

## Welcome Speech

**FUKUTA Ajo**

Program Leader

Kanagawa University 21<sup>st</sup> Century COE Program

Thank you all for coming to the 2<sup>nd</sup> International Symposium on Nonwritten Cultural Materials. My name is Ajo Fukuta, and I am the leader of the Kanagawa University 21<sup>st</sup> Century COE Program.

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century COE Program, as I am sure you are aware, is a major initiative research program launched in 2002 by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology to promote the establishment of world-class research and education centers. Universities offering doctoral programs were encouraged to submit research proposals for screening and were awarded five-year research grants if the proposals met the strict standards of COE program. In 2003, our proposal “Systematization of Nonwritten Cultural Materials for the Study of Human Societies” survived strong competition and was selected as a grant winner. Next year, which will be our fifth and final year, we will be required to present research results befitting a world-class research center.

In November 2005, we hosted the 1<sup>st</sup> International Symposium on Nonwritten Cultural Materials, which many of you might have attended, and to which we invited prominent scholars in the related fields to present their latest research findings and methodologies. The symposium turned out to be a great success and, as we had secretly hoped while organizing it, we were able to absorb a great deal of the newly acquired knowledge from the top scholars and were able to develop and expand our program activities.

This is our fourth year of the COE Program, and it will not be too early before we start planning to finalize our research. In this 2<sup>nd</sup> International Symposium, we would like to share with you the concept and framework of our study and to highlight some of new findings. We will also welcome comments and suggestions from you who have been involved in the related fields. Your feedback will be invaluable as we proceed to summarize our research results. The objective of our program is to compile and systematize three types of nonwritten cultural materials – namely, illustrations; physical techniques and sensibility; environment and landscape. The progress of those three areas varies at this point, and that might be reflected in how the sessions proceed over the next two days. We would appreciate your understanding and patience.

Last but not least, I would like to express my gratitude to all of you for attending this symposium, and I sincerely hope that, through the two days of presentations and discussions, you will develop a deeper understanding of the importance and possibilities of nonwritten cultural materials in studying human societies. I would appreciate your active participation, and please feel free to ask any questions or share your thoughts about our program. Thank you.