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Special theme I: Memories of Sasaki

In Memory of Komei Sasaki

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My first encounter with Komei Sasaki was at the late Hiroko Morishima's laboratory at the National Institute of Genetics, around 1990 or 1991, as I recall. Prof. Komei, as I came to call him, was already a distinguished scholar and remote from my usual circle. That was hardly surprising: he was, after all, old enough to be my father, and our academic specializations were different. But, as it happened, he was trying to assemble scholars from Minpaku and the National Institute of Genetics to launch a special research project titled 'Tradition and Change in Contemporary Japanese Culture'. Prof. Komei's and Morishima's discussions were fruitful, and a research group was created to explore the formation of Japanese culture from many different perspectives, including the Japanese people, language, rice cultivation, animal husbandry, and companion animals.

The joint meeting during the last year of that project was immensely stimulating. The first day was filled with presentations from geneticists and other natural scientists, all of whom introduced new data. All of the researchers present were thinking about how to achieve an integrated understanding of those data. The day was dominated by genetics, or so it seemed to me. The second day, however, was totally different. I still remember the meeting's schedule. On the morning of the second day, 'Sahara's Doll Festival Dream', a handwritten memo by the late Makoto Sahara, an archaeologist, was distributed to everyone present. The whole of that day became a series of heated exchanges about Sahara's memo. Gradually, however, Prof. Komei became the center of the discussion. He probably was one the few present who really understood everything that was being said.

Prof. Komei was famous for his ability to organize joint research with researchers from different disciplines. He was particularly famous for joint research projects that overcame the science-humanities divide. The gap between the humanities and the sciences is serious, everywhere in the world. I don't



Komei Sasaki, and a rice field of the Batak people, with view of Lake Toba, in northern Sumatra, Indonesia (Shinobu Yoshimoto, 1991)

Sato is professor and Deputy Director-General of RIHN, Kyoto. His research began with the origins of rice cultivation and now extends to include the origins and dissemination of other grains and their sympatric production and consumption with protein sources. He has published numerous articles in Heredity, Nature Genetics and other journals. His most recent publications include Rice More Delicious Than Koshihikari (in Japanese, Asahi Shimbun Publications, 2010); Know and Eat

know if he understood every detail, but he had a gift for grasping what scholars from different disciplines were trying to say. After listening to a young researcher's presentation, he would burst out in Kansai drawl, "Essentially, this is what you are trying to say, isn't it?" To me at least, what Prof. Komei said was much, much easier to understand than what the specialists said.

Prof. Komei was also sometimes sarcastic. In 1996, I published a book in the NHK Books series in which I said, "Japonica rice originated in Chang Jiang." Sasaki's take was, "Essentially, you mean we still don't know the origin of Indica rice. And our joy is middling, right?" As sarcasm goes, that was savage. I now think, however, that what

he probably meant was "We now understand half the puzzle," not, "We only understand half." We later gained a sketchy understanding of the origins of Indica rice, and I communicated the bare outlines of that to him. Unfortunately, I never asked what he thought about it. I wonder, if he were still with us, what he would say. I wish I had asked him.

Prof. Komei was also a famous fieldworker. When I visited his home following his death, I was shown his fieldnotes. Every page was packed tightly with detailed observations, a testimony to his meticulous and methodical character.

I have been doing fieldwork for more than thirty years, but never had the opportunity to do fieldwork alongside him, not even once, inside or outside Japan. I regret that, but at the same time, when you do fieldwork with someone, you are living together twenty-four hours a day. All sorts of peculiarities emerge. Quirks clash. If I had had the opportunity to travel with Prof. Komei, the nuances of what I am writing here might change a bit.

Joking aside, fieldwork requires diligence. Especially when it comes to organizing photographs, that is absolutely essential. In my case, I have a huge number of photographs, but they are poorly organized. There are many where I don't even know the date on which they were taken. Especially slides: since each slide is separate, unless you organize them quite well, things get totally out of control. Then they have almost no value as data, which is such a waste. Once, however, I borrowed Prof. Komei's Mongol photographs. The prints were properly inserted in envelopes and labelled indicating where and on what dates the photographs were taken; I was made keenly aware that if you did not do that, you couldn't do fieldwork.

Prof. Komei was also a geographer; that was, I'd say, his true profession. When the Research Institute for Humanity and Nature was publishing a book based on a research project to which he had contributed, the manuscript we received from him included a hand drawn map with detailed instructions for the cartographer. He had definite standards for what a proper map should be. World maps aside, north and south had to be clearly indicated. The scale had to be indicated by a graphic scale, not numerically, as in 1:10,000. Bodies of water had to be filled in with diagonal lines. But what the map the editor at the publishing company provided was crude. After all, nowadays some

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publishers will feel perfectly comfortable using maps that someone threw together in Power Point. In this case, the editor hadn't really given much thought to the issue. Then I received a call from Prof. Komei and had to give the editor a ferocious scolding about how to draw maps. That was, I felt, a good experience for me and for him. Today we are forbidden to use words like 'reprimand' or 'discipline', but, yes, training is necessary.

A master of interdisciplinary studies. An expert fieldworker. Somewhere in that combination of interdisciplinary studies with fieldwork is a unifying underlying current. I mentioned that diligent care is indispensable for tasks such as organizing photographs, but another necessary skill in doing fieldwork is the ability to adapt flexibly to the demands of the moment. Nothing ever goes as predicted; the fieldworker needs a certain boldness that permits not thinking things out too much from the start. It is important to embrace a bit of come what may. That attitude is also essential for interdisciplinary studies. What is important is not a complete, precise understanding of every detail but rather the ability to



Komei Sasaki (right) and Yo-ichiro Sato (left) discussing at the first 'History of Agriculture in Eurasia' Panel Discussion (Doshisha University, 2008)

grasp the whole.

Master of interdisciplinary studies, expert fieldworker: Both are now in danger of extinction. But I believe that both are essential elements for scholarly development. We may never again see a researcher who combines them as well as Komei Sasaki did, but I continue my research in the hope that I might become at least one or the other.

the World's Rice (in Japanese, Iwanami Shoten, 2012); and On Food (in Japanese, Fukuinkan Shoten, 2012).

Komei Sasaki: Field Research and Theory Building

Peter J. Matthews

National Museum of Ethnology

Professor Sasaki began his academic studies as a student of Geography at Kyoto University, in the 1950s. Over many years, he pursued field research on the diversity of agricultural production systems in Nepal, India, Southeast Asia, China, and Japan. In the process, he became interested in the origins of agriculture and of Japanese culture. His views on these matters were insightful and open-minded. From his ethnological viewpoint, it was necessary to look at the formation of Japanese culture by taking a wider Asian perspective.

While developing a deep and broad academic view of the origins of Japanese culture and agriculture, Sasaki also spread his understanding to others through popular books that used the phrase 'Shoyojurin' or 'Shining Leaf Culture' in reference to the shining leaf (*lucidophyllous*) character of most

trees in the evergreen broad-leafed forest (think of evergreen oaks, an important component of such forests).

In the mid-1980s, I was a PhD student at Australian National University (ANU), in Canberra, beginning a long-term study of the origins and dispersal of taro, a widespread root crop in Asia, Africa, and the Pacific. At ANU, I learned about the *Shoyojurin* and Sasaki's theory from Japanese students attending the University, before knowing who exactly had developed the theory, and before knowing anything about Minpaku. Thus, I had started to absorb his ideas before first visiting the Museum in 1990 and meeting, briefly, both Sasuke Nakao and Sasaki. On that occasion, I was able to introduce my work on taro at a workshop on Austronesian culture history organised by Tomoya Akimichi, a specialist in Oceania at the Museum.

Matthews is associate professor and an ethnobotanist at Minpaku, where he shares responsibilities for the Field Sciences Laboratory. He is the author of numerous papers on the history of taro and other crops in Asia and the Pacific, and co-editor of *Irrigated Taro (Colocasia esculenta) in the Indo-Pacific: Biological, Social and Historical Perspectives (Senri Ethnological Studies 78, 2012)*.

In subsequent years, Sasaki was always sympathetic to my work on taro, and I remain very grateful to him for his enthusiasm for historical research on agriculture, and ethnobotany in general. His enthusiasm helped make Minpaku a welcoming place to work, when I first arrived as a postdoctoral researcher in 1991, and again later when I joined the staff under his tenure as Vice-Director of the Museum. Just weeks before his passing, new genetic research on taro (by one of my students) added further support for the importance of Himalaya and East Asia in crop domestication and agricultural origins. I did not have any opportunity to discuss this new work with him.

In a published interview (1996, Komei Sasaki: National Museum of Ethnology, interviewed for *Anthropology Today* 12: 8 by John Knight, now Reader in Anthropology, Queen's University, Belfast), Sasaki indicated his wish to 'destroy [the] theory of Japanese uniqueness', with its focus on recent 'imperial history' and cultural development within the Japanese islands. His strong opinion on this matter was informed by long experience in the study of swidden cultivation systems inside Japan and beyond. One of his earliest published works was a review and partial translation into Japanese of Pierre de Schlippe's (1956) masterpiece of agricultural ethnography, *Shifting Cultivation in*

Africa. The Zande System of Agriculture (Routledge and Kegan Paul). His review also refers to H.C. Conklin's seminal work on shifting agriculture ('The study of shifting cultivation' *Current Anthropology* 2: 27–61, 1961). The cited authors set high standards for describing and analysing how swidden cultivation systems vary and operate, and urged agricultural scientists to understand indigenous farming systems before setting out

to change them according to foreign or new models of agricultural development. A respect for indigenous rights and ways of living is also very evident in Sasaki's later work with the Ainu in Japan.

Sasaki combined international and local scholarship, and his own original field experiences, into an original and influential perspective on Japanese cultural origins. Some indication of the process and results can be found in his review 'Studies of vegeticulture in Japan: Their origins and development' (in Y. Yoshida and P.J. Matthews eds, *Vegeticulture in Eastern Asia and Oceania*, Japan Center for Area Studies, National Museum of Ethnology, 2002). Among Japanese scholars who were important for him was the botanist Sasuke Nakao, whose studies of crop history and the origins of Japanese agriculture were also popular in Japan — see especially Nakao's 1966 volume, *Cultivated Plants and the Origin of Agriculture*, Iwanami Shoten (in Japanese).

Although seeking to draw historical conclusions from broad comparisons of modern, living farming systems, Sasaki was alert to the limitations of ethnographic analogy when constructing theories about the past. His main contribution to understanding of the past was a series of papers and books, in Japanese, locating the origins of Asian swidden farming not in any specific place or crop, but in the ecological zone of warm-temperate evergreen broad-leaved forest that extended from higher altitudes in the Himalayan mountains to higher latitudes in East Asia, including Japan. Within this zone, similar wild plants and animals could be found and exploited, and crops could easily move in multiple directions, from West to East and East to West. Throughout this region, people, knowledge, material culture, and crops were seen as being involved in a continuous series of social exchanges, and the emergence of rice culture in Japan was seen as a relatively recent stage in the process, not the defining basis for Japanese culture as a whole.

The present article focuses on just one area of Professor Sasaki's interest and effort. For readers of this *Newsletter*, I recommend highly the 1996 interview published by Knight (see above). In that interview, we can detect Sasaki's forceful personality expressed in a manner close to his own words, and respect his achievements as an ethnographer, thinker, writer, and socially-concerned academic more fully.



Colocasia yunnanensis, a cold-tolerant wild relative of taro (sato-imo) growing at 2000 m asl near Sapa, in northern Vietnam (Matthews, 2012)

Special theme II: Core Research Project 'The Cult of Things: Possession, Collection, and Representation'

The Cult of Things: Possession, Collection, and Representation

Shoichiro Takezawa

National Museum of Ethnology

Our Core Research Project at Minpaku has two themes, one of which is entitled 'Anthropological Studies of Materiality'. Within this, we conducted a sub-project entitled 'The Cult of Things: Possession, Collection and Representation', for three and a half years from October 2009.

What were the aims and outcomes of this sub-project? Our starting point was the fact that: In the present age of Late Capitalism, cheap, standardized and mass-produced commodities are everywhere. Meanwhile, we are confronted with a phenomenon which seems antagonistic to this, a phenomenon that can be called the 'Cult of Things'. In fact, a growing enthusiasm for material possession, collection and representation prevails in today's world.

