

PREFACE

The International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI) was established in 2011 within the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage (NICH), Japan, as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of UNESCO. Since its establishment, IRCI has undertaken extensive work to enhance research to safeguard intangible cultural heritage (ICH) in the Asia-Pacific region through implementing research projects in cooperation with research institutes, museums, NGOs, and government sectors within and outside the region.

For its Medium-Term Programme 2016–2020, IRCI has set a new activity focus on ‘Research on ICH Safeguarding and Disaster Risk Management’ in consideration of UNESCO’s focus on dealing with post-conflict and post disaster situations, and has begun exploring the situation of ICH in relation to natural hazards and in conflict-affected countries through two research projects. This proceedings is the final outcome of one of these projects: Preliminary Research on ICH Safeguarding and the Disaster-Risk Management in the Asia-Pacific Region and the major activity that was conducted in FY 2018, the Asia-Pacific Regional Workshop on Intangible Cultural Heritage and Natural Disasters, which served as a conclusion of the current ‘preliminary’ phase of research on this theme by allowing researchers to further share and discuss various issues of the region and present recommendations for further activities.

The workshop was held from 7–9 December 2018 in Sendai, with an excursion in Onagawa, Miyagi Prefecture. It was a great honour and pleasure for me as the Director-General of IRCI to welcome all the researchers and specialists who came from Australia, Bangladesh, Fiji, Myanmar, New Zealand, the Philippines, Vanuatu, and Vietnam in the Asia-Pacific Region, as well as UNESCO and its category centres in China, the Republic of Korea, and also Peru in Latin America, and to engage in discussions with all of them over the course of the workshop.

From the early stage of the workshop planning, the Tokyo National Research Institute for Cultural Properties, another research institution under NICH, and IRCI’s collaborator on this project since 2016, assisted IRCI as the co-organiser. Its expertise and professional commitment in the post-disaster recovery process of ICH in Japan was crucial in developing the contents of the workshop, particularly the session on Japan and the excursion to Onagawa. The Center for Northeast Asian Studies at the Tohoku University also supported the workshop as the cooperating body and contributed substantially to discussions. I would like to take this opportunity to express my gratitude for their professional support for convening the workshop successfully.

My personal experience of working at the Tohoku University in Sendai at the time of the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011 taught me the important role culture plays in the process of the recovery of human lives and the region. In this sense, being able to hold this workshop in Sendai and Onagawa, areas that were severely damaged by the 2011 earthquake and tsunami and the communities of which are still in the process of

recovery, was also of great significance for us. In this regard, I would like to extend my appreciation to Mr Eiichi Hiratsuka, Mr Tadashi Abe, and Mr Shigeo Suzuki for staging unforgettable experiences during the excursion in Onagawa and the community of Takenoura, demonstrating the vital role of ICH for community recovery. The workshop was made possible by the fund donated to NICH for the protection of cultural heritage that has also supported this project since 2016. Given that the workshop was elaborated on the basis of our preliminary activities during 2016–2017, all the researchers and organisations that interacted with IRCI in the past years are also acknowledged for their valuable inputs in the course of the development of the project.

In recent years, the Asia-Pacific region has experienced an increasing number of extreme hazards, some of which have resulted in disasters. Therefore, it is extremely important to safeguard ICH from various disasters and to mobilise the community's ICH in risk reduction and recovery. Practical efforts and the concrete framework for this purpose are yet to be undertaken and strengthened. In my view, linking ICH and disaster risk reduction is a key issue for the realisation of sustainable development globally. I am convinced that this workshop was able to provide a valuable opportunity for researchers to exchange case studies and ideas for enhancing research on safeguarding ICH in the context of natural disasters. It would be a great pleasure to see this publication as well as the recommendations adopted at the workshop become widely used, and various research programmes jointly initiated by researchers in the field of ICH and disaster risk reduction to be implemented in respective countries and regions.

Thank you all for your generous cooperation and contribution in this project, and I hope you continue to support forthcoming IRCI projects.

Wataru Iwamoto
Director-General
International Research Centre for Intangible
Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI)