

History

- 1935** A plan to establish an ethnological museum of Japan as an incorporated foundation is developed under the leadership of SHIBUSAWA Keizo and SHIRATORI Kurakichi.
- 1964** The Japanese Society of Ethnology, the Anthropological Society of Nippon, the Japanese Archaeological Association, the Folklore Society of Japan, and the Japanese Association of Ethnology jointly submit to the Minister of Education and other relevant authorities a request to establish a national ethnological research museum.
- 1972** A research council (chaired by KUWAHARA Takeo) conducts a feasibility study on the establishment of a National Ethnological Research Museum. A basic concept plan for the museum is submitted to the Minister of Education.
- 1973** A preparatory council for the establishment of a National Ethnological Research Museum (tentative name) and a preparation office are set up.
- 1974** The National Museum of Ethnology is founded under the “Law to amend part of the National School Establishment Law” (No. 81, 1974), with an Administration Department, an Information and Documentation Center, and five Research Departments. Collecting artifacts from overseas was started in Papua New Guinea.
- 1975** A collection of folklore reference materials (28,432 items) owned by the former Ministry of Education Archive were transferred from the National Institute of Japanese Literature.
- 1977** The Museum buildings (28,778m²) are completed and the surrounding area is landscaped. An opening ceremony is held. Exhibitions on Oceania, the Americas, Europe, West Asia, Music, Language, Southeast Asia, and East Asia (Japanese Culture), as well as the Videothèque are opened to the public.
- 1978** Long-term and carefully organized “Special Projects” are started as key components of ethnological research.
- 1979** The fourth Exhibition Hall (1,272 m²), which accommodates an additional exhibition on East Asia (Japanese Culture), is completed and opened to the public. Exhibitions on Central and North Asia, and East Asia (Ainu [Aynu] Culture) are opened to the public.
- 1981** The Auditorium (3,704m²) is completed.
- 1983** The eighth Exhibition Hall and other facilities (4,816m²) are completed. The exhibition on East Asia (Cultures of the Korean Peninsula and Regional Cultures of China) is opened to the public.
- 1984** The tenth anniversary of the Museum's founding is celebrated. “A Ten-Year History of the National Museum of Ethnology” is published.
- 1987** The tenth anniversary of the Museum's opening to the public is celebrated.
- 1989** The School of Cultural and Social Studies (with the Department of Regional Studies and the Department of Comparative Studies) of the Graduate University for Advanced Studies is established within the Museum. The Special Exhibition Hall and the library stacks (5,292m²) are completed. The first special exhibition, “The Great Andes Civilization: Inca, the Reviving Empire of the Sun” is organized to celebrate the completion of the Special Exhibition Hall.
- 1993** The main Museum building is expanded and a joint research facility (891m²) is completed.
- 1994** The 20th anniversary of the Museum's founding is celebrated. The Japan Center for Area Studies is established. (Discontinued in FY2005)
- 1995** Owing to damage caused by the Hanshin-Awaji Great Earthquake, the entire collection is closed for 45 days. (Earthquake-proof reinforced construction was retrofitted between 2002 and 2003) The Center of Excellence (COE) program is established: “Pioneering Research for the Development of New Ethnological Studies Using Multimedia in the Global Era.” (Concluded at the end of FY1999)
- 1996** The seventh Exhibition Hall (6,439m²) is completed. Exhibitions on Language and Southeast Asia are renovated. An audio-visual gallery, the Materiatheque, and the exhibition on South Asia are opened.
- 1997** The 20th anniversary of the Museum's opening to the public is celebrated.
- 1998** Following the enactment of the Ministerial Ordinance to revise part of the administrative rules for the Inter-University Research Institute (Ordinance of the Ministry of Education No. 24 of 1998), the five research departments are reorganized into four research departments and one research facility.
- 1999** The Minpaku “Digital Guide and Study Area” are completed and opened to the public.
- 2000** A renovated exhibition on the cultures of the Korean Peninsula is opened. Partial renovation of the Museum exhibitions continued until 2003.
- 2004** As authorized by the National University Corporation Act (Act No. 112 of 2003), the National Institutes for the Humanities, as part of the Inter-University Research Institute, is established. The former system of 4 research departments and 1 research center is reorganized into a system with 3 research departments and 2 centers. To facilitate joint research, screening by the Joint Research Committee, whose members include representatives from the research community, is established and the scope of the call for joint research applications expanded. Editing of a book entitled A Thirty-Year History of the National Museum of Ethnology is one of the earliest commemorative events started in preparation for the 30th anniversary. (The book is published in March 2006.)
- 2006** The Minpaku Collections Help Desk opens.
- 2007** Commemorative events celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Museum are held, including a commemorative ceremony in November.
- 2008** A collaborative agreement is signed with the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology.
- 2009** After renovation, the Africa and West Asia exhibits are re-opened to the public.
- 2010** After renovation, the Music and Language exhibits are re-opened to the public. New systems are consolidated including the establishment of the Center for International Academic Exchange.
- 2011** After renovation, the Oceania and America exhibits are re-opened to the public.
- 2012** After renovation, the Europe exhibit and Information Zone are re-opened to the public.
- 2013** After renovation, the East Asia–Culture of Japan exhibit is re-opened to the public. Consolidation of new systems, including the Audit Office and Umesao Archives.
- 2014** After renovation, the East Asia–Culture of the Korean Peninsula, Regional Cultures of China, and Culture of Japan exhibits are re-opened to the public.