Examples include the proliferation of museums as institutions possessing and evaluating high value objects, the acceleration of the market price of art works, the global expansion of interest in cultural heritage, the extraordinary preference for brand items. This so-called cult of things seems also to affect human bodies. The increasing popularity of physical modifications, such as cosmetic surgery, body piercings and tattoos suggest that the human body is now regarded as a thing or material for manipulation.

With this perspective, three foci were identified for our studies of the 'Cult of Things': Museum, Memory, and Human Body.

1) In displaying many things carefully, the museum asks its audience to treat them with special caution and attention. In this way, the museum represents a specifically modern form of the cult of things. This is why the museum has been described in terms of cult, for example, as a 'cult creating the nation' (Krzysztof Pomian) or a place for 'civilizing rituals' (Carol Duncan). The ethnological museum has remained outside this cult. But recently, a new trend occurs; we are

now enduring strong pressure to transform the ethnological museum into a kind of art museum, since the commercial 'success' of the Quai Branly Museum attracts more visitors than ever. How can we reformulate the purpose and the *raison d'être* of the ethnological museum? The following essays by Kenji Yoshida, Paul Faber and Yukiya Kawaguchi try to answer to this delicate question from different points of view.

2) Late Capitalism can also be described as a time of large-scale destruction, through two world wars, ethnic conflicts and natural disasters. If we note that our memory is maintained only when attached to certain things, cases of large-scale destruction must be critical challenges for memory. We may ask how survivors who have lost all their belongings can fix firmly in their memory what has happened or what has been lost. This question becomes extremely important when we try to make exhibitions concerning disasters like war or tsunami that have claimed many lives and eliminated many things.

3) The body as a thing is also a trend of our time. People in the past considered the body and soul to be one and the same. But this kind of thinking has drastically changed. Medical development of organ transplants and growing trends in cosmetic surgery, tattoos and body piercings have made us think of the body as changeable, as much as we like. If the body is regarded as a thing to be manipulated and altered, does the mind or ego that was supposed to be supported by the body become replaceable and lose its stable identity? To study the body as material leads us to reconsider concepts of human identity in the Late Capitalism.

With these problems in mind, we set about our project, and organized six international symposia and two international lectures. The presentations and discussions will be

Takezawa, professor at Minpaku, specializes in ethnology and West African history and archaeology. Recent works include 'Discovery of the earliest Royal Palace in Gao and its implication for the history of West Africa' in Cahiers d'études africaines (2012), What is Society? (in Japanese, Chuokoron-sha, 2010), and Living among Rubble: Aftermath of the Tsunami (in Japanese, Chuokoron-sha, 2013, English translation in progress).

**In Spring 2014, a special issue of the French Journal Techniques & Culture will publish all the papers presented on the occasion of our Paris symposium held in January 2013.*

published in Japanese and in French.*
Soon after embarking on the project, an unparalleled disaster occurred in northeastern Japan. Bitterly affected by it, we were obliged to modify the direction of our studies: the study of the body as material seemed indiscreet

and we began to think of making an exhibition on the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami. The last essay written by Shoichiro Takezawa discusses the relationship between memory and thing with reference to a possible exhibition on the tsunami.

The Power of Museum Display

Kenji Yoshida

National Museum of Ethnology

Within the framework of a Core Research Project 'The Cult of Things', a series of symposia and colloquia was organized, including two international symposia concerning Africa, for which I played the role as convener. In this short essay, I wish to introduce some ideas that gained recognition through discussions at these symposia.

As many readers know, Minpaku has been refurbishing its entire permanent exhibition, beginning with the galleries for Africa and West Asia, which reopened in March 2009. So far, about two thirds of the galleries have been renovated, and the work will continue for two more years.

To refurbish the Africa gallery, for which I was in charge, we asked museum professionals in Africa to be advisors, with the hope that the exhibition would function as a continuing platform for academic cooperation. The completed Africa gallery now incorporates the input from those advisors.

The colloquium 'Exhibiting Africa: Contemporary Perspectives on the Representation of Cultures in Museums', was held on February 17–18, 2012, at Minpaku, to review the

new exhibition of the Africa gallery. Invited were specialists who directly or indirectly contributed to realization of the exhibition. The colloquium enabled us to consider Minpaku's new African exhibition in the global context, making the achievements and limitations clear. Many overseas participants appreciated the display in the 'Work' section, which focuses on individuals with their portraits, names, the tools they work with, and video or text messages that tell us what they think about their own occupations. We, curators of the exhibition, installed the display with the intention to demonstrate the life of the people who live together with us in the same era. These exhibits were appreciated as suggesting a new direction for ethnographic exhibition.

