



National
Museum of
Ethnology
Osaka

Number 2
June 1996

Exhibitions for the Future

Naomichi Ishige
National Museum of Ethnology

Minpaku (the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan) is a yet to be completed museum. The original design concept was that the Museum should comprise a central building and surrounding structures. The latter were to include eight exhibition halls, one lecture hall and one special exhibition building. The land necessary for the design has been available since our foundation.

Over the years, we have been making efforts to implement the original plan. Part of the effort has required negotiations with the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture in order to receive funding from the central government. Government authorities have accommodated our requests with positive understanding and support, and the buildings have been erected one after another according to plan. At the beginning of this year, the seventh exhibition hall was completed, and preparatory work is now under way for a completely new exhibition. It is scheduled to open in November this year.

Since the very beginning, it has been our basic policy to display as many of the world's ethnic cultures as possible. Until now, we have been unable to provide an exhibition of Indian sub-continental cultures because of a shortage of space. With the advent of the new exhibition hall, it is our great pleasure to report that a South Asian Exhibition will be added to our assets. The South Asian Exhibition will introduce Indian sub-continental cultures to visitors. The new space will also accommodate a facility called the 'Information Plaza.' This represents a new category and style of Museum display for our visitors.

With the new momentum under these circumstances, we are also redesigning the South East Asian Exhibition and the Language Exhibition, adjacent to the new building. When these efforts are completed, about a quarter of the previous total exhibition area of the Museum will have been redesigned. We hope that many visitors will come to see the Museum in autumn, after the refurbishment. We will appreciate receiving their opinions as feedback.

Compared with about two decades ago, when the Museum was initiated, the societal background of anthropology has changed substantially. Urban living styles have

progressed on a global scale, as part of the major tide of modernization. So-called traditional societies have been the conventional focus of anthropology, but they can no longer be discussed in isolation from the global system. The demise of the 'Cold War' has brought to the surface profound ethnic problems in many regions, and ethnic identities have become major political issues.

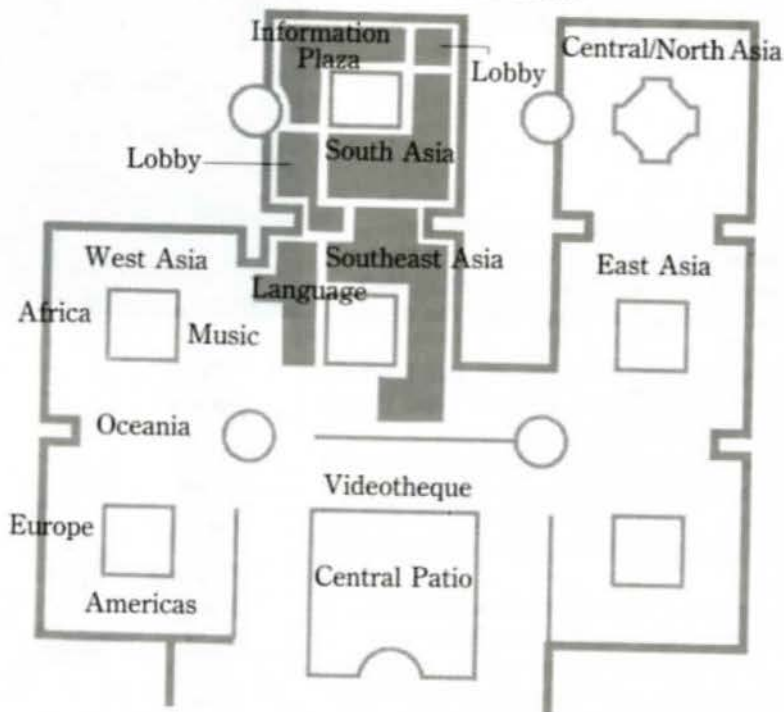
In this context, it is necessary for anthropology to try to tackle the various challenges of urban living and environment, development, environmental destruction, ethnic relations, poverty, medical care and so on. Many researchers at Minpaku have been focusing on these contemporary issues, in response to the realities of the world today. The results of their study have seldom been presented in our exhibitions. It is, therefore, strongly recommended that future exhibitions be designed to expose our visitors to contemporary

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MINPAKU
Anthropology Newsletter

The 7th Exhibition Hall



The seventh exhibition hall and its surroundings.

world problems in the most understandable way. Our commitment to this initiative will be partly realized in the newly designed facilities.

For example, in the South East Asia Exhibition to date, major emphasis has been given to so-called traditional cultures in which rice cropping activities have functioned as a nucleus of society for centuries. It is as if, at a certain point of time, conventional agriculture-based cultures had been cut off from their natural environment before the various plastic goods of modern life had entered rural villages. The cultures appear frozen and alienated from the ongoing stream of life in South East Asia.

When the basic plan for this exhibition was formulated during the 1970s, it was generally accepted that 'traditional culture' was still in South East Asian societies, and that time proceeded rather slowly in those societies. Our exhibition could also be interpreted as suggesting a lack of dynamism and innovation. The reality is very different.

In recent years, the region has achieved remarkable economic growth, and this has induced tremendous changes in the politics and culture. South East Asian societies have undergone rapid urbanization, forcing people in the region to review traditional values that had been held for so many years.

Recognizing these developments in the world, the forthcoming South East Asia

Exhibition will include a space called Urban Scenes, with shop signboards and an ornate 'jeepney' from Manila, and street food-stalls from Jakarta. For similar reasons, a presentation of modern urban life will be incorporated in the new South Asia Exhibition together with the display of modern lives in agricultural and fishing villages in that region.

Computer-based audiovisual presentation technology has undergone radical innovation during the past two decades. We have always aimed to be a pioneer in the creation of a computer literate Museum. Our facility was the first in the world to feature a 'videotheque' system in which visitors can choose automatic replays of whatever they wanted to see from a collection of hundreds of ethnic videos. Recent innovations in computer technology have been really remarkable. The Information Plaza mentioned before will incorporate the recent achievements in computer engineering. For further elaboration of this plan, see Dr Kurita's article in this Newsletter.

