



National
Museum of
Ethnology
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For the MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter

An Inaugural Message

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National Museum of Ethnology

The National Museum of Ethnology was founded as a major research and information centre for ethnology (cultural anthropology) in Japan in 1974. Following a preparatory period for the construction of facilities, collection of materials, preparation of displays and so forth, it was opened in 1977. In 1997, therefore, we are to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the opening of this Museum.

Since its establishment, the Museum has received many overseas researchers who engage in academic work in collaboration with the faculty of the Museum. Some of them have been invited here as visiting professors, associate professors or overseas research fellows, while others have participated in the international symposia which we have hosted. Some of our visitors have been given financial support from organizations such as the Japan Foundation. There have also been many other people from overseas who have joined our joint research programmes on various occasions. We are proud that the Museum has accommodated about 350 overseas researchers from a total of 49 different nations around the world from its foundation to the present. Especially in recent years, the museum has extended its activities to cover not only joint research in anthropology but also studies of museum practice, and international cooperation for aid programmes, so it is expected that an increasing number of foreign scholars will visit to participate in our programmes.

To tell the truth, however, I am not totally confident that, while accepting many scholars from abroad during the past 20 years, our institute has really been doing its best to establish and maintain long lasting academic exchange with foreign researchers after their initial assignment in Japan, except for occasional friendships fostered on an individual basis. There might have been a lot more that we could have done to strengthen human ties in the international community of ethnology and anthropology. It is to be regretted that we have not made sufficient effort to foster discussion between Japan and other nations. One might criticize us for being rather slow in realizing this fact after so many years. However, while preparing ourselves to celebrate the 20th anniversary which is coming soon, we sense urgency in the need to help create a close global network of researchers in our discipline.

This is the first issue of the Newsletters, and represents our very first step towards a formal correspondence between the Museum and our friends abroad. We sincerely hope that it will enhance the studies of those who have been associated with our activities to date. We are very keen to transmit updated information concerning our institute and research efforts, focusing on the collection of materials, recent exhibitions, conferences, cooperation for international aid programmes, the construction of a data base, and so forth. It is planned that the correspondence will incorporate not only information about this Museum but also recent news about developments in the anthropological world and museums in Japan and

Contents

Komei Sasaki

For the MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter 1

Jack Goody

The Anthropologist and the Tape-recorder 2

Shamsul A.B.

Anthropology and the State and
the State of Anthropology in Malaysia 5

Juha Janhunen

MINPAKU: Reflections and Recollections 7

Exhibition 9

Conferences 9

Visiting Scholars 12

Publications 12

MINPAKU
Anthropology Newsletter

other Asian countries.

At the same time, we would be more than happy to have our friends contribute to this Newsletter from all over the world, to communicate recent developments in their work. For instance, the contribution could be a short essay or diary describing what they found, what they felt and how they proceeded in their field work under specific circumstances.

We hope that overseas researchers will feel free to come forward with whatever news or information they have, and can enjoy writing to us about their experiences. The initiative to launch the Newsletters is aimed at creating a forum of personal exchange between the Museum faculty in Japan and researchers abroad, by sharing information and deepening mutual understanding.

With the turn of the century just around the corner, we are faced with many serious problems associated with anthropological studies and museums. We must learn how people in the modern world can develop intercultural understanding, how they can deal with ethnic conflicts and confrontations in

real life, and how different cultures should be presented in the context of museums. These questions are very fundamental issues to which we are all exposed today. Although this Newsletter is rather small in scale, we are going to make every effort to expand a human network through its medium, to promote exchanges of views in the international community of anthropology and the study of museums. This should help us to deepen our understanding of the many issues of diversity that we are trying to resolve. It is also our sincere hope that this contribution to the global network will enhance international understanding among nations as we move towards the 21st century.

At any rate, support and cooperation from our overseas colleagues is essential in order to issue the Newsletters frequently, to extend the chain of personal communication, and to bring success to the whole initiative. Taking this opportunity I cordially request those who have been associated with the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan to kindly extend support and assistance to us in this important undertaking.



The Anthropologist and the Tape-recorder

Jack Goody

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The author was William Wyse Professor at the Department of Social Anthropology, Cambridge from 1972-1985. His most recent publications include The Culture of Flowers (1993) and The Expensive Moment: The Rise of Social Anthropology in Britain and Africa 1918-1970 (1995). He will give the Royal Anthropological Institute Huxley Memorial Lecture on 6 December 1995.

On my first visit to the LoDagaa of northern Ghana in 1949 I could do nothing to record in sound their melodious xylophones nor yet their long and elaborate recitations. Sound recordings then required exceptionally heavy machines, which I did not possess, and electricity of which the district had only the occasional generator in a government compound. The alternative was pencil and paper, but that was no help to me with the music for I had no experience in transcription. And as for speech, it meant that virtually every prayer or speech in a formal, 'ritual' situation had to be reconstructed from memory or written down with the aid of an assistant outside the context of the ceremony itself. Both procedures left a lot to be desired. Occasionally I could persuade an 'informant' to sit and dictate an account of custom, rite, court case or personal experience, which I could write directly into my duplicate notebook. But if one was really trying to act as a 'participant observer', as enjoined by all, then it was a question of making a few notes on scraps of paper, looking at them afterwards and reconstructing the events of the day, possibly with the help of an assistant. There was little chance of doing much while the

performance was in full flow: a camera might help in recalling some aspects, though concentration on the lens of a cine camera could easily hinder one's view of what was going on around one. Hence the insistence, by those who had worked with Malinowski, that fieldnotes should be written up that evening, while the memory of the discussions was still fresh. Of course it was also possible to invite people to talk at a slow speed (or with many pauses) while one took down a version of their words in writing - though again one could do little for the music.

