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Databases at the National Museum of Ethnology

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National Museum of Ethnology

Ethnological collection, conservation, and information services

From the time of establishment, one of National Museum of Ethnology's missions has been the collection and conservation of ethnographical materials and information. The ethnographical materials consist of artifacts, audio-visual materials, books, serials, and gray literature that are purchased, generated or acquired during fieldwork. Now over 600,000 books and other

textual documents, about 70,000 audio-visual items, and over 250,000 artifacts have been accumulated. They are maintained, conserved and well-organized by using databases, to be available not only to academic scholars, but also to public



organizations like schools, and the general public.

For almost all those materials, index information or bibliographic information is arranged as a big-scale textual database composed of sub-databases relevant to each of the materials. In addition to constructing bibliographic databases, the Museum has been endeavoring to develop so-called 'fact-database,' namely, 'image database,' 'sound database,' and 'video database' where image, sound or video information itself is digitized and organized as a database.

At present, the image database has been constructed to give several views (eg. plan, front, side and bird's-eye) of each artifact, as well as to show other visual materials like photographs and slides. The sound database is for audio materials like audiotapes of oral conversations, folk tales, or ethnic performances, and audio disks or audio CDs for ethnic music. The video database is for documentary films taken during fieldwork by our staff. All databases are integrated to one voluminous multimedia database composed of many sub-databases, which are

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Masatoshi Kubo is a specialist in computers and ethnoinformatics. This article has been adapted from 'Development of the Image Database at the National Museum of Ethnology — Toward Forum-Type Database Management' in Proceedings of International Conference of Museum Digitization — Antiquities, Painting and Calligraphy (pp.25-41, National Palace Museum, Taiwan, 2003).

available to our staff, and some are available to outsiders through the Internet.

A retrieval system, developed by the Museum and named MMIR (Minpaku Multimedia Information Retrieval), allows users to retrieve records across media and across sub-databases (Minpaku is an abbreviation of the Museum's Japanese name.). Users can first select several sub-databases, then apply the same retrieval terms to them simultaneously. The MMIR seeks matches among those sub-databases, tries to adjust relevant index fields properly, and then shows the number of matches in each sub-database. Users can proceed into a deeper browsing phase that presents detailed information together with images or sound, if desired.

The current information systems have a decentralized form where several sub-systems are connected around the local area network. The Central System, composed of several servers, mainly controls the textual bibliographic-databases. Digital images of artifacts and photographs are generated by a high-quality image entry and processing system, then transferred to and stored in the Image Server.

In order to supplement exhibitions, some unique computer-assisted systems have also been developed. They are the: (1) Videothèque, an on-demand video library, (2) Materiathèque, which enables visitors to explore ethnological objects which they are holding, and (3) Minpaku Digital Guide, which provides audio-visual explanations about the objects chosen by visitors.

When designing these exhibition-oriented information systems, we tried to provide contextual information for each object exhibited, such as how it was made and used, and other related information. The idea has been to compensate for the fact that each object was extracted from its original environment and brought to the artificial exhibition space. To recreate this context, it is not necessary to use the latest high-tech media. Any kind of media can be utilized in a most effective manner, whether it is high-tech or low-tech. This strategy can be viewed as aiming for true 'multi' media.

Forum-type database planned for the future

In ethnology or cultural anthropology, sometimes the following questions have been raised:

- 1) Are the ethnographical materials described or collected by a researcher objective?
- 2) Can the relation between the

described-side and describing-side be viewed as symmetrical? The latter is sometimes dominant over the former in political, economic, and even cultural ways.

- 3) Are the ethnographical materials collected and described by the dominant side sometimes exclusively possessed by that side, thus creating 'cultural deprivation'?

One way to answer the above questions is to thoroughly introduce 'collaboration' at every step of managing ethnographical materials, such as discovering, acquiring, organizing, then modifying them so that they can be used both in academic and public areas. Every description or collected material is just an arbitrarily-selected piece from actual life, and is therefore never free from an individual's subjective view. This answer for question means that efforts must be made to collaboratively collect descriptions and materials with authentication by their writers and collectors to respect both individual rights and responsibilities. As for questions 2 and 3, collaboration and sharing between the described-side and describing-side would also lead to a solution. For example, ethnographical materials can be left at their original site, documentation and construction of databases can be carried out in collaboration, and then the resulting information can be shared between the both sides.

This kind of collaboration can be rephrased as a 'forum' where researchers, local participants, related people, and general public cooperate, exchange opinions, and share information about ethnographical materials through the Internet. Of course, considering the anarchy in the realm of the Internet, protective mechanisms are essential, especially to protect intellectual properties, moral rights and rights of publicity. Based on this idea, we are planning to modify the existing MMIR so as to realize collaborative data management. We call this new database management method the 'forum-type'.

An experimental forum-type database with cross-searching mechanism

If such forum-type databases are developed in other institutes and museums, and if they are opened worldwide through the Internet with a cross-searching mechanism among those databases, the collaborative management and sharing of ethnographical materials will be greatly enhanced. In the hope of realizing this, we are also trying to incorporate the

cross-searching mechanism into our forum-type database.

In order to realize cross-searching among different databases, each database needs to share similar data format and data retrieval mechanisms.

As for the common data format, Dublin Core (DC) is well known as the standard. To make the most of DC's extensibility to specialized data items as well as common data items, several extensions have been proposed for specific areas such as museums for natural and human sciences, art galleries, and historical archives.

For data retrieval, a protocol named Z39.50 has been widely accepted as the standard. Although the Z39.50 was first developed to realize a common interface for different OPACs (On-line Public Access Catalogues), its distinguishing characteristic is that it allows simultaneous cross-searching of different databases. Many experiments have been conducted for applying Z39.50 to various areas other than libraries.

Considering above trends in standardization, we are now developing an experimental database using both DC and Z39.50 together with the forum-type collaboration mechanism, and have named it MARS (Multi Archives Retrieval System). For each existing sub-database, a Z39.50 server has been developed which is directly accessible from Z39.50 clients.

Furthermore, to avoid inconvenience for users without a Z39.50 client, Z39.50 Web Gateway has been developed. This enables such users to access the database using an ordinary web browser.

