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Mongolian Modernity and Hybridity

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The term 'Mongol' conjures up an image of homogeneous nomadic bands roaming vast and open grasslands. It denotes a romantic carefree lifestyle, which appeals to an international tourism eager for things exotic, and also denotes the most brutal force unleashed by the Almighty to punish humanity, an image imputed to anyone who commits atrocity, as exemplified by the name 'New Mongol' acquired by Americans in recent years. Locked in medieval time, Mongols, in both native and foreign orientalist imaginations, are seldom modern.

This denial of coevalness to the modern-day Mongols cannot conceal the fact that they are thoroughly modern and living in dynamic ways determined not by nomadic instincts but by nationalism, international geopolitics and a host of other modernist discourses and practices. It is thus essential that any study of modern Mongolia and Mongols take stock of these larger issues. In this essay I apply a theoretically-informed critical perspective, hoping that it will serve the twin



Ulan Bator, Mongolia (photo by Ipeei Shimamura)

purposes of explicating Mongolian modernity and providing a typical Mongolian case study for social scientific disciplines, including general anthropology.

Mongolian modernity is underscored by the refiguration of various Mongolian groups in the world of Mongolness, set in partitions of the steppe by Russia and China, the division of historical Mongolia into Outer and Inner Mongolia, the independence of Outer Mongolia, the Russian colonization of Buryat Mongolia and the Chinese control of Inner Mongolia, as well as pan-Mongolism and the horrors this program etched in the minds of its antagonists. It is predicated on the production of one singular Mongolian homeland and an authentic Mongolian identity entrusted with one sole Mongolian group — the Halh — to the exclusion of other Mongolian groups and their lands, notably Mongols in Buryatia and Inner Mongolia. And above all, it is rooted in the process of building a socialist Mongolian nation in the Mongolian People's Republic.

In socialist Mongolia, Mongolian groups, instead of being recognized

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Contents

Special theme: Transnationality

Uradyn E. Bulag
Mongolian Modernity and
Hybridity 1

Ipeei Shimamura
More than One 'Homeland' 3

Peter Kwong
Chinese Illegal Immigration 5

Chen Tien-shi
Reconsidering Nationality with Anne
Frank 7

Teiko Mishima
Why do People Migrate? 9

Molly Lee
Yup'ik Eskimo Grass Baskets 10

Exhibition 13

Conferences 13

New Staff 14

Visiting Scholars 15

Publications 15

From the Archives 16

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as subgroups of the Mongolian nation, have been classified as 'ethnic groups' (*yastan*), and divided into the majority and minorities, majority being represented by the Halh following a formulaic equation: Halh is Mongol, and Mongol is Halh, so if you are not Halh, you are not Mongol, and if you want to be Mongol, you must become Halh first. In this way, socialist Mongolia rendered the entire non-Halh Mongolian groups as lesser or non-Mongols. In this new Mongolian empire of ethnic hierarchy, the Halh represent modernity and authenticity, they are the custodians of Mongolian history and guardians of Mongolian homeland, whereas other groups are traditional and degenerate or even alien. Mongols outside Mongolia are seen as castaways, having lost their Mongolian authenticity through their associations with Chinese or Russians. Because they are not Halh-cum-Mongol, they are not entitled to Mongolian citizenship.

Inherent in this modern Mongolian refiguration is the creation of new dynamics between homeland and diaspora, authenticity and hybridity. To be sure, these dynamics have been shaped by the Mongolian experiences of nationalist struggles in the first half of the 20th century. Pan-Mongolism, or the desire of Mongolian groups to be liberated from colonial dominations and to create their own unified nation, was promoted by the Japanese, Chinese and Russians at one point or another when expedient, and denounced when it did not serve their own purposes. The external manipulation of pan-Mongolism ultimately resulted in acrimonious recrimination among Mongols, a conflict accentuated by the so-called ethnic processes in both Buryatia and Inner Mongolia. The Soviet Union constructed a Buryat nationality, stripped of Mongolian identity; and in the People's Republic of China tens of thousands of Inner Mongols were killed after accusations that they were nationalists aspiring for unification with Mongolia.

In the 1990s, in the wake of the collapse of the socialist regime, there developed in Mongolia an intense fear of *erliiz* or hybrids, who were imagined as biologically programmed by hostile foreigners, especially the Chinese, to eat away Mongolian sovereignty. Fearing for the extinction of Mongolian genes, intellectuals and politicians have been advocating the revival (read invention) of the tradition of *obog* (surname), requiring everybody to know their *obog* so as to avoid endogamy that would enfeeble the Mongolian body,

and at the same time to discourage national exogamy, for fear of genetic pollution. Against real or imaginary *erliiz*, politicians have often mobilized forces in the name of safeguarding pureness and the sovereignty, culturally and biologically. *Erlitiz*-bashing has thus become a staple in Mongolian electoral politics, wherein political groups avidly screen the genealogical background of their rivals.

Erlitiz-bashing is an exclusivist practice; it makes the Mongolian world ever shrinking, in sharp relief to the outward conquest of the ancient Mongols, who once built the most expansive land empire known in the world, attested to by the presence of Mongols from Manchuria to the Volga region of Russia, from Siberia to China's Yunnan province. No doubt, this shrinking modern Mongolian world is also antithetical to the image of nomads now promoted by protagonists of globalization, nomads who symbolize a transnational movement that transcends national boundaries. It is also antithetical to the notion of hybridity embodying cosmopolitan advantage and ideal.

From the postcolonial perspective, all cultures are continually in a state of hybridity. But our postmodern appreciation of hybridity must not be one simple anti-essentialist talk, emptied of history and politics. While Mongolia tries hard to transcend its landlocked disadvantage, its citizens travel and migrate to far-flung corners of the world. This inevitably produces new kinds of hybridity. Thus Mongols and Mongolia must examine the social, cultural, and economic underpinnings of hybridity, historically and geopolitically, in order to sense what exactly constitutes Mongolness. It is through acknowledging the wider political and historical context and experiences that we will be better able to harness hybridity's liberating potential, while acknowledging fully the painful reality of being called hybrids.

For Mongols, an examination of the issue of hybridity is of paramount importance, not least because recognition of the Mongolian identity of non-Halh Mongols (inside and outside Mongolia) and of the real or imaginary hybrids, would only enrich a new Mongolia that acknowledges cultural diversity and is united by a common sense of history. Mongolia's greatest deficit today is perhaps not hard currency, but the virtue of Mongolness. Recognizing hybridity, in its broad sense of cultural diversity, as the essential feature and strength of Mongolness, rather than seeing it as an

invisible perilous force undermining it, may also enable the modern sedentarized Mongols to regain their

nomadic rigor and sensibility, and prepare them well for their next round of outward, but peaceful, adventure.