That is what I did when I first recorded the long recitation of the LoDagaa associated with initiation into the Bagre society.¹⁾ Seeing that I had been attending the public side of the performances, an ex-soldier, Benima 'Dagarti', with whom I had become acquainted offered to recite to me, the 'myth' that was told to the initiates when they were 'in the room', that is, shut up in the main room of the house where the Bagre was being performed. He had been impressed with Islam (especially with the mosques) when serving abroad with the British Army in South-East Asia and on his return had ceased to live in his local community of Chaa

1) The Bagre is the name of a 'secret society' found among the LoDagaa and their neighbours, and

in order to take up residence among other Muslims in the stranger's settlement (*zongo*) on the main road. But he constantly visited his natal settlement of Birifu, partly for social reasons, partly to sell patent medicines. He was an outsider in both communities, as converts tend to be, but he had been well-trained in the Bagre by his grandfather, Naañi. So he came to visit me one day and started to recite while I transcribed his words, adding in the margins some short explanations that he offered in response to my queries, for I tried to understand the recitation as he told it. So we continued for the following ten days, in some secrecy as he was breaking his oath to the Bagre god.

Meeting Benima was a stroke of good fortune for me, for I was able to produce a 'text' of the 'myth' of the Bagre which I later translated in another village with the help of a Christian school-leaver, Romulo Tadoo; it would have been difficult in Birifu as it was a secret performance. That encounter enabled me to overcome the real limitation of pre-tape-recorder fieldwork which lay in the discourse, formal and informal, of ceremonies confined to the 'ritual' context. It was clearly difficult to get people to repeat funeral orations privately as they felt uncomfortable in so doing. With long 'mythical' recitations such as that of the Bagre, it was virtually impossible. In the first place, it was 'secret'. In the second, speakers who could recite were difficult to find. In the third, the ceremony itself was needed to inspire them, to give them voice. Even if one did overcome these difficulties in the way I had done, the recitation could never be the same as that made in the course of the ceremony. It is a sober reflection to think that until the 1960s virtually none of what passes for oral literature represents what people actually said during a specific ceremony. Rather it is what has been dictated to the transcriber in completely decontextualized circumstances by some individual who is free from the constraints of recitation in public. That is one reason why we often lack data on the audience, because there was none, except the anthropologist. Folktales are recorded but we have little information about who and when they are told to in natural conditions. What one assumed to be told between adults may often be told exclusively to children (and anthropologists), so that they provide evidence of *la pensée sauvage* only in a very particular sense, rather like our own fairy tales.

What other effects does this decontextualization have? Firstly, the speaker may direct his attention to the present audience and what he or she is thought to want. I have argued that this orientation may often lead to a concentration on narrative elements, to the exclusion of

others less easy to recall and less relevant to the encounter, distorting the nature of many myths. But secondly a very different outcome may take place with a piece like the Bagre. Benima's recitation (Goody 1972) was notably longer and more complicated than the various versions that I later recorded with the aid of a tape-recorder. Why? Benima was an intelligent and thoughtful person, but the circumstances themselves may have more to do with the difference. What is learnt by initiates to the Bagre is an outline of the myth but also a way of producing recitativo which is capable of introducing new material and forgetting old. Outside the context of the ritual situation Benima seems to have allowed himself to develop certain themes, in a freer way, knowing perhaps that I would be interested in the elaboration of speculative religious aspects, as indeed he was as well. Again the mode of dictation to me was very different from the rapid recitation to the initiates when no gaps were allowed. Indeed a good Speaker was one who spoke rapidly, clearly and without hesitation. Whereas in reciting to me he had to allow me time to write down what he was saying and possibly to ask for an explanation of a phrase I did not understand. The whole process was slower and more deliberate, ten days instead of, say, eight hours, which gave him time to think more about what he was saying.

These are two possible 'distortions' produced by transcription out of context. That situation has changed entirely with the advent of the portable tape-recorder, where we can record during a ceremony and then transcribe afterwards. That procedure has several advantages. In the first place we get to know what was going on in the actual process of recital. We can see what input if any the audience has on the performance, if they correct the Speaker (which is not the case with the Bagre, where people only express opinions afterwards). One can see more

which offers protection to humanity against the ills of the world. Initiation is in two stages, the White and the Black, each accompanied by a long recitation; the former consists of a series of ceremonies lasting some six months and is open to both males and females; the latter is 'men only'.

Jack and Esther
Goody in Cambridge





clearly how the recitation is developed for we record mistakes and gaps as well as continuities. But above all we can make a plurality of recordings of the same recitation, to see how far it is the same and how far it changes. In earlier days, it was all an anthropologist could do to record one version of, say, a South American myth. That version became the standard simply because there were no others. Deductions were then made about the relationship of myth to ritual or to society more generally, oblivious of possible variations. And the genre tended to be seen as a highly standardized form which was handed down to each generation in a relatively precise manner.

In the case of the Bagre, K. Gandah and myself have now made a series of recordings dating from the seventies (the first pre-tape transcription was made in 1950). He was a member of the society and so could attend the secret ceremonies, taking with him the tape-recorder after getting the permission of the elders. I could not attend. It might be thought that the use of the tape-recorder broke the condition of secrecy, and so too it did in my case; I could then hear what was otherwise forbidden to me. But that did not seem to be a major obstacle, partly because, with the advent of schools, many had become convinced that writing down the local traditions was a valuable task, and partly because tape recorders and radios quickly became part of the local scene. A reference to my machine was actually introduced into the first recording we made, and some local people took up their use for other purposes. When I was attending the birthday of the Prophet, I took along my recorder very discreetly to register the prayers offered by the Muslims, placing the machine as inconspicuously as possible in front of me. After a few minutes a senior Muslim merchant, Abu Jaja, got up carrying his own tape-recorder, picked up mine and placed them both in the centre-stage right in front of the speakers. The recorder had entered into local culture. While its use sometimes destroyed the monopolies of the oral transmission of knowledge, including its secrets, that was by now an accepted fact.

