

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Third IRCI Researchers Forum on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region was held on 29 October 2021, entitled “Progress and Challenges in the Research for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage—Towards a Sustainable Future—”. This was one of the events to mark the 10th anniversary of the foundation of the International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI).

The purpose of the forum is to review progress on the research for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the past 10 years, reflecting on IRCI’s research projects since its establishment and discuss the future direction of research. Nine researchers including one from IRCI and a UNESCO officer who have collaborated in the past and on-going IRCI projects participated in the event as presenters and facilitators. Given the difficulties of travel and holding in-person meetings because of the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic, an online format (Zoom Webinar system) was employed. The pre-registered audience, including researchers and ICH-related individuals from 21 countries in the Asia-Pacific region and beyond, joined the event online (total of 95 audience members).

The forum, held as a half-day academic symposium, consisted of two sessions and a panel discussion. For details on the presentations in sessions, see the Presented Papers section of this volume.

OPENING

The event began with two opening remarks by representatives of the organisers, followed by two congratulatory speeches by honorary guests (see Annex 1 for full speech transcription).

Opening Remarks

Mr IWAMOTO Wataru (Director-General, IRCI)

On behalf of IRCI, Mr Iwamoto welcomed and extended his gratitude to the co-organiser and guests, facilitators and presenters of the sessions and the audience. After briefly describing the 10-year history of IRCI and the background and purpose of the forum, he expressed his wishes for a fruitful discussion.

Mr TOKURA Shunichi (Commissioner, Agency for Cultural Affairs, Japan)

On behalf of the Agency for Cultural Affairs, the forum's co-organiser, Mr Tokura briefed the audience on the history of the 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage and the contribution that Japan has made towards its promotion. Reviewing IRCI's research activities conducted for the implementation of the Convention, he reaffirmed that IRCI's research outcomes have new significance now and will have, too, in the post-COVID-19 world to come.

Congratulatory Speech

Mr NAGAFUJI Hideki (Mayor of Sakai City)

Mr Nagafuji delivered his message in video format. He described the history of Sakai, which is famous for accommodating the Mozu-Furuichi Kofun Group, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the city with a rich tradition of ICH. The city has worked in collaboration with IRCI since the establishment of its office inside the Sakai City Museum. Mr Nagafuji heartily congratulated IRCI on its 10th anniversary and hoped for further collaboration to pass on the inherited history and culture to the next generation.

Mr MATSUURA Koïchiro (Honorary Advisor of IRCI; Former Director-General of UNESCO)

Mr Matsuura, former Director-General of UNESCO, described when the Convention was adopted at the General Conference of UNESCO in 2003. Currently, 180 members have ratified the Convention, which is almost comparable to the 194 members of the World Heritage Convention. Conventions on World Heritage and ICH are two major drivers to safeguard cultural diversity. In conclusion, Mr Matsuura hoped that the forum discussions would contribute further to IRCI's research activities.

SESSION 1:

**PROGRESS OF THE MAJOR ISSUES IN ICH SAFEGUARDING,
REFLECTING ON MAJOR RESEARCH PROJECTS BY IRCI**

Session 1 was dedicated to discussing progress in the field of research for ICH safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific region in the past 10 years. Four researchers who have worked on IRCI's major research projects were invited to present their views and reflect on IRCI's research activities in the last 10 years. They were Ms NOJIMA Yoko, IRCI, Japan; Ms Harriet DEACON, University of Cape Town, South Africa; Ms Meredith WILSON, Heritage Consultant, Australia and Mr Hanafi HUSSIN, University of Malaya, Malaysia. This session was facilitated by Mr TERADA Yoshitaka, Professor Emeritus, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan.

IRCI's Research Activities: Achievements and Challenges

NOJIMA Yoko (IRCI)

Ms Nojima showed the timeline of IRCI's research activities in the past 10 years, extensively carried out with various organisations within the Asia-Pacific region based on inter-disciplinary cooperation, referring mainly to major research projects since 2013, when the present two activity focuses framework entered into operation. Projects under Activity Focus I have been carried out to promote research for safeguarding ICH, which have successfully led to providing sustainable frameworks for deepening academic and inter-disciplinary discussions on ICH. Major projects composing Activity Focus II have been dedicated to a variety of case studies and, in recent years, to issues related to disasters. Ms Nojima's presentation formed the basis for the forum discussion.

