

# Preface



The National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku) is a research institute and museum that provides graduate-level training in anthropology and ethnology. It was founded in 1974 as an Inter-University Research Institute. Since April 2004, it has been a member of the National Institutes for the Humanities as a part of the Inter-University Research Institute Corporation.

In accordance with its motto, “To the Ends of the Earth, To the Depths of Knowledge”, Minpaku is engaged in a never-ending quest to explore human cultures. By launching core research projects, using new concepts to transform our displays, and disseminating information in fresh, creative ways, Minpaku’s staff has, with one accord, redoubled its efforts to ensure further growth and development for this institution.

The academic staff of Minpaku do research on various cultures and societies and follow the changes resulting from globalization. While conducting fieldworks on peoples and their ways of life in many parts of the world, we have collected numerous ethnographic artifacts and audiovisual materials to help us better understand the cultures and ways of thinking of study areas. Our research results have been made available to the public through a variety of media including publications, exhibitions, public lectures, symposia, and our websites. One of the important functions of Minpaku is to provide information and research results to the general public as well as to scholars in academic institutions.

As an Inter-University Research Institute, Minpaku also trains specialists in cultural anthropology and ethnology in the doctoral program of the School of Cultural and Social Studies within the Graduate University for Advanced Studies.

By speeding up the flow and exchange of people, commodities, and information, globalization has given us easier access to what we want, and has undeniably brought greater convenience to everyday life. Its other effects, however, have been less positive: dominant cultural elements in various parts of the world are exerting a powerful influence on traditional social systems and cultures, resulting in drastic changes in living environments.

The continuing advance of globalization has created regional and ethnic conflicts and tensions, economic and information gaps, and cultural and religious frictions. The great earthquake and tsunami that devastated the northeast of Japan on March 11, 2011 have shown us how the power of nature transcends human understanding and have exposed the fragility of our vast global technology and industry. Now, more than ever, it is time to rethink the relationships between nature and civilization.

As mankind faces these challenges, fieldwork-based anthropological and ethnological research has gained new relevance as an aid to understanding other cultures, and even our own. Here at Minpaku, we, too, are concentrating our efforts on the question of how best to respond to public interests and concerns.

Your ongoing guidance and support for Minpaku are profoundly appreciated.

SUDO Ken'ichi  
Director-General