The recordings we made show very considerable variation, even when the same man is reciting on different occasions or different men on the same occasion. I argue that this fact provides evidence that the Bagre is not remembered word-by-word, as I had thought when I had only one version. People remember some passages more or less accurately and otherwise recall a series of themes or incidents plus a method of recitation. Variations not only creep in by stealth, they are also encouraged, in the sense that elaboration is applauded, and elaboration is one area means elimination in another. Such elaborations display evidence of creative talents which the 'fixed text' notion of a myth neglects. Moreover difference in the recitation in neighbouring villages must have arisen by some process of continuous

creation of this sort.

I suggest that the tape-recorder has shown the necessity of recognizing a looser and more flexible relation of myth to society than many earlier anthropologists had suspected. It has also shown that recitation of such myths is not merely an exercise at exact reproduction, as when I copy out a passage of Milton's *Paradise Lost*, but often involves creative increments of a surprisingly wide variety, resulting in very considerable changes not simply in the surface structure but in the deep structure as well. Of course there is always a level of abstraction that reduces the many to the one and sees all versions as variants of a Proppian kind (Boy meets Girl etc.). But in the case of the Bagre the variations can affect the whole tenor of the recitation, for example, whether it is more theocentric, more concerned with supernatural intervention rather than with man's invention.²⁾ Important incidents which I had earlier thought were basic to the myth disappeared virtually without trace in later versions, so that predictions of what constituted the continuing deep structure were impossible to make.

These are some of the conclusions that arise from the introduction of tape-recorders into the anthropological analyses of standard oral forms (of a 'literary' kind). Clearly similar advances have been made possible in discourse analysis in oral cultures. New techniques have enabled us to make new theoretical conclusions; paper and pencil is no longer the only instrument at our disposal. Clearly the tape-recorder does not solve all our analytic problems; like the computer, it is a tool. As I have argued with writing, a published recording offers a fixed text which may replace creative heterodoxy with authoritarian orthodoxy. But the recording of different versions may reveal more than show deviations from a hypothetical 'original'; it can also demonstrate creativity, versions that display alternative approaches to the understanding of the world, even contradictions one with another.

Postscript

The first transcription of the Bagre was made in 1950 in Birifu and published in 1972. Subsequently I returned with K. Gandah in 1965 when we recorded a version recited not in the natural context but with multiple participants in a mock-up of the ceremony. This we published in English and French in Paris in 1981. We subsequently recorded other versions done in the course of the Bagre ceremonies in Birifu, in the neighbouring settlements of Gomble and Biro, and in Lawra. These we have transcribed, translated, annotated, and put in computerized form but cannot publish until we find a subvention. We regard this material as important since it spans the advent of the tape-recorder and represents one of the first (probably the first) of its applications to the study of 'oral literature' of this kind.

2) See Goody 1994.

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Anthropology and the State and the State of Anthropology in Malaysia

A Comment

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In the general academic fields of social sciences and humanities, anthropology came into existence as a formally recognized academic discipline in the late nineteenth century. However, in Malaysia, it was only about eighty years later, in 1970, that anthropology was taught formally as a discipline and entered the university bureaucracy, as a full-fledged academic department. This had a lot to do with the state rather than the state of anthropology.

Before 1970, and particularly during the colonial period (1819-1957), anthropology, as a medium of intellectual discourse and a method of knowledge accumulation, was an integral part of the administrative science of the colonial state, instrumental in the construction of colonial knowledge and imagination about the natives in Malaysia, a process which was deeply rooted in 'British orientalism'. At that time, anthropological knowledge was perceived as critical in the implementation of the British policy of 'indirect rule', that is, formally delegating power to native authorities and native courts. This made knowledge of Malayan and Bornean, especially Malayan, political and legal institutions an important pre-requisite of colonial administration. However, the British preferred to teach anthropology to its officers rather than putting up with the peculiar ways of anthropologists whose interests were not always similar with those of the administration.

Consequently, the anthropologically-conscious colonial officers took up the role of researchers, too. They began to publish extensively on various aspects of Malay culture and history, mostly in publications of the local branch of the London-based Royal Asiatic Society, (for example, the *Journal of the Straits Settlement Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*, later the *Journal of the Malayan Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society*). The two most prolific colonial administrator-scholars were R.J. Wilkinson and R.O.W. Winstedt, whose works on Malay history, literature and customs are still referred to today.

After the Second World War, with the involvement of anthropologists such as Raymond Firth (*Malay Fisherman*, 1946; *Report on Social Science in Malaya*, 1948), Edmund Leach (*Social Science Research in Sarawak*, 1950), Rodney Needham (on the

Penan in Sarawak), Derek Freeman (*Iban Agriculture*, 1955) and William Geddes (*The Land Dayaks of Sarawak*, 1954) and, later, their students, 'professional' anthropology (research and teaching) began to take roots in Malaysia. This was sponsored first by the colonial state and later, after the Independence in 1957, by the post-colonial state.

The influence of British social anthropology found its way into Malayan, later Malaysian, tertiary institutions through courses taught and research conducted, mainly in the 'oriental studies'-like Department of Malay Studies and, to a certain extent, in other departments within the Faculty of Arts and the Faculty of Economic and Administration, both of the University of Malaya. This university was established in 1949 and remained the only university in Malaysia until 1970. An interesting feature in the teaching of anthropology at the Department of Malay Studies was the way it was combined with sociology. The unwritten rationale was that if anthropology in the place of its origin, in the West, examined non-Western societies, then anthropology in Malaysia should be the study of Malay society. Since sociology in the modern industrial West was claimed as a 'science of society', it was also thought to be relevant for investigation of the modernising Malay society.

It is no surprise then that the pre-occupation of foreign and local anthropologists in the 1950s and 1960s was to study social change



Teminar woman musicians (Courtesy of Dr Wan Zawawi).





experienced by Malay society, using approaches informed by theories and concepts, positivist and non-positivist, drawn from both anthropology and sociology. Even ethnographic studies conducted in Sarawak and Sabah during that period shared a similar orientation. Thus arose an impressive collection of anthropological studies on Malaysia, some of which contributed to the advancement of anthropological theory, as in the study of the structure of cognatic societies. There was also a marked increase in the number of 'raw empirical' studies on the Malays in the form of undergraduate dissertations, some of which were excellent and eventually published.