Research for the Safeguarding of Endangered Intangible Cultural Heritage: Reflection on the Last Decade

Harriet DEACON (University of Cape Town)

In the First IRCI Researchers Forum held in 2012, Ms Deacon had stressed the importance of bibliographies in ICH-related studies. Returning in 2021, she analysed the development of data collection by IRCI and commended the outcomes of its research projects, including the projects on legal systems and disaster risk management. She then suggested some key areas remaining for further research exploration, such as the link between sustainable development and ICH safeguarding, where IRCI can play a significant role. She also introduced insights from the project in India, aiming at helping communities plan sustainable development through ICH, which developed heritage-sensitive intellectual property and marketing strategies (HIPAMS) to maximise the benefits while minimising the risks of community engagement with the market.

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Disaster: Reflections on the IRCI Project 2016–2020

Meredith WILSON (Heritage Consultant, Australia)

Touching on IRCI's research project, ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management in the Asia-Pacific Region conducted in Vanuatu and other areas in the Asia-Pacific region from 2016 to 2018, Ms Wilson highlighted the need for further promoting ICH's role in the community-based disaster risk reduction (DRR) and recovery process. To prioritise ICH safeguarding and sustainability in an increasingly disaster-prone world, she emphasised the need to develop models that address emerging composite risks such as disaster, climate and health. The models should address natural hazards within the broader context of other forms of emergency and expand the scope for response by combining models of DRR

and climate change adaptation. It is also necessary to invest in both the safeguarding and adaptation of ICH elements that are most vulnerable to disasters and most valued by communities.

IRCI Research Data Collection for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage: Issues, Challenges and Future

Hanafi HUSSIN (University of Malaya)

Mr Hussin described the development and outcomes of IRCI's three major data collection projects: Mapping Research for the Safeguarding of ICH in the Asia-Pacific Region; Literature Survey on ICH Safeguarding Research in the Asia-Pacific Countries and Sustainable Research Data Collection for ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region, for which the latest outcomes and analysis of the survey in partner countries are complemented. Pointing out the challenges that these projects faced and the positive aspects that can be explored further, he concluded with recommendations for future research on ICH safeguarding, such as the improvement on methodologies, assessment of research on the safeguarding initiatives through the database and collaborative work by all researchers and governmental/non-governmental bodies to produce comprehensive data.

SESSION 2: RECENT INTERNATIONAL TRENDS AND SCOPE FOR THE SAFEGUARDING OF ICH: FROM THE VIEWPOINT OF THE 2003 CONVENTION AND OTHER PERSPECTIVES

In Session 2, the discussion was deepened around the theme of recent international trends in the field of research for ICH safeguarding, which should lead to the exploration of the future of ICH research. The talks included highlights of the latest research perspectives and approaches as well as the on-going projects deployed by UNESCO. Presentations were given by experts who have collaborated in recent IRCI's research projects: Mr SATO Masahisa, Tokyo City University, Japan; Mr IIDA Taku, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan; and Ms Himalchuli GURUNG, UNESCO Beijing Office. This session was facilitated by Mr ISHIMURA Tomo, Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, Japan.

Intangible Cultural Heritage and Human Security in an Age of SDGs

SATO Masahisa (Tokyo City University)

Mr Sato delivered a strong message that ICH needs to be reconsidered in the context of 'human security'. He elaborated on the analytical framework of the human security approach and applied it to analyse the ICH in sustainable development. This reconsideration contributes to the integration of different purposes such as ICH safeguarding, inclusive social development, inclusive economic devel-

opment, environmental sustainability, and peace and security. It further contributes to the promotion of policy integration, multi-stakeholder partnership, and adaptive collaborative governance. Also, Mr Sato described the importance of the community participation structure in the area of ICH safeguarding.

Heritage Studies as Public Ethnology: Recent Trends and the Issues Concerned with Intangible Cultural Heritage

IIDA Taku (National Museum of Ethnology, Japan)

Mr Iida provided an overview of recent trends common to tangible and intangible heritage studies, focusing on people's practices. Exploring the contrasting nature of ICH, 'fluidity vs. solidity' and 'communicativity vs. group identity', he emphasised the importance of fluidity and communicativity, as ICH is a processual phenomenon constantly recreated by communities and groups, and serves as a resource for understanding other cultures. He concluded his presentation with the suggestion that heritage studies should promote and facilitate dialogues between researchers/practitioners and the general public based on the public ethnology approach.