Conventional museums in the past have been institutions where collections of tangible goods are stored and displayed. Future museums will give priority to not only goods but also the images and sounds that are characteristic of world cultures. Furthermore, performing arts cannot be understood in depth if presented only as musical instruments or garments used in performances. Abstract concepts about social structure are often too difficult to be expressed through the medium of tangible goods. In fact, society and performance are already major subjects for ethnological museums, and computer technology has become indispensable for presenting images and sounds.

Based on the recognition of future technical trends and opportunities, Minpaku has made major efforts to collect audiovisual materials representing many cultures. Making the same commitment as for the collection of the tangible goods of daily life, we have been exploring audiovisual techniques for recording and presenting the daily life of different ethnic groups. Today, an increasing number of researchers carry a video camera when they go out on fieldwork.

The forthcoming Information Plaza is just another step towards the ultimate goal of full computer-assisted presentation in our Museum. When the next and last exhibition hall is completed, the Museum will have a full-fledged capacity to present the world to visitors. Thus, Minpaku remains a yet to be completed museum of the future.

Multiculturalism in the United States: *Victory for Liberals or Conservatives?*

Harumi Befu

Kyoto Bunkyo University and Stanford University

Thesis:

In America, 'multiculturalism' is currently hailed by liberals, including most anthropologists, as the solution to the problem of White hegemonic dominance and White discrimination against and exploitation of ethnic and racial minorities. Every racial and ethnic group should be accorded equal status, the rhetoric goes. As racial and ethnic minorities demand their rightful place in the American sun, multiculturalism is offered as the shortest cut to the right place.

As part of the strategy to reach this goal, since the 1950s, civil rights legislation has been introduced to protect the rights of minorities so that they may share the fruits of society, including political participation and education especially. If civil rights statutes were to implement egalitarianism in political and educational realms, equal opportunity legislation was ushered in to allow minorities equal participation in the competition for the society's scarce economic resources. When these pieces of legislation were not enough to attain the goal, discriminated minorities were given preferential treatment through affirmative action.

Discrimination still exists and, on the opposite side, affirmative action itself is under attack for presumably giving minorities 'excessive' opportunities. Nonetheless, the basic stance of sharing of the 'American creed' by majority and minority groups has been broadly viewed as a relative success, especially when compared with postcolonial nations in Africa and in the former Soviet Union. In these and other nations, discrimination against minorities is open and blatant and even ethnic cleansing reminiscent of the Jewish Holocaust still takes place.

Despite this relative success of the multicultural approach, I wish to propose here a somewhat heretical, if not cynical, view, namely that multiculturalism does nothing to change the structural dominance of the Western-derived institutions but instead unwittingly perpetuates it because the liberal's attention is focused on multiculturalism as the solution, when it assuredly is not: Attention is taken away from the real problem: Western institutional dominance. Multiculturalism spells victory for Western civilization. How so?

Background:

First, let us review the source of multiculturalism. The idea ultimately derives from Western civilization. It is important to be aware of this larger ideological context in which multiculturalism is founded. From this comes the American creed, which legitimates the nouveau riche by celebrating 'rags-to-riches' history, or 'hit-the-jackpot' wealth creation (in contrast to the inherited wealth revered in the old world). The American creed also has directly political aspects; 'from-log-cabin-to-the-White-House' is a political form of the rags-to-riches economic story. Individualism is praised, and 'rugged individualism' is a special brand in which even taking the law into one's own hands is justified, as in the frontier cowboy. Freedom and equality are ideological commodities theoretically available to all, and legitimise individual competition. The legitimacy of individual competition is an underlying premise for all of the above.

Most of these ideas and values are either derived directly from Western civilization or are Western ideas and values that have been modified through the New World experience. The American creed was first monopolized by White Europeans. For many, in the 19th century 'humanity' by definition did not include non-Whites. Although freedom and equality were promoted as universal, the human universe included only Whites; non-Whites were not eligible to share these values.

Since the last century, revolutionary changes have taken place: definitions of equality, humanity, and universality have all been slowly revised to include all races and ethnicities. Thus privileges formerly enjoyed only by Whites have been gradually extended to non-Whites. Nevertheless, opposition to these revisions and advocacy for discrimination against minorities are still well and alive.

It should be noted that the values of the American creed are not primordial; that is, they are not owned exclusively by Whites on the basis of shared blood, common religion, or any other cultural insignia. This fact allows expansion of the population partaking in the creed to expand and include all races and all ethnicities.

In other words, the strategy of the United States has been to exploit the White (indeed Anglo-Saxon) mainstream cultural values, such as individualism, freedom, and equality, by transforming them into a

The author is Professor of Anthropology at Stanford University and Kyoto Bunkyo University. He has been engaged in research on Japanese kinship and society since the 1950s. Professor Befu has written extensively on that subject and on anthropological theory. Recently he edited Cultural Nationalism in East Asia: Representation and Identity (California U.P., 1993).

nationwide system in which Americans of all racial and ethnic backgrounds would be able to maintain a socially ratified personal identity. In doing so, the dominant White society abandoned its exclusive possession of these values and offered them to minorities.

It is important to note that while giving up exclusive possession of these values and allowing minorities to share them, the dominant White society still maintains the advantage of having profited from their exclusive possession in the past: social, political, and economic rewards have been largely monopolized by and accumulated in the dominant group in the past, and this advantage is still maintained. Because the threat to the White majority through minority participation has been small and only slowly felt, the dominant group has been willing to share these values.

