

## P R E F A C E

The International Research Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Asia-Pacific Region (IRCI), an institution of the National Institutes for Cultural Heritage (NICH), was established in 2011 in Sakai City, Osaka, Japan, as a Category 2 Centre under the auspices of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

With our mission to promote the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage (the 2003 Convention) through implementing research, we are conducting various projects, among which is the 'Research on ICH Affected by the COVID-19 Pandemic'. This project started with a preliminary study in FY 2021 in cooperation with researchers and institutions in nine countries in the Asia-Pacific region.

Following that year, it was developed into full-scale research in FY 2022 to further investigate through case studies the situation of the practice, transmission, and safeguarding of ICH amid the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the gradual recovery process and revival of ICH. Focusing on the changes that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, the case studies have revealed the flexibility and adaptability of ICH and its related communities. To conclude the project, IRCI held a regional conference in Osaka in July 2023 to share the results of the case studies with all collaborating researchers and discuss ways to safeguard ICH in the context of pandemics and epidemics that could occur again in the future.

This book presents the results of the case studies conducted in FY 2022 in Bangladesh, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Kyrgyzstan, Mongolia, Papua New Guinea, and the Republic of Korea. I hope it will contribute to promoting a better understanding of ICH among its stakeholders, especially the local communities and practitioners.

I would like to take this opportunity to express my deep appreciation to the members of the local ICH communities for sharing their personal experiences and to the specialists for providing guidance throughout the research. My special thanks go to the cooperating partner institutions and their teams who actively conducted research in their respective countries.

It is my sincere hope that this book will reach everyone involved in ICH as a researcher, practitioner, or local administrator.

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