General discussion in the colloquium helped us to identify more positive and productive ways of exhibiting cultures in museums in this and the coming age. Many participants, from inside and outside Africa, underlined the need for and potential of exhibitions that bridge various gaps found in our perception — between we and they, Africa and the West, the primitive and the civilized, etc. — for the ultimate purpose recognizing that we all are contemporaries. It seems the new Africa gallery at Minpaku is appreciated partly because it has achieved these goals. An exhibition indeed has power to change our perception about the world.

Another symposium 'Can Art and Museums Contribute to the Renaissance of the Society?' was held on May 26, 2012. This was concerned with a unique challenge now faced in Mozambique, where civil war directly followed the nation's battle for independence from Portuguese colonial rule (1962–1975). The civil war ended in 1992, but a vast number of weapons remained in the country, buried in the bush or hidden in peoples' homes. Now a project called



The new African exhibition in Minpaku (Yoshida, 2013)

Transformação de Armas em Enxadas/ Transforming Arms into Plowshares (TAE) is in progress. Weapons are collected in exchange for instruments of production, like hoes, plows, bicycles, and in some cases tractors, and collected weapons are transformed into art works by the hands of artists. The project, which transforms destructive weapons into productive tools is now considered a model for peace-building and peace-keeping in post-conflict societies. Artworks made through the TAE project were collected by the British Museum in 2004, and Minpaku also commissioned a work. This work, named 'Cycle of Life', was made in 2012, and was on display in a temporary exhibition 'Transforming Arms into Art: Peace-building in Mozambique' (July 11 – November 5, 2013).

To the symposium, we invited as keynote speaker Bishop Dinis Sengulane, who initiated the TAE project. When he found that large numbers of weapons remained in his country after the war, he had the idea of exchanging guns with agricultural tools and bicycles. Within a couple of years, he also started the programme of transforming the collected guns into artworks. In his speech, Bishop Sengulane stressed that art and museums have the power to disarm the minds of people as well as the hands of people.

In South Sudan, a similar project has started, based on the TAE project. When Jok Madut Jok, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, South Sudan, visited the British Museum in January 2012, and saw a TAE piece named 'Tree of Life' on display, he was inspired by the work and became keen to start the same project in his own country. He expressed his wish to meet Bishop Sengulane. I received this information from Chris Spring, curator of the British Museum, whom I had invited to the same symposium as a panelist. I



'Tree of Life' on display at the British Museum, 2004 (Yoshida, 2005)

immediately invited Jok Madut Jok also, hoping that he and the Bishop could meet each other in Japan. Unfortunately Jok could not come to Japan because of official duties in his country, but he sent us a paper for the symposium. As a result, the symposium in Japan was able to play a role in bridging peace-building movements between the two African countries. A project of transforming collected weapons into art monuments has already started in South Sudan. This became possible because of the existence of an art object designed to be seen by people, in a place where people can meet each other, i.e., the museum. Indeed a museum display has the power to change society.

Yoshida is professor at Minpaku, specializing in Museum anthropology. He has carried out fieldwork on the expressive culture and cultural heritage of Southern Africa, especially in Zambia. He has also organized exhibitions on art and culture through networking between art museums and cultural museums. His major exhibitions and publications include *Discovery of Cultures* (in Japanese, Iwanami Shoten, 1999), *Images of Other Cultures* (co-editor with John Mack, exhibition catalogue, in Japanese, NHK Service Center, 1997), *Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Africa* (co-editor with John Mack, James Currey, 2008), *Self & Other: Portraits from Asia and Europe* (co-editor with Brian Durrans, exhibition catalogue, Asahi Shimbun, 2008), and *Portraits of Cultures: Networking Museology* (in Japanese, Iwanami Shoten, 2013).