Price of Participation:

To share in the ideology of the dominant majority, non-Whites must give up many cherished values that conflict with or contradict those of the White mainstream, or that have negative consequences. For example, if a group, such as the Hopi, prizes cooperation and condemns competition, the dominant group's invitation to join in the competitive game of economic ladder-climbing might force the Hopi to adopt an attitude inimical to fellow Hopi. If they do not want to fail in the mainstream society. If a group, such as the Japanese, values modesty and nonassertiveness, its members are less likely to succeed in the White-dominated corporate world, where these values are not respected. What this means is that although the values offered by the dominant majority are dubbed 'universal,' they are nonetheless unmistakably Western, and non-Whites must alter their values if they want to participate in the mainstream culture.

The question is not whether these Western 'universal' values of the dominant society can be replaced by some values of a minority group or whether some amalgam can be created by synthesizing the values of several groups. These options are not available: the American creed is here to remain. Rather, the question is whether or not a minority person is willing to accept the dominant American creed and play the game accordingly.

Institutionally, too, the United States has only one system. No minority group can insist on having its own different or rival system of governance without violating the sovereignty of the United States. Similarly, the United States operates officially on one economic system and does not allow a different system to be formally instituted within its borders. Egalitarianism may allow minority participation in political and economic institutions, but these institutions remain unmistakably Western.

What does multiculturalism mean in this context? It means freedom of worship; celebration of ethnic traditions, art, and music; use of one's own language; and having ethnic studies programs on college campuses. These prescriptions do not interfere with the dominant American creed and political and economic systems. Therefore they are tolerated or even welcome.

In the United States, most minority intellectuals and liberals have capitulated and accepted the American creed. Their goal is not to institute their own political and economic systems, but to work for increasing minority participation in the majority game. Perhaps they have never imagined a utopia without the dominance of the American creed and Western institutions. Instead, they seem to envision fitting their ideals to the framework of that creed and those institutions. Their assumption or hope is that minority members can accept and adopt the American creed and institutions, no matter how alien those might be for them.

The incessant chanting of the overarching American creed—freedom and equality, individualism and democracy, and other slogans—can be understood as a reaction to the divisive and polarizing tendencies within the multicultural, multiethnic, and multiracial background of the nation. The overarching American creed is presented to the American populace as a way to transcend internal differences; it is offered as a set of values that individuals of all and any racial, ethnic, or religious background can and should espouse. Whether one is black or white, one should believe in freedom; whether one is Chicano or Asian, one can allegedly reach personal success through individual effort. This 'universal' creed, thought in the dominant White terms, is offered to all Americans in an attempt to create a cultural unity beyond cultural diversity—in the spirit of *e pluribus unum*, as inscribed on every American coin. The creed attempts to create and maintain unity through a cultural nationalism that recognizes diversified equality.

Thus even if multiculturalism triumphs in America, the country is still dominated by an ideology derived from the White European civilization. By allowing, first, minorities to participate in the dominant majority's political and economic game, the dominant White group maintains the hegemony of its political and economic institutions. By permitting, second, minorities to celebrate their own cultures under the banner of multiculturalism, the dominant society diverts the energy of minority intellectuals and liberals into relatively innocuous activities and ultimately retains its hegemony. By conceding certain cultural battles to minorities, European civilization wins the larger ideological and institutional war.

An Involvement in the Anthropology of Art

Luke Taylor
National Museum of Australia

In the last decade there has been a growing interest in the anthropology of world artistic systems. Theoretical works written in the 1980s opened up the subject and pointed to many potential new areas of research. These include analysis of the effective elements of art works, these indigenous aesthetics, art forms and their relationship to indigenous systems of meaning, understanding the dialectics of the relationship between the interpretative roles of producers and viewers, and understanding the role of art production by indigenous groups within the framework of power relations of modern industrial states. Perhaps some of these subjects are not so new, but they have been given renewed prominence in places where material culture studies are generally enjoying a revival. The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute offers a prize for essays on this subject, and a plethora of books has appeared recently which provide detailed ethnographies of particular world arts.

In Japan, material culture studies are also undergoing something of a revival, and Minpaku supports a number of projects that are generating new research in this field. A walk through the permanent display, which showcases one of the world's greatest collections of art produced by indigenous groups, reminds one of the vast potential of studies in this area. I have been lucky enough to be involved in one of the Minpaku's projects and it relates to a subject close to my heart. Currently the Australian research team at Minpaku are documenting the mythology associated with their collection of Australian Aboriginal bark paintings, a collection primarily put together by Professor Shuzo Koyama in the 1980s. This project focuses upon intriguing aspects of mythological change and how the advent of many other media for communication in Australian Aboriginal societies affects the interpretation of the meaning of bark paintings.

My interest in this area was stimulated many years ago as I looked over a number of worn, yet stunning, bark paintings owned by my father. One of the paintings depicted Macassan fishermen preparing trepang at Groote Eylandt—evidence of a history of contact with the continent that started centuries before the British arrived. One painting showed the body design of the honey bee totemic group of the Milingimbi

region. The design consisted of a grid of chevrons filled with multicoloured dots and depicting the hive of the bee. Another work showed the surprising forms of a butchered shark. My father had purchased these paintings from a mission store before I was born and throughout my upbringing these works were in our house working on everyone who viewed them. My father is an artist who works in the abstract expressionist style and he paints to interpret his experience of the Australian landscape. It always struck me, as it did my father and many other Australian artists of his generation, that these bark paintings spoke of a tradition of interpreting the Australian landscape that was radically different to our own. Few Australians at that time had much insight into the cultural and religious life of these Arnhem Land artists, yet many Australians wished to try and understand this tradition of interpreting the meaning of the Australian landscape—a tradition that undercut so much of the orthodox history of the country.

My opportunity to go beyond the looking glass of these paintings came at the Australian National University which was a centre for scholarship relating to the anthropology of art. Professor Anthony Forge's course on the subject was very popular among students and a number of

Dr Luke Taylor works as Senior Curator at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra. His ethnography on Kunwinjku art will be published in November 1996. He has also worked with Australian Aboriginal artists in other parts of Australia and prepared an extensive listing of artist's biographic details now published in electronic form.