At present, the experimental MARS is being verified through in-house use at Minpaku. This system provides the user with a forum-type 'bulletin board,' through which they can send or view opinions about any records retrieved. We will soon participate in joint experiments with other institutes in Japan, and hopefully open our new database to the Internet in the near future.

Packaging Other Cultures: Japanese TV Production and Ethnography

Taku Iida

National Museum of Ethnology

Two decades have passed since anthropologists began to recognize and discuss a crisis in the representation of cultural others. Despite its significance, the focus of this text-critical debate has been on completed work, while little has been said about the production processes of representation, visual or literal, aesthetic or scientific. If we investigate, more consciously, the conflicts and compromises between authors/artists and the social limitations imposed on them, more practical guidance can be expected for anthropologists as the authors of ethnographies in particular contexts.

Here, I focus on a Japanese TV documentary program that was made in an area where I conduct fieldwork intermittently. The producers of this program contacted me before going to the location. My aim is to clarify the production process in the present situation of Japanese mass-media targeting the general public. I also examine the general relationship between Japanese media and

audiences, and the principle for doing anthropology in the media-saturated society of Japan.

The program in question focused on life in a fishing village in Madagascar, and reported unconfirmed information that was in fact false, according to the author's research. This information was developed into a major storyline, magnifying the false position: the subjects' spoken words were translated into Japanese subtitles which did not accord with what they actually said. For example, a Christian hymn was converted into a song in praise of abundant sea cucumbers. Other subtitles, referring to the abundance of the sea, or to the significance of family bond, did not correspond to the actual simultaneous speech, which mentioned neither abundance nor family bonds. These mistranslations, seemingly harmless in themselves, served to lead audiences to the producers' opinion, which was clearly expressed in the following narration (my translation of the Japanese):

The author is a research fellow at Minpaku. His major interests are ecological anthropology, ethnography of coastal fishermen especially in Japan and southwestern Madagascar, and their adaptation to environmental and socioeconomic changes. His publications include 'Competition and Communal Regulations in the kombu kelp (Laminaria angustata) harvest' (Human Ecology 26-3, 1998), and 'Fishing Activities and Economy among the Vevo of Southwestern Madagascar' (Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology 26-1, 2000, in Japanese).

Changes arrive, just like winds, on the coast of Madagascar as much as elsewhere. Many villagers gave up fishing and began to live in the town. The number of those who travel from island to island to follow schools of fish is getting smaller and smaller. Despite these trends, Mr. Z (pseudonym) and his brothers and sisters chose to gather together as one family, hoping to be so eternally if possible. To be with the sea and breeze, to pray and talk with spirits – such simple living was the very thing that Mr. Z and his family believed would unify them.

The narration thus insisted that Mr. Z's attachment to the sea and his family had made him choose to be a fisherman against the social currents. However, fishermen have not actually decreased in number in this area, where I have witnessed a remarkable increase of young fishermen. In addition, the number of seasonal migrants to the islands has increased (Iida in press), because they can get—from around uninhabited islands—a quantity of shark fins and sea cucumbers for Chinese buyers. As a friend of Mr. Z, I cannot avoid concluding that he was following an ordinary life course, not against the current.

Two major factors led to improprieties in the reporting. One was logistical: the limited expenses and time for collecting materials and background information. The TV camera crews in question went to Madagascar to scout locations only four months before going on-air, spending 16 days to find them, about three weeks in staff meetings and arrangements back in Japan, and 29 days on location.

Thereafter, some days were required for editing during the seven weeks before going on-air. Considering the distance from Japan to Madagascar, and the inconveniency of transport from the capital airport to the location, the crews were cutting corners with the limited production period. However, production companies are obliged to reduce the location cost and period because the rating for 'ethnographic' documentaries is gradually dropping year by year. Many producers and TV station workers say that regular

documentary programs are decreasing in number, and some have been amalgamated with quiz or variety shows to get higher ratings.

The other major factor concerns the editing stage. The people responsible for this program, who had not been on location, should have directed the work with more consideration for the context of each scene. They neglected this partly because the camera crew could not provide enough contextual information, and partly because they were preoccupied with catching the attention of an audience that has been struggling against nationwide depression. To entice the audience, they tried to make Mr. Z's life seemingly against the current, finally making much of the unconfirmed statement that fisherman and migrants were decreasing in number, with Mr. Z's exception. Their major concern was not to be loyal to the context on location, but to package their work to entice an audience, thus benefiting 'public interests'. Such audience-oriented program direction is assumed to raise ratings, but the effect seems limited: Japanese TV audiences seem to have lost their interest in cultural others, thus reducing the budget of TV documentary production considerably. While the audience-oriented tendency of TV production generally has been pointed out by a few anthropologists, this tendency seems especially acute in Japan.

However, it is not only TV program producers but also anthropologists who package other cultures or direct their work to entice and inform recipients, because manipulations of some kinds are unavoidable for communicating unfamiliar realities to audiences or readers. The most obvious example is the anthropological textbook, in which cultural realities are cut from their contexts and forced into jarring proximity (Clifford 1988: 146). In order to render the unfamiliar comprehensible, which is one of the ends of ethnography, authors tend to adopt such 'surrealist juxtapositions'. Anthropologists thus share some of the limitations of TV producers. However, the anthropologists are in a much better position to understand social contexts, and can gather high-quality information about the contexts of a scene, location, or society.

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Net hunting of shark among the Vezo people of southwestern Madagascar. After this picture was published in the journal of Minpaku associates (Ethnology Quarterly), I was contacted by TV producers wanting to shoot the scene. (photo by Taku Iida)



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The Idea of Returning Home in the Buryat Community of Inner Mongolia

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Buryat-Mongols (usually known as Buryats in scientific literature) are Mongolian speakers and one of the largest native populations of Siberia and the Far East. According to the census of 1989 there were 421,380 Buryats in the Soviet Union. Most of them were in the Republic of Buryatia (249,525 people), Ust-Orda Buryat autonomous region (49,298), and Aginsk Buryat autonomous region (42,362). Outside Russia, Buryats are compactly distributed in northeastern Mongolia (30,000-100,000 depending on the source of estimate) and in the autonomous region of Inner Mongolia in China (about 6,000). Thus there has been a significant diaspora of Buryat groups into areas of stable Mongolian settlement. Unlike other Mongolian peoples Buryats represent a divided nation: they live in the territory of three states – Russia, Mongolia and China.

