Agency for Cultural Affairs of Japan, *Intangible Cultural Heritage...*, p. 10.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 17.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem*, pp. 9–10 and 22–23, unless other citation provided.

<sup>15</sup> S. Miyata, *Preservation and Inventory-Making...*, p. 18.

<sup>16</sup> N. Aikawa-Faure, *Excellence and authenticity: Living National (Human) Treasures' in Japan and Korea*, “International Journal of Intangible Heritage” 2014, vol. 9, p. 45.

Human Treasures” system,<sup>17</sup> adopted in other countries like France, the Czech Republic, Hungary etc.<sup>18</sup>

The Holders, in order to maintain valuable arts, crafts and skills are assigned to respective Important Intangible Cultural Properties or Selected Conservation Techniques by the Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, along with the designation of these items as important/requiring preservation measures. The Japanese system puts emphasis on the transmission of classical, sophisticated, one could say ‘elitist’ art forms preserved by professionals who perform, cultivate and research them, and who are able to guarantee the ‘authenticity’ of performances understood as the most similar form to its origins and striving for excellence.<sup>19</sup>

As for Important Intangible Cultural Properties, recognition is divided into three categories: Individual Recognition of Holders, Collective Recognition of Holders and Recognition of Holding Groups. Individual Recognition concerns individual performers who embody outstanding skills and knowledge on arts or craft techniques. Thanks to popularization of the term by mass media, individual Holders are more widely known as ‘Living National Treasures’.<sup>20</sup> It is an informal term not mentioned in the LPCP, however, its positive connotation celebrates the admiration and the great respect towards masters of their own domain better than unsentimental and pragmatic “Holder”. Collective Recognition, on the other hand, refers to groups of two or more artists who specialize in specific performances like puppeteering, singing, playing instruments etc., who display those skills individually while working together. Out of many performers of certain art, only those who are recognized as possessing outstanding skills, belong to the group of Holders. Finally, Holding Groups are groups of people, mainly practicing craft techniques, such as preparation of pottery clay or glaze, however the recognition of individual characteristics and each performing Holder is not necessary, focusing on a group of people practicing certain craft technique as a whole.

The link between designated cultural property and its Holder or Holding Group is rather tight and formalized. The recognized person or group gains certification as a Holder (Holding Group), which is terminated with the death of an individual Holder or the dissolution of a Holding Group (art. 72(4) of LPCP), and may be revoked when a person is no longer suitable as a Holder due to the deterioration of mental or physical health or, in the case of Holding Groups, due to the transfer of members (art. 72(2) of LPCP). Moreover, the connection between designated cultural properties and Holders is strong, to the point of designation as Important

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<sup>17</sup> N. Lupu, M.O. Tănase, P. Tudorache, *Quo Vadis ‘Living Human Treasures’?*, “Amfiteatru Economic Journal” 2016, vol. 18, issue 10, p. 758.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>19</sup> N. Aikawa-Faure, *Excellence and authenticity...*, pp. 47–48.

<sup>20</sup> T. Kono, *The Basic Principles of the Convention...*, p. 38.

Intangible Cultural Property being lifted if all of its Holders are deceased (dissolved) (art. 72(4) of LPCP). Holders are supported by annual 2 million JPY grants for their self-development, successor training, and public performances. Additional measures taken in cooperation with the Holders to pass down the knowledge of performing arts and art techniques come in the form of video documentations of performances and other activities, and exhibitions of collections or materials produced by Holders and Holding Groups.

Provisions on the matter for Conservation Techniques for Cultural Properties are for the most part analogical to those applying to Cultural Properties (art. 148(2-4) of LPCP). The institution of Holders and Holding Groups does not apply to Intangible Folk Cultural Properties, since those traditions are being transmitted in daily lives of people, thus the recognition of individual practices is not necessary.

### The significance of Japanese intangible cultural heritage

One of the most widely recognized characteristics of Japan is its fascinating duality between the modernization of one of the world's strongest economies – as expected of the member of G20, and the attachment to tradition – cherished by people and intertwined in the landscape of metropolises. A look at Japan's relations with the West during various periods of history – the times of complete isolation, followed by abrupt political and societal reforms under Western influences or the return of nationalistic tendencies pre- and during World War II and coping with defeat under American occupation – may hint where both, the dualism and the need of seeking balance between national identity and globalization stem from. Unsurprisingly, those fluctuating political and societal tendencies, especially the times of glorification of the traditional Japanese values, have left their mark on the present cultural heritage protection system.