More than One 'Homeland': Diasporic Imaginations of the Aga-Buryats

Ipei Shimamura

National Museum of Ethnology

The term 'diaspora' is derived from the Greek verb *speiro* (to sow) and preposition *dia* (over), and it originally denoted migration and colonization. However, the term later came to be used to refer to peoples such as Jews, Africans, Armenians or Palestinians who have had traumatic experiences of being banished from their respective 'homelands'. In William Safran's famous definition, diaspora requires the one original center as homeland and several away locations as periphery.

Mongol nomads have been scattered throughout the Eurasian continent since the fall of the Mongolian Empire in the fourteenth century, and many descendants of Mongol soldiers still live across today's national borders in Eurasia. In principle, by virtue of their constant movement from one place to another, pastoral nomads like the Mongols should have much less attachment to the autochthonous land than sedentary peoples. Does this mean that nomads have little affinity with the concept of diaspora? There are few scholarly studies that deal with the scattered Mongols as a diaspora.

In this short essay, I consider whether we can or should apply the concept of diaspora to the Aga-Buryats, an eastern group of Buryat Mongols (Buryats). In what ways does their history represent a diaspora? Aga-Buryat Mongols have been dispersed in three countries: Russian Siberia, northeastern Mongolia, and China's Inner Mongolia. Their name is derived from an original homeland, the Aga steppe in today's Aga Buryat Autonomous District of Russian Federation. After Russian invasion beginning in the mid-seventeenth century, Buryats became separated from other Mongol groups. However, the Russian colonization also led to the emergence of a Buryat intelligentsia versed in European culture, much earlier than other Mongols under the rule of the Manchu Qing dynasty. A

large number of highly educated Buryats moved to Outer Mongolia in the early twentieth century, joined the Mongolian independence movement, and helped build the Mongolian People's Republic. In the wake of Russia's October Revolution in 1917, and as a result of anarchy and rampant banditry around the Lake Baikal area and in the Aga steppe, some Buryats decided to escape from this homeland and settle in the more peaceful Outer Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, now imagined as their national homeland(s). Because of their cultural sophistication and dispersed situation, Buryats are often labeled *Mongolyn Yubrii* (Mongolian Jews) among Mongols.

Theoretically, there are two antagonistic standpoints about whether people who are dispersed across national borders form a diaspora or not. Safran points out that diaspora is now a 'metaphoric designation' used to describe different categories of people like deportees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants and ethnic and racial minorities. James Clifford, in contrast, explicitly distinguishes diasporas from people who live across borderlands. He suggests that diasporas are 'caught up with and defined against nation-state', and are social entities that have different claims from those of indigenous, autochthonous, and 'tribal' people. Borderland culture implies, on the other hand, a situation of bi-locality where an emerging syncretic culture is temporarily separated by erratically enforced frontier controls, but linked by legal and illegal migration.

If we apply Clifford's theory, Aga-Buryats living across the borders of three countries are not members of a diaspora but 'borderlanders.' But here I would like to demonstrate that not only have they had strong attachment to their 'lost homeland,' but they do not have just one singular center (homeland) but plural homelands, in

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Aga Buryat shaman
in *shantar* ritual

Mongolia and in the Buryat Republic of the Russian Federation.

Uradyn Bulag has shown that in the course of building the socialist Mongolian nation, Mongolia treated various Mongol groups as ethnic groups and that most groups were either assimilated or were in the process of being assimilated into the majority Khalkh. The latter were regarded as geographically co-terminous with the Mongolian nation (Bulag 1998). On the other hand, socialist Mongolia became an authentic 'national homeland' or Mecca to Mongols outside Mongolia, including the Buryats in Russia and Inner Mongolian groups in China. It was the only independent state of Mongols built on the historical Mongolian homeland, from where Mongols marched out to conquer the world, but then found themselves in many newly-established, modern states. It is no exaggeration to say that many Mongols outside Mongolia dream of going to Mongolia, as Bulag did before his visit there. His study documents the epochal clashes between the principle of nation-state as a bounded and limited entity and the principle of diaspora that both challenges and reinforces the nationalist ideals.

The Buryat situation is somewhat different from that of Mongols in Chinese Inner Mongolia. The latter did not experience large-scale migration across national boundaries in modern times, and are mostly included in one administrative unit. Unlike the Mongols in China, who are designated as a Mongolian nationality (*ündüsten*, *minzu*), Buryats have been defined by the Soviet state as a nation (*natsiya*) separate from the Mongolian nation, and a Buryat Republic was created for them. These distinctions have had widespread repercussions. The Buryats

in Mongolia have been discriminated as *Orosiin tsagaachid* (Russian immigrants) or *gadaad khun* (foreigners). While aspiring for Mongolia as a Mongolian nation-state to some degree, Buryats in Mongolia also have attachments to two additional homelands: the Buryat Republic, and the Aga Buryat Autonomous District in Russia. The same is true for most Buryats in Chinese Inner Mongolia.

Multiple attachments can also be observed in the trans-boundary movements of shamanism after the fall of the Soviet Union, especially between Russia and Mongolia. In recent years, among the Aga-Buryats in the four Buryat counties of Dornod province of Mongolia, the number of shamans has rapidly increased to a total of about 120. The overall population of the four counties in 2000 was 14,789 persons, so shamans constituted about one percent of the population. This is remarkable because the increase happened after the democratization of 1991, and Buryat Mongols have been predominantly Buddhists since the 17th century. No such dramatic shamanic proliferation was seen among the Darkhads of Khovsgol province and Altai-Uryankhai of Khovd province, other groups that have been shamanic. In 1997, I found only five shamans among the Darkhads, who had a population of 14,757 in 1989.

In the summer of 2000, I stayed in the camp of a famous Mongolian Buryat shaman (see photo). Within one week, I saw five jeeps arrive from Russia to the quiet eastern Mongolian steppe. These Russian Buryats came for shamanic initiations under the guidance of the master-shaman. Interviews with these Russian Buryats made it clear that they believe Buryats in Mongolia have preserved their traditional customs more than those in Russia. Master-shamans among the Mongolian Buryats have also been invited to Aga-Buryatia by Russian Buryats to help them become shamans (Shimamura 2002).

One important role of Buryat initiation rites (*shantar*) is the capture of ancestral spirits (*ug*) (see photo). These rites are usually conducted by Mongolian Buryat shamans who are believed to be able to invoke the *ug*-spirits more effectively. The magical incantations used in *shantar* rituals are analogous to *magtaal* — the traditional Mongolian poems that eulogize the ancestral land — but they also refer to the contemporary diasporic situation. Furthermore, the *ug*-spirits summoned often instruct the new shamans to visit their ancestral lands, which are often

in the Buryat Republic or the Aga-Buryat region of Russia.

Shamanic incantations thus appear to invoke and represent the essence of Buryatness for the Aga Buryats. While the Russian-Buryats long for Mongol roots in Mongolia, the Mongolian Buryats long for Buryat roots in Buryatia. Through these mutual longings for Buryatness and Mongolness, the Aga-Buryat groups that are divided in different states construct multiple, yet unified diasporic homelands.