Within the Russian Federation they live in three administrative territorial units. Given the peculiarities of Buryat territorial settlements, it is very important to learn how various Buryat local groups are connected with their 'ethnic home'. At the moment, this is the Republic of Buryatia, where the largest group of Buryats live as a cohesive native population. It is also of wider importance to study the role and significance of the idea of 'motherland' in the everyday practices of ethnic communities living in Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, China.

Researchers studying the Buryat ethnic community in Inner Mongolia, China, have found that the relationship between this ethnic group and its maternal ethnos has had a mostly politically-formed ideological character. For instance, during the Soviet period Buryats living in Inner Mongolia had

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- ① Republic of Buryatia ② Ust-Orda Buryat autonomous region ③ Aginsk Buryat autonomous region
④ region of Shenekheen



Buryat celebration of Malai Emnee, a seasonal holiday associated with cattle breeding. Shenekhen, Inner Mongolia, 1998 (photo by Boronoyeva Darima).

little contact with their motherland (especially after the mid-1930s), because Soviet authorities stigmatized representatives of this group as 'national enemies', 'counter-revolutionary', 'pan-Mongolists', and in other ways, and prohibited any contact with them. There is no doubt that this policy also influenced scientific discourse of that time. As a result, at the beginning of 'perestroika' in the mid-1980s, very few Buryats in Russia knew of the Shenekhen Buryats living in Inner Mongolia, and named after the river and region of Shenekheen).

While the Buryat ethnic community of Inner Mongolia had no opportunity to maintain everyday relations with the motherland, it was very important, even necessary for them to remember it.

What is the personal world of Shenekhen Buryats, the world where the people actually live? Field research proves that their personal world is very closely connected to the idea of unity with a society at a higher taxonomic level, a society to which they belong – the Buryats in their historical motherland. Being isolated from their maternal ethnos Shenekhen Buryats have unconsciously chosen a closed traditional lifestyle. At the center of this lifestyle, there must be some strong idea that consolidated the group. Researchers think that this was the idea of returning home, a romantic or nostalgic belief in the motherland as an original, real, and ideal home, the place where they or their children must return sooner or later. The idea of returning home was evident among older members of the Shenekhen Buryats people who could remember very well their own history of moving and settling down in new places. They did not learn Chinese, principally because they were sure that they would be able to return home. The idea of returning home in this case can be

interpreted as a realization that the present existence is short-term. This consoling response helped them form positive motivations, overcome difficulties, and accept present realities. Active discourse about the motherland is a distinctive feature of the Buryat Diaspora in Shenekhen. In this respect it differs from the one in northeastern Mongolia.

Among Buryats of the Republic of Buryatia, there have been two responses to the arrival of Shenekhen Buryats: rejection and acceptance. The reasons for this are complex and create difficulties for Shenekhen Buryats. It means that being accepted is not certain, and this may largely explain their attempts to maintain and prove their Buryat traditions and connections.

In the early 1990s, a return movement began encouraging the actual return of Shenekhen Buryats to their original country. When the first returnees appeared in the Republic of Buryatia (Russian Federation), they immediately surprised everyone with their natural 'Buryatism'. Their 'pure' and soft Buryat speech was organically filled with sayings and proverbs; they sang the drawling melodies of ancient Buryat songs (songs that sounded like something forgotten long ago), and displayed a luxury of traditional clothing and decorations. To initiate a revival of Buryat people and their culture, all these seemed to be necessary.

By the middle of 1993, about three hundred Shenekhen Buryats had moved to the Republic of Buryatia and the Aginsk autonomous region. In the same year, a Shenekhen Buryats' friendly association (*zemlyachestvo*) was founded to protect the interests of Shenekhen Buryats who had returned home. At the moment the number of returnees is still the same as in 1993. Unfortunately, some people have been forced back to Inner Mongolia because the process of return migration is not legally supported, and there is no system to provide the social support needed by returnees. Return migration is still a grass-roots initiative despite the fact that well-known Buryat organizations such as The Congress of Buryat People and the Common Buryat Association of Cultural Development claim that promoting the return of Buryats from China is one of their priorities.

While investigating the formation and cultural development of Shenekhen Buryats as an ethnic group in Inner Mongolia, China, it is reasonable to ask if a diaspora can be recognized. Having

left Russian territory, Buryats did not find themselves in an alien hostile world, where they had to overcome difficulties of adaptation to different cultural environment. On the contrary, the southward migration into Mongolia and Inner Mongolia, in the first quarter of the 20th century, can be viewed as realizing a pan-Mongolian idea and millenary myth. Buryat migration was activated by the policy of 'Russification' in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, and by social-political events that took place in Russia in 1917. Migration was activated only within the Mongolian world, of which Buryats considered themselves to be a part. This makes it problematic to associate the Buryats of Inner Mongolia with the term diaspora. On the other hand, the ideology of this group does have features characteristic of diaspora: the idea of returning to a motherland, belonging to a community,

and expressions of common solidarity, for example. The latter are closely connected with preserving and demonstrating a complex of ethnic features that differentiate Buryats and the Buryat community from other Mongolian nations.

Terminology is just one of the problems facing recent research. More broadly, there is a need to study the distinctive peculiarities of all Mongolian nations and their cultural traditions. This has been the focus of my work while visiting Minpaku. Together with Yuki Konagaya, I have been reviewing Buryats and the Mongolian World, and the identification practices of Buryats in broad historical context. In the present circumstances of increasing interaction among Mongolian nations, our project has both cognitive and practical significance.

Written Language in Colonial Spanish America: The Uses of Documents

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Alphabetic writing was introduced into the Andean region of South America by Spanish conquerors in the 16th century. Since then, written documents on paper have played an important role in communication and information. Many old documents were carefully saved by local authorities and people. Today those collections are preserved in historical archives and are open to researchers.