Japan takes the lead in the terms of legislation on intangible heritage protection, being the first country to introduce this category of cultural heritage in Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties in 1950.<sup>21</sup> Facing the destructive effects of World War II and the continuing Westernization since the Meiji Period, the establishment of the LPCP was not only a proactive measure to secure the remains of cultural assets, but also a recognition of the value of intangible cultural properties and a need to safeguard them.<sup>22</sup> It is believed that the fire at the Horyu-ji temple, the oldest wooden structure in Japan registered nowadays as a UNESCO World

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<sup>21</sup> A. Vaivade, N. Wagene, *National Laws Related to Intangible Cultural Heritage: Determining the Object of a Comparative Study*, "Santander Art and Culture Law Review" 2017, no. 2, p. 100.

<sup>22</sup> S. Miyata, *The Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan*, Experts' Lectures, 7 August 2012, pp. 53–54, <https://www.irci.jp/assets/files/ShigeyukiMiyata.pdf> (accessed: 13.02.2021).

Heritage site, in 1949 contributed to both, an increased interest in cultural heritage and the strong national sentiment for cultural protection,<sup>23</sup> becoming a push to enact the LPCP and resonating with political need to rebuild the national identity, as well as with a societal longing for the sense of affiliation based on the same roots, values, shared activities etc.<sup>24</sup> Sumiko Sarashima in her Ph.D. thesis *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan: Bingata a traditional dyed textile from Okinawa* argues that the introduction of the Cultural Property Protection Law in 1950 was related to Japan's efforts to establish a 'new self' – as a country accommodating to the newborn modernity, to replace the 'old self' – the one facing humiliation after the defeat.<sup>25</sup> Instead of rejecting Western values applied to heritage, as other ex-colonial states tended to do, Japan adjusted itself to the social and political changes, while creating at the same time a new value of 'tradition' as 'heritage'.<sup>26</sup> This visible distinction between Western-influenced modernity and the attachment to the past that had been lost, resulted in an entirely unique approach towards intangible cultural property.

What additionally contributes to the association of national identity with history, societal constructs and property is the policy of emphasizing the uniqueness of Japanese culture and the strong sense of ownership. Mito Takeuchi introduces in his work<sup>27</sup> the theory of 'Japaneseness', *Nihonjinron* – a movement promoted mainly via literature, education and the public narrative. National integrity is formed around the sentiment towards the culture that is inherently 'own' by creating an idea that the profound comprehension of Japanese culture is rather instinctive than logical, thus only attainable for natives (as opposed to foreigners and Japanese-speaking migrants). The deeply rooted need of 'belonging to a group' and differentiation between 'insiders' and 'outsiders' are prevalent motives in various analyses of Japanese society,<sup>28</sup> manifested in both the *Nihonjinron* and Sarashima's thesis on the role of tradition in creating national identity, serving in both instances as means to enforce the sense of solidarity and attachment between members of the same community. In consequence, society's attention is directed towards their legacy, tradition and culture, which are of exceptional quality and which are notably distinctive from those of other countries, therefore deserve protection and preservation. This philosophy,

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<sup>23</sup> E. Kakiuchi, *Cultural heritage protection...*, p. 12.

<sup>24</sup> S. Sarashima, *Intangible Cultural Heritage in Japan: Bingata a traditional dyed textile from Okinawa*, Doctoral thesis (Ph.D), Department of Anthropology University College London, January 2013, pp. 48–53, <https://discovery.ucl.ac.uk/id/eprint/1388906/> (accessed: 13.02.2021).

<sup>25</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 54.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>27</sup> Further reading: M. Takeuchi, *The Reinforcement of Cultural Nationalism in Japan: An investigation of Japaneseness and 'the Notebook for the Heart'*, Paper presented at Japan Studies Association of Canada 2006 Conference, Thompson River University, Kamloops, 12–15 October 2006, <https://tru.arcabc.ca/islandora/object/tru%3A1421/datastream/PDF/view> (dostęp: 13.07.2021).

<sup>28</sup> Cf. L. Leszczyński, *Gyoseishido w japońskiej kulturze prawnej*, Lublin 1996, pp. 17–21.



apart from being the measure for coping with post-war reidentification, is what may explain as well as enhance the rather unusual, from the Western point of view, prioritization of ethnic worth of intangible properties, rather than the economical.