The introduction of anthropology in 1970 was not only tied to the interest of the post-colonial state then struggling to restore urgently the ruptured social order as a consequence of a bloody ethnic riot in 1969 but also to the global and regional interest of the United States of America (USA) then deeply involved in the Vietnam War. Clutching at straws, the Malaysian state immediately adopted the recommendations of a report entitled, 'Social Science Research for National Unity: A Confidential Report to the Government of Malaysia' (29 April 1970) authored by four prominent social scientists from the USA, viz., Nathan Glazer, Samuel Huntington, Manning Nash and Myron Weiner, whose brief 'research' for the report was funded by the Ford Foundation. Anthropology, along with sociology, psychology and political science, was perceived by the state as an academic discipline critical to Malaysia's long-term effort to create 'national unity' within its multiethnic population-hence the introduction of these disciplines at the local universities and the establishment of separate departments for each. However, anthropology remained combined with sociology, as they were in the Department of Malay Studies. In fact, many of the founding academic staff of the Departments of Anthropology and Sociology in the local universities in Malaysia in the 1970s were graduates and academics recruited from the Department of Malay Studies. They were joined by anthropology and sociology graduates from universities in the Commonwealth and USA. A few expatriate, established anthropologists were also recruited.

The new departments also embarked on aggressive training programmes, fully-sponsored by the state. Each department sent graduates or prospective academic staff to universities in the Commonwealth and USA for graduate studies, or recruited those who were already abroad completing their studies. Others were trained locally for their masters degree and subsequently went abroad for their doctorate. Almost all came back to Malaysia to conduct field work. The whole 'project' resulted in a sudden increase in the number of in-depth anthropological studies,

mostly in the form of unpublished MA and PhD theses, not only on the Malays but also on other ethnic groups in Peninsular Malaysia, Sabah and Sarawak, covering a number of themes, and employing a variety of theoretical approaches in vogue in the 1970s and 1980s in the USA, Commonwealth, Latin America and Continental Europe. A few were published and became celebrated works.

These works, and contributions from foreign researchers of the period, enriched anthropological studies about Malaysia and kept alive interest on Malaysian social studies abroad. Local and foreign researchers shared many healthy debates. One interesting feature of anthropological studies in Malaysia, which reflects the unresolved majority-minority discourse in the multiethnic society, is that it tends to be ethnicised: anthropology is used as an instrument to advocate an ethnic cause or to launch a purportedly 'objective and scientific' critique of an ethnic group. Some anthropologists seem to prefer 'prophet of doom' analyses of social life in Malaysia, giving the picture that an outbreak of ethnic riot is around the corner. In this sense, anthropological studies in Malaysia are rather politicised.

However, the most encouraging news and development in the last decade has been the increased popularity of anthropology among the undergraduates. They, being most sensitive to the demands of the job market, have enrolled in the hundreds in the various departments of anthropology in local universities. The Department of Anthropology and Sociology at the National University of Malaysia has had, for the last decade, an average annual enrolment of nearly a thousand students; this would make many anthropology departments abroad, especially those struggling to survive, envious. Both the Malaysian public and the private sector seem to prefer anthropology graduates. Anthropology graduates are perceived as excellent generalists, good at 'peddling' cultural knowledge, and thus best suited for the multiethnic public, the market, or people at the grassroots, when employed as civil servants, business executives or development workers.

Anthropology in Malaysia seems to have a bright future. To what extent this is due to anthropology as a discipline or to the contemporary social context or to the state sponsorship is yet to be examined and analysed seriously. It was once said that anthropology was 'the child of colonialism'. In the light of the fact that increasing numbers of anthropologists are likely to come from non-Western countries, many of which have been branded, sometimes rather off-handedly, as 'authoritarian', could this then mean anthropology will become the 'servant of the modern nation-state'? The Malaysian case is worth watching.



MINPAKU: Reflections and Recollections

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I first came to Japan as a foreign graduate student in 1977 and studied Japanese at the Osaka University of Foreign Studies. My single previous, personal contact in Japan was Mr Hiroshi Shoji, a native of Osaka, who had been one of my fellow students at the University of Helsinki. Together we had attended courses on Uralic and Altaic studies, and I had also attended his Japanese classes, which were among the first to be held in Finland.

Early in 1978, Mr Shoji took me to visit his future place of work at the National Museum of Ethnology. Minpaku was still partly under construction, and my impressions of the place were rather chaotic. I can remember that it was very difficult to get there, and both the surroundings of the Museum and its facilities inside were unfinished. There was no library to speak of, and the ethnographic collections were just beginning to be formed.

More than seven years later, in 1985, I was invited to work at Minpaku for a period of ten months as a visiting fellow. Very much had changed. Officially the Museum was still undergoing its formative period, but it now had a well-organized structure, a growing library, representative ethnographic collections, advanced technical facilities, and a well-selected staff of research fellows, all headed by Dr Tadao Umesao, the prime mover and first Director General of Minpaku.

Eight more years elapsed until I had a second opportunity to work at Minpaku, this time for a whole year, beginning in 1994. Again, much had changed. The Museum was still being enlarged, with a section for the future South Asian exhibition now under construction. The technical facilities, including the computerized handling of the ethnographic collections, had grown beyond my imagination. Most importantly, the Museum now had a separate building for its library. The Museum was now headed by Dr Komei Sasaki, the current Director General.

Much of the development that has taken place at Minpaku reflects, in my opinion, a general trend in the whole Kansai region of Japan. Although my first impressions of Japan made me think that Tokyo is the center of the country in all respects, my three long stays in Osaka have gradually shaped me into a real Kansai chauvinist. On recent trips to Tokyo, I have become convinced that Osaka and the Kansai region have definitely surpassed Tokyo and Kanto not only culturally, but also economically. It was, indeed, a fortunate choice to place Minpaku

in the ancient region of Senri, between Osaka and Kyoto.