I am visiting Minpaku as part of a research project 'Uses of Documents and Social Change in Bolivian History', coordinated by Akira Saito. By analysing ordinary legal and administrative manuscripts and notarial records we have been learning about the process of introduction of written language in Spanish America and ITS impact in urban and rural societies. Our focus is the former *Audiencia de Charcas* (today Bolivia) and documents produced by that administrative unit and its population. The social group being studied was composed of European immigrants and their descendants, and a large and well organized native people known generically as *Indios*.

The Spanish Crown and its officials

along with merchants and immigrants became interested in formal controls and effective profit-making in these territories, so they planned a full regime to be applied in the New World. Spanish authorities relied exclusively on alphabetic writing in order to set up a stable political and religious order based in Christianity and Spanish Law. This rule generated a bureaucratic society within an almost illiterate population. Furthermore, the native population did not know the language on which the documents were written.

The written document was, without doubt, an efficient device for incorporating the population, European and native, into the new regime. Rapid expansion in the use of documents was promoted by the Crown itself, dictating a full complex body of laws known as *Leyes de Indias*. These laws demanded drawing up written records for almost all procedures-fiscal, legal, governmental- and for petitions and requests. Each transaction or statement acquired its own standard pattern leading to a distinctive kind of writing for administrative purposes. This written language remained stable over time while popular speech incorporated

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new idioms, words and structures continuously from the local native language. In speech, an energetic local slang or creole language was created.

It was not necessary to create regulations with regard to writing. Written language reached the New World together with the Spanish language in a natural way following the general dynamics of social interactions, especially among the Europeans. Writing was necessary to people for trade and personal communication. Commercial exchanges became more secure and dynamic with the use of written invoices and contracts. Local practices stimulated a highly sophisticated system of credit. Furthermore, the legal system acquired more stability with permanent laws. Since proof and testimonies could remain intact from the time they were written and registered, trials could become more impartial. The fiscal administration also used written records to control activities of the population. This part of the state structure was mainly interested in having a full census of the tributaries, and required every person to be registered in the local parish at the time of baptism, a few days or weeks after birth. The parish registers held records of all weddings and funerals.

Private documents also became extremely important in social life. Documents had to be registered in front of a notary in order to legalize transactions. For instance, patrimonial

belongings, testaments, and explanations related to personal honor and pride, had to be registered.

Because of the popularity of written documents, scribes and notaries became important members of society. Notarial activity needed government permission; in general the notary had a high social position in the city of residence and his signature was recognized among local social groups. The notary had

scribes under his supervision; they were usually paid copyists employed by the notary, but some of them were permanent government employees.

The urban population was composed of people of Spanish origin, many of mixed blood known as *mestizos*, and some *Indios* who were fully integrated under Spanish colonial rule. The latter had opportunities to learn to read and write at a primary level at informal schools managed by priests in the local parish. Native leaders called *caciques* had special schools, created by the Crown, in order to teach Spanish language and religion. The rural communities of *Indios* were also part of the system but had no direct contact with the new culture and no access to Spanish language. Decrees ordering the creation of primary schools throughout the Andes continued even into the late 18th century, indicating that the task of spreading literacy was far from complete in the late colonial period.

Incapable of decoding the written language, the *Indios* nevertheless started keeping valued documents, pictures, and signatures, viewing them as important symbolic objects that could be stored, exhibited or utilized as evidence in support of legal claims. The use of documents to prove land ownership appears to have depended upon the physical presence of the written word in the hands of the witness: possession of the title meant possession of the object. Legal writings were also influential in transforming native categories of thought and social organization.

Legal documents conferred privileges upon those who enjoyed access to them. Those who had access to the legal arena through the services of scribes were empowered. In some cases, we do not know whether certain *caciques* were literate or not, but we do know that they were able to cement political claims through recourse to writing. Despite the fabricated nature of documentation, the Spanish administration was deeply interested in use of the written word as a tool to create stability in society and impose the new rule. The Spanish themselves recognized the tremendous force of authority provided by the written word within their own system. Indigenous actors responded by using written symbols to preserve their own political and social space within the colonial regime.

Religion was also crucial for bringing the *Indios* into the regime. Christianity was based on a book, the Bible, and without the spread of literacy among the *Indios*, even this canonical

Illustration from
Felipe Guaman Poma
de Ayala Nueva
[1621] *Cronica y buen
gobierno*



Christian text had little practical value in everyday religious rituals. Moreover, Spanish law was codified in writing, which the natives had to learn and obey for the stability of the colonial regime

By the seventeenth century other types of writing, artistic representations, technological innovations, and the Andean and European traditional medicines and crafts had also merged. Knowledge had been developed with success and was transmitted over centuries.

Roman Catholicism and Spanish law were the pillars of the colonial regime in

the Andes, and both depended fundamentally on alphabetic writing. The traditional system of mnemonics slowly gave away to alphabetic literacy because its inception in America was accompanied by the spread of a new ideology. Alphabetic writings, forms of artistic expression, and conceptions of geographical space and property ownership all changed to accommodate European influences, while some indigenous modes of expression endured, with dynamic and constant renewal.

Exhibiting Music in Museums

Robert Garfias

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Museums in general are by nature displays of objects. The earliest museums of only about one hundred and fifty years ago were collections of oddities. Displays were intended to show things that people had not seen before but might want to see because of their strangeness or oddity. The focus was on showing the "thing" itself. Later this came to be expanded to displays of great works of art, paintings, sculpture, etc and eventually all manner of things. However the focus still remained on objects to see. This fact has limited the scope of exhibits about music. The natural result has been a focus on the display of musical instruments, the most viable and available "objects" connected to music in the relatively few museums choosing to include music.

The main difficulty is that music itself is not an object in the usual sense. It is something that is best displayed in living sound. The display of musical instruments, examples of notation, or photos of musicians skirts the real focus of a music display, the music itself. This is not to suggest that we should give up on displaying these secondary objects. It may however be useful to reconsider the purpose of all museum displays, which is not just to display objects, but to use whatever is on display to stimulate the imagination, to raise questions, and to elucidate.

When a museum like Minpaku shows something about music, the display should ideally be about the cultural context of that music. The display should be about the people who created the music and who use it. It should say something about the way it

has been created and how it used. By extension, the function of music should be raised as fundamental questions about what music is and how it functions in human society. To do this effectively means doing a bit more than showing musical instruments.

At the outset there lies an important logistical difficulty. Any successful attempt to show something about music will need to accommodate sound, something that by its very nature is not easily managed in a controlled gallery-like setting. The museum must be a place that allows visitors to gain fully from each exhibit without unduly disturbing other visitors and the free movement of visitors from one topic to another.

There are any number of ways in which this can be done. Providing headsets that are fixed at certain points is one way. Another is to have ambient

Fig. 1 The Ainu mouth harp, mukukuri. (old archive photo)



The author is an ethnomusicologist who has done field work in Japan, Burma, Romania, Turkey, Mexico and Central America, Zimbabwe and elsewhere. He founded the ethnomusicology program at the University of Washington and has created hundreds of ethnographic documentary films of music and dance performances, the largest number being films made in the Philippines and Korea during 1965 and 1966. While at Minpaku, he has completed a book 'Music: the Cultural Context' Senri Ethnological Reports 47 (2004 press). Most recently, he has been concerned with the use of computer technology for the presentation, preservation and documentation of research material in ethnomusicology.



Fig. 2 The free reed as a bundle of pipes: the sho of Japan. (photo by Robert Garfias)



Fig. 3 An American Cajun musician with a button accordion. (photo by Robert Garfias)

sound playing quietly at specific locations. It should be quiet enough to not disturb those not listening to it, yet still clear enough to be heard. This method is now used very successfully at Minpaku. One very good method for including the sound of music is used at the new Experience Music Project in Seattle Washington. The music is beamed down from above directly to the individuals standing below and is virtually unheard by anyone else standing nearby.

This is an ideal method for presenting high quality sound. The sound of the music is the important message in such exhibits, and it is therefore important to present it as well as possible without interfering with the traditional sense of quiet concentration demanded in any kind of museum. Other museums making excellent use of music as the focus of the exhibits are la Musee de la musique in Paris which shows a number of instruments in a clear and spacious arrangement, and the Tropen Museum in Amsterdam that displays numerous sets of instruments from Indonesia in performance contexts. The

Hamamatsu Museum of Musical Instruments provides earphones at various points in the display so that visitors can hear the instruments in performance.

The use of videos, live sound and wherever possible an interactive interface between visitors and the exhibits is vitally important for

displaying music in a way that remains true to the purpose of music. Unobtrusive and yet effective use of photos, sound, and video greatly enhances the message of a display based on artifacts.

How then to deal with things more substantively close to music itself without relying entirely on a display of instruments alone? By linking together small displays into a theme it is possible to encourage the visitors to draw inferences and questions from the connections between groups of items. In this manner revealing relationships between the items on display can become the point of the exhibit.

For example, showing the diffusion of instruments demonstrates the path taken by an instrument type across several different cultures. This connection can also be used to show how an idea is adopted from one culture and transformed by other cultures. Such a display can also illustrate something about each of the affected cultures as well as showing the changes in the instrument itself. Take for example the principle of the free reed. The Ainu *mukkuri* and the Philippine islands *kobing* are just two examples of this instrument, which is found over a wide area of Asia. In southeast Asia the basic instrument is first transformed by setting the free reed into a pipe that amplifies its sound and several such pipes are then bundled together to form instruments such as the Miao *gen* and the Laotian *khene*. This ancient mouth organ was taken into the ensembles of ancient China where it was known as the *sheng* and as such was then introduced into Japan and Korea. A German visitor to China in the eighteenth century saw the instrument there and took it back to Europe. From that developed the Western reed organ, accordion and harmonica. Linking all these instruments together can show how each culture adopted and modified the original free reed principle (see Figures 1-3).

It is also possible to show something about the social structure of the people whose music is being displayed. In the Solomon Islands, the Are-are people of Northern Malaita use various ensembles of pan-pipes. The manner in which they are played, with individuals playing closely interlocked parts that dovetail together also reflects the highly cohesive and interdependent society in which this music is played.

By contrast, a highly stratified social structure such as that of the Islamic peoples of the Sulu Islands in the Philippines is reflected in a hierarchical

structure in its music. Here each instrument has specialized functions that are superimposed one on the other: melody, and several strata of underlying abstracted melody and rhythm. The European symphonic orchestra also shows a high degree of social stratification with a single leader directing a large group that is further subdivided into sections and then into a hierarchy of individual players (see Figures 4–5).

Another approach might be to take something like the human voice and show how different cultures make use of it and how different cultural conceptions of what constitutes a beautiful human sound can lead the visitor to reconsider the standards for a beautiful voice in his or her own culture.

Thus a number of different paths can be taken to encourage a thoughtful reaction on the part of a museum visitor, something that goes far beyond the predictable response to viewing merely the odd shapes of musical instruments from various parts of the world, without sounds.

Fig. 5 Philippines, Sulu Islands, Sanga Sanga: a kulintang ensemble. (photo by Robert Garfias)



Fig. 4 A pan pipe ensemble from the Solomon Islands. (photo by Hugo Zemp)



Wood Engravings from Gyalrong (Jinchuan)

Samten G. Karmay

Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), Paris, France

My research at Minpaku is about the Bon tradition in Gyalrong and particularly 48 wood engravings from there that Minpaku has recently acquired for its collections. Gyalrong, a region of Tibetan culture, is situated to the west of Chengdu, Sichuan, China. The wood engravings are concerned with legendary Tonpa Shenrab Miwo. This personage is a semi-mythical figure, but at the same time, he is regarded as the founder of the Bon religion in Tibet. The Bon religion, which is the only non-Buddhist religion in Tibet, is very rich in hagiographic literature concerning the life-story of its founder. The oldest version of the texts which narrate the life-story is called

Dodu in one volume. The second version is known as Zermik, in two volumes and the third is called Ziji in twelve volumes. While the dates of composition for the first two versions are yet to be determined, they are generally regarded as being from about the eleventh century. The third version in twelve volumes dates from the fourteenth century. Western scholars have already studied this literature. H. A. Francke and D. L. Snellgrove are the best known authors of work on this hagiographic account.