In effect, Japan has created an extraordinary system of cultural heritage protection which connects Euro-North American values embodied by classical tangible cultural heritage<sup>29</sup> with all economical, commercial, and educational aspects included, and the local, indigenous values of intangible cultural heritage usually attributed to underdeveloped countries,<sup>30</sup> which demonstrate deep appreciation for their tradition and diversity, and aim for the protection of their national identity from Western influences. Thanks to that, the Japanese recognition of the importance of intangible cultural heritage initiated the legislative movement in Asia to include this category of cultural heritage in the protection system at the national level (established in South Korea in 1962 and the Philippines in 1972)<sup>31</sup> and influenced Japan's strong advocacy to create a system dedicated to the intangible cultural heritage protection at the global level, resulting in its primary input in the creation of UNESCO's Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage.<sup>32</sup>

## Conclusions

The elaborate intangible cultural heritage protection system continuously developed and expanded over the past 70 years showcases the awareness of the irreplaceable value of the nation's legacy. Japanese people seeking their new identity in the moral and economical disarray after World War II, have created the societal integrity over the admiration and nostalgic longing for a past never to return, while pursuing reconstruction and modernization of a country. Taking great pride in their legacy – a culture that is elaborate, sophisticated and captivating, they have established the preservation measures aimed for the protection of its uniqueness and quality against the progressing Western influences, leaving themselves space of familiarity and authenticity, close to their origins.

Japanese people are convinced their tradition is worth preserving, and in contrary to the European approach to embody and materialize the legacy in form of assets, they have not overlooked the significant value of the intangible heritage – the cultural diversity carried on in times of globalization, the knowledge of the past life

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<sup>29</sup> S. Sarashima, *Intangible Cultural Heritage...*, p. 33.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>31</sup> H. Schreiber, *Intangible Cultural Heritage, Europe, and the EU: Dangerous Liaisons?* [in:] *Cultural Heritage in the European Union. A Critical Inquiry into Law and Policy*, eds. A. Jakubowski, F. Fiorentini, K. Hausler, Leiden 2019, p. 327.

<sup>32</sup> T. Kono, *The Basic Principles of the Convention...*, p. 39.

the modern society could both explore and derive its own conclusions from, and aesthetics of high quality.

Despite the decreasing interest in tradition in the modern world, a problem which concerns even a country so attached to its heritage, Japan has taken presumably one the most effective measures to safeguard its legacy out of all of the world's legislations, thanks to the complex legal system with a plethora of solutions – from a detailed division of which intangible heritage is in particular need of protection and what are its specific needs, through registration and means of financial support, to maintenance by masters engaged in research, contribution and education of new generations.

While exploring the legal provisions of the Japanese intangible cultural heritage protection system, one can indirectly experience the wonder and pride of Japanese people over their own legacy, which inspired other countries – firstly in the neighboring Asian region, and finally on an international scale – to take appropriate measures for their own intangible cultural heritage. Hopefully, with the rising awareness of the value of the non-corporeal legacy in Western countries, the interest in both one's own cultural diversity and the traditions of the less promoted or wealthy regions, could increase to the point of viewing the cultural diversity as something worth its due respect and as something to be cherished and cultivated, despite the global trend of standardization.

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## STRESZCZENIE

### NIEMATERIALNE DZIEDZICTWO KULTURY W JAPONII

W artykule przybliżono wyjątkowe zarówno w stosunku do standardów zachodnich, jak i standardów krajów postkolonialnych podejście Japonii do niematerialnego dziedzictwa kultury, szczególnie w kontekście gwarantowanego prawnie systemu ochrony oraz historycznego i współczesnego znaczenia tego dziedzictwa dla społeczeństwa. Poczynając od wprowadzenia po raz pierwszy kategorii niematerialnego dziedzictwa kultury w ustawie o ochronie dóbr kultury z 1950 r. aż po obowiązującą obecnie nowelizację z 2004 r., niematerialne dziedzictwo podlega coraz szerszej i bardziej efektywnej ochronie. Składa się na nią zarówno wsparcie finansowe ze strony państwa, jak i edukacja społeczeństwa, promocja i kultywowanie tradycji. Wszystkie te działania zapobiegają odejściu w niepamięć klasycznym umiejętnościom i dziedzinom sztuki. System ochrony w Japonii dzieli niematerialne dziedzictwo na wiele kategorii, które podkreślają zróżnicowany charakter dziedzin, w jakich przejawia się lokalna kultura i które mają zapewnione adekwatne środki prawne, odpowiadające ich szczególnym potrzebom. Starania podejmowane w celu zachowania niematerialnego dziedzictwa kultury i dbałość o nie były podyktowane potrzebą zrekonstruowania tożsamości narodowej po przegranej II wojnie światowej oraz zabezpieczenia folkloru przed postępującą globalizacją i westernizacją, obecnie zaś stanowią przejaw rosnącego zainteresowania różnorodnością kulturową.