Tim Wurrubirlibiri, a Kunwinjku language speaker, with his painting of the Rainbow Serpent depicted wearing a headdress of waterlily leaves, Marrkoldjban outstation, 1982. Bark paintings produced for the market are also used to teach children about important religious subjects.



George Milpurruru, a Kunlupuyngu speaker, completes a painting of magpie geese at Raminginting in 1988.

Arnhem Land artists can create powerful visual effects through the application of careful patterns of parallel lines. Howard Morphy has written an important paper examining indigenous concepts relating to this aspect of aesthetics among the Yolngu of eastern Arnhem Land.



his former graduate students had undertaken ground breaking primary research around the world. The anthropological concern for examining the way that art was produced, evaluated and circulated within specific social networks held considerable appeal to one who had listened to conversations about the politics of art worlds all his life. I decided to conduct fieldwork with bark paintings in western Arnhem Land in order to provide a complement to research already undertaken in eastern Arnhem Land by my friend and supervisor Dr Howard Morphy, now at the Pitt Rivers Museum in Oxford.

Working with artists of the Kunwinjku language group, it never ceased to amaze me that they could produce sublime religious images from materials that were readily at hand: bark from stringy-bark trees flattened and smoothed, ochres and grindstones from a nearby creek, beautiful fine brushes from the stem of a water reed. These artists had a strong sense of their power and control over their destiny. I very quickly came to see the important relationship between paintings and ceremonial subjects and the quest by senior men to become knowledgeable about matters pertaining to the creation of the world by Ancestral beings. Often the artists did not expand at length on the meanings of their paintings but waited for me to see certain ceremonies and visit certain sites before they revealed that I had seen all this before in a particular painting. My understanding of the reverberations of meaning of a work could only come when I

had acquired experience of other aspects of the culture. How could one understand the connotations of a butchered kangaroo for example if one had not experienced the joy of hunting, catching and eating one? How could one understand the power of Ancestral creation if one had not visited certain sites and experienced this power or been to the associated ceremonies? I am profoundly thankful for the patience the Kunwinjku showed toward me and for the way they shared understanding about the relationship between their lives, art, and the lands on which they live.

Kunwinjku artists asked me to show people how the power of their culture derives from the power of their Ancestral beings, they wanted me to make others believe in the powers of these beings. The anthropologist thus becomes a part of the network of people who strive to promote Aboriginal culture to a wider audience. There are linkages between Aboriginal artists, community arts advisors, gallery dealers, museum curators, anthropologists and the general public who buy or view the works. The linkages also must be studied in a detailed way. One cannot write about Aboriginal art as if it were a closed system among the community concerned. The wider networks of the art world, and indeed one's own role in it, must be analysed.

My interest to attempt some kind of translation of the cultural meanings of Aboriginal art led me to work in the National Museum of Australia. The Museum holds one of the world's largest collections of Aboriginal art, collections that were primarily created through transfers of the collections of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Aboriginal Arts Board of the Australian Council. The National Museum of Australia still does not possess a major exhibit space although it has a number of small venues and has been active in recent years in developing travelling exhibitions. The Museum's various programs currently attract more than 300,000 visitors a year.

It is a policy of the Museum to maintain strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in exhibitions dealing with Australian history and the interaction of people with the Australian environment. The Museum has a policy of employing Aboriginal staff so that they may become involved in the presentation of their own history, yet staff from all three major areas of the Museum work in multidisciplinary teams to create exhibitions that deal with major issues of Australian history understood in the broadest possible sense. Together, we try and find innovative ways of interpreting the objects in terms of their cultural and historical context.

Life at the National Museum of Australia has been very hectic over the years, so it has been a tremendous opportunity for me to step away for a while to join the Minpaku team and to complete the publication of my ethnography of Kunwinjku art. My research interests are close to those of Minpaku's Australian team and I hope that the ethnography will facilitate their work. I have enjoyed the opportunity to work with Minpaku's researchers and to compare their findings with my own. I hope that the team found my comments on their work constructive. My time at Minpaku has also allowed me to survey the facilities, interpretative practices, and display techniques of many other Japanese

museums, and I hope to draw upon this experience in the development of the National Museum of Australia. I have enjoyed working in close proximity to Minpaku's fabulous display and the excellent library resources. The professors and staff at Minpaku were most helpful in all aspects of my work. Living in Japan itself has many other fascinations. For me one of the highlights was being able to participate in the ceremony performed by Mr Shigeru Kayano within the Ainu exhibit. This experience brought the exhibit alive and we will strive to achieve this effect in our own developments back home.



A similarly striking mixture of patterns and textures created in the display of ceremonial mats, inaw sacred shaved prayer sticks, and sacred lacquered containers, inside an Ainu house or chise at Shiraai village in 1996. Photograph courtesy of Maureen MacKenzie.

Project on the Social and Cultural History of the Tai Peoples

Chatthip Nartsupha
Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok

When I was a visiting professor at the National Museum of Ethnology from October 1990 to September 1991, I had the good fortune to interview Professor Tadao Umesao three times. Transcripts of the interviews were later used in my article on the thought of Professor Umesao published in Thai in the *Journal of Japanese-Thai Studies*, December 1992. In my first interview, interpreted by Mr Yukio Hayashi, then a research fellow at the Museum, Professor Umesao recommended strongly that I do a comparative study of Tai societies and cultures. He said that Tai peoples were unique because their various groups were located in very widely separate geographical areas, making contact with different peoples and nations. At first, these Tai peoples must have had the same, original characteristics. It was very interesting theoretically to compare the societies and cultures among Tai ethnic groups themselves. I had already done some work on the Tai Ahom of Assam when I met Professor Umesao. His important suggestion gave me confidence and made me more committed to the comparative study of Tai societies and cultures. Now I have established a project entitled 'The Social and Cultural History of Tai Peoples.' The project will last at least three years from January 1996, and will be focused on the history of Tai communities outside Thailand.