Crisis in Dutch Ethnological Museums

Paul Faber

Tropenmuseum Amsterdam, Nederland

Not very long ago, the Netherlands had a unique position worldwide in the field of ethnological museums. In the early 1980s there were ten ethnological museums. The three largest and most important were the National Museum of

Ethnology in Leiden, the Museum of Ethnology in Rotterdam (owned by the city of Rotterdam), and the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam (owned by a society, financed by the national government). All three had roots in the

Faber was Senior Curator Africa at Tropenmuseum Amsterdam from 1997 until December 1, 2013. His activities focused mainly on contemporary African art and popular art and culture. His recent publications include 'How the Tropenmuseum collected' in Encounters (KIT Publishers, 2012), Africa at the Tropenmuseum (KIT Publishers, 2011), and Long Live the President: Portrait-cloths in Africa (KIT Publishers, 2010). For more, see www.paulfaber.nl

19th century, the Tropenmuseum being the descendant of the previous Colonial Museum.

I started my museum career in 1986 in Rotterdam. There were about seven curators at the time, and a very dynamic and ambitious staff. We produced up to fifteen exhibitions every year, expanded themes to include modern art and photography, ran a small theatre, and addressed the multi-cultural status of Dutch society. In that period the Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam drew more visitors than ever before, up to 300,000 a year. The museum was full of innovative ideas, and performed at a high level. The Amsterdam cosmopolitan population was highly interested in what was then called 'The Third World'. The museum in Leiden had, and has, a stronger academic approach, closely linked with Leiden University. It is situated in a smaller city, but has the oldest and largest collection.

The dense Dutch museum culture led to creative competition. The value attributed to world cultures was high, as the Dutch realized they lived in a small country in a large world. Besides that, the Dutch population had become culturally very diversified. There was a general belief that these museums played an important role in society. The Tropenmuseum enjoyed worldwide respect as a leading institution for its collections and presentations. In the Tropenmuseum Junior (TM-junior), it housed an exemplary children's museum, and its Tropentheatre was the largest theatre in the Netherlands for 'non-western' performing arts.

Now in 2013, the situation is dramatically different. Over the years,

smaller museums were closed one by one, with the exception of the Africa Museum in Berg en Dal. The museum in Rotterdam, renamed as the 'Wereldmuseum' (World Museum), inherited financial problems after an ill-conceived extension. The present director Stanley Bremer changed the course of the museum radically, and brought in commercial parties. The major exhibition hall was emptied for rentals, there is a wine bar and a large shop, the children's museum closed down. As this didn't get the museum out of trouble, Bremer started to contemplate selling parts of the collection. When Bremer announced his intention to sell off the complete Africa collection last year, the museum world and city politics were definitely alarmed. The city government withheld its permission, and at the same time cut the budget by 40 percent. As a result 28 of 37 staff members were fired in May 2013.

A comparable disaster struck the Tropenmuseum, but here the threat came out of the blue. Due to the economic crisis, the government announced two years ago that it intended to stop financing the museum completely as of January 2013. This led to disbelief, protests and political action. In June 2013 the final verdict was given. The museum budget and the museum staff will be cut in half. This is taking place as I write these lines. The theatre is already closed as well as the library. Furthermore, the Tropenmuseum is obliged to fuse with the National Museum of Ethnology and the Africa Museum into one National Museum of World Cultures. This is expected to take place in January 2014. The objective is to maintain the public functions in all three localities, but there are no guarantees for that. All of these changes seem to signal the end of an era. The future will show us what grows in the new era.



Front side of the Tropenmuseum Amsterdam, 2013 (I. de Groot, 2013)
(© Tropenmuseum)

Searching for Another Way of Representing Art: 'A Fateful Journey: Africa in the Works of El Anatsui'

Yukiya Kawaguchi

Rikkyo University

An exhibition entitled 'A Fateful Journey: Africa in the Works of El Anatsui' was held at Minpaku from September 16 to December 7, 2010. It was the first exhibition totally consecrated to a living black artist of sub-Saharan Africa displayed in Japan. Based on my experience of curating this exhibition, I would like to make some comments on the possibilities and impossibilities of exhibiting artistic works in an ethnological museum.

The exhibition 'A Fateful Journey: Africa in the Works of El Anatsui' contained around 140 works from earlier wood reliefs to the most recent metal bottle-cap installations with some locally-made traditional textiles, wooden figures, photos and video, explaining the cultural background of his life and works.

El Anatsui, born in Ghana in 1944 and now based in Nigeria, is one of the most prominent artists in the world today. Since around 2000, when he began to create textile-like installations from metal-caps scrapped by local people, he has come to attract a lot of attention in the global art world.