During my second stay at Minpaku, I also had the unique experience of seeing the impact of the Great Hanshin Earthquake. Even the exceptionally robust bunker architecture of Minpaku was not completely safe. I still keep for memory a piece of thick glass from an exhibition hall window which broke at the impact of the seismic force. The worst damage, at least visually, was in the offices and study rooms, where floors were filled by books and where many doors were jammed by displaced furniture.

Measures have now been taken to prevent this from happening again.

Certainly, earthquakes are not the only thing I find difficult to bear in Japan. For a person accustomed to the warm houses and cool breezes of Northern Europe, the winters in Osaka, especially inside the thinly-constructed element walls of most houses, appear extremely cold, while the summers are even more exhausting with their prolonged periods of humid heat. The system of transportation is also very difficult. On the map, and even from an airplane, Osaka looks like a nice seaside city surrounded by mountains, but both the sea and the mountains are virtually inaccessible without an enormous investment of time and money.

Since I came to Minpaku to work, however, I am primarily concerned with my immediate working environment, and in this respect I can only be grateful to Minpaku for the opportunities and facilities it has provided. Especially after the completion of the library department, the Museum has been able to offer world-class service to its research fellows. Even the interlibrary loan system, whose existence in a compartmentalized society of the Japanese type encounters obvious difficulties, has started to function effectively.

Although the library facilities and professional expertise at Minpaku cover the whole world, I have found much useful source material for my own particular research, which, during the last decade, has increasingly been focused on the ethnic groups of Manchuria. This is, in fact, a field in which both Japan and Finland can look



Janhunen during the symposium excursion to Osaka downtown



back to a venerable scholarly tradition. I can only hope that my humble contribution to the field can to some small extent bridge these traditions. In this task, I am greatly helped by my colleague Prof Shoji, who at Minpaku represents the Japanese expertise on my own homeland as well as on the surrounding countries of Scandinavia and the Baltic region.

I am occasionally being asked by my Japanese colleagues at Minpaku, how the Museum could be developed further. Although, as a guest, I am not supposed to be too critical of my hosts, I would do a disservice to my colleagues at the Museum if I refused to give some constructive opinions and suggestions. Certainly, in many respects, Minpaku is an ideal place for ethnological studies, but it is always useful to consider alternative solutions for the future.

I can basically see two lines of potential improvement. They are what I would identify as the tasks of popularization and internationalization of Minpaku. The task of popularization involves the need to develop the Museum in a direction where it could, even better than today, serve the interests of the general public. The task of internationalization, on the other hand, involves the need to raise the international profile of the Museum to correspond to its recently achieved status as one of the very few Centers of Excellence in Japan.

I have heard that the number of visitors to the Minpaku general exhibition has been slowly declining. This may be due to the increasing supply of alternative forms of activity and amusement in the Kansai region. However, the accessibility of Minpaku by public transport has recently greatly improved thanks to the completion of the Osaka Monorail, so it could be assumed that this would draw increasingly large crowds to the Museum. That this is not so, may mean that the Museum has not been renewing its image quickly enough.

One way for Minpaku to renew its image would be to reorganize its permanent exhibition. I am myself very much in favor of the old academic type of ethnographic museum, where the exhibits are arranged according to a strict ethnic and geographic taxonomy. However, I am afraid that many non-professional visitors, especially those who have already seen the permanent exhibition in its present shape, might prefer to see a more rapidly changing survey of the world's ethnic groups, focused on cross-cultural themes such as food, housing, religion, entertainment, and others.

The creators of Minpaku have, of course, thought of this problem and found a number of innovative solutions. I especially admire the Videotheque system, which wonderfully complements the permanent exhibition by allowing the visitor to get insights into the spiritual culture and social structures of a variety of ethnic groups. The semiannual special exhibitions, which often involve

performances by living representatives of exotic cultures, have also been successful.

To increase the moment of personal experience, Minpaku could, in my opinion, also consider the possibility of building activity corners – places where visitors, especially the younger ones, would be able to see and touch the ethnographic objects and use some of the techniques illustrated by the Videotheque. There are positive experiences from such activity corners in museums all over the world, including, for instance, the Swedish Museum of Ethnography in Stockholm. Also, guests from different cultures could be invited to Minpaku more regularly than today, perhaps focusing on a new ethnic group each month. In a country like Japan, with a well-educated and cash-rich general public, it would even be possible to start a programme of ethnographic travelling, led by the experts of the Minpaku research department.

The importance of internationalization has been recognized at Minpaku from its very beginnings. In fact, it would be hard to find a more thoroughly internationalized scholarly community in Japan than is formed by the research staff of Minpaku with its global coverage of alien cultures and extensive knowledge of exotic languages. The desire to promote the international profile of Minpaku is also well manifested by this new alumni newsletter in English.

However, it is impossible to deny the fact that Japanese scholarship, including the Japanese tradition of ethnological studies, is still very much oriented towards the home public. The vast majority of all research results are written and published in Japanese, and most of the learned periodicals of Minpaku are also in Japanese only. Now, Japanese is an important language with a large number of native speakers, but its relatively limited role abroad does not yet allow it to be called an international language.

To increase the international role of Japanese is one task, but for Minpaku it would be sufficient to promote knowledge of Japanese ethnological studies in a framework of international communication. To do this, the Museum would have to increase considerably the role of foreign languages in its activities. Above all, the Museum should have one major foreign-language periodical, a highest-quality publication that would have chances to become the leading periodical in ethnic studies for the whole world.

It is, of course, a matter of opinion, whether Minpaku should strive at becoming a truly international center of ethnic studies. After all, the Museum is financed by Japan and for Japan, and it has no obligation to vie for the position of an international leader. However, the financial resources are there by combining them with the expertise of the Minpaku staff, the Museum would have excellent prospects of growing even greater than it is today.