The people in these communities are the Tai Ahom in Assam, Tai Yai in the Shan States, Tai Nua in Dehong

(Yunnan), Tai Lue in Sibsongbanna, Lao in Laos, Tai Dam and Tai Khao in North Vietnam, Tai and Nung in North Vietnam, and the Chuang in Kwangsi Province, China. The total population of ethnic Tai outside Thailand is about 30,000,000—half the size of the population of Thailand.

The values of the project are three fold:

1. As Professor Umesao suggested, the theoretical value. The project will give us more understanding of the particular characteristics of each Tai ethnic group and will allow us to reconstruct the common, original characteristics of all Tai. It would be difficult to do this from a single Tai group.
2. We will understand Thai culture in the rural areas of Thailand better. Thai culture in the rural Thailand is similar to the Tai culture of Tai ethnic groups outside Thailand. The similarities include belief in the spirits of ancestors and the natural environment, adherence to rituals for calling the life essence, and adherence to concepts about family, kin group and village community. If we want a deep understanding of village culture in Thailand, we need to study its roots in the history of Tai ethnic groups beyond our borders.
3. The study will benefit the preservation, revival, and development of Tai culture in areas where Tai people form ethnic minorities. In such areas, it is very important for the people to maintain their self identity: Tai culture can serve as a guiding force or ideology for guarding against exploitation by ruling groups or nations. These are not the only options for maintaining self-identity and culture. For isolated Tai minorities, knowledge about the existence and well-being of other Tai cultures helps to maintain or stimulate cultural vitality.

The author teaches at the Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University. He taught at the University of Tokyo (1986/87) and was a Visiting Professor at the Museum (1990/91). He is currently a Senior Research Scholar supported by the Thailand Research Fund (a Thai agency). His major work, Thai Village Economy in the Past, was translated into Japanese and published in 1991.

Professor Chatthip Nartsupha and Dr Tadao Umesao.



Within the discipline of comparative history, I believe that the methods of philology are most important for investigating Tai cultures. Old written materials are particularly valuable for our purposes. In order to understand the meanings of the ancient documents, we have to study the Tai written language among all the Tai ethnic groups. The Tai written language appears in many different kinds of script (at least more than ten kinds) and we must be able to read history, scripture, folklore, astrology, prayers, declarations, songs and other kinds of literature. We therefore need much time and effort. Fortunately, we have the examples of two

major scholars who have begun to use the methods of philology to study Tai ethnic culture. These scholars are Phya Anuman Rajadhon and Khun Chit Bhumisakdhi.

Previous studies of the Thai village and Thai history have neglected philology. This might not be a serious problem if we only wish to know about Thailand within its present boundaries, or Thailand in the recent past. But to find the roots of Tai societies and cultures, an ability to read old written documents is required. In fact, very few scholars of Thailand can read the characters of many Tai ethnic writings. In my project, I would like to involve Tai scholars outside Thailand, who study the various Tai ethnic groups.

At the moment the project involves nine people: Assistant Professor Sompong Witayasakpan of Chiang Mai University, Acarn Ranoo Wichasin of the Chiang Mai Rajapat Institute, Acarn Yanyong Jiranakorn of Chulalongkorn University, Miss Ranee Lertleumsai, Miss Ankana Sathanon, Mr Pakapat Thipyapapai, Mr Sompong Taitumkaen, and myself of Chulalongkorn University. Our address is Project on the Social and Cultural History of Tai Peoples, c/o Political Economy Centre, Faculty of Economics, Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok 10330, Thailand. The telephone and fax number is +66-2-218-6294.

Post-graduate Education at Minpaku

Akitoshi Shimizu
National Museum of Ethnology

The National Museum of Ethnology, or Minpaku, is an anthropological museum, and at the same time it functions as a research institute and as a post-graduate school attached to the Graduate University for Advanced Studies. The last function, which is the topic of this article, is implemented in a rather complicated manner.

The Graduate University for Advanced Studies was founded in 1988 by the Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (Monbusho). The essential idea was that several national research institutes would jointly be able to provide a better standard of higher education by each taking charge of one or two departments. Minpaku participated in the Graduate University by establishing the School of Cultural Studies with two departments, Regional Studies and Comparative Studies. These are located at Minpaku and are staffed by Minpaku researchers. Later, the School added a Department of Japanese Studies which is based at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies in Kyoto. The Graduate University is an independent educational institution. Although

Minpaku itself has no say in the administration, the two departments do represent the higher-educational function of Minpaku.

Minpaku joined the Graduate University with its own ideas about doctoral research. Historically, universities in Japan have only had the notion of the DLitt for humanities and social sciences. This degree was usually granted to prominent scholars in recognition of their life work. Minpaku argued that graduate schools should grant a doctor's degree to students who have proven their ability for independent research. Coincidentally, the Ministry changed its policy for higher education and introduced a new form of doctor's degree similar to the PhD in Western countries. According to this new system, a student who has fulfilled all requirements, including a thesis, is granted the degree while he or she is still enrolled. Those who quit a post-graduate course can continue their studies independently and apply to submit a thesis at any time later. The first task of the School, during its initial years, was to develop a program in which doctoral students would be encouraged to complete their thesis within the seven-year limit for course enrolment.

At Minpaku, the School of Cultural Studies supports social, religious, linguistic, aesthetic, technological and museological studies. The

Department of Regional Studies encourages projects with a single cultural or geographical focus. The Department of Comparative Studies encourages cross-cultural or inter-regional studies. The curriculum of each department is more interdisciplinary than specifically anthropological. This reflects the broad variety of expertise among Minpaku research staff. Although the two departments are distinct in theory, in practice they have been managed academically as one educational unit. Both departments require that students present their research proposal in two seminars during the first year of enrolment before fieldwork. After their main fieldwork, students are asked to present a third seminar with a full outline of their prospective dissertation.