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Chinese Illegal Immigration: Looking Back a Decade and Half Later

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In the late 1980s, an 'invasion' of Chinese illegals began to appear at the gates of Taiwan and Japan, then spread to the USA, Canada and parts of Western Europe as well. With the help of human smuggling networks, they often broke through the borders undetected, and if discovered, appealed for political asylum.

An unusual feature of this migration is the extraordinarily high fees that migrants must pay to the 'snakeheads' (human smugglers), starting at \$20,000 to get into Japan, and reaching as high as \$65,000 to get into the USA. Most have to pay with money earned after arriving at a destination. Non-payment leads to severe retributions by the traffickers. The illegals are willing to work in almost any circumstances to keep up the debt-payment. The disturbing aspect is that being unskilled and lacking foreign-language knowledge, the illegals end up working for Chinese employers in segregated enclaves outside the reach of local law enforcement. They have become easy targets for exploitation. The impression is that Chinese are laboring under the conditions of indentured servitude, and are controlled by alien criminal elements.

Not surprisingly, the few reports to reach mainstream media have become sensational news items. The June 1993 grounding of a cargo steamer *Golden Venture*, outside the New York harbor, with 286 Chinese illegal immigrants on board, gained the most worldwide attention. Then there was the gruesome

discovery in 2000 of 58 bodies of Chinese immigrants who had suffocated inside a Dutch tomato truck in Dover, England. These appalling images helped to galvanize anti-immigrant responses everywhere. The *Golden Venture* incident was one of the most important factors leading to the passage of a series of harsh anti-immigration laws in the USA. These affected not just illegal immigrants but legal immigrants as well. Other nations have used the threat of Chinese illegal immigration to tighten asylum laws, strengthen border controls and establish multi-national counter-trafficking agreements.

But human smuggling remains a profitable multi-billion dollar industry, and the smuggling networks are capable of out-smarting every law enforcement initiative every step of the way. Over the years, human smuggling operations have become more sophisticated. For instance, most Chinese illegals in the USA no longer arrive by land or sea, but by planes, and they use hard-to-detect counterfeited or legally acquired visas to get past the border controls. Meanwhile, the networks have expanded their smuggling operations to more diverse destinations. Countries in Eastern Europe, South America and the Caribbean Islands were previously used as staging points to reach more 'desirable' destinations like the USA, France or Germany. As the target destinations restricted immigration, former staging points have become the end destinations. Chinese are very

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Rooms for rent and passports for sale, in Chinatown, New York (photo by Chen Tien-shi)

much in evidence in Italy, Hungary, Romania, Former Yugoslavia and Spain. Thus, Chinese illegal migration seems to be getting out of control. It has come to symbolize the nightmarish vision of defenseless national boundaries in a Post-Communist globalized world, with the haunting specter of China's one billion people in the background.

As out-of-control as it may seem, the scope of Chinese illegal migration is limited and has well-defined patterns. The overwhelming majority of the Chinese have emigrated from two metropolitan areas (Beijing, Shanghai) and four provinces (Guangdong, Fujian, Jilin and Yunnan). Emigration in the late 1970s to western nations was at first led by professional elites, mostly in Beijing and Shanghai. Their exodus continues to this day, generally by legal means. Guangdong is historically the most important emigrant province, but the pace of emigration there has slowed down considerably, and largely relies on legal means as well. Jiling province on China's northern borders with Siberia is sending emigrants mainly to Russia. Yunnan province in the southwest is sending emigrants to the neighboring states of Laos and Burma to engage in thriving cross-border trades.

The major originating province of illegal emigration is Fujian province. In addition, there are two minor

contributing areas worth mentioning; the Wenzhou region in Zhejiang province, and the eastern part of Shandong province. The former sends emigrants mainly to Europe, the latter to Japan. The Fujianese illegals are by far the largest group of China's illegal emigrants. They are actually coming from the northern part of the province, even more specifically from four small counties (Mawei, Liangjiang, Fuqing and Changle) on the outskirts of the city of Fuzhou.

The narrowness of the emigrant base reflects the difficulties of establishing migration chains to facilitate large-scale exodus. Unskilled laborers without foreign language abilities do not have the financial resources and social contacts needed to journey to foreign countries, unless helped by relatives who already work overseas and are willing to advance a down-payment for the smuggling fee necessary to begin the journey. Once abroad, they need their ethnic contacts to help them find employment. The more Chinese already in a foreign country (i.e. the larger the 'seed population') the more new migrants they are able to sponsor. But the building of a sizable seed population requires time. Fujianese have the unique advantage of being a long-time emigrant sending region, first to Southeast Asia and then elsewhere, for centuries. Their overseas communities have had the means to quickly establish seed population in many parts of the world. Up to this point, very few other regions in China could do the same.

Chinese illegal emigration is also limited to very specific choices of destination. Most illegal emigrants are young males from semi-rural regions, and have less than junior high school education. They travel to where there is need for unskilled laborers, to where labor enforcement is weak, and to where foreigners without legal status can find and hold jobs. Of course, they would prefer to end up in high-wage earning areas. In this respect, Japan and Western Europe are excellent places, but the immigration controls there are tough, and illegals are often deported. USA, on the other hand, is ideal; it is easy to get into; once there, it's easy to find jobs and there is no fear of being deported. This is why the 'smuggling fee' to the USA is the highest, even though most Chinese emigrants would prefer working in Japan on account of cultural compatibility and a higher wage level. One of the most important considerations in selecting a destination

is the ease with which illegals can later obtain legal protections and permission to stay. Great Britain is preferred over most of the other Western European nations because of its relatively lenient policy towards asylum seekers.

Having said all of the above, we have already witnessed the peak of Chinese illegal emigration. China's super-rapid economic growth in the past twenty years has created more jobs domestically. The wage and opportunity gaps between those staying in China and those emigrating are narrowing. Fujianese, for instance, have no reason to want to leave if they can use a remittance from their relatives to start businesses right in China.

At the same time, globalization has continued to cut down manufacturing jobs in the developed nations. For a time, employers in the declining industries in those nations have been trying to cut costs by hiring immigrant workers. They have been forcing wages ever lower, and working hours ever longer. The garment industries in the USA and in Europe have depended heavily on Fujianese illegals, but a persistent decline in the number of jobs in such places is forcing illegals to look for work elsewhere. This typically

means going to jobs they are not familiar with, and that most likely require a better command of local language. All of this adds up to a higher opportunity cost, making emigration less attractive.

The slowing down of emigration from China fits in with the experiences of other developing nations. In the 1980s, when China first began on the path to capitalist development, it created few jobs, but it also heightened expectations that led to a massive rural to urban migration, and serious social and economic dislocations. Those with the option to leave the country did. Both Taiwan and South Korea began their phase of economic expansion in the 1960s, and since then close to two million legal emigrants from those two countries have arrived in the USA. The emigration pressure in the two countries only began to ease in the 1990s when their own economic development created enough jobs to retain citizens.