Recent International Trends and Scope for the Safeguarding of ICH: Research and the 2003 Convention

Himalchuli GURUNG (UNESCO Beijing Office)

Ms Gurung touched on research identified in the 2003 Convention as one of the measures to ensure ICH safeguarding and 'inventorying and research' in UNESCO's Overall Results Framework approved in 2018. She also showcased UNESCO's five ICH safeguarding initiatives/projects along with their objectives and impacts, then introduced the latest operational principles and modalities for safeguarding ICH in emergencies. In response to a question from Mr Ishimura, she provided an explanation of why and how the term 'living heritage' came to be used in UNESCO.

PANEL DISCUSSION: CURRENT ICH RESEARCH AND ITS CHALLENGES—SUGGESTIONS ON FUTURE RESEARCH

The panel discussion further explored issues raised in previous sessions. All the presenters and facilitators of the sessions participated as panellists. Mr IWAMOTO Wataru of IRCI served as the discussion moderator and took up topics on the research on ICH and the IRCI itself, around which panellists actively exchanged ideas and opinions from various perspectives.

Research and community: making research outcomes relevant to the practices of safeguarding ICH

The first topic was how research outcomes can be linked with the community, the main actor or stakeholder of ICH, and how researchers should link research outcomes to the practice of ICH safeguarding to empower the community.

As an anthropologist, Mr Terada noted that, although it might be efficient to reach the community through governmental channels, researchers with anthropological backgrounds can identify the key players in a community in a different way. Emphasising the role of the community in the research process is an important point, but he cautioned that it is critical to understand the nature of the community group to work with, as the community is not necessarily unified.

Mr Sato pointed out that participatory action research, which involves community members in setting research plans to work together, is an important research methodology. Mr Hussin clarified that research for academic purposes might place more emphasis on creating a methodology or theoretical framework as research outputs, while researchers who focus on the safeguarding of endangered traditions may see the post-research programmes as more important. In the latter, communications with communities are continued, and the relationship between the researcher and community is long term. Mr Iida added that including communities in the research process should naturally make research outcomes relevant to the people.

The HIPAMS project in India, where Ms Deacon has been involved, addresses heritage, intellectual property and marketing strategies. It aims to help communities make sustainable livelihoods from their heritage crafts and performances. Ms Deacon described that, in the course of the project, it has been proved that research can play a role as a solver of problems experienced by the community. Not all ICH research should be of this sort, but certain research outcomes could help the community develop and implement the strategies.

An example was given by Mr Terada. It often happens that a certain ICH element is appreciated by only a small segment of a community and ignored by or not known to the majority of its members. When discussing researchers and the community, we need to pay close attention to such cases, which are easily pushed out of the framework otherwise. Ms Deacon and Ms Wilson agreed that we should not underestimate the role of archival resources that help communities strengthen and revitalise traditions. Archival research has potentiality. Mr Hussin also gave an example of the re-documentation of a ritual that is no longer performed in a community in Malaysia. This contributes much to the community in terms of sharing its past with younger generations. Mr Iwamoto added that

the concept of ICH is very fluid and communities are, too.

Function of ICH: establishing identities and nurturing mutual respect

Subsequently, the function of ICH related to the issues of identity and mutual respect was discussed. ICH helps an individual or a group of people like a community to establish an identity. However, the creation of identity may differentiate oneself from others, or it may not encourage the establishment of mutual respect, as Mr Iida noted in his presentation. The question here is to know how ICH can contribute to fostering mutual understanding and respect.

It is difficult to link identity and mutual respect, Mr Sato said. When members of communities with different attributions work together, they should recognise their own differences, strengths and characteristics. In this sense, cross-border communication needs to be promoted. Mr Iwamoto added that individuals may recognise ICH as a symbol of identity. Understanding that there are naturally other people in the world who hold other ICH as their identity symbol consequently may lead to the establishment of mutual respect. This relates to the issue of tolerance that UNESCO seeks.

Mr Iida explained that the concept of communicativity of ICH is included in the 2003 Convention. In practice, people tend to consider some ICH continuous from the past, thereby solidifying the group identity. However, it is not in accordance with the spirit of the 2003 Convention. It is necessary to politically disseminate the communicativity that ICH holds. Ms Deacon explained that under Article 2.1 of the 2003 Convention, an institution like IRCI should focus on ICH that promotes mutual respect and comply with human rights. Moreover, to maximise the positive effects of certain aspects of cultural heritage, it is important for IRCI not only to examine its practices but also to conform to human rights standards. Mr Iwamoto reminded that, although SDGs do not include any specific goal on culture, culture is mentioned as a driver and enabler of sustainable development in view of promoting intercultural understanding or teaching cultural diversity.

