

PREFACE

The International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI) was established in 2011 in Sakai City, Osaka, as a category 2 centre under the auspices of UNESCO and as one of the organisations of the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage of Japan. It is a great pleasure that IRCI marked its 10th anniversary in 2021, a remarkable opportunity for reflection for an institution.

IRCI's mission is to promote the UNESCO Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (the 2003 Convention) and its implementation, and to enhance the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) through instigating and coordinating research in the Asia-Pacific region.

In recent years, many elements of ICH have become endangered throughout the world. IRCI works in close cooperation with UNESCO and other related institutions, including universities, research institutions, governmental and non-governmental organisations, museums and communities in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond to safeguard ICH in the Asia-Pacific region. It has accumulated significant outcomes in the last 10 years by facilitating various research projects such as Sustainable Research Data Collection, Researchers Forums and International Symposia, Safeguarding Endangered ICH, ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management, Emergency Protection of ICH in Conflict-Affected Countries in Asia and ICH's Contribution to SDGs.

To commemorate its 10th anniversary, the IRCI Researchers Forum on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region was held on 29 October 2021 as a half-day symposium entitled "Progress and Challenges in the Research for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage—Towards a Sustainable Future—". The forum reviewed a wide range of IRCI's achievements in its 10 years of life and explored the future of ICH research in general as well as IRCI itself. The forum was highly honoured by congratulatory speeches given by Mr NAGAFUJI Hideki, the Mayor of Sakai City, and Mr MATSUURA Koichiro, the Honorary Adviser of IRCI and former Director-General of UNESCO.

In consideration of the COVID-19 pandemic situation, the forum was held in an online format. Experts who have worked closely with us kindly agreed to contribute to the event as presenters and facilitators. Moreover, the forum attracted the online participation of 95 researchers and ICH-related individuals from 21 countries, including Japan, Myanmar, Nepal, the Republic of Korea, China, Indonesia, the Philippines and Kyrgyzstan. It was a meaningful opportunity for us to rediscover the potential of an online event such as this forum in enlarging the audience beyond the country borders.

In the sessions and panel discussion, various perspectives concerning research for ICH safeguarding, issues and challenges were discussed, such as the importance of linking research outcomes with the communities as well as the actual practice of ICH, sustainable development and the commercialisation of ICH, and the adaptation of ICH to on-going global changes. The contents of discussion are tremendously suggestive to us and encourage us to develop our future orientations. I am sincerely grateful to all the

participants for bringing the forum great success, and I hope the present volume will serve as a medium of sharing the forum's fruits widely with all those involved in ICH safeguarding. Moreover, I am convinced that the proceedings will be useful to all those who are interested in ICH research, which has increasing importance in today's world.

Finally, I would like to thank Japan's Agency for Cultural Affairs for jointly hosting the forum. My heartfelt gratitude goes to all those who have extended invaluable assistance to this memorable occasion.

March 2022

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Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI)