I am Sasaki from the Craft Techniques Section, Traditional Culture Division of the Agency for Cultural Affairs. In the Craft Techniques Section there are 3 senior specialists. As researchers and as senior specialists, we are in charge of the administrative work for the protection of craft techniques that are categorized as intangible cultural properties. Now I would like to begin my presentation on the present condition of and issues on the protection of intangible cultural properties, with emphasis on craft techniques.

First, I would like to confirm the meaning of intangible cultural properties. According to the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties, intangible cultural properties are defined as art and skill employed in drama, music and craft techniques, and other intangible cultural products, that possess a high historical and/or artistic value in and for Japan.

What, then, are included among craft techniques? According to the standards for designation of important intangible cultural properties, they are the artistry and skills necessary for ceramics, textiles, lacquer work, and metal work. To be a little more concrete, craft techniques for ceramics include artistry and skills for making porcelain and ceramics; those for textiles include artistry and skills for making dyed goods and woven goods; those for lacquer work include artistry and skills for making objects for which urushi (Japanese lacquer) is used; those for metal work include artistry and skills of hammering metals or of using molds to make objects. Also included among craft techniques is woodwork – assembling pieces of wood or carving out wood to make objects. Then there are artistry and skills for making dolls and washi (handmade Japanese paper). These, then, are what are considered craft techniques in Japan. Similar categorization exists in art history and applied art history.

Now, in the history of the protection of craft techniques that are categorized as, intangible cultural properties, I think there were three epochs.

The first epoch was in 1950 when the Law for the Protection of Cultural
Properties was enacted and intangible cultural properties became targets for protection for the first time under law. Before this time, such tangible cultural properties as paintings, sculptures and buildings and historic sites, places of scenic beauty and/or natural monuments were targets for protection.

The second epoch was in 1954 when the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties was revised. With this revision, intangible cultural properties having high historic and/or artistic values were designated as important intangible cultural properties and people who possess related artistry and skills were recognized as holders of important intangible cultural properties in order to preserve and utilize the said artistry and skills. This was the start of the system for designation and recognition of important intangible cultural properties that we have today. Incidentally, there are two exhibitions being held in Tokyo now on the works of two persons, both now deceased, who were the first to be recognized as holders of important intangible cultural properties: Tomimoto Kenkichi of iroe (overglaze polychrome enamel ceramics) and Matsuda Gonroku of makie (lacquer work decorated with sprinkled gold powder). I sincerely hope that you will see them. The present system of designation and recognition of important intangible cultural properties, thus, began in 1954. But before that, in other words from 1950 to 1954, even if intangible cultural properties had high historic and/or artistic values, they were not targets for protection unless they were in danger of extinction.

The third epoch was in 1975 when the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties was revised again. It was at this time that artistry and skills needed to manufacture or produce tools and raw materials necessary for the protection of craft techniques that are categorized intangible cultural properties, in other words techniques for the conservation of cultural properties techniques, became targets for protection.

From the mid-1950s to the mid-1970s, there was significant growth in the economy of Japan. During this time social and environmental conditions also changed greatly. In such situations, skilled workers who could restore buildings or works of fine art and craftwork grew older and their number decreased. In addition it became increasingly difficult to obtain materials, for example for obtaining cypress bark used for thatching one of the traditional roofs in Japan. In other words, the conservation of cultural properties itself was becoming more and more difficult. The same was true in areas related to craftwork. People who could make or produce outstanding tools and good quality materials were decreasing or growing old, and the protection of craftwork itself became at risk. It was under such circumstances
that the Law for the Protection of Cultural Properties was revised again and the techniques for the conservation of cultural properties became targets for protection.

In order to manufacture outstanding craftwork using advanced artistry and skills, in other words to conserve and transmit craft techniques outstanding tools and good quality materials are indispensable.

Now let us take a look at the world of lacquer work. I chose this because it is an area in which there have been many designations and recognitions.

