

【Grant-in-Aid for Specially Promoted Research】

Humanities and Social Sciences



Title of Project : From Local Historical Material Studies to Regional Historical Culture: Creation of a New Research Field for Resilient Local Communities in a Country of Natural Disasters

Hiroshi Okumura

(Kobe University, Graduate School of Humanities, Professor)

Research Project Number : 19H05457 Researcher Number : 60185551

Keyword : Local historical material studies , Regional historical culture

【Purpose and Background of the Research】

After the Great Hanshin Awaji Earthquake in 1995, various activities were conducted all over Japan to save, conserve, and employ the damaged historical and cultural materials as well as materials recording the risks of the natural disasters. Our project in 2009, ‘Creation of Local Historical Document Studies based on theory of Historical Materials Preservation at the time of large-scale natural disasters’ [Grant-in-aid for Scientific Research (S)], collected and analyzed the numerous cases of such activities. Its research findings produced a new research field called the ‘Local Historical Material Studies,’ which was to provide researchers of humanities, social science and technology with a huge platform of public engagement.

Based on the 2009 project and the experience of the 3.11 catastrophe, we have been conducting the KAKENHI project since 2014, ‘Establishment of Local History Materials Science: Forming Disaster Subculture in the Post-3·11 World.’ This acclaimed project found that it is necessary to make ‘cultures resilient to the natural disasters’ (hereinafter, ‘disaster resilient cultures’) in local communities in Japan, and the Local Historical Material Studies successfully found some practical knowledge and methodology to develop disaster resilient cultures.

However, these 2 projects have clarified that local communities in Japan faces not only the risk of natural disasters, but also serious problems derived from the current population drop and globalisation. All these problems make it increasingly difficult to inherit rich regional historical culture in Japan to the future generation. The loss of regional historical materials and culture would give a devastating blow to vast range of academic fields depending on them (e.g. History, Studies on Cultural Heritages, and Seismology) and furthermore, even endanger local communities themselves. Our project team, who have been engaged in research focusing on times of disaster, found it necessary to immediately start a new research focusing on ordinary times, employing our knowledge and methodology of the Local Historical Material Studies developed in times of disasters.

【Research Methods】

This project consists of three research fields on national and international scale: (1) Study for Inheritance of Regional Historical Materials to the Future, (2) Study for Creation of Digital Data Infrastructure to Inherit Regional Historical Materials, (3) Study for Making a New Local History of Japan Including Disaster Resilient Culture.

These three different fields will be synthesized in the final phase of the project. Through the whole process of our project, the needs and opinions of people in the local communities have priority

【Expected Research Achievements and Scientific Significance】

Our studies will give 4 national/international impacts on research fields of Humanities, Science and Technology, as well as on Japanese/foreign society: (1) Studies for Memory Inheritance Culture this project deepens will be an indispensable part of various research fields of Humanities, (2) A new academic research field, ‘Regional Historical Culture Studies,’ can make a practical contribution to empower and revive local communities on the verge of extinction, (3) By presenting a unprecedented regional history of Japan including history of natural disasters from a long-term perspective, and by building a national data infrastructure model for inheritance of historical materials, this project can improve the level of academic research about local communities. Furthermore, these results will lead to reduce damages by future natural disasters, (4) This new academic research field ‘Regional Historical Culture Studies’ is such an academic breakthrough that can realize international platform of academic research on the initiative of our project team in Japan.

【Publications Relevant to the Project】

Hiroshi Okumura (ed.), Protection of Historical Cultures from Natural Disaster: The Construction of the Local Historical Materials Studies (University of Tokyo Press: Tokyo, 2014).

Hiroshi Okumura, The Great Earthquakes and the Conservation of Historical Materials (Yoshikawa Ko-Bunkan: Tokyo, 2012).

【Term of Project】 FY2019-2023

【Budget Allocation】 316,300 Thousand Yen

【Homepage Address and Other Contact Information】

tokusui-core@lit.kobe-u.ac.jp