Purpose and Functions

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

Functions

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

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

Information Center
The Museum has collected and maintained ethnological research materials over the years, including artifacts, audio-visual materials, books and other forms of research data. It is also a repository for the Human Relations Area Files (HRAF). Information about these materials is provided to researchers inside and outside the Museum through computerized databases.

Exhibitions
The research results of the Museum are open to the public through exhibitions. The Museum has emphasized the close-linkage between research and exhibition as its basic policy, and the academic staff participate in the planning and organizing of the exhibitions. The main hall consists of two different types of exhibitions, regional and cross-cultural. The former exhibits cultural elements shared across human societies such as music and language. Thematic Exhibitions are also held from time to time which focus on rapidly changing world situations and feature current research in cultural anthropology and ethnology. In addition to these galleries, the Museum presents temporary, comprehensive exhibitions on special topics to make its joint research available to the public.

Social Contributions
In order to present the latest research findings to the public, the Museum offers academic lecture programs, seminars, the Weekend Salon, special lectures and performances, and film showings. The Museum also organizes intensive courses on museology and various projects for other museums as part of its international cooperation effort.

Graduate Programs
The School of Cultural and Social Studies of the Graduate University for Advanced Studies, based at the Inter-University Research Institute, is located at the Museum. It has two courses: Regional Studies and Comparative Studies. These Departments offer research training programs leading to the Ph.D. degree with the aim of producing unique professional scholars. The Museum also makes its joint research available to the public.

Guide to Educational Resources at Minpaku: For University Students and Their Teachers
One of the purposes of this manual is to encourage universities to use Minpaku as an educational setting. It has therefore been prepared to enable students and faculty to make full use of Minpaku’s research, exhibits, archival documents, and facilities. The manual provides a broad range of content, including methods for utilizing the museum’s exhibits, library, and artifacts.