China currently is going through the same cycle. If her economic transformation proceeds without political turmoil, the problems created internationally by Chinese illegal migration will gradually fade away as well.

Reconsidering Nationality with Anne Frank

Chen Tien-shi

National Museum of Ethnology

Anne Frank is famous for her wartime diary, *Anne's Diary*, but it is little known that she was stateless, and passed away (in 1945) a few years after writing her diary, without having any legally recognized nationality. As a teenage girl, everything she wrote became world famous as a symbol for all those persecuted and killed during the Second World War. She became an epitome of courage under Nazi occupation. The house of Anne Frank in Amsterdam, where she wrote the diary while her family sheltered, is now one of the must-see sights of Holland. Surely, there is an irreplaceable and deep connection between Anne Frank and the Dutch, and the ties have strengthened as time has passed.

In October 2004, a Dutch TV station launched an effort to posthumously award Dutch citizenship to Anne Frank,

so that she could be made a candidate for the 'Greatest Dutch Ever' TV show. A Dutch national newspaper had raised the question of citizenship in a report about the contest on TV. In the contest, Anne Frank was elected by viewers as one of history's greatest Dutch personalities. Although the Netherlands has always recognized Anne Frank as one of its own, she never actually possessed Dutch citizenship.

Anne Frank was born in Germany in 1929 and came to the Netherlands with her family when she was four years old. In the mid-1930s her family fled from Nazi Germany, as part of an exodus of German Jews across the world. She lost her German nationality and became stateless in 1941 when Nazis made a law to strip Jews living in other countries of their nationality. When the Nazis occupied the Netherlands and

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enforced anti-Jewish laws, her family hid in an apartment in Amsterdam. This became the museum known as Anne Franks House, where Anne wrote about her feelings and thoughts.

The programmers of KRO television have quoted the part of the diary where Anne states that she 'wants to become Dutch (... meek me Nederlander!).' Now her wish for citizenship is a political issue. Even the national assembly has joined the campaign to award Dutch citizenship to Anne, 60 years after her death in a concentration camp. Under pressure, the Dutch Minister of Justice tried to find a way, but the current law only allows living people to be naturalized. One cannot become Dutch posthumously.

For whom does nationality exist, the individual or government? By seeking and claiming Anne Frank as part of their national legacy, for a TV show, the TV company and participating viewers crossed the boundaries of good taste, and so did the parliament that made an order to grant Dutch nationality to Anne. Nevertheless, it is disappointing that the government and its legal institutions could not break through fixed ideas and laws concerning nationality.

That nation states or governments are always responsible for determining people's legal status and nationality is common sense. A person's national status or identity is mostly control by the government of the country to which he or she belongs, and becomes an important foundation for the individual. However, how much truth is there in the identification of individuals with nation states, through legal categories such as nationality? Also, why do people in Holland want to make Anne Frank Dutch and include her as one of their own, now? Why not when she was still alive and actually living in Holland?

In the present era of globalization, the meanings of border and nationality are changing. My own research is focused on issues related to migrants, diasporas, and statelessness. While some people have obtained dual nationality or multiple legal statuses through migration, others are living without any nationality. To allow people to cross borders, passport, travel documents, and identification cards are normally issued by the government where one's nationality is based. For many purposes, people are usually identified according to those documents. However, the meaning of nationality and the formation of identity differ in a person's self perception and in the perceptions of others around that person. They also differ between

the majority and minority groups of a society. It is here that an actual gap existed between Anne and the Dutch, in perceptions of her longing during her lifetime and after. Also, the meaning of nationality and formation of identity is transforming under globalization, especially for migrants, members of a diaspora and the stateless.

Transnational flows of money, people and information are increasing in the present world. Globalization promotes interdependence and mutual understanding on the one hand, and increases the chances of conflict between nation states on the other. This paradox is particularly significant for policies concerning citizenship and the protection of human rights of migrants. Through my recent research, I have realized that as transnational population flow increases, more and more stateless people appear. Today, the kinds of statelessness that may exist are more diverse than in the time of Anne Frank. In her time, most stateless people were political refugees attempting to escape from conflicts between nation states.

Usually, a stateless person is defined as someone who does not have the legal bond of nationality with any state under national laws. The lack of legal bonding with a nation state means that the rights and obligations of a stateless person are not well defined. Without nationality, how can stateless people identify themselves and how can others identify them? Is the stateless person a world orphan or global citizen? As global citizens, are stateless people pioneers for a world without borders or division?

The Dutch Justice Minister, Mr. Jan Piet Hein Donner, in an interview by the Dutch newspaper *Trouw* on October 7, 2004, said that Anne cannot be naturalized because making exception just for her would not be fair for all the others who cannot become Dutch, and who were in the concentration camps as well. He also felt that Anne Frank does not belong to the Netherlands only: 'She is not ours, she is of the world (Anne Frank is niet van ons; zij is can de wereld).'

It is utterly impossible for me to build my life on a foundation of chaos, suffering and death. I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness, I hear the approaching thunder that one day will destroy us too, I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty too shall end, that peace and

tranquility will return once more. In the meantime, I must hold on to my ideals. Perhaps the day will come when I'll be able to realize them!
— Anne Frank, July 15, 1944

Stateless still, after 60 years, Anne Frank leads us to reconsider the meaning of nationality.

Why do People Migrate?

Teiko Mishima

National Museum of Ethnology

The concept of 'immigrant' is a social invention. The immigrant as person is excluded from the receiving nation, not having the same rights and duties as nationals. The state controls the immigrant with a border that represents nation and territory. The immigrant is also segregated by invisible borders like the culture and the language.

Perhaps the most important border is that of immigration politics. Through politics and policy the state is able to modify laws and exert discretionary powers. This is highly evident in the migration of labor. If a labor market demands cheaper labor forces, the state takes an open stance on migration. During recession, the state rejects the immigrant in order to protect its unemployed nationals. The immigrant is confronted with legal and illegal status through no intention of his or her own. In any case, the immigrant is often regarded as a threat to the economic and cultural borders of the nation state. Today, with modern transport, people can move faster, and movement has become more frequent and easier in the global community. In response, the state has taken greater interest in the politics and regulation of migration to guard its national identity and territory. The presence of migrants has thus become more distinct and more problematic in society, generally.

When we talk about migration issues, we generally do not consider the migrant's home society. It is effects in the receiving society that claim attention. The immigrant can be seen as a factor upsetting the balance of the domestic labor market, as well as creating cultural conflict and deterioration in social conditions. Working illegally and over-staying are symbols of the immigrant, yet the status of the immigrant depends on the discretion of authorities. Whatever causes people to move, the state faces the choice of accepting migrants as citizens or dealing with them as illegal entrants. Ultimately, the state faces the

problem of deciding between 'assimilation and segregation' (Emmanuel Todd).