The performance of the two departments during the past seven years has been moderately successful. During the years 1989-1996, forty-three students joined the course. Eight obtained their degree, three quit after finishing the course work, four quit without finishing the course work, and the rest are still enrolled. Among those who quit, most are working for universities but are continuing their doctoral research and are planning to submit theses eventually. Those who graduated with their degree all found jobs in public or private universities and research institutes, within a year after graduation. On average, they needed five years from first enrolment until graduation.

The doctoral research topics reflect current trends of anthropology in Japan. The students tend to concentrate on contemporary socio-cultural change. Their research topics include the acquisition of ethnicity by indigenous people in urban settings, a new religious movement as adaptation to urbanisation, oral traditions of ethnic resistance, the manipulation of traditional belief by the powerful and by the powerless, and the creation of community solidarity through folk dance performance, in the context of rural depopulation. The students have conducted, and are still conducting, research in East Asia, Southeast Asia, Australia and Oceania, South and West Asia, Europe, Africa, and South America. Research concerning Japan has attracted only two students, and one of them is not Japanese. Younger anthropologists in Japan appear more and more interested in the people of other countries.

Exhibition

Information Plaza

On November 14, 1996, our museum will open a new exhibition hall. The hall will house a gallery for South Asia, and an area called the Information Plaza. The latter will open with reflections on the work of Minpaku during the twenty years since the museum opened.

Some visitors to our museum say that they do not understand the concepts of 'culture' or 'ethnicity.' And some say that in this museum there are many professors, but they are not visible in the exhibition galleries. The Information Plaza is an attempt to reply to these comments.

Within the Information Plaza, there will be a 'Picture Gallery' with a large LCD television screen displaying one to sixteen pictures simultaneously. Initially, we will show slide photographs that were taken in the field recently by museum research staff. Visitors will experience an audio and visual form of quick field report.

We also want to raise contemporary topics with programs about Korean culture in Japan, and programs about the role of anthropology in economic and social development. We will also make a short program explaining concepts of culture and ethnicity. This will be narrated by Minpaku research staff.

The Information Plaza will also feature a 'Please Touch Exhibition' with something extra: a new form of exhibition developed by our museum. Open tables will display about one hundred different kinds of handicraft that a visitor can pick up. Any item can be taken to a computer which will identify the item and explain its use by showing pictures, movies and by providing a narration. Each item will be electronically tagged.

Recently, it is said that multi-media systems will change the nature of museum exhibition. Our staff decided to create a question and answer system that does not require a keyboard or mouse for information retrieval. This unique system will allow people to approach the computer as directly as they might approach a person.

Yasuyuki Kurita
National Museum of Ethnology

Conferences

Dynamics of Asian Music

The international symposium 'Dynamics of Asian Music: Tradition and its Modification' was held at the National Museum of Ethnology from October 24 to 28, 1995, in cooperation with the Asia-Pacific Society for Ethnomusicology. This society was founded in 1994 by leading Asian ethnomusicologists from many Asian countries. The symposium was attended by about one hundred participants from many Asian countries. Most participants were Asian scholars studying traditional Asian music.

The symposium focused on changes in traditional music in contemporary Asia. Particular topics included the transmission of traditional music, and relationships between traditional and popular music in Asia. The symposium schedule is outlined below.

24 October: In his keynote speech, Professor Tomoaki Fujii, chairman of the society executive committee, reported on the current status of traditional music transmission in Indonesia, Korea, the Philippines, and China.

25 October: Reports were given on the current status of transmission of traditional music in Chinese Taipei, Thailand and Japan; a panel discussion on the structure of transmission of Asian traditional music.

26 October: Spoken presentations and video showing.

27 October: Spoken presentations and a panel discussion on relationships between traditional and popular music.

28 October: Introductory lecture by T. Fujii followed by a public performance by the Okinawan vocal group, the Nenes. Their music style was a dynamic and elaborate fusion of the traditional, popular, Asian, and Western.

Music is a cultural form that strongly expresses ethnic and/or national identity. Many Asian countries are now trying to preserve, modify, or even 'invent' their traditional music. The inheritance and development of traditional music is an essential theme for Asian scholars who study their own music. The symposium provided scholars an opportunity to exchange information and ideas about the similar issues faced in

many different countries.

Differences in attitudes also became clear, especially in the panel discussion dealing with traditional and popular music. Many participants argued against the discussion of popular music because of its perceived inferiority. Scholars can never be completely objective! We hope that this symposium served to broaden and promote discussion of traditional music in Asia.

The symposium report is now available. Please contact me at the National Museum of Ethnology.

Shota Fukuoka
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National Museum of Ethnology

East African Age Systems in Transition:

Contemporary Political and Military Contexts

*The 19th International Symposium
Division of Ethnology
The Taniguchi Foundation*

Age and gender are two universal and fundamental principles underlying human social organization, and a number of East African societies are known in which very specific and intricate types of organization are based on age and gender. The East African age systems are a combination of age-sets, age-grades, and generation-sets, and are considered to be predominantly a male domain. The age systems are said to bear political, military, religious, economic, and other functions. The study of age systems seems to be a well established and defined genre with an impressive accumulation of articles and books; some might think that the subject is already a settled case, with not much left to be added. The claim that many pastoral societies with age systems have been declining and are marginalized seems to underlie this view. In fact, many age systems among agricultural and agro-pastoral societies have become nominal or defunct, as a result of modernization.