Exhibition

Weaving Color as Culture: The Maya Today

Seventh Special Exhibition

A special exhibition 'Weaving Color as Culture: The Maya Today' is showing at the Special Exhibition Hall of the Museum from 14 September to 30 November 1995. The magnificent garments of the modern Maya are displayed. The exhibition is based on research carried out from 1993 to 1995, in a project entitled 'Ethnological Studies of Maya Textiles', and headed by Yoshiho Yasugi.

The Maya, descendants of the famous Maya civilization, live in Southern Mexico (States of Yucatan, Quintana Roo, Campeche, Tabasco, Chiapas), Guatemala, and Belize. Their population is about 4.5 million, and most of them live in the highlands of Guatemala and Chiapas.

Each Highland community has its own language, costume, and oral tradition, among which costume has provided the most visible evidence of cultural autonomy. Highland costume is village-specific and therefore indicates the wearer's geographic origin. Highland costume also encodes gender, economic level, wearer's age, occasion (ordinary or festive), ethnic identity (Mayan or

non-Mayan), and syncretism (the mixture of ancient Maya and European garment styles).

Women's basic garments are the *huipil* – an untailored sleeveless blouse – and a skirt. Women usually wear not only *huipils* but also *cintas* (headwraps), *fajas* (sashes), *sutes* (napkins) and *perrajes* (shawls). These are woven by women themselves on a backstrap loom, while skirts are woven largely by men on a foot loom. Most men's costumes are now western style and less than twenty communities retain their own costume for men.

The exhibition hall has two floors. On the first floor Mayan costumes from about 100 villages are exhibited. The costumes are arranged according to language group and geographical distribution, so that we can easily get a broad perspective and observe relationships between costume and language or geography. The second floor is divided into three sections: weaving technology, daily life, and ceremonial

Maya costumes in the gallery



costume. The background of Mayan costume is explained through ethnographic materials.

Guatemalan or Chiapas Mayan costumes have been exhibited previously, but no full Mayan costume exhibition has ever been held. The present exhibition, with costumes from almost all Mayan communities, is a unique attempt in the world.

Yoshiho Yasugi
National Museum of Ethnology

Conferences

How Can We Represent Other Cultures?

Anthropology, and Ethnographic Museums in the 21st Century

The National Museum of Ethnology celebrated in July 1994 the 20th anniversary of its foundation (three years before the public opening). The circumstances of ethnographic museums and the discipline of anthropology have changed greatly in these twenty years. Especially since the end of the Cold War, serious ethnic conflicts have occurred in many parts of the world. Ethnicity has become a major issue, even in international politics. At the same time, almost all theories and paradigms which have been predominant in the field of human science since the end of the 19th century are being greatly criticized. Anthropology is not an exception.

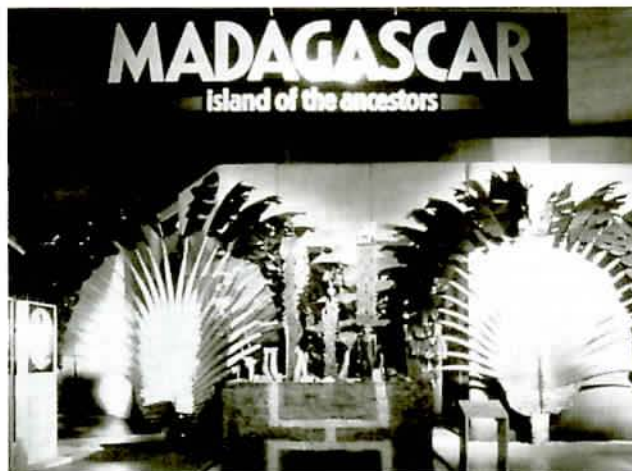
The turn of the century being close at hand, we need to find a new vision or philosophy for anthropology as well as for ethnographic museums.

Writing ethnography and exhibiting ethnographic objects have common problems and possibilities, for both are means of representing other cultures. As is mentioned in the widely quoted volume *Writing Culture* (James Clifford and George Marcus, eds), ethnography is now in the midst of a political and epistemological crisis: Ethnographers no longer portray non-Western peoples with unchallenged authority; the process of cultural representation is now inescapably contingent, historical and contestable.¹⁾ Under

these circumstances, we, who are engaged in writing ethnography and displaying objects of 'others,' have to ask ourselves how we can represent other cultures. Or, can we represent other cultures? We conceived the anniversary symposium, held in July 1994 at the Museum, as an attempt to review our present understanding and investigate future directions.

The keynote speech was given by Dr John Mack, Keeper of the British Museum's Department of Ethnography (Museum of Mankind). The speech was entitled 'Acts of Translation'. Some criticism of museum practice has tended to emphasize 'acts of appropriation.'

The Madagascar exhibition at the Museum of Mankind, 1984 (Courtesy of Dr John Mack).



and has denied of the possibility of satisfactory relationships. In contrast, Dr Mack speaks of 'Acts of Translation' that create positive relationships. Citing the Madagascar exhibition which he organized in London, New York and Antananarivo, in collaboration with his Malagasy colleagues, he emphasized the extent to which redisplay of the same exhibition required a new translation at each successive venue. He demonstrated the necessity of speaking in a language that is intelligible to the audience of the exhibition as well as the importance of relationships between those who exhibit and those who are exhibited.

The keynote speech was followed by a panel discussion involving Dr John Mack, Dr Takashi Sugishima (National Museum of Ethnology), Mr Yukiya Kawaguchi (Setagaya Art Museum), Ms Yuki Konagaya (National Museum of Ethnology) and Dr Ryuta Imafuku (Chubu University). Dr Sugishima pointed out the fallacy of ethnographic realism and described ethnographic writing as an act of conversation between the writer and another culture. Mr Kawaguchi took up issues concerning the museum. He questioned the distinction between ethnologic museums and art museums, and noted that by seeking authentic objects we are simply trying to reify our own imaginings of other cultures. Ms Konagaya assessed the possible influences of future multimedia systems in museum displays. In her opinion, with the introduction of various interactive devices the tripartite distinction between the exhibitor, the exhibited and the audience will become more and more obscure. Dr Imafuku presented the notion of 'mnemonic museum'. By using this term, he stressed that the museum

should be a place where our historical awareness is stimulated and our memory of the past can be renewed and reconstructed for anticipating the future.