In the study of migration, an analytical frame often follows concepts and categories established in political discussion. International labor migration is often recognized as a result of the economic gaps created by the capitalistic world economy. Many of the push factors in an emigrant's home society can be related to the world economy. In developing countries, the adoption of a monetary economy seems inevitable and promotes the desire for a rich life. There is no doubt that migrants are involved in the present global economy, but this is not the full story. Migrants and migration can be viewed in other ways.

For at least a thousand years, the Soninke people of West Africa have had a tradition of moving to other countries, and they are now taking advantage of the global age. They are very familiar with procedures for obtaining formal entry permissions or other nationalities. They have developed a worldwide ethnic network and use this to move actively about the world. Usually, Globalization and the transmission of cultural heritage seem contradictory, but, in the mobile culture of the Soninke, they coexist.

In general, most labor migrants move from 'poor' countries to 'rich' countries. The Soninke appear to be labor workers from the South who depend economically on the North. The economic motivations for migration are commonly recognized, while personal motivations are ignored. The motivations of migrants have become more diverse with the rise of information and communication technologies. It has never been easier for people to exchange information, maintain long distance relationships, or perceive economic opportunities. The movements of the Soninke have responded to these changes.

One part of Soninke people have

The author is an associate professor at Minpaku. She has studied the social and economic situation of Soninke people in Senegal, Mali, and some countries in Asia. Her main research interest at present is Soninke trade during the last half of the 20th century, between Africa and Asia. She has published several articles on the family structure of Soninke people, emigration to France, rural development projects initiated by emigrants, and the diaspora in Asia.



Creation of
African style
in Bangkok

been mainly occupied with trade between Asia and Africa since the 1980s. They buy commodities in Hong Kong, Bangkok, Shanghai and elsewhere in Asia, and export them to major cities in Africa. The trading begins at an individual level, and develops domestically and internationally through the use of family networks, and because of them; the motivations are not just economic.

Although migration has an ancient history, international migration today attracts special attention because of the borders created by nation states. The rise of technologies that allow easier migration has been accompanied by greater control over territories and boundaries, so that the available space for migration has declined.

Why do people move? The widely accepted theory of push and pull factors, derived from an economic gap, does not explain everything. We cannot ignore the macro system of the

worldwide capitalistic economy, but our understanding of the motivations of people who move should not be arbitrarily limited by our preoccupations with the relationships between nation states.

The dynamic and independent economic activities and the movements of the Soninke contradict the economic dependence that is usually assumed in African economic history. During colonization, the Soninke found opportunities to move ever farther afield, especially within Africa, by using the political connections between French colonies. After the independence of African countries, they became pioneers as migrant workers in the French homeland. This was initially viewed as merely a migration of labor. In the traditional framework of migration studies, the migrants are considered poor because of their economic position in France. However, they did not all remain migrant workers. They built an economic base in the new environment by using their long experience as merchants. This led to the development of trade between Asia and Africa after economic opportunities were found in Asia. Many daily necessities made in Asia are now sold in African markets, even in remote villages.

The migration of labor does not start simply because of demand and supply for labor. We must give attention to the actual intentions of the people who move. For the Soninke, migration appears to be part of an ethnic culture inherited over many generations. The receiving societies have a responsibility to understand why people move, even if people themselves are not fully conscious of the reasons.

Yup'ik Eskimo Grass Baskets: The Cultural Dimensions of a Tourist Art

Molly Lee

University of Alaska, Fairbanks, USA

I have always been interested in how material objects make intangible notions of culture visible. Since 1994, I have been conducting research on the cultural dimensions of Yup'ik Eskimo women's grass basket making in the Yukon-Kuskokwim Delta of southwestern Alaska (Y-K Delta). Though often dismissed as tourist art,

grass baskets, which are called *mingqaaq* (meaning 'sewn basket') in the Central Yup'ik language, were first made in the late 19th century and are the most widely sold Yup'ik art form today.

The socio-economics of Yup'ik coiled basketry

Historical and anecdotal evidence suggests that Yup'ik women made coiled baskets for sale, rather than local use, from the start. There are at least two reasons for this. First, coiled ware is stronger and presumably would stand up better to packing and shipping to faraway patrons than the traditional twined pack baskets (or *issran* in Central Yup'ik). Second, the coiled technique permits a wider range of decorative possibilities.

The coiled technique probably filtered down into the Delta from Bering Strait, but its florescence in the Yup'ik area is owed in large part to the presence of a ready contingent of middlemen. Moravian mission reports reveal that as early as 1906, baskets from the Y-K Delta were shipped out to the lower forty-eight States to help finance missionary operations.

The mingqaaq's success as an export commodity seems to have been immediate. Ethnographic collections in several major US museums include examples of Yup'ik coiled ware from this period. It is probably no coincidence that the spread of Yup'ik coiling dovetails neatly with the Indian basket craze that took North America by storm around 1900.

Further evidence for the mingqaaq's commercial genesis is its relative unimportance within Yup'ik domestic culture. The *issran* is still made and used for gathering and storage, but the mingqaaq has never been used locally. When I asked one of my Yup'ik collaborators to explain the difference between the two, she pointed to an *issran* and said: 'We use these,' and, pointing to a mingqaaq, 'we sell those.'

The many meanings of grass

Mingqaaqs are a product of recent times, but the grass and its harvest, as I have shown, are deeply rooted in Yup'ik culture, as much a part of the annual cycle as the cutting of fish in July. Long ago, the *issran* was only one of many items twined from grass: grass mats served as room dividers, kayak seats and sails, and the insulating grass socks worn inside mukluks. Furthermore, next to locally obtained furs, grass was probably the raw material most closely associated with the female gender. On Nelson Island, a pregnant woman was careful to orient herself in the same direction as the pattern twined into the grass floor mat she sat on, because if she did so she would deliver her baby easily. During a fall ceremony, two older men (called *aanak*, or 'mother') went from house to

house collecting *akutaq* (a seal oil and berry treat). Dressed in gut parkas, the arms and foreheads of the 'mothers' were draped with newly harvested grass.

Grass also helped mark the stages of the female life cycle. As recently as the 1940s a girl's parents honored her first grass harvest by distributing food in the community house. This acknowledged her status as a full participant in the subsistence economy. And after a girl emerged from the requisite seclusion during her first menstruation, she tied a lock of her hair on a grass plant to ensure the productivity of future harvests. Today, when store-bought commodities have largely replaced articles made of grass, the mingqaaq, as we shall see, commemorates the key role that the harvesting, storing and sharing of grass played in the lives of women in earlier times.

