

Preface

To study human culture and civilization that has developed in the various regions across the world, it is essential to conduct a thorough study drawing upon a diverse range of information. In addition, we must collect and examine a large volume of this information in order to compare the results of such studies and reflect on human history.

From the perspective that we must develop innovative methods for such study in the 21st century, the International Research Center for Japanese Studies has conducted a joint research project entitled "Study of methods to analyze and interpret historical and spatial information" for the past three years. Against this background, we are holding The 24th International Seminar entitled "Reading Historical Spatial Information from around the World: Studies of Culture and Civilization Based on Geographic Information Systems Data." The purpose of this seminar is not only to present results of our studies but also invite researchers who are conducting innovative studies in Europe, America and Asia and learn about their methods and the results of their studies.

While the information used in the study of culture and civilization is diverse both in type and nature, all such information contains time and spatial information. Given this fact, we have developed studies that use GIS (Geographic Information System) based on interdisciplinary cooperation among archaeology, geography and information science.

GIS is an outstanding technology for conducting a range of spatial analyses as it allows the display of a large volume of information, containing time and spatial data, on a digital map. Having such characteristics, GIS is an effective tool in the study of culture and civilization, as this field of scientific endeavor deals with large volume of information and requires objective data suitable for comparative review.

While studies based on GIS became rapidly popular in Europe and American in the last quarter of the 20th century, they are still in their infancy in other regions including Japan. One reason for this was that interdisciplinary studies that integrate the humanities and sciences were not mature in these regions. I hope the opening of this international seminar and the discussions that will take place will be a stepping stone to researchers gaining a better understanding of the effectiveness of this study and contribute to the progress of these studies in Asia.

Lastly, I greatly appreciate the cooperation and support all participants in this seminar and all the other people concerned have extended to us.

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Chairman of Executive Committee of the 24th International Seminar