In Tibet, it was a common sight to see Tibetan thankas, pictorial representations, of the deeds of the master. One good example of this is

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kept in the Musee Guimet, Paris. P. Kvaerne has recently published a meticulous analysis of these fine paintings. The present 48 wood engravings, which illustrate the life-story, are based on the last version of the hagiographic book, the Ziji. There existed a number of engraved wood blocks in Trokyab, one of the eighteen principalities in Gyalrong, on various themes. The 48 wood engravings at hand are printed in ink on cotton so that the images appear in two rows upper and lower, running from left to right. The printed pieces of cotton are intended for hanging as banners in a temple. The impression on cotton is less satisfactory than it would have been on paper. There are places where printing is unclear due to insufficient ink and in other places where too much ink clogged up fine lines, but the pieces are a good example of the practice of wood engraving in Trokyab.

In 1758 a vast and highly ambitious project of wood engraving of the Bon Canon was launched by King Kun dga' nor bu and Queen Tsewang Lhamo of Trokyab. In this they were supported by the Lama Kundrol Drakpa (b.1700). This lama was a prodigious writer and historian, but also a mystic. He was born in Khams, eastern Tibet and in his

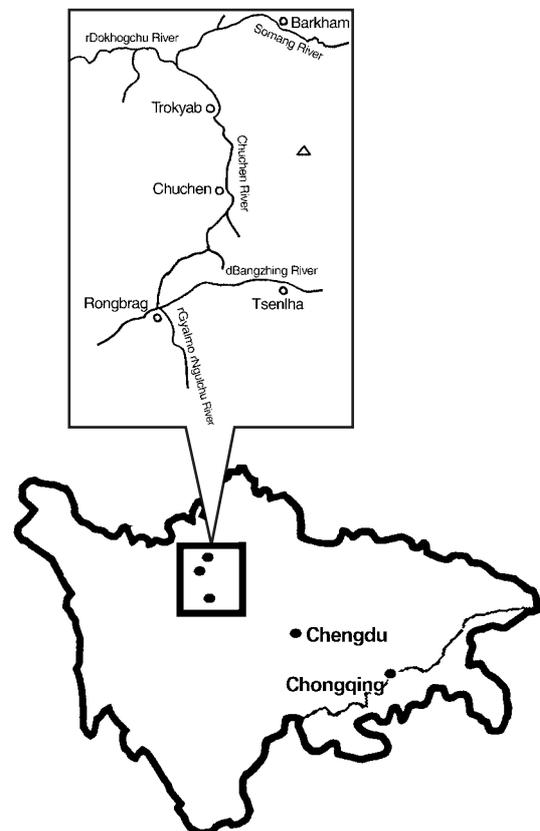
later life he flourished in Gyalrong. He was at first the prelate at the court of Trokyab royal house, but later also at the courts of Chuchen and other principalities in Gyalrong. It was under his influence that there was a remarkable revival of the Bon religion in Gyalrong in the eighteenth century. Later he became the principal editor of the canonical texts for the wood engraving project. It began with a feverish period of searching and collecting texts of the Canon, then editing, making copies of them and finally preparing them for engraving on wood blocks for the purpose of printing them. The hagiographic books concerned were engraved on wood blocks as part of this project. It was also in connection with this project that the 48 wood blocks were engraved in order to convey the ideas in images in line with the hagiographic books.

The surface of the printing blocks measured approximately 58.3 × 42.4 cm going by the actual prints, but their depth cannot be assessed since the wood blocks are no longer extant. They perished during the years of turmoil between 1965 and 1975 in China. The prints at hand were made during the 1940s from the wood blocks.

The eighteenth century is a period of



A figure representing the Bonpo master Kundrol Dakpa (b.1700), one of the wood block prints kept in National Museum of Ethnology (photo by S. G. Karmay)



Sichuan Province

cultural renaissance in Gyalrong especially in the field of art. The 48 wood engravings witnesses to the craftsmanship that was a common feature of this period. The practice of engraving texts on wood blocks for the purpose of printmaking began around the beginning of the fifteenth century in Tibet. It gradually became the most popular way of printing books, especially for religious texts and sacred images. The texts of the Bon Canon which had 113 volumes were engraved on wood blocks in Trokyab between 1758 and 1774. It was also with this technique of printmaking that the Tibetan Buddhists printed their Canon consisting of hundreds of volumes. The Tibetan Buddhist Canon is a collection of texts mainly translated from Sanskrit, but native works directly written in Tibetan were also printed in this way. The most important printeries were in Lhasa, Narthang and Derge and for the Bon tradition the printery was in Gyalrong. The practice of wood engraving continued right up to 1959.

The technique uses line engraving and shows only linear marks. The engravers who incised letters or other designs on wood were often laymen, but monks and especially nuns also took up the profession. Like any other artists they used to go and work in different places where a sponsoring monastery or other would employ them. While an

elderly skilled artisan usually led a group of trained people he would at the same time also take in young students. The engaging process involved cooperation between two skilled people: a calligrapher to prepare copies of a text on a traceable paper which was then pasted in reverse on the surface of a wood block, and a craftsman to engrave the wood following the writing of the calligrapher. Likewise, an artist first drew a figure or a design which was then incised into the wood by an engraver. There were also artists who were skilled in calligraphy, drawing figures and carving them on wood by themselves. However, they were rare and in the case of large projects such as the one we are dealing with, it would have been impossible for a skilled artist to do everything alone.

The wood that was used is called *Takpa* which is a type of birch. It is a hardwood that rarely cracks. However, the tree grew only rarely in Tibet and was sparse even in forests. Moreover, one needed a skilled person to cut it down and then prepare pieces for woodcuts. Texts and even figures were rarely carved on the end grain of the wood. The engraving was usually done on the side grain of the wood block. The transportation of the wood blocks was another major task, because it often involved long distances and transport on the back of mules and yaks.