Lacquer work is a traditional craftwork of Japan. Six types of lacquer work techniques are designated important intangible cultural properties today: *makie*, *raden*, *chinkin*, *kinma*, *kyushitsu* and *Wajima-nuri*. Holders of these techniques are called “living national treasures.” These holders and holding groups are recognized, and measures are taken for the conservation and transmission of the techniques. Since the words may be unfamiliar to you, I would like to show some representative examples of lacquer work. Photo A① is a *makie* box Oba Shogyo, a holder of important intangible cultural property for *makie*. It is 12 cm high, 15.8 cm long and 24.7 cm wide. It is owned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. The box in Photo A② is a work using *raden* technique. It is about the same size as the previous one and is also owned by the Agency for Cultural Affairs. The box in Photo A③ is an example using *kinma* technique. Photo A④ shows a bowl using *kyushitsu* technique. It is 10.6 cm high and 40.8 cm in diameter. Photo A⑤ shows examples of *Wajima-nuri*. They are lacquer works made at Wajima, a city at the tip of Noto Peninsula in Ishikawa prefecture, facing the Sea of Japan.

Now it goes without saying that the holders of important intangible cultural properties who actually made these works, which are representative of the traditional craftwork of Japan, were the only people engaged in the manufacture of these objects. For the holders to embody the skills and to make their works, they need raw materials like good quality *urushi* and outstanding tools to use in the process of manufacture, such as brushes for applying *urushi* or for making *makie* designs and charcoal for polishing. It is not an overstatement to say that were it not for them the conservation and transmission of lacquer work would not be possible.

Now, let us look at the selected conservation techniques associated with lacquer work and holders and holding groups of these techniques. First of all, there is a technique for manufacturing and refining Japanese *urushi*. Nihon Bunkazai Urushi Kyokai (Japan Association for Urushi Cultural Heritage) is recognized as a holding group for this technique. Photo B① shows a *urushi* cultivation site at Joboji in Iwate prefecture. Photo B② shows *urushi* being refined. Photo B③ shows
Nakahata Chojiro and Nakahata Fumitoshi, holders of conservation technique for the manufacture of tools for collecting *urushi* sap, making the tools. The Nakahatas live near the previously mentioned *urushi* cultivation site and makes tools like these. Photo B④ shows the tools for collecting *urushi* sap. At the top you can see, from the left to the right, the processes for the manufacture of the sickle-shaped tool for making grooves on the tree when collecting *urushi*. The technique for making brushes is also selected as a conservation technique associated with lacquer work. Photos B⑤ and B⑥ show the 8th generation Izumi Seikichi and his son, 9th generation Izumi Seikichi, making brushes for *urushi*. Photo B⑦ shows how a brush is used to apply *urushi*. In Photo B⑧ Murata Kurobei, a holder of selected conservation technique for the manufacture of *makie* brushes, is shown making a brush for *makie*. Photo B⑨ shows the *makie* brush being used. Charcoal is used in the process of making lacquer work, and Photo B⑩ shows Higashi Asataro, a holder for the manufacture of charcoal for polishing, making charcoal. Photo B⑪ shows a work being polished with charcoal. Of the above “traditional techniques that are indispensable for the conservation of intangible cultural properties,” the first two, the technique for manufacturing and refining Japanese *urushi* and the technique for making tools for collecting *urushi* sap, have been selected techniques for which measures should be taken in order to preserve them since they are techniques associated with the production and manufacture of materials essential for the manufacture of craftwork. The others, the techniques for making *urushi* brushes, *urushi* filter paper (Yoshino paper), *makie* brushes and charcoal for polishing, have been selected since they are techniques for making tools necessary for the manufacture of craftwork and for which protective measures should be taken. The previously mentioned Nihon Bunkazai Urushi Kyokai (Japan Association for Urushi Cultural Heritage) is an association whose aim is to secure the manufacture of what is called “*urushi* for cultural properties,” in other words Japanese *urushi* necessary for the restoration of cultural properties and the manufacture of lacquer work. Another association has been established for the purpose of preserving and promoting the technique of collecting *urushi* sap, Nihon Urushi-kaki Gijutsu Kyokai (Japan Association for Preserving the Skill of Extracting Urushi). These two associations are recognized as groups whose major purpose is to preserve the techniques selected as conservation techniques and to carry out activities for the preservation of these techniques. The Nakahatas, the Izumis, the Konbus (for the manufacture of Yoshino paper), Murata Kurobei and Higashi Asataro are all recognized as holders “who have acquired and are expert at their respective
techniques.” It may be said that they are the only ones who possess such skills in Japan.

Over half a century has passed since the establishment of the system for the designation and recognition of important intangible cultural properties, and 30 years have passed since the beginning of the system for selected conservation techniques. The role that these systems have played in the protection of craft techniques that are categorized intangible cultural properties is extremely important.