I conceived this exhibition with two main foci. The first was to present a large-scale one-man exhibition of a living black African artist. Probably this exhibition was the first attempt in the world to cover a living black African artist on such a large scale. The art world of Europe, America and Japan may not have been keen to take up and engage black African artists as individuals, using the one-person exhibition format.

The second focus was to represent the artworks of Anatsui through the narrative of art history and cultural anthropology. Of course, I am deeply conscious that this approach will not be easily accepted by the artist and other art-world professionals in Africa. Modern and contemporary masters like Picasso or Warhol from Europe and America are often exhibited in art museums without any explanation of their cultural background. Their works

are almost always presented just as artworks.

However, we should not forget that artists must bear the burden of the culture, history, and local conditions and customs of the times and places in which they live. If this fact is accepted sincerely, there may be a positive way of looking at this condition, and to meaningfully speak about art from a variety of viewpoints, including those of art history, cultural anthropology, and even related fields such as mythology and folklore.

I believe the viewer would be in a better position to understand the rich tradition of textiles in Ghana, such as Kente cloth and Adinkra, lying behind the metal-cap installations by Anatsui, if the art museum provided a more detailed presentation of the work's historical and cultural background, from the perspective of cultural anthropology and history. This approach might suggest that the presentation and experience of art merely as art is simply insufficient. That is one reason for the approach adopted in this exhibition.

Again, though, I acutely understand

Kawaguchi is professor of Rikkyo University. His main research themes are contemporary African art and representation in display. His recent publications include Contemporary Art from Africa (in Japanese, Akashi Shoten, 2011), Bijutsukan to Iu Gensou: Girei to Kenryoku (translation, Carol Duncan, Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums, Suiseisha, 2011). He has also curated many exhibitions including An Inside Story: African Art of Our Time (Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo and others, 1995–1996), A Fateful Journey: Africa in the Works of El Anatsui (Minpaku and others, 2010–2011).



An overview of the gallery with metal-cap installations (2010)



Showing the historical and cultural background through traditional textiles and other objects (2010)

that this explanation cannot satisfy art-world professionals in Africa, who keenly want these works treated just as artwork, and who wonder why only black African artists are discussed in the context of both art galleries and ethnological museums. To deal with this question squarely, it would be necessary for all museums, whether they deal with ethnology or with art, to represent modern and contemporary artists of Europe, America, and Japan in the context of their time, history, and

culture from multiple points of view. This exhibition is not a site controlled by a privileged narrative limited to the perspective of a single discipline; rather, it is a bold step toward creating a discursive space where multiple narratives can coexist.

Minpaku organized this exhibition partly because public art museums in Japan are not particularly active in holding African contemporary art exhibitions. Some energetic younger curators at public art museums here might wish to propose such shows, but would most likely run into a stone wall. If it were an artist like Anatsui, the art museum elite might note that he is surely a wonderful artist, but that it is a little too early to present his one-man exhibition before making a (yet another) provisional group exhibition to know broadly what is going in the African contemporary art world. Very fortunately this time, the kind understanding of three art museums enabled me to make a good network for the touring exhibition of El Anatsui. Nevertheless, given current realities, the likelihood of a one-man exhibition of Anatsui or any other black African artist anytime soon in a major Japanese art museum is slim. This exhibition is thus an attempt to break a habitual problem few want to acknowledge: how to overcome our deep-rooted Euro-American centrism.

Exhibiting Catastrophes in Ethnological Museums

Shoichiro Takezawa

National Museum of Ethnology

The Great East Japan Earthquake occurred on March 11, 2011. It was the most powerful and most disastrous known earthquake ever to have hit Japan. The Japanese Government has confirmed 20,853 deaths and missing persons, 332,374 buildings collapsed, 468,653 refugees, and an economic loss of 200 billion dollars.

Many coastal municipalities were destroyed by the Tsunami which followed the earthquake. Some of them lost all their institutions and infrastructure: their city hall, fire station, police station, shopping center, and more. In such municipalities, only the self-defense organizations formed

by local people could protect each community from shortages of food and water, the winter cold, and thieves who became active in the darkness of night. With the help of such organizations, and by working shoulder to shoulder, they could survive for a week without any help from the outside.