Effects of globalization on style

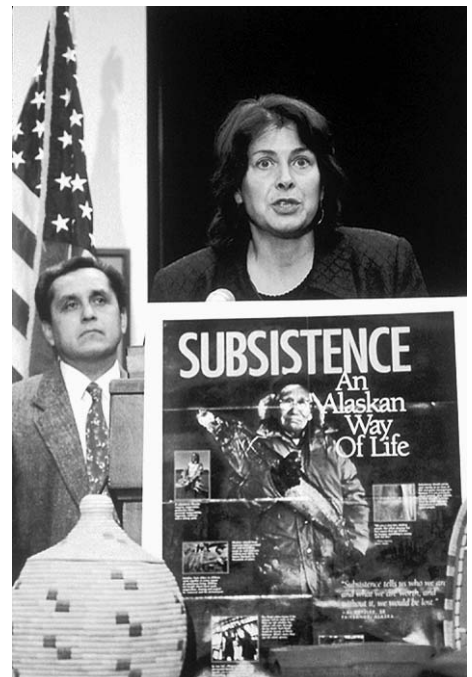
One of the difficulties of researching the relationship between objects and culture today is that indigenous peoples have been as affected by globalization as everyone else. Compared to an earlier study I did on baleen basketry in the villages of Point Hope and Barrow, there are 52 villages in the Central Yup'ik area, and grass baskets are made in over half of them. Furthermore, almost two decades after the completion of the baleen study, which focused on two remote settlements in North Alaska, Yup'ik women now travel constantly: to Bethel and Anchorage for health care and other purposes, and to the many arts and crafts fairs held in urban and regional centers around Alaska each year. Thus the discrete and easily recognized styles that once formed the basis of material culture studies are now a thing of the past. For an anthropologist, the headaches of sorting out the basket styles are compounded every time a basket maker boards an airplane.

'Platinum' grass

One remarkable feature of Yup'ik basket grass (*Elymus mollis*) is that in a few places in the Yup'ik area — particularly around the tiny (population 49) village of

Molly Lee received her MA in Art History from the University of California, Santa Barbara and her MA and PhD. in Anthropology from the University of California, Berkeley. She holds joint appointments at the University of Alaska, Fairbanks, as Professor of Anthropology and at the University of Alaska Museum as Curator of Ethnology. Her most recent book is *Eskimo Architecture: Dwelling and Structure in the Early Historic Period* (with Gregory A. Reinhardt), University of Alaska Press, 2003. She was a visiting professor at Minpaku from January to June 2004.

Alaska Federation of Natives President Julie Kitka argues the Alaska Native position on subsistence rights, Juneau, Alaska, September, 1999. Beside her, resting on the podium, stands a Yup'ik Eskimo basket (photo courtesy of Seanna O'Sullivan, Associated Press)





*Yup'ik grass basket
by Julia Paul of
Kipruk, Alaska (photo
courtesy of Barry
McWayne, University
of Alaska Museum)*

Platinum on Goodnews Bay — grass is found to grow with brilliant red stems instead of the normal creamy white color. The red-stemmed grass is prized by the women for its color, which dries to a soft, luscious lilac. The color is so distinctive that when you run across baskets of made of it at art shows or gift shops anywhere in Alaska you can immediately identify it as Platinum grass. Yup'ik women are uncertain of the reason for the unusual color. 'I don't know,' said one of my collaborators when I inquired about it,

'maybe the dirt.' David Murray (University of Alaska Museum, Fairbanks), a well-known specialist in Northern Hemisphere plants, attributes the color to the unusual mineral content of the soil around Goodnews Bay, which, he points out, was the location of the only ground-surface platinum mine in North America.

The red-stemmed Platinum grass is used in several different ways. Some women artists make small baskets entirely from it, though many consider this wasteful because of its scarcity. A few use the colored stems as a decorative element. Most often, though, the purplish grass is used alternatively with the normal pale straw-colored grass as a background color for the bright decorative designs of commercially dyed grass or seal intestine. This produces a mottled pale and lavenderish effect, which Yup'ik women admire. Consumer reaction, however, is less enthusiastic. To the untrained eye, the random purplish patches read as having 'bled' from the basket's bright-colored decorative elements, and potential non-native

buyers often pass them up. Why the artists, normally responsive to consumer preference, have continued to turn out the randomly colored baskets is probably explained by their delight in its natural occurrence. At the beginning of the 20th century, the Yup'ik environment provided few color choices for basket decoration. Before the coming of schools to the Delta, when crepe paper, carbon paper and construction paper were soaked to make dye for reuse (commercial dyes did not become available in village stores until the 1960s), the only way to decorate a coiled basket was to introduce darker materials such as strips of sea mammal skin into the coiling. The choice may also be economic. In the mixed cash-and-subsistence economy of the Y-K Delta, money is hard to come by, which may also explain the attraction of free and local natural colorant.

The Mingqaaq as signifier of the Yup'ik past and present

Formerly, basket grass had many uses in Yup'ik culture: Women twined it into pack sacks, mats, room dividers, kayak sails, and insulating grass socks worn inside mukluks. Today, trade goods have replaced these items, and the grass basket is the only object still made from the grass. Almost all women in these villages go out to gather grass, for themselves, for relatives and friends, and also because the fall is a wonderful season to be out on the tundra, even when it means the fatiguing stoop-labor necessary for picking grass. Mingqaaq-making is the sole remaining use for grass, and this art form commemorates the many now-abandoned earlier uses of grass and reaffirms the women's ties to their past culture. The Yup'ik mingqaaq also represents abstract notions about the present. The rising popularity of grass basketry with tourists has intensified its visibility throughout Alaska. Today, as rural Alaska Natives battle the non-Native establishment, the basket is often employed as a symbol for Alaska Natives' struggle to retain hunting and gathering priority on public lands.

Exhibition

The Arabian Nights

Special Exhibition
September 9 – December 7,
2004

In 1704, the first Western rendition of the *Thousand and One Nights* appeared in France, made by the French Orientalist, Antoine Galland. Translation of *the Thousand and One Nights*, later more commonly called the *Arabian Nights*, was an epochal event that triggered off the European fascination for orientalia, and consequently the phenomenon of what is now termed 'Orientalism'. The *Nights* played a decisive role in forming the general image of the Islamic Middle East in Europe, which in turn influenced the image in Japan. All the early Japanese translations of the tales were made indirectly through European versions, so their reception into Japan occurred hand-in-hand with the importation of European notions of the Islamic world. This Arabian Nights vision fostered in the Japanese mind is probably, still to this day, a major component of the Middle Eastern image prevalent in Japan. In this manner, nearly three hundred years ago, the *Nights* left its homeland to be regenerated and transformed in the Orientalist climate of Europe, and subsequently, to become one of the masterpieces of world literature.

The year 2004 has been officially designated by UNESCO as the 300th anniversary of the first European translation of the *Nights*. In commemoration, many relevant symposia are taking place and publications are appearing worldwide. Minpaku's unique contribution on the occasion of the tercentenary of Galland's translation is the Special Exhibition: the *Arabian Nights*, with Tetsuo Nishio as its chief organizer.