Today, with regard to individual designation of important intangible cultural properties in the fields of ceramics, textiles, lacquer work, metal work, wood and bamboo work, doll making, handmade Japanese paper and kirikane (craftwork in which thin metal foils cut into shapes are used to decorate artifacts), there are 44 cases and 56 recognized holders. With regard to group recognition, there are 14 in the fields of ceramics, textiles, lacquer work and handmade Japanese paper and 14 holding groups.

In order to preserve designated important intangible cultural properties, 2 million yen is provided annually to recognized holders as special subsidy for the preservation of important intangible cultural properties. This is not a pension; the subsidy is to be used for the preservation of designated techniques. It is given in order to subsidize a part of the expenses necessary for holders to refine their techniques and to train their successors. As for the holding groups, subsidy is provided according to the content and scale of activities conducted for the transmission of the designated techniques.

Today 19 cases of conservation techniques associated with craft techniques that are categorized intangible cultural properties are selected and 12 holders and 10 holding groups are recognized. Subsidy is also provided to these holders and holding groups for their activities related to the training of successors. Approximately ¥1,100,000 is given annually to holders; an amount in accordance with the content and scale of activities is given to holding groups.

Various other measures are taken and activities conducted for the protection of craft techniques that are categorized intangible cultural properties

“Exhibition of Japanese Traditional Art Crafts” is an exhibition that is held to protect and nurture craft techniques that have high historic and artistic values. It was first held in 1954 and this year is its 54th year. It is a very competitive contest-style exhibition and approximately 700 works are selected from about 2,300 to 2,400 applications. After Tokyo, it travels to 11 exhibition sites throughout Japan.
An appreciation course for children is also held. Another exhibition, “Nihon no Waza to Bi (Japanese Artistry and Beauty) - Important Intangible Cultural Properties and the People Who Sustain Them” (Photo B ⑫), attempts to introduce comprehensively the highest skills of the traditional craftwork of Japan by exhibiting representative works by holders and holding groups of important intangible cultural properties and materials related to selected conservation techniques that support these holders and holding groups. It is held at two places every year; this year is the 12th year. Photo B⑬ shows a demonstration by a holding group of important intangible cultural property that was presented during the exhibition.

As for documentation, films are produced of craft techniques that are categorized intangible cultural properties. Techniques, including processes, of craft techniques designated as important intangible cultural properties that are difficult to document by words and photographs are documented in films and used for the preservation of important intangible cultural properties, for the training of successors, as reference for people engaged in artistry, and for research. In other words, they are made for the preservation and transmission as well as for the exhibition and promotion of intangible cultural properties. As of today, 33 films have been made, approximately 1 per year.

Works are also bought in order to preserve and encourage traditional craft techniques. Works that have been bought and films that have been produced are utilized at the previously mentioned “Nihon no Waza to Bi” exhibition.

Another event that was started in 2003 is the event, “Supporting Cultural Properties: Masters of Tradition - Selected Conservation Techniques.” It is held so that many people will come to know about conservation techniques for cultural properties, which they are not so familiar with.

Although many measures are taken and many projects conducted, there are issues that must be dealt with. The materials used for many of our traditional craftwork have been procured either in their respective regions or in other parts of Japan. The people who make these materials know their characteristics well and have been manufacturing objects by making use of these characteristics. However, there are many materials today that must be imported. For example, over 90%, 98 to 99% of urushi is imported. In the case of kozo, which is the raw material for handmade Japanese paper, over 50% is also imported. Ideally, domestic urushi should be used for the restoration of buildings that are designated cultural properties and other cultural properties but in reality low-cost, imported urushi is
used. It is a fact that cost controls the world of protection of cultural properties, too. As for tools and raw materials necessary for craft techniques, a great variety of high quality tools and raw materials are required but not in great amount. It is this very fact that makes the procurement of tools and raw materials difficult today. Furthermore, the decline in local industry, which is an important foundation for craft techniques that are categorized intangible cultural properties, caused by changes in life style and in the awareness of the consumers who now seek less expensive products is accelerating the decrease in demand for these tools and raw materials. For the people who possess the skills for the manufacture and production of these tools and raw materials, in other words for the protection of craft techniques that are categorized intangible cultural properties, it must be admitted that the condition is becoming more and more serious today.