



Global Center of Excellence for
Education, Research and Development
of Strategy on Disaster Mitigation
of Cultural Heritage and Historic Cities
Newsletter No.11

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Greetings

Takeyuki Okubo

(Leader of Ritsumeikan G-COE, Dr. Eng., Professor, Faculty of Science and Engineering)

Mental and spiritual activities are what mark us as human beings. The cultural heritage that we receive, maintain and pass down to our successors is the irreplaceable trace of our humanity and integral, precious components of a society's foundation. People have established an elaborate network of institutions for preserving the world's cultural heritage sites, but systems for protecting them from major disasters are still in their infancy. It is relatively rare, however, for researchers in disaster prevention science to study issues pertaining to protection of cultural heritage. The 21st Century COE (former COE) fused science and culture and took a leading role in establishing the science required to mitigate the impact of disasters on humanity's cultural heritage.



The objectives of our Global COE are to implement advanced education and research for the protection of cultural heritage and historic cities that have them, to develop these concepts on an international scale, as well as in Japan, and to nurture professionals capable of leading efforts to preserve human cultural heritage world-wide.

The Kinki region, centered on Kyoto and Nara, is just one of areas in Japan with a high concentration of cultural heritage that experience frequent earthquakes. Seismologists predict increasing seismic activity over the next 50 years and, because of recent spreading of urban area with high density and many traditional flammable buildings, Japan's historic cities and cultural properties face a critical situation of earthquake-triggered fire. Meanwhile, little is being done about cultural heritage's vulnerabilities to major disasters, both in Japan, and the world. Japan has a large number of historic cities, and world-wide, more than 660 sites including many historic cities have been inscribed on UNESCO's List as World Cultural Heritage. To protect these cities, local, national and international governments need thousands of experts trained in methods to protect cultural heritage from disasters. Another no less urgent need is the training of young researchers to promote disaster-prevention studies. Consequently, an institute that makes direct international efforts is indispensable.

Our mission is to promote experts and standards for protection of cultural heritage and historic city from disasters in the world. Please support this project and keep contact with us.

Best regards,
Takeyuki OKUBO



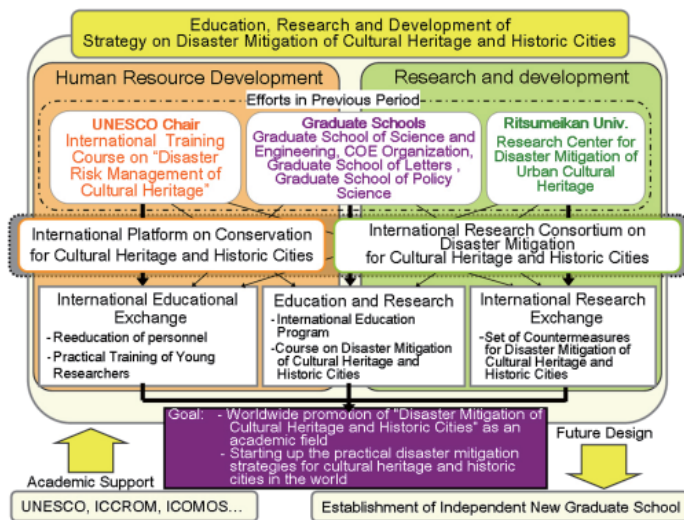
Targeted research field between two existing fields

Mission Statement

Japan's Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology

"Global COE (Centers of Excellence) Program"

The former COE Program already has had a leading international role and been recognized as the only one UNESCO Chair holder for conducting the training course on mitigating the effects of disasters on cultural heritage sites and crisis management. It has had an active agenda, mainly involving the historic city of Kyoto.



The Program's center identifies issues and conducts basic research on mitigating disaster damage to cultural heritage. Researchers at a global COE must consider research objectives in all their aspects, from artistic works associated with a site to the surrounding environment, and the relationship to other historic cities around the world by utilizing a holistic, comprehensive approach to the historical milieu. The science for mitigating the impact of disasters on human cultural heritage calls for results that are practical, widely applicable and the development and dissemination of educational programs. The followings are mandatory goals:

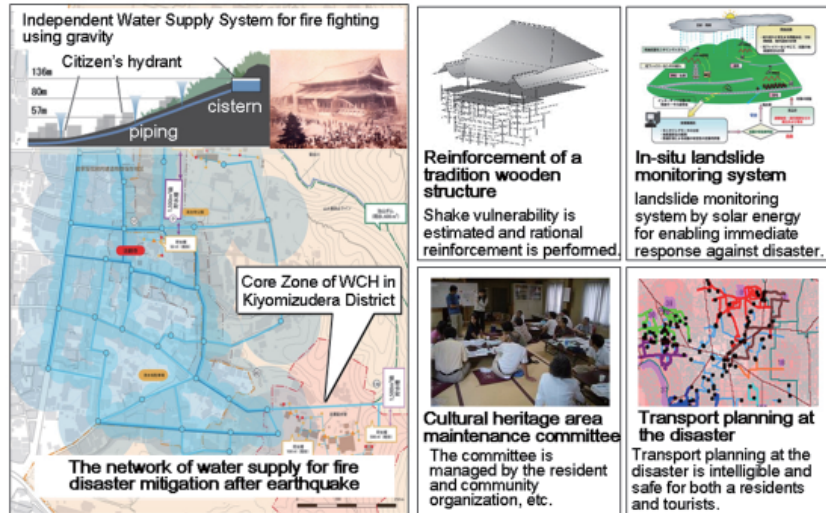
- a) Producing persons who can contribute to society as experts or as young researchers in the field.
- b) Research and Development (R&D) of universally practical, applicable technologies for mitigating the effects of disasters on cultural properties and their environments.
- c) International contributions to education and research related to mitigating the impact of disasters on human cultural heritage.

<Research >

In the study of protecting historic cities' heritage sites, four research projects have been designed as part of the new science for mitigating the impact of disasters on human cultural heritage:

- a) Assessing the Values of Cultural Properties and their Vulnerabilities (Cultural Heritage and Vulnerability)
- b) Traditional Procedures for Mitigating Disasters (Historical Disasters)
- c) Disaster Mitigation Technologies for Preserving Cultural Values (Disaster Mitigation Technologies)
- d) Comprehensive Planning for Disaster Mitigation, Emphasizing Cultural Heritage (Disaster Mitigation Planning and Policy)

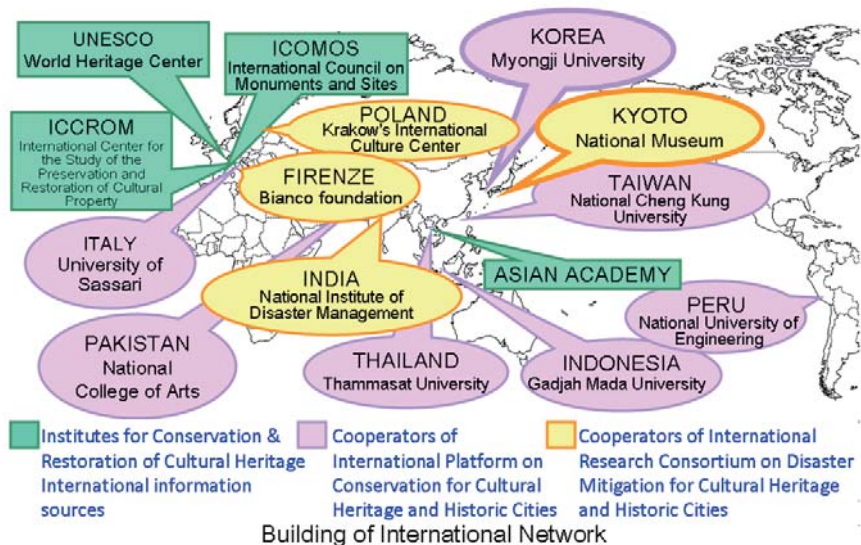
Culture and engineering experts will participate in these projects. A management team will oversee the expansion of project results to applications for other historic world cities, and consider possible types of locations and disasters. It will create countermeasures aimed at protecting cultural heritage during disasters, and a universally applicable, practical set of directives that covers everything from artistic works to the surrounding environment.



Image; Set of countermeasures (Case in Kiyomizu-dera Temple Area)

< Education >

There has been almost no educational initiative for protecting cultural heritage from disasters, in Japan or elsewhere; it is an almost untouched field. The curriculum created by the Global COE will serve as a basis for an international advanced education program. It will target members of international organizations and be expanded through practical training courses and courses for researchers. Initially, each relevant school of learning will establish a major in mitigation of the impact of disasters on cultural heritage sites, and proactively enroll Japanese and foreign students from various scientific and cultural disciplines. Students will be required to participate in all four of the listed projects. The goal is to produce young researchers in the engineering sciences who will understand the peculiarities of protecting cultural heritage and can conduct R&D, and those in the humanities who also can understand and carry out research on disaster mitigation technologies.



Research Members

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