Exhibition

West African Storytelling Village

Special Exhibition
July 24 – November 25,
2003

The main purpose of this exhibition was to invite visitors to experience life in a West African village where stories are told together with music and dance. When we go to the field we experience exciting events. Instead of taking people to the field, I reproduced my field at the National Museum of Ethnology. I brought West African storytellers, and trained Japanese volunteers in storytelling. They cooperated with each other and told West African stories every day. In

between storytelling, there were jembe drum workshops led by African colleagues. We built four West African huts and a shelter, and erected a baobab tree in the middle of the village. Under the shelter we told stories and beat jembe drums. Before the opening of this village, we collected musical instruments and other artifacts directly from West Africa.

This was an exhibition of intangible cultural heritage. I have collected about two thousand Fulbe folktales, prepared texts in Fulfulde, and translated them into Japanese. The Japanese storytellers used the translations. When the West African storytellers told stories, I translated them simultaneously into Japanese for the Japanese audience as if I were telling them stories naturally. Visitors sometimes stayed in the exhibition hall for

several hours. The same visitors came back to the exhibition hall several times. On the second floor we

Oummahani and Eguchi telling stories



displayed West African cloths and handwoven clothing dyed with natural colors. They were treasures from the museum.

Several hundred volunteers were involved in this exhibition. Some of them came to the museum more than a hundred times. They say that the exhibition gave them a lot of satisfaction. There were child advisors who participated in the building of the village. We had fifteen meetings beginning from the previous year, and planned the exhibition and workshops carefully. It was the first experience of this kind for the museum.

There were slogans: transmitting knowledge to each other, telling experience to each other, and getting in touch with each other. Visitors to the village put on West African clothes to experience something of West African life. Before opening the exhibition, we had workshops of various kinds: planting plants of West African origin, making musical instruments and West African clothes, cooking West African food, etc., to educate the general public. We did this because West Africa is so far away from Japan that it is difficult for Japanese people to understand the culture.

The exhibition was a great success. In the village festival, all the participants shared a common feeling of intimacy and excitement. Now people of all ages can enjoy West African culture. They became cosmopolitan.

Paul Kazuhisa Eguchi
Chief Organizer
National Museum of Ethnology

Conference

Questioning Authenticity: Southeast Asian Performing Arts and Issues of Cultural Identity

*International Symposium
October 23 – 26, 2003*

The symposium explored the

ways in which notions of authenticity are involved in the construction and maintenance of cultural identity in Southeast Asian performing arts. Our aim was to develop a nuanced commentary upon the interplay between practice and discourse of performing arts by comparing relevant case studies. The symposium began with a welcome speech by Makio Matsuzono (Director General, Minpaku) and a keynote speech by Tomoaki Fujii (Institute for Advanced Studies, Chubu University), followed by three sessions exploring specific themes.

In the first session, Endo Suanda, Sam-Ang Sam and Usopay Cadar described the systemic problems facing the transmission of traditional performing arts in Southeast Asia. They identified various ways in which government policies on education affect the transmission of traditional performing arts. The issues discussed included the relevance of formal education in transmitting individual local traditions, the nature of difficulties therein from the perspective of practitioners, and the impact of increasing globalization on the performing arts of Southeast Asia that are disseminated outside the region.

The second session examined the complex and frequently conflicting relationships between cultural policies, nationalism and performing arts. The three papers (Gavin Douglas, Phong Nguyen, Paritta Koanantacool) dealt with the contradiction between a nationalistic desire for cultural identity and the customs and aesthetics of locally practiced traditions. In the representation of a national culture through performing arts, certain forms, genres and ethnic groups are highlighted over others, and authenticity is often an important criterion in the process of such selection. This session sought to identify various forces that come into play when the notion of 'authenticity' is negotiated or manipulated in cultural policies.

The third session dealt with

the construction of cultural identity among minority groups. The culture of minority groups may be neglected or suppressed in some cases, while in others it may also be supported and patronized by individuals and institutions of the majority as part of national or regional heritage. The papers by Adelaida Reyes, Tan Sooi Beng, and Takasi Sameda sought to identify the conditions in which an increasingly conscious use of performing arts among minorities intersects with the majority's propensity for comprehensive representation and changing social, cultural and political environments.

Stimulating commentaries were provided by all discussants — Robert Garfias, Yuji Baba, and Yoshiko Okazaki for each session respectively and Alan Feinstein for the entire symposium.

As part of the symposium, two public concerts were held at the museum; a mini-concert by Phong Nguyen, Sam-Ang Sam, and Yun Khean on the second day to showcase Vietnamese and Cambodian music, and a concert by Mindanao Kulintang Ensemble led by Usopay Cadar on the last day to present music from the Philippines. This symposium was organized as part of a series of events to commemorate the ASEAN-Japan Exchange Year 2003, and was funded by the Agency for Cultural Affairs and Minpaku.

Yoshitaka Terada
Convenor
National Museum of Ethnology

Mini-concert at the entrance hall



New Staff

Masayuki Deguchi

Professor, Center for Research Development



Deguchi received a B.A. in sociology with *summa cum laude* from Osaka University in 1979. After serving as a program

officer at Suntory Foundation, he investigated philanthropic and nonprofit organizations (NPOs) as an International Philanthropy Fellow at Johns Hopkins University (JHU). In 1995, Deguchi joined the Graduate University for Advanced Studies as Professor. He remains engaged in the impact analysis component of the Comparative Nonprofit Project led by JHU, and is also exploring a new method of evaluation named CACOP (Cases Collected by Practices). With this method, he has been able to show that giving to government, in Japan, has been more significant than philanthropic support for NPOs. Deguchi has also developed a theory of *linguapolitics* that suggests linguapolitical borders will be of greater importance than national borders in the era of internet. He is currently serving as president-elect of the International Society for Third Sector Research (ISTR) (until January, 2005). The society has members and representatives from 82 countries (enquires: deguchi@idc.minpaku.ac.jp).