It goes without saying that our acts of writing and exhibiting 'other cultures' cannot be freed from the bonds of our own way of thinking. What was proposed in the symposium, as a way to overcome an ethnocentric disposition, was to look into the stereotypes which govern our images of others as well as to develop mutual relationships with representatives – however defined – of other cultures. Since the activity in which anthropologists and ethnographic museums are engaged is the communication between different cultures, we can model it only on the most basic mode of communication, that is the personal communication through which we can grasp the other and the self at the same time. Duncan Cameron noted that there are two types of museums: one is the museum as temple, and the other is the museum as forum.²⁾ It is almost certain that ethnographic museums will increasingly be required to play the former role: a role in which participants are not only the exhibitor and the audience, but also representatives of the culture which is exhibited.

Notes:

- 1) Clifford, James and George E. Marcus (eds). 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- 2) Cameron, Duncan 1972. The museum: a temple or the forum. *Journal of World History* 14(1): 197.

Kenji Yoshida
National Museum of Ethnology

Tourism in the Twentieth Century

The long-term, special research project, 'Tradition and Change in Ethnic Cultures in the Twentieth Century', began at the Museum in 1991 and is expected to run for six more years. The third symposium within this project was held from the 13th to the 15th of October in 1994 on the theme 'Tourism in the Twentieth Century'. The symposium was attended by thirty scholars (mostly Japanese, but including scholars from the Republic of Korea, United Kingdom and United States of America).

In a keynote speech I suggested the importance of a new concept, which I call 'tourism revolution'. This refers to the drastic structural changes in tourism since the mid-nineteenth century. The first tourism revolution appeared in Europe in the 1860s. The second tourism revolution took place in America after the first world war. The third tourism revolution appeared in the developed countries in the 1960s when jumbo jets started to operate, which led to the globalization of tourism and the involvement of peoples throughout the world.

The symposium consisted of seven sessions. Tourism in the Nineteenth Century; Indigenous Peoples and Tourism; State-led Tourism Development Policies; Commercialization of Culture; Hosts and Guests; New Trends in Tourism; and Tourism in the Twenty-First Century. Fourteen presentations (thirty minutes each) were given and heated discussions followed. A variety of topics related to tradition and change in ethnic cultures, and tourism development, were discussed. The commoditization of culture through tourism has led to re-evaluation of traditional ethnic cultures and the identities of hosts to the tourists. Since the late 1980s, alternative tourism has become much more popular. Eco-tourism and heritage tourism, which are new trends in tourism, have been criticized for being predicated on the political and cultural ideology of western societies. However, even in socialist countries such as Cuba and the Mongolian People's Republic state-led tourism development

policies have been established.

Finally, I suggested the possibility of a fourth 'tourism revolution' in the 2010s based on a popularization and further diversification of tourism, which will include the emergence of virtual tourism. It is likely that in Asian countries the fourth 'tourism revolution' will form part of another stage of economic development associated with the emergence of nationalism and ethnicity. Tourism, as a metaphor of the modern age, has become a key factor in understanding tradition and change in ethnic cultures in the twentieth century. A book based on the symposium proceedings will be published in Japanese in 1996 (ed. Ishimori, Shuzo. *Tourism in the Twentieth Century*. Tokyo: Domesu Publishing).

Shuzo Ishimori

National Museum of Ethnology

Comparative Studies of Transportation

The 13th International Symposium: Japanese Civilization in the Modern World

The symposium 'Japanese Civilization in the Modern World: Comparative Studies of Transportation' was held at the Museum between the 12th and 19th of December, 1994 as the 13th of the 'Bunmeigaku' Symposium series. This annual symposium has been organized by the Museum and the Senri Foundation since 1982, and is sponsored by the Taniguchi Foundation.

The main theme of the 1994 symposium was transportation in modern Japanese society. The types, functions, and transformation of transportation systems during the Edo (feudal period) and the modern period were extensively examined.

In the opening session of the symposium, T. Umesao gave a lecture on the need for holistic studies of transportation, and T. Akimichi presented a paper on historical changes in the transportation of marine products, as an example of more general changes in commodity transportation systems.

In succeeding sessions, historical changes and different types of

transportation were discussed in temporal sequence. First, the political control of transportation systems during the Edo period (1600s–1860s) was discussed with reference to Sankin-Kotai (the attendance of feudal lords to Edo Town) (C. N. Vaporis), and with reference to Tosenba (river-crossings) (Y. Hayashi). Riverine, road, and marine coastal transportation, during the late Edo and early modern Period (1860–1910s), were discussed in terms of localization and modernization (A. Onodera and S. Matsuki). Two papers on the railways during Japanese Imperialism (1930–40s) were presented (P. Duus and Y. Takahashi) and the Far East Asian example of imperialism was discussed.

Contemporary topics included long-distance train transport in Japan and its psychological implications (S. Guichard-Anguis), commuter traffic in Germany and urbanization (W. Flüchter), and mobilization in postwar Japan (M. Takada). The major changes in transportation systems during the postwar period reflect the new roles of transportation in the modern world.

For general discussion and comparison, different traffic and transportation systems in Europe were described by J. Kreiner. H. Befu summarized the discussion and defined useful key terms for analyzing transportation in modern civilization. The results will be published as a volume of *Senri Ethnological Studies in English* in 1996.

Tomoya Akimichi

National Museum of Ethnology

Minority Languages as a Main Theme

Endangered minority languages in the North were the central theme of the 18th International Symposium, Division of Ethnology, held 7th–14th November 1994 at the National Museum of Ethnology under the title, 'Northern Minority Languages: Problems of Survival.' This symposium was one of the two international symposia sponsored annually by the Taniguchi Foundation.