History

1935 A plan to establish an ethnological museum of Japan is set under the leadership of Sumiharu Kato and Satoru Nishikai.
1936 The Japanese Society of Ethnology, the Anthropological Society of Nippon, the Japanese Archaeological Association, the Folklore Society of Japan, and the Japanese Association of Ethnology jointly submit a request to establish a national ethnological research museum to the Minister of Education and other relevant authorities.
1937 A research council (chaired by KIMURA Taka) conducts a feasibility study on the establishment of a National Ethnological Research Museum. A basic concept plan for the museum is submitted to the Minister of Education.
1938 A preparatory council for the establishment of a National Ethnological Research Museum (tentative name) and a preparation office are set up.
1939 The National Museum of Ethnology is founded under the “Law to amend part of the National School Establishment Law” (No. 81, 1974), with an Administration Department, an Information and Documentation Center, and five Research Departments. Collecting artifacts from overseas was started in Papua New Guinea.
1940 A collection of folklore reference materials (28,432 items) owned by the former Ministry of Education Archive were transferred from the National Institute of Japanese Literature.
1977 The Museum buildings (28,778 m²) are completed and the surrounding area is landscaped. An opening ceremony is held.
1978 Exhibitions on Oceania, the Americas, West Asia, Music, Language, Southeast Asia, and East Asia (Japanese Culture), as well as the Videotheque are opened to the public.
1979 Long-term and carefully organized “Special Projects” are started as key components of ethnological research.
1980 The fourth exhibition hall (1,272 m²), which accommodates an additional exhibition on East Asia (Japanese Culture), is opened and completed to the public.
1981 Exhibitions on Central and North Asia, and East Asia (Ainu-Ayuy Culture) are opened to the public.
1983 The eighth exhibition hall and other facilities (4,856 m²) are completed. The exhibition on East Asia (Cultures of the Korean Peninsula and Regions of China) is opened to the public.
1984 The tenth anniversary of the Foundation is celebrated. “A Ten-Year History of the National Museum of Ethnology” is published.
1987 The tenth anniversary of the Museum’s opening to the public is celebrated.
1988 The School of Cultural and Social Studies (with the Department of Regional Studies and the Department of Comparative Studies) of the Graduate University for Advanced Studies is established within the Museum.
1989 The Special Exhibition Hall and the library stacks (5,090 m²) are completed. The first special exhibition, “The Great Andes Civilization: Incas, the Restoring Empire of the Sun” is organized to celebrate the completion of the Special Exhibition Hall.
1993 The main Museum building is expanded and a joint research facility (894 m²) is completed.
1994 The twentieth anniversary of the Museum Foundation is celebrated.
1995 The Japan Center for Area Studies is established. (Discontinued in 2005)
1996 Due to damage caused by the Hanshin-Awaji Great Earthquake, the entire collection is closed for 45 days. Earthquake-proof reinforced construction was retrofit (between 2002 and 2003) of the Center of Excellence (COE) program is established: “Pioneering Research for the Development of New Ethnological Studies Using Multimedia in the Global Era.” (Concluded at the end of 1999)
1999 The seventh Exhibition Hall (6,439 m²) is completed. Exhibitions on Language and Southeast Asia are renewed. An audio-visual gallery, the Materiaethnuque, and the exhibition on South Asia are opened.
1999 The Center of Excellence (COE) program is established: “Pioneering Research for the Development of New Ethnological Studies Using Multimedia in the Global Era.” (Concluded at the end of 1999)
1999 The tenth anniversary of the Museum’s opening to the public is celebrated.
2000 Following the enactment of the Ministerial Ordinance to revise part of the administrative rules for the Inter-University Research Institute (Ordinance of the Ministry of Education No. 24 of 1998), the five research departments are reorganized into four research departments and one research facility.
2000 The Minpaku Digital Guide and Study Area are completed and opened to the public.
2000 A renovated exhibition on the cultures of the Korean Peninsula is opened.
2000 Partial renovation of the Museum exhibitions continued until 2005
2001 As authorized by the National University Corporation Act (Act No. 112 of 2001), the National Institutes for the Humanities, as part of the Inter-University Research Institute, is established.
2003 The former system of 4 research departments and 1 research center is reorganized into a system with 3 research departments and 2 centers. The Education and other relevant authorities.
2004 Editing of a book entitled “A Thirty-Year History of the National Museum of Ethnology” is one of the earliest commemorative events in preparation for the 30th anniversary. (The book is published in March 2006.)
2006 The Minpaku Collections Help Desk opens.
2007 Commemorative events celebrating the 30th anniversary of the Museum are held, including a commemorative ceremony in November.
2008 A collaborative agreement is signed with the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology.
2009 After renovation, the Africa and West Asia exhibitions are re-opened to the public.
2010 After renovation, the Music and Language exhibitions are re-opened to the public.
2011 Consolidation of new systems, including the establishment of the Center for International Academic Exchange.
2012 After renovation, the Oceanic and America exhibitions are re-opened to the public.
Former Directors-General / Professors Emeriti