We are now planning to make an exhibition about the East Japan Earthquake. How can it be conceived? Two requirements should be kept in mind: 1) To make clear to whom and for whom the exhibition is to be shown and made; 2) To be sensitive about the limits of the exhibition. We should avoid giving a false image of a catastrophe

that was of a scale far beyond anything that can be imagined.

If the exhibition is realized in our museum located far from the disaster stricken area, its purpose would be to make the unknown known, to make the knowledge touchable: many Japanese understood the immensity of the catastrophe through TV and the newspapers, but such media could not convey the full reality of the disaster. It would not be meaningless to try to represent nature's awesome forces by an arrangement of objects destroyed by the tsunami, combined with photo panels and video.

The content would be completely different, however, if it were to be presented in the actual area devastated by the tsunami. In this case, we should firstly be careful not to exploit the catastrophe, i.e., to avoid 'consuming' the sufferings of the victims. An exhibition that focuses on the immensity of the catastrophe would be severely criticized by the local people who have lost family or friends and who are still suffering from it. They would observe that an exhibition of this kind would be merely about the catastrophe, the traumatic event, not the people who have experienced it.

What should we do then? We think it important to reproduce a series of scenes of how people organized their daily lives before the disaster, how they experienced the tsunami, and how they continue to strive to reestablish their lives and communities after the catastrophe. It is important to show the flow of experiences that constitute the cultural and social context in which they live.

If the above is accepted as our principle, the exhibition would be composed of certain sections or scenes. In the first, two scale models representing respectively the town before and after the tsunami would be shown to give a general overview. These models would then be followed by a section with scenes of daily life before the catastrophe: a small business shop in the town centre, a room in a farmhouse on the mountainside, and a room equipped with fishing tools. On the wall in each of these spaces, photos would be added to make the scenes vivid. This section may be attractive to the local people, who might rediscover there their lost world.

The next section would demonstrate the subversive power of the tsunami through photos, panels and video. This section would also be filled with daily-life objects destroyed by the tsunami, for example: dishes, cupboards, water pipes, bicycles, motorbikes and



Aftermath of the tsunami in Kirikiri village (Takezawa, 2011)



Scale model of the village before the tsunami made for the future exposition (Takezawa, 2013)

instruments of music. After this visitors could watch stories of the people who experienced the catastrophe. The speakers on screen would explain how they personally escaped the tsunami by a hairsbreadth, and how they survived the total razing of their community by it.

The last section would show how local people are building their lives. Scale models representing the reconstructed town would be included, together with some of the festival symbols that have been a source of emotional support for the people who lost everything.

At the end of the exhibition, we plan to put photos all over a corner wall. These are photos that were found in the piles of debris or under destroyed houses. Through my experience as a voluntary worker after the tsunami, I know how these photos were originally

saved. We cleaned them up and displayed them on walls so that the photo owners could recover them. Many were returned to their owners, but many still remained in the storehouse, attesting the absence of owners who

may have died or moved out of town. The photo without a claimant is something like the lonely dead. In this corner, we want to transmit memories of the lost souls.

Exhibition

Shibusawa Keizo Memorial Project: Attic Museum

Special Exhibition
September 19 – December 3,
2013

The year 2013 is the fiftieth anniversary of the death of Shibusawa Keizo (1896–1963). To commemorate his life, we are presenting a special exhibition, 'Shibusawa Keizo Memorial Project: Attic Museum'.

Keizo had many different faces, as businessman, banker (vice-president of Dai-ichi Bank, governor of the Bank of Japan), Minister of Finance appointed from the private sector (Shidehara Kijuro Cabinet), international goodwill ambassador, philanthropist, educator, researcher of fisheries history, and folklorist. Before World War II, he worked for the project of his grandfather, Ei-ichi Shibusawa, who established modern capitalism in Japan by introducing the banking system and corporation under the new Meiji government. In this period, he established the Attic Museum, a laboratory for fisheries history, and was devoted to training researchers, and to his own studies. After the war, he organized 'Kyu Gakkai Rengou', a union of nine societies (ethnology, folklore, anthropology, sociology, linguistics, geography, religious studies, archaeology, and psychology) and the 'Minakata Society' to honor Kumagusu Minakata and disseminate