Over 900 objects from the Minpaku collection and from

various other public and private collections are displayed in the three-part exhibition. The first section, *Origin and History of the Arabian Nights*, traces the mysterious origins of the tales, formation of the *Nights* as a collection, and the transmission of this collection to Europe and the rest of the world. Extremely precious Arabic manuscripts of the *Nights*, including the manuscripts used by Antoine Galland himself for his translation, are displayed on loan from the Bibliothèque Nationale de France. From the Minpaku collection, rare early European editions as well as the first Arabic editions of the *Nights* are also presented.

The second section, *Arabian Nights as a Window to the Middle East*, looks into the gap between the cultural reality of the Islamic Middle East and its stereotypes through exhibits of objects surrounding nomadic life, women's clothing, belly dance, musical instruments, and the Arabic alphabet. Besides the ethnographical displays, there is a corner where visitors can actually experience the Islamic veil.

The fantasy of the *Nights* continues to this day to be reproduced in various media. In the third section, *Arabian Nights as Entertainment*, we focus on the *Nights* as a source of fantastic imagination, expanded and transformed through art, theater, movies, comics, and games. This section offers a rare chance to view a series of color lithographs by Marc Chagall and a 3D computer graphic animation jointly produced by the cartoonist, Monkey Punch, and Minpaku.

The exhibition is the final result of years of preparation. A team of specialists led by Tetsuo Nishio has been involved in the acquisition of objects and in collecting film footage in the field. A series of joint research projects incorporating researchers from various fields helped in developing the main concepts presented in the exhibition. Our knowledge and ideas have been enriched by the visits of



Young Scheherazade by comic artist, Monkey Punch

Hasan El-Shamy (Indiana University, USA), Ulrich Marzolph (Enzyklopädie des Märchens, Germany), and Margaret Sironval (CNRS, France), during the two years preceding the exhibition.

Yuriko Yamanaka
Organizing Committee Member
National Museum of Ethnology

Conferences

The Social Uses of Anthropology in the Contemporary World

International Symposium
October 28 – 30, 2004

To consider how anthropological knowledge should be utilized in the contemporary world, this symposium was hosted by Minpaku with the joint support of the Shibusawa Fund for Ethnological Studies and the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology. Twenty-eight participants were invited from abroad and Japan to offer different views, although all shared an interest in the inspirational works of Margaret Mead.

After opening remarks by Makio Matsuzono (Director-General of Minpaku) and Shinji Yamashita (University of Tokyo, co-convenor of the symposium), William Beaman from Brown

University gave a keynote speech. He referred to Mead's work as a relentless educator to the world on the importance of mutual understanding between peoples and nations, and mentioned the continuing need to recognize her wisdom.

The first of six sessions was 'Children and Media', chaired by Yasuko Minoura (Ochanomizu University), we examined the contemporary media environment of children in three different cultural contexts: Korea, Indonesia and Japan. The next session, 'Use of Ethnographic Film', was headed by Yasuhiro Omori (Minpaku), the significance of using moving images was discussed. The third session, 'Male and Female Today' was chaired by Matori Yamamoto (Hosei University), and dealt with the roles and power of men and women within a family, group, and in three different societies: urban Japan, Aboriginal Australia and Foragers of Southern Africa. In the fourth session, 'Cultural policy', chaired by Takumi Kuwayama (Hokkaido University), we focused on cultural and political issues in Japan and Korea. The fifth session, on 'Development and Culture', was chaired by Junji Koizumi (Osaka University), and covered modern transformations in specific societies and cultures, especially the transformations called development, and the international cooperation efforts associated with 'development', in Middle American societies. In the summary session, Emiko Namihira (Ochanomizu University) pointed out how anthropologists can be conscious of contemporary and historical issues in their work. The importance of this was generally recognized by the participants. An audience of nearly fifty researchers and graduate students attended, and the presence of younger students was notable. The last session was open to the public, and included a speech by Mary C. Bateson, President of the Institute for Intercultural Studies, which was founded by Margaret Mead.

In addition, three films about and by Margaret Mead were shown to the public over ten days: (1) *Margaret Mead: Portrait by a Friend*, (2) *Bathing Babies in Three Cultures*, (3) *Childhood Rivalry in Bali and New Guinea*.

Katsumi Tamura
Convenor
National Museum of Ethnology

Role of Social Sciences in Development Projects

International Workshop November 6 – 7, 2004

In April 2004, 'Cultural Anthropology in Social Practice' was adopted as a new research theme at Minpaku. Under this title, we have started a basic study to help develop applied anthropology in Japan.

Historically, development projects undertaken by Danish and Swedish agencies in Africa, Asia and Latin America have been highly appreciated by local people, and appear to have been more successful than projects undertaken by Japanese agencies. This is despite the fact that Denmark and Sweden provide much less funding than Japan. With this discrepancy in mind, our first workshop was held with a special focus on the roles of socio-cultural anthropology in development projects of Danish, Swedish and Japanese ODA agencies. Our hypothesis was that Danish and Swedish development agencies make better use of socio-cultural anthropology in aid projects than the Japanese agencies.

At our workshop, Neil Webster (Department of Development Research, Danish Institute for International Studies, Denmark), Tomas Kjellqvist (Department for Research Cooperation, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sweden) and Hiroshi Sato (Institute of Developing Economies, Japan) were invited to compare the policies and outcomes of development projects supported by the three countries. With regard to development policy,

what roles have been played by social sciences such as anthropology in development projects, and what relationships have existed between development agencies and research institutions in each country? With regard to outcomes, and examples of successful development projects, how have evaluation methods made projects successful, and how have anthropologists contributed to evaluation?

In this workshop we also discussed the basic terminology of social sciences, strengths and weakness of anthropologists in aid projects, and how to bridge great gaps of opinion between the policy makers and anthropologists involved with projects. Most participants agreed that anthropologists and sociologists can play important roles in monitoring and evaluating the impacts and sustainability of aid projects. Several participants suggested future research topics such as an ethnographical study of aid policy makers, a study of development NGOs, ethical problems in foreign aid, and a comparative study of aid culture across major donor countries.

This workshop signified a rising concern for 'anthropology in action' in Japan. It may also have been the very first time for Japanese anthropologists and sociologists to come together for a discussion of development aid.

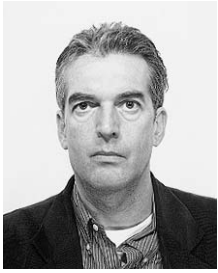
Nobuhiro Kishigami
Chief Organizer
National Museum of Ethnology

New Staff

Wil de Jong

Professor, Japan Center for Area Studies

De Jong holds a PhD in Agricultural Sciences, and an MSc in Forestry. Between 1982 and 1984, as a research assistant at the Peruvian Amazon National University, he investigated the ethnobotany



and forest management systems of Bora Amerindians near the Colombian border. Between 1984 and 1985 he was

a Research Associate at the National Institute of Agricultural Research of Peru and studied traditional agroforestry further. From 1985 to 1995 he was based at the New York Botanical Garden. He then moved to Indonesia to study local forest management among indigenous forest communities in West Kalimantan.

