

# Purpose and Functions

## Purpose

The National Museum of Ethnology conducts anthropological and ethnological research and aims to promote a general understanding and awareness of peoples, societies and cultures around the world through the collection and conservation of ethnographic materials and public exhibitions. Minpaku was established in 1974 as an Inter-University Research Institute under the “Law to amend part of the National School Establishment Law” (No. 81, 1974). In April, 2004 it made a fresh start as a member of the National Institutes for the Humanities, under the “National University Corporation Act” (No. 112, 2003).

## Functions

### Research Institute

The Museum functions as a research institute equipped with a museum. It serves as a research center for anthropology and ethnology, providing information and research results to academic communities and the general public through publications, exhibitions, and other means.

### Joint Research

As an Inter-University Research Institute, the Museum supports and organizes joint research projects with researchers from other academic institutions. Materials collected and stored in the Museum are used widely by those researchers.

### Information Center

Over the years, the Museum has collected and maintained a great variety of ethnological research materials. These include artifacts, audiovisual records, books and other forms of research data. The Museum is also a repository for the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). Information about these materials is provided to researchers via computer databases.

### Exhibitions

The research results of the Museum are open to the public through exhibitions. Minpaku emphasizes the close-linkage between research and exhibition as a basic policy, and its academic staff participate in planning and organizing exhibitions. The main halls display regional and cross-cultural exhibitions. The former displays cultures and societies in major regions, such as Oceania and the Americas, whereas the latter emphasizes cultural elements such as music and language, which are shared across human societies.

Thematic Exhibitions are also held occasionally. These focus on rapidly changing global situations and feature current research in cultural anthropology and ethnology. The Museum also presents, Special Exhibitions in spring and/or fall, in the Special Exhibition Hall.

### Social Contributions

Also with the objective of presenting its latest research findings to the public, the Museum offers academic lecture programs, seminars, the Weekend Salon, special lectures and performances, film shows, and various workshops. The Museum also organizes intensive courses on museology and various projects for other museums as part of its international cooperation activities.

### Graduate Programs

The School of Cultural and Social Studies of SOKENDAI (The Graduate University for Advanced Studies), based at the Inter-University Research Institute, is located at the Museum. It has two courses: Regional Studies and Comparative Studies. These Departments offer research training programs leading to the Ph.D. degree with the aim of producing unique professional scholars. The Museum also cooperates with other universities in training graduate students enrolled in doctoral programs.