Professors Emeriti

1984–
Sofue Takaosu (psychological anthropology)
1985–
Iwata Keiji (cultural anthropology)
1986–
Kato Kyuzo (music history in North and Central Asia)
1988–
Itoh Mikiharu (anthropology of religion)
1988–
Nakamura Shunkichi (study of ethnic technologies and tools)
1988–
Kimishima Hisako (Chinese folklore)
1990–
Wada Yuichi (deceased) (linguistic anthropology)
1991–
Tarumi Minoru (deceased) (anthropology in spatial domain)
1992–
Sugimoto Hisatsugu (cultural geography, cultural anthropology)
1992–
Katakur Motoko (social geography, ethnology)
1993–
Ogvi Chikatsuo (cultural structure of Latin America)
1994–
Umesao Tadao (deceased) (ethnology, comparative study of civilizations)
1994–
Kemura Takuji (deceased) (ethnology, comparative study of civilizations)
1995–
Cho U Tsu-sheng (theory of material culture)
1995–
Matsumoto Kazuko (social anthropology)
1996–
Dalmaru Hiroshi (comparative study of the history of literature, based on clothing, etc.)
1996–
Fujii Tomoaki (ethnology, anthropology of music)
1996–
Tomoda Hirohiko (deceased) (social anthropology)
1997–
Sasaki Komei (history of agriculture in East and South Asia)
1997–
Sugimura Toh (study of other arts)
1998–
Wada Shohei (comparative study of cultures, anthropology of Africa)
1998–
Shimizu Akitoshi (comparative study of families, study of Oceania)
2000–
Hata Nobuyuki (economic anthropology, anthropology of Africa)
2001–
Kubota Etsuko (theory of ethnicity and social culture, anthropology of Central America)
2001–
Sakaiya Shizumi (linguistic anthropology, Oceanic linguistics)
2002–
Kovama Shozo (ethnology)
2002–
Morita Tsuneo (archaeology, ethnology)
2003–
Kurita Yasui (museum anthropology, study of Bhutan)
2004–
Sugita Shigeru (computer ethnology, civilization)
2004–
Fujii Tatsuhiko (prehistory of the New World continent)
2004–
Komukura Isao (history of Japanese culture)
2004–
Tachikawa Masahiro (philosophy of religions, Buddhist thought)
2004–
Tanabe Shigebaru (social anthropology of Southeast Asia)
2005–
Yamada Mutsuo (deceased) (history of Latin America, area study of Latin America)
2005–
Eguchi, Paul K. (deceased) (archaeology and material cultures of the Fulfulde-speaking people, Cameroon)
2005–
Matsubara Masatane (social structure, Turkey, Eastern Asia, Central Asia)
2005–
Ortsuka Kazuyoshi (Asian food gatherers, paleoecology, prehistoric agriculture, Japan)
2006–
Isshimi Shuzo (cultural development studies, anthropology of tourism, museum anthropology, culture resource management, Micronesia, Polynesia, Southeast Asia, Japan)
2006–
Nomura Masahiro (nomothetic communication, ethnology of Mediterranean Europe)
2007–
Okumura Yukihiro (ethnology, visual anthropology)
2007–
Yanamoto Toyota (anthropology of ethnicity, the Andes, the Himalayas)
2008–
Matsumo Makio (social anthropology)
2008–
Matsuyama Tohshio (anthropology of contemporary Australian Aboriginal society, Australia)
2010–
Nagano Yasuhiko (historical linguistics, lexical semantics, Tibetan-Burman area)

Organization Chart

Board of Advisors

Director-General

Deputy Director-General (in charge of planning and coordination)

Department of Cultural Research

Director, Center for International Academic Exchange

Deputy Director-General (in charge of research and exchange)

Department of Advanced Studies in Anthropology

Professor, School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University

Professor, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University

Director, Research Center for Cultural Resources

Professor, Graduate School of Education, Kyushu University

Professor, Graduate School of Education, Kyushu University

Director-General, Kyushu City University of Arts

Professor, Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University

Director, Center for International Academic Exchange

Professor, Graduate School of Social Work, Kyoto University

Department of Social Research

Director, Center for Research Development

Department of Information and Documentation

Center for Research Development

Center for International Academic Exchange

Board of Advisors

The members discuss the Museum’s management, and operational issues of critical importance, at the request of the Director-General.

Asakura Toshio
Director, Research Center for Cultural Resources, National Museum of Ethnology

Kato Yasutake
Trustee / Vice President, Saitama University

Kawakita Mihoko
Professor, School of Historical Science, Kakei University

Kishigami Nobuhiro
Director, Department of Advanced Studies in Anthropology, National Museum of Ethnology

Kogasa Yuki
Director, Department of Social Research, National Museum of Ethnology

Kurita Hiroaku
Director, Tokyo University of Foreign Studies Library

Matsuda Motoji
Professor, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University

Nishiyo Tetsuo
Director, Center for Research Development, National Museum of Ethnology

Sakai Shin
Deputy Director-General (in charge of research and exchange), National Museum of Ethnology / Director, Center for International Academic Exchange

Sugimoto Yoshio
Deputy Director-General (in charge of planning and coordination), National Museum of Ethnology / Director, Office of Information and Documentation

Takada Akira
Professor, Department of Social Research, National Museum of Ethnology / Director-General, Kyoto City University of Arts

Terada Yoshitaka
Professor, Department of Social Research, National Museum of Ethnology / Course-Director, Department of Comparative Studies, School of Cultural and Social Studies, The Graduate University for Advanced Studies

Ueno Hiroko
Professor, Faculty of Sociology, Toyo University

Watanabe Kozo
Professor, Graduate School of Core Ethics and Frontier Sciences, Ritsumeikan University

Watanabe Yoshio
Professor, College of International Studies, Chubu University

Yasui Yoshihiro
Director, Department of Cultural Research, National Museum of Ethnology

Yoshikuni Masaori
Professor, Graduate School of Intercultural Studies, Kobe University

Governing Body

Sign indicates a section for Overseas Visiting Fellows.