

Editorial Intent

Special Number: Transmitting Japanese Cultures

The spread of COVID-19 since late 2019 has affected all aspects of society. While we tend to focus on the effects on society's foundation, such as the economy and education, we must not forget that the pandemic has also caused a crisis in the transmission of cultures. Since 2020 in Japan, many festivals and folk events have been canceled or forced to change their format. Even now, in 2022, there is no sign that the situation will return to normal. Postponing or changing the format of an event is a major blow to the transmission of that culture.

This is true even for individual rituals; you cannot just take the ritual implements out of storage and get started. Maintenance by people with knowledge is required, and there are the ritual's actions that have been passed down. Expertise about the food to be served to the gods and others is also indispensable. There are many rituals for which yearly performance is what makes it possible to regularly pass on skills and knowledge.

Even before the pandemic, the transmission of culture was a matter of concern in Japan due to the country's declining birthrate, aging population, and rural flight. However, the pandemic has made people feel that a crisis is imminent now.

Therefore, we have decided to publish three articles related to the transmission of Japanese cultures. Ogawa's article raises issues regarding contemporary folk performing arts from a broad perspective. Yamamoto's article focuses on a specific regional performing art: Iwami Kagura. Kurosaki's article considers the effects of the Great East Japan Earthquake, which preceded the pandemic, on local culture.

Each of the problems concerning individual festivals and performing arts actually connects to the larger issue of passing on Japanese cultures. Through these three articles, we want to reexamine the question of cultural transmission in contemporary society to the present times.

KJS Editorial Committee