Visiting Scholars

Samten G. Karmay

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Karmay studied at the School of Oriental and African Studies,



University of London where he obtained the M.Phil degree in 1970 and Ph.D. in 1985. In 1997 he was elected President of the

International Association for Tibetan Studies (IATS). From 1996 he worked closely with Minpaku's Yasuhiko Nagano on the Bon culture research project and jointly edited a number of volumes published as monographs in the *Senri Ethnological Reports*. Karmay has published numerous books and articles in English, French and Tibetan on Tibetan culture, history, and religion, including *Secret Visions of the Fifth Dalai Lama* (1988).

(July 3, 2003-June 30, 2004)

Kanoksak Kaewthep

Associate Professor of Economics, Chulalongkorn University (Bangkok, Thailand)



After receiving his B.A. and M.A. in economics from Thammasat University, Kaewthep obtained his Doctorat de 3e Cycle at

Université Paris 7 in 1984. He is the author of numerous books in Thai, English and French and articles on economic development and peasant movements, including 'From farmers' federation of Thailand to forum of the poors' (1997) and 'Forms and phases of Thai industrialization in a historical perspective' (1995). He has recently completed a project to evaluate the impact of community development projects run by a Thai NGO in Myanmar. His research topic during his stay here is "The economics of giving: Buddhism and NGO practices".

(October 1, 2003-March 31, 2004)

Margaret Sironval

Researcher, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) (Paris, France)



Sironval studied Arabic literature and civilization at the University of Paris-Sorbonne. She also studied

semiology of popular traditions at the EHESS (Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales) where she obtained her MA. She obtained her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature at University of Paris-Sorbonne (1998). Her main interest lies on the network of relationships between Oriental and Western culture. She is studying this network through the Book of the Thousand and One Nights, by looking at how topics in Oriental versions were transformed into texts and illustrations in the Western versions. She has published many articles in several scientific journals and has organized several exhibitions in France and abroad (Tunisia and Turkey).

(November 15, 2003-May 15, 2004)

Jean-Pierre Berthon

Charge de Recherche 1, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS) (Paris, France)



Berthon obtained Ph.D. in ethnology from Paris 10th University, Nanterre, France. He studied a Japanese

new religion, Omoto-kyo, at Kyoto University in 1977-1978. He was at la Maison Franco-Japonaise de Tokyo (1984-1986), a researcher of Waseda University (1990-1991), a representative of Ecole

Française d'Extrême-Orient Tokyo (1994–1996) and a researcher of Comité National de la Recherche Scientifique from 1988 to date. His recent research projects concern new religions and ethnology in Japan. He has been working on a comparative study of Japanese and French new religions, and relationships between new religions and indigenous faiths. While in Japan, he will continue these projects and develop a visual anthropological point of view with Minpaku's Yasuhiro Omori.

(November 19, 2003–February 19, 2004)

Publications

The following were published by the museum during the period from June to November 2003:

◇ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*, vol.28, no.1, July 2003.
Contents: M. Minami, 'Technological and social changes among coppersmith castes and typology of copper water jugs (*gāgrī*): A case study in western Nepal'; H. Yang, 'Historical memories of an ethnic community preserved through a ritual tradition: Focusing on a court case involving "Darqad" during the Dao Guang era together with a historical analysis'; and R. Inoue, 'An encounter with medicine men in north Cameroon: Dreams and experiences of a psychotherapist'.

◇ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*, vol.28, no.2, October 2003.
Contents: S. Takezawa, 'Museums of ethnology today: Can museums of ethnology exist in the 21st century?'; A. Saito, 'Waging war, propagating the faith: The predatory expansion of the Jesuit missions in south America'; S. Fukuoka, 'Fumio Koizumi's study of Japanese traditional music as the starting point of

his ethnomusicological research'; and J. Ma, 'Historical origin & social transformation of the Hui nationality of Hainan province: A historical & anthropological study of two Hui nationality villages of Yanglan town, Sanya city'.

◇ Umesao, T., S. Yoshida and P. Schalow (eds.), *Japanese Civilization in the Modern World X VIII Alcoholic Beverages*. Senri Ethnological Studies, no.64, i +151pp., November 2003. Contents: T. Umesao, 'Keynote address: Alcoholic beverages and civilization'; S. Hanai, 'Structural characteristics and modernization of alcoholic beverage production in Japan and China'; H. Yoshida, 'Transfer of *sake* technology to Korea, Taiwan and China'; S. Asai, 'The introduction of European liquor production to Japan'; N. Kanzaki, 'The alcoholic beverages of bars and restaurants in 17th–19th century Tokyo'; P. Schalow, 'Dangerous pleasure: The discourse of drink in early modern Japan'; E. Ben-Ari, 'Sake and "space time": Culture, organization and drinking in Japanese firms'; H. Nishizawa, 'The Chinese way of drinking alcoholic beverages'; K. Inose, 'Drinking customs of the English: From gin palaces to pubs'; and S. Yoshida, 'Alcoholic beverages and narcotics in the history of civilization'.

◇ Sakiyama, O. (ed.) *Current Status and Issues of Studies in Endangered Languages*. Senri Ethnological Reports, no.39, 314pp., June 2003.

◇ Martin, D., P. Kværne and Y. Nagano (eds.) *A Catalogue of the Bon Kanjur*. Senri Ethnological Reports, no.40, 799pp., August 2003.

◇ Konagaya, Y. (ed.) *The Twentieth Century in Mongolia: Interviews About the Way to Socialism*. Senri Ethnological Reports, no.41, 230pp., October 2003.

◇ I.Lkhagvasuren. (ed.) *The Twentieth Century in Mongolia: Interviews About the Way to*

Socialism. Senri Ethnological Reports, no.42, 225pp., October 2003. In Mongolian.

◇ Millones, L., H. Tomoeda and T. Fujii (eds.) *Tradición popular: Arte y religión de los pueblos del norte del Perú*. Senri Ethnological Reports, no.43, 179pp., November 2003.

MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter

The MINPAKU Anthropology 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 'Minpaku fellows' who have been attached to the Museum as visiting scholars from overseas. The Newsletter also provides a forum for communication with a wider academic and anthropological audience.

MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter is accessible through our homepage at: www.minpaku.ac.jp/english/

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