The symposium was concerned with two main issues: what is the actual present state of linguistic minorities in northern areas, and how, if possible, can these minorities be preserved despite the forces of assimilation. These issues are extremely urgent for the northern minorities of Siberia, North America, Greenland and Scandinavia: long-term exploitation, and expansion of majority peoples and state power in the home areas of minorities, have already fatally affected the languages of many northern minorities.

Most of the participants have been long engaged in studies of northern languages, and have considerable experience of socio-linguistic problems. In addition to the planners of this symposium, Hiroshi Shoji and Juha Janhunen (Helsinki), the nine other members consisted of Viktor Atknen (St. Petersburg), Nils Helander (Kautokelno), Eugene Helinski (Moscow), Hideo Kirikae (Sapporo), Michael Krauss (Alaska), Tapani Salminen (Helsinki), Katsuhiko Tanaka (Tokyo), Toshio Tsumagari (Sapporo) and Stephen Wurm (Canberra). Each member presented a paper and chaired a session in turn.

The main part of the symposium was made up of three sections: (1) Language survival as a political challenge; (2) Regional aspects of linguistic diversity; and (3) State language as a threat to ethnicity. The first section dealt with central and general notions related to language policy and language problems, and provided a brief overview of the linguistic situation of northern minorities. Ideas were also presented on the process of language decline among northern minorities, and the conditions necessary for their languages to survive. In the second section, regional factors affecting linguistic and ethnic cohesion, and the very existence of northern minorities, were brought to light: mass-scale exploitation of natural resources, pollution, majority immigration into minority areas, deprivation of minority children, unilingual state education. The third section examined the assimilation and disruption of minority languages by state-imposed or majority languages. Lucid statistics were presented, providing comprehensible images of the

otherwise abstract but serious phenomena of language assimilation, decline, and death.

During the symposium we heard accounts of the latest situations of some languages, cases of mother tongue recovery, covert mother-tongue use, languages persisting under unfavourable conditions, and the symbolic persistence of mother tongues. It was concluded that several basic terms and notions need to be re-examined, including the general negative attitude toward language change, bilingualism of minorities, the unalterability of mother tongues, and the symbolic existence of mother tongues.

The papers and an outline of the discussions will be published during the course of coming year.

Hiroshi Shoji
National Museum of Ethnology

Visiting Scholars

The Japanese Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture (Monbusho) has sponsored the following visitors:

Azarya, Professor Victor

is Professor at the Harry & Truman Research Institute for the Advancement of Peace and stayed at the Museum from October 1994 to September 1995. He has two general fields of interest, one in Africa, the other in the Middle East, and Jerusalem especially.

Gachet, Dr Nathalie

is a researcher at F.R.C. (Formation de Recherches Cinématographiques), Université Paris X-Nanterre and is to stay at the Museum from June 1995 to March 1996. Her main research interests are professional cooking in France and Japan, cooking methods, competence, and labour organization. Her investigations are based on video film recordings of cooking activities in schools and restaurants.



Helmuth, Dr Nicholas

is Director of the Foundation for Latin American Anthropological Research, USA and is to stay at the Museum from



October 1995 to March 1996. His research interests are the art and architecture of ancient Mayan civilization, from 600 BC to AD 900.

Janhunen, Professor Juha

is Head of the East Asian section at the Department of Asian and African Studies of the University of Finland. He visited at Minpaku from October 1994 to September 1995, to investigate ethnohistory and ethnic relations among peoples of Northeast China. After initial training in Uralic and Altaic linguistics, his field expanded to cover the whole north-eastern part of Eurasia using a multidisciplinary ethno-linguo-historical approach. He is currently investigating East Asian bronze mirrors and ancient Kitai scripts.

Li, Professor Kun Sheng

is Director of Yunnan Province Museum, China and is to stay at the Museum from October 1995 to March 1996. His major interests are in the Neolithic cultures of Yunnan, bronzes and bronze drums in Yunnan and South East Asia, Nanzhao and Dali history, and Yunnan art history.



Shamsul, Professor A.B.

teaches at the National University of Malaysia and is to stay at the Museum from April 1995 to March 1996. His major interests are in politics and culture in South East Asian communities.



Taylor, Dr Luke

is Senior Curator at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra, Australia and is to stay at our Museum from May 1995 to May 1996. He is concerned with the anthropology of Australian Aborigines and has focused on the meanings of bark painting or paintings on canvas produced for the world market. For Aborigines the production of art and craft materials is important for maintaining cultural identity in



both urban and remote settings. Dr Taylor is also concerned with the exhibition technologies and techniques used in museums.

Publications

Publications from the Museum during the period from April to September 1995 include:

◇ Yoshio Nishi, James A. Matisoff and Yasuhiko Nagano (eds). *New Horizons in Tibeto-Burman Morphosyntax*. Senri Ethnological Studies No. 41, vi+288 pp., July 1995.

◇ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*, Vol.20, No.1, August 1995. This contains the following: Osamu Sakiyama, 'Decipherment and Studies of Early Palauan Word-Lists Collected since the Eighteenth Century'; Ping Xu, 'An Analysis of the Social Structure of the Qiang Village'; and James A. Matisoff, 'Sino-Tibetan Numerals and the Play of Prefixes'.

MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter

The MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter will be published semi-annually, in June and December. 'Minpaku' is a Japanese abbreviation for the National Museum of Ethnology. The Newsletter will promote a continuing exchange of information with the 'Minpaku fellows' who have been attached to the Museum as visiting scholars, and who have visited us from overseas. It is also hoped that the Newsletter will become a forum for communication with a wider academic and anthropological audience.

General Editor: Komei Sasaki

Editor: Shigeharu Tanabe

Editorial Panel: Tomoya Akimichi, Tatsuhiko Fujii, Eisei Kurimoto, Peter Matthews, Akiko Mori, Yasuhiko Nagano, Hiroshi Shoji, Shigeharu Tanabe, Shigeyuki Tsukada.

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