In 1995, de Jong became Senior Scientist at the Center for International Forestry Research (CIFOR), Bogor, Indonesia. Since then he has conducted research in Bolivia, Peru, Zimbabwe, Indonesia and Vietnam, focusing on the economics and livelihoods of people depending on non-timber forest product extraction, national level policies and legislation affecting local forest use, small-holder tree plantations and the assessment of national forest rehabilitation strategies. De Jong has authored numerous journal articles, book chapters, and monographs.

Hiroyuki Yamamoto

Associate Professor, Japan Center for Area Studies



Yamamoto completed his MA with a major in Area Studies of Asia at the University of Tokyo in 1995. Prior to obtaining his PhD in

Area Studies from the University of Tokyo in June 2003, he served as visiting research associate at the Institute for Development Studies (Sabah, 1996-1998), lecturer at Universiti Malaysia Sabah (1998-2000), and research associate at the

University of Tokyo (2001-2003). He has conducted research on the modern history of Malaysia specializing in nationalism and ethnicity in the State of Sabah. His publications include 'Sports, beauty contests and the *Tamu Besar*: The origins of harvest festival in Sabah (North Borneo)' (2002) and 'From Penampang boys to Tambunan sons: Kadazandusun leadership and their cultural 'revival'' (2002).

Visiting Scholars

The following visitors have been sponsored by the National Museum of Ethnology:

Uradyn E. Bulag

Associate Professor, City University of New York, USA



Bulag received his PhD in Social Anthropology from Cambridge University in 1993, and has been working at Hunter

College and the Graduate Center of the City University of New York since 1998. Author of *Nationalism and Hybridity in Mongolia* (Oxford 1998), and *The Mongols at China's Edge: History and the Politics of National Unity* (Rowman and Littlefield 2002), Bulag is co-editor of *Inner Asia* and *Toronto Studies of Central and Inner Asia*, and is on the editorial boards of *American Anthropologist* and *Critical Asian Studies*. At Minpaku he is writing about the creation of a Mongolian 'working class' or the failure thereof for a volume on Inner Mongolian Modernity to be edited by Yuki Konagaya, and is completing a book manuscript tentatively entitled *Inner Mongolian Frontiers of China and Japan: The Poetics of Empire and Nation*.

(July 1, 2004 - June 30, 2005)

Bréhima Kassibo

Human Sciences Institute of Bamako, Mali



Kassibo is a research director at the Human Sciences Institute of Bamako, in Mali, West Africa. He currently leads a

scientific research program on recent institutional changes in West African countries, and supervises the training of MA and PhD students at the University of Bamako. Since 1984, his main fields have been natural resource management (fisheries and forests), the international migration of Malians, and institutional changes (democratization and decentralization) in West Africa from 1990. He has worked with several institutions in collaborative research programs. His recent publications include 'Pêche continentale et migration: contrôle politique et contrôle social des migrations de pêche dans le Delta central du Niger (Mali)' (2000) and 'Decentralised management of renewable natural resources in Mali' (2002).

(September 21, 2004

- April 30, 2005)

Publications

The following were published by the museum during the period from March to September 2004:

◇ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology* 29 (1), 2004.
Contents: J. Kreiner, 'Umesao Tadao's civilization-theory, viewed in the historical context of Japanese anthropological science'; M. Mio, 'Looking for love and miracles: Multivocal composition and conflicts among believers in a Sufi mausoleum festival of Rajasthan, India'; H. Takakura, 'Gathering and releasing animals: Reindeer herd control

activities of the indigenous peoples of the Verkhoyansky region, Siberia'; S. Yoshida, 'Methods of molding Japanese Buddhist temple bells'; and Таксами, Чунер Михайлович, 'Проблемы у коренных малочисленных народов Севера в XX веке'.

◇ Yokoyama, H. (ed.) *The Dynamics of Cultures and Society among Ethnic Minorities in East Asia*. Senri Ethnological Reports, no.50, 377pp., March 2004.

◇ Nishiyama, N. (ed.) *Current Status and Issues of Cultural Heritage Management and Tourism*. Senri Ethnological Reports, no.51, 279pp., March 2004.

◇ Taksami, C. M. *Cultural Heritage of the Nivkhi: Ethnological Collections in Museums in Japan*. Senri Ethnological Reports, no.52, 139pp., December 2004.

From the Archives

Since its foundation, the National Museum of Ethnology has had a strong focus on the systematic recording of data related to its collections. Moving collection data from one medium to another has been a huge effort. In recent years, the development of digital databases has been a priority. These are used for exhibition and research purposes, and smaller public versions can be seen (Japanese language only) at the museum website (www.minpaku.ac.jp/menu/databases).

Overall, the museum houses approximately 230,000 artefacts. Of these, data for 76,659 have been entered into the multi-media information retrieval (MMIR) system used by museum staff and research visitors. This work will be completed for current collections in 2005. Each artefact has to be photographed from different angles, and information is given in 21 data fields.

The public Digital Database for Artefacts offers a smaller

range of information on just 9,600 artefacts, with the following data fields: museum accession number, name and function of the object, the locations where used and where collected, main dimensions, weight, year of collection, and year received by the museum.

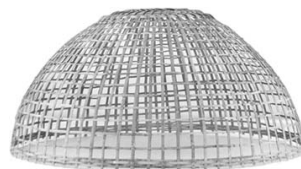
In the MMIR database so far, 3,493 baskets and basket-related artefacts have been recorded. In the public database, only 396 are shown at present, yet these are enough to demonstrate the wonderful diversity in the world's basketry. The following images were selected from the public database.

To use images from the public database for online or print publication, please ask for permission from the Information and Documentation Center of the National Museum of Ethnology, c/o this Newsletter or the main contact address on the Museum website. In general, no payment is required for non-commercial, educational purposes.

Peter J. Matthews
National Museum of Ethnology



Basket to carry soil, Yunnan, China, collected 1997.



Basket placed on ground to hold chickens, Chiang Mai, Thailand, collected 1985.



Basket for a baby, Caroline Islands, Micronesia.



Basket for dough made by pounding breadfruit, Marshall Islands, Micronesia, collected 1975.



Basket to hold caught fish, Papua New Guinea, collected 1974.

MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter

The Newsletter is published bi-annually, in June and December. 'Minpaku' is a Japanese abbreviation for the National Museum of Ethnology. The Newsletter promotes a continuing exchange of information with former visiting scholars and others who have been associated with the museum. The Newsletter also provides a forum for communication with a wider academic audience.

MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter is available online at:
www.minpaku.ac.jp/publication/newsletter/

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