One purpose of the present symposium was to challenge the negative association of age systems with social decline. Including the convenor, we had six participants from Japan and six from abroad,

and they spoke about age system in many different groups: Katsuyoshi Fukui (Bodi and Narim), Sharon Hutchinson (Nuer), Kaori Kawai (Chamus), Toru Komma (Kipsigis and Tiriki), Eisei Kurimoto (Pari), John Lamphear (Jie and Turkana), Nobuhiro Nagashima (Ugandan Teso), Shun Sato (Rendille), Günther Schlee (Gabbra, Boran, Garre), Simon Simonse (Lotuho, Lopit, Lokoya), Paul Spencer (Maasai), and Serge Tornay (Nyangatom and Toposa). I believe that these participants have provided the best recent studies for a wide variety of East African societies.

The main themes of papers and discussion were: (1) resonance or synchronization of age systems across ethnic boundaries, especially in southeastern Sudan and in the Ethio-Kenyan border region, (2) significance of violence and inter-generational antagonism for the very existence of age systems, (3) revitalization or reinvention of the military aspect of age systems during contemporary ethnic conflict and civil war, (4) reevaluation of the position of women in male dominated systems, and (5) decline and extinction of age systems following encroachment and encapsulation by state and capitalism.

The discussion was very lively and serious. Sometimes we did indulge ourselves in discussing specific ethnographic details. More significantly, however, at the end of the week, we became firmly convinced that East African age systems are not dead; they are still essential for the people involved and constitute a challenging theme for academic investigation. I am grateful to the participants, Minpaku, the Senri Foundation, and the Taniguchi Foundation. Together, they made the symposium possible and successful. The results of the symposium will be published in English next year.

Eisei Kurimoto
Symposium Convenor
National Museum of Ethnology

Time and Language

*The Seventh Symposium of
Comparative Studies of Asian
and Pacific Cultures*

What is *Time*? This symposium was designed to examine the eternal

problem from the angle of social sciences, mainly through language phenomena.

Time has long been discussed in the fields of philosophy and literature, and we have an enormous accumulation of works on it since Aristotle. In modern physics too, time itself is an important subject of research and, at the same time, one of the indispensable functions. In recent years, *time* in physics has been a hot topic in connection with black hole theories. In biology, the concept of 'biological time' is well established, and presents a very different interpretation of time from that of physics. Thus, the subject of *time* seems to have already been discussed exhaustively in various fields of study.

What prompts us to reexamine the subject? Our general suspicion about *time* in philosophy and physics is that something essential is still missing. In physics, *time* is an object of cognition, and objectivized time is their target. This kind of physical time is really not *time* but the homogenized space of coordinates, which is quite irrelevant to human time. In philosophy, human time has been considered, but the approach by philosophers is strongly idealistic and lacks objectivity. Husserl and Heidegger are not exceptions.

Linguists and historians with similar ideas on *time* gathered here from October 30 to November 2, 1995, presented their papers, and groped for some interfaces of analyses. They were: A. Gell (LSE), A. Yasutomi (Kyoto Univ.), M. Mita (Univ. of Tokyo), N. Miyata (Kanagawa Univ.), N. Furuhashi (Musashi Univ.), O. Sakiyama (National Museum of Ethnology), M. Tachikawa (National Museum of Ethnology), W. Chafe (UC Santa Barbara), and M. Mithun (UC Santa Barbara), J. Matisoff (UC Berkeley), P. Austin (LaTrobe Univ.), and J. Kawada (Tokyo Univ. of Foreign Studies). The results will appear in the summer of 1997 as *Time, Cognition and Language*, in the Senri Ethnological Studies published by this Museum.

Yasuhiko Nagano
Symposium Convenor
National Museum of Ethnology

International Cooperation Seminar on Museology

Since two years ago, winter at our Museum has been made more lively by the presence of museology 'students.' For two weeks they attended lectures, observed museum activities, received practical training, and were able to discuss many issues among themselves and with our staff. This is the 'International Cooperation Seminar on Museology,' which was first conducted in December 1994. Most of the 'students' are in fact directors, curators or other staff at museums, or hold government positions in cultural affairs, and most of them come from developing countries.

Recently, developing countries have had increased interest in defining national identity and in managing national cultural heritage. With this trend, museums have become more important, for preserving and maintaining cultural heritage, and as educational institutions. During the last five or six years, guests from museums in many countries, especially in Southeast Asia, often came to our Museum in order to investigate museum practices and to seek cooperative assistance. In 1993, just one year before the start of our seminar, a letter came from Vietnamese scholars asking to study our museum activities. At that time, however, we had no systematic curriculum for teaching museology. Therefore, we planned to conduct a seminar for one week with the help of other staff. The organizers were Tsuneyuki Morita, an expert on museology, and myself, an anthropologist with experience in mainland Southeast Asia. Unfortunately the Vietnamese were not able to come, but museum staff from Thailand, Laos and Myanmar (Burma) did attend the seminar. Soon after, the Osaka International Center of the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) launched a training course in museum management technology. In 1994, our seminar was started formally, in close cooperation with JICA, and organized by a committee

headed by T. Morita.

The seminar in December 1994 was attended by 11 persons from eight countries. In January 1996, in the fiscal year of 1995, 16 persons from 11 countries attended, including observers. The Vietnamese scholars who wrote to us previously were present at this seminar. They are now preparing to open exhibition at the Vietnamese Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi. During the seminar they not only studied museum activities, but also discussed a programme of cooperation on museum technology and joint research. This programme will begin in 1996. In a class exercise, one participant from Bhutan developed an exhibition plan which will be realised in cooperation with Yasuyuki Kurita of Minpaku. At the request of Mongolian participants, Morita went to Ulan Bator in Mongolia to deliver lectures on museology. These activities are positive extensions of our seminar.

Our seminar will continue, and we will attempt to improve it. Many participants stated, "The technologies used in Minpaku are too advanced and too expensive for our museums." They regarded Minpaku as a special case because it is also a research institute, and much of its operation depends on subcontracting companies. Most participants also visited other museums in Japan, and some preferred the smaller-scale or local museums. It is definitely necessary for us to present a seminar more applicable to local conditions in other countries. Exhibition methods in Minpaku were also criticized. For example, the number of exhibited objects is overwhelming for some, the explanation boards are too small and restricted to Japanese, and the lighting is too dim. The participants are thus also valuable advisors. I hope that our methods and also the contents of our exhibitions will in some way reflect our interaction with the seminar participants.

Katsumi Tamura
National Museum of Ethnology

New Staff Members

Hirai, Mr Kyonosuke

has studied company culture in Japanese society, and power-gender relations among Thai factory workers. He is widely interested in various aspects of production and consumption, and is now preparing for fieldwork in Laos and Vietnam.

Ikeya, Mr Kazunobu

majors in anthropology and cultural geography. He has studied socio-economic change among hunter-gatherers and pastoralists in Southern Africa, and among mountain farmers in Northern Japan.

Kishigami, Associate Professor Nobuhiro

is an arctic anthropologist working with Canadian Inuit and Russian Koryak. His major interest is socioeconomic change, and he is currently comparing social structures among indigenous peoples in coastal regions of the Northern Pacific.

Matthews, Dr Peter

has carried out research on agricultural history and prehistory in Asia and the Pacific, using ethnographic, historical, archaeological, and biological approaches. He has explored the origins, dispersal and domestication of taro (a root crop) and has a broad interest in the interactions between plants and humans.

Nishio, Associate Professor Tetsuo

specializes in Arabic language and culture. He is now preparing a dialect atlas for South Sinai. He is also interested in story-telling typology and story-writing techniques. His particular concern is the origin and development of 'Arabian Nights.'

Sasahara, Mr Ryoji

has investigated dance, drama and music performed at rituals and festivals by Japanese folk societies. In recent years he has focused on the lion-mask dance of the South Kanto district in Japan.

Terada, Dr Yoshitaka

is an ethnomusicologist who has investigated Asian music culture in South India and the Philippines. His present concerns are identity negotiation and representation among dominant and subordinate ethnic groups in Asia and the United States.

Visiting Scholars

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

Beckwith, Professor Christopher, I.

is Professor in the Department of Central Eurasian Studies, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana, USA. He will stay at the National Museum of Ethnology from May 27 to December 15, 1996. He is concerned with noun classification in Eurasian languages, Tibeto-Burman historical linguistics, and the cultural interactions of medieval Inner Asians with the peoples of surrounding areas.



cultures; pastoral and shifting cultivator communities in the Eastern Ghats; and oral epics, religion and rituals centered on folk deities. His area of field research is the state of Andhra Pradesh, India.

Sain, Dr

is a researcher at the Department of Cultural Anthropology, Institute of Nationality Studies, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, and will stay at the Museum from April 1996 to March 1997. His major interests are culture complexes, acculturation and shamanism in Mongolia.



Obayashi, 'Ethnic Groups in Border Regions of China in Historical Times'; Hideaki Kikuchi, 'The Trend of Middle Class Lineages in the South-East Area of Guangxi Province China during the Ming and Qing Dynasty'; and Atsuhiko Kato, 'The Phonological Systems of One Western and Two Eastern Dialects of Pwo Karen.'

◊ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*, Vol.20, No.4, March 1996. This contains the following: Katsumi Tamura, 'Essay on the Founding Myth of the Traditional Kingdom of Burma'; Paul Kazuhisa Eguchi, 'The Expression of Joking Relationships among the Fulbe of Northern Cameroon'; Masanori Yoshioka, 'On Gift-Exchange in the Life-Cycle Rituals of North Raga'; Satoru Murase, 'Patchwork Jacket and Loincloth'; and Akitoshi Shimizu, 'Current Trends of Out-Migration from Kosrae and Pohnpei, the Federated States of Micronesia.'

Koh, Dr Hesung Chun

is currently the Chairman and Director of East Rock Institute, Inc., New Haven, Connecticut, USA, and was formerly at Yale University and HRAF. She first came to the Museum for three months in 1979-80. This time she will stay for one year until March 31, 1997. Her major interests are Korean culture in the East Asian context, and on relations between law and culture. She is currently on the Museum's collaborative research team for Computer Ethnology, comparing the 18th century criminal law in China, Japan, Korea, and Vietnam, with reference to family, kinship and gender roles.



Murty, Professor Malladi Leela Krishna

is Head of the Centre for Regional Studies and Honorary Director, Centre for Folk Culture Studies, at the University of Hyderabad, India. He will stay at the Museum from April 15 to July 31, 1996. His research interests are archaeology in South Asia: hunter-gatherer

Publications

Publications from the Museum during the period from October 1995 to March 1996 include:

◊ Tomoya Akimichi (ed). *Coastal Foragers in Transition*, Senri Ethnological Studies No. 42, v+227pp., February 1996.

◊ Galina Zoubko (ed). *Dictionnaire peul-français*, Senri Ethnological Reports 4, xiv+552pp., January 1996.

◊ Hiroyasu Tomoeda and Luis Millones (eds). *La Tradición Andina en Tiempos Modernos*, Senri Ethnological Reports 5, 212pp., March 1996.

◊ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*, Vol.20, No.2, November 1995. This contains the following: Eisei Kurimoto, 'Coping with Enemies'; Taryo Obayashi, 'Ethnic Groups in Border Regions of China in Historical Times'; and Junko Iguchi, 'Text and Narration of Chinese Oral Narrative.'

◊ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*, Vol.20, No.3, February 1996. This contains the following: Naoko Sonoda, 'Emergency Treatment of Textiles Submerged by a Sprinkler Accident'; Taryo

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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Please note that signed articles represent the views of their writers, not necessarily the official views of the National Museum of Ethnology.

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ISSN 1341-7959

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