IRCI's research activities in the future

Then the discussion moved to the future of ICH research. To begin the discussion, Ms Nojima introduced the highlights of the online questionnaire survey that IRCI conducted in July through August 2021 to mark its 10th anniversary. They are as follows (see Annex 3 for the details of the survey):

- The top three of most mentioned terms as the research themes/topics that IRCI should address are: safeguarding endangered ICH, climate change adaptation, and disaster risk management. It is also notable that there seems to be a growing interest in shared heritage.

- As to the evaluation of the progress of IRCI's activities over 10 years, Ms Nojima shared the list of comments by respondents expressing further expectation, encouragement or challenges, in which she noted the emphasis on communities, and pointed out that linking research with safeguarding practice on the ground might be an important task for IRCI.

As a collaborator with IRCI on projects related to education, Mr Sato expressed his expectation for IRCI to continue contributing to bridge-making between different fields of activities such as education and culture. Reflecting on the summary of the survey, the discussion was further deepened on IRCI's future activities. Mr Iwamoto reaffirmed that IRCI should conduct research activities always respecting mutual understanding. Also, as was raised by Ms Deacon, IRCI's data collection is crucial for many of IRCI's clients including the Member States and research institutions, since periodic reporting to UNESCO on the implementation of the 2003 Convention has been introduced on a regional basis.

Invited to update the periodic reporting system, Ms Gurung confirmed that the outputs of IRCI's research activities are beneficial to the other two East Asian category 2 centres, ICHCAP and CRIHAP, as well as those around the world. IRCI has already obtained valuable research findings relating to DRR, emergent issues such as COVID-19 and the climate change, which contribute to developing annual project plans and reports. As three category 2 centres in East Asia have high expertise in their fields, they can bring together promising findings out of their respective activities with UNESCO's facilitation. Ms Gurung added that the research areas IRCI should address further are 'endangered ICH' and 'shared ICH' noting that these two are not competing with each other. The focus of the 2003 Convention is the promotion of international collaboration and cooperation—that is, peacebuilding in human minds. Joint nomination has been enhanced recently and becoming the area of focus in the Asia-Pacific region.

Adaptation as a future main field of research

Finally, the issue of adaptation was raised, as it drew much interest from the panellists and audience.

Ms Wilson found it interesting that climate change and disaster risk management were among the top three most frequently mentioned themes in the survey responses. Under notable climate change, people transform their ICH practices more quickly. Climate change is going to become a very important area, as people are forced to adapt in ways that they have never imagined. Therefore, looking at the relationship between adaptation and safeguarding will be an important area for us and IRCI in the coming years. Ms Nojima added an example, though not in the context of climate change. IRCI has already set out a

research project on the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. ICH practices have been changing under the current pandemic, and they may change again when COVID-19 is over. The research should inform the transformation/adaptation of ICH in a changing situation.

Mr Iwamoto said that we might clarify more on the nature or meaning of ICH for the community through the analysis of ICH concerning natural hazards. Ms Deacon agreed with Mr Iwamoto, saying that thinking about adaptation and changes helps clarify the conceptual perception of ICH safeguarding. Also, research on adaptation in the context of disasters can help us understand the response to commercial forces, for example. Changes are encouraged in a balance of power within the community, where gender equality becomes more important, and it is beneficial to have conversations across these frames and topics of discussion. To conclude the talk on this topic, Mr Iwamoto noted that ICH might be directly linked to the livelihood of the community but should never be over-commercialised. Not damaging the essence of ICH but also not keeping it in a secret manner—balancing these two perspectives is essential. Adaptation is indeed the keyword for IRCI's future research activities.

Other Q&As

In addition to the discussions summarised above, questions were raised from the audience and between panellists as follows:

–How has IRCI coped with the worldwide spread of COVID-19 in terms of research?

Ms Nojima described positive outcomes obtained from research activities conducted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, in the Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management, a set of worksheets prepared for the project counterparts turned out to be a good tool. Also, the present online forum, with participants from across the world, shows the advantage of the online format in enlarging potential audiences.

–How can lessons and knowledge from community-based DRR apply to human-induced disasters like pandemics?

According to Ms Wilson, the resilience of ICH elements can depend on the causes and the type of exposure to them. It is important to look at the impacts caused by natural hazards, pandemics and conflict situations together, to understand the picture of resilience and adaptation of ICH elements. She also stressed the importance of posing research questions that address what we need to do to look after the community as well as what the community can do to look after themselves in order to ensure sustainability.

–How can gender studies help ICH safeguarding?

Ms Deacon clarified that the gender issue was recognised in the 2003 Convention, but further conversations are needed to understand gender issues in ICH management and in terms of human rights. It was pointed out that gendering of ICH practices can create disadvantages for certain groups, for instance, if they are not allowed to participate in a part of ICH activity for gender reasons. There is still a big gap.

–Are there any fellowship programmes for researchers at IRCI?

Mr Iwamoto noted that currently at IRCI, no such fellowship programme is available, but IRCI hopes to start fostering young researchers in the Asia-Pacific region shortly.

Comments

Before concluding the panel discussion, the facilitators of the two sessions were invited to make comprehensive comments on the programme.

Mr ISHIMURA Tomo (Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties)

As a resume of today's discussion on research, Mr Ishimura proposed to classify ICH research into three categories. The first category consists of research on ICH itself, which is naturally scientific or academic, and includes historical analysis, documentation and so on. Secondly, there is so-called applied research/science on ICH. Examples of this domain are how to safeguard ICH against natural disasters, how to utilise ICH to achieve SDGs and human security. The third category includes critical or reflective research. Critical theoretical approaches are associated with heritage studies. Issues such as gender as related to ICH and so on are handled in this research category.

Among these three categories, IRCI has carried out the second type of research and has accumulated significant outcomes. As for research in the first category, IRCI could promote it further by facilitating comparative studies of ICH research between countries, which may encourage the multi-national nomination of ICH onto the representative list. Regarding the third type of research, relatively few critical studies have been carried out in the Asia-Pacific region as this type of study is mainly initiated by Western researchers. It could be beneficial for IRCI to encourage researchers in the region to pursue or incorporate this type of approach.

Mr TERADA Yoshitaka (National Museum of Ethnology, Japan)

Firstly, Mr Terada congratulated IRCI on its 10 years of achievements in the research field of safeguarding ICH. Regarding the steps that IRCI will take for the near future, given the high expectations seen in the summary of the survey on

IRCI's research activities, he expected that IRCI would grow into a substantial, mature research institution for rigorous research activities.

In the same survey, many respondents expressed the need for IRCI to increase its interaction with communities. From this perspective, IRCI can play a role in mitigating top-level operations down to the community by enhancing collaboration with local institutions such as museums, archives and non-governmental organisations. In terms of IRCI's identity, though it is structurally situated as a category 2 centre of UNESCO, Mr Terada expressed his hope that it could maintain a certain level of independence and continue to serve as an important channel between UNESCO and local communities.

Key findings from the discussion

To close the whole discussion, Mr Iwamoto wrapped up the major points as follows:

- It is important to acknowledge the community's roles in safeguarding ICH and link research with the community.
- We should understand the nature of the "community" we work with, which is multi-layered. ICH itself is living and fluid.
- Aspects of identity, communicativity and mutual respect should be taken into consideration when promoting research. These concepts relate to the spiritual value of ICH.
- Adaptation is an important viewpoint to understand ICH in relation to sustainable development. Human security is also a new perspective that could advocate for the role of culture in the context of sustainable development and adaptation.
- IRCI's data collection could play a more important role under the reformed regional reporting system of UNESCO.

CLOSING

Representatives of the organiser delivered remarks to close the programme and expressed their gratitude to all those involved in the event.

Closing Remarks

Mr SHIMATANI Hiroyuki (President, National Institutes for Cultural Heritage)

(See Annex 1 for full speech transcription)

Mr Shimatani expressed his appreciation for the remarks and speeches given in the opening session as well as the presentations and discussions by the presenters and facilitators. He was also grateful to receive opinions from UNESCO's perspective and the audience online from various parts of the world.

He hoped the forum would contribute to disseminating the importance of research on ICH for ensuring a sustainable society, and he asked all the participants for their continued support for the further development of IRCI.

Mr Iwamoto then declared the close of the forum. He appreciated the ‘birthday presents’ offered for IRCI’s 10th anniversary, which were the enlightening and positive comments and instructive advice presented in the forum. Extending his gratitude to all those who contributed to the forum’s success, he expressed his wishes that the encouraging comments would inspire IRCI to become a more resilient, relevant and reliable research institution.



Participants of the IRCI Researchers Forum on ICH Safeguarding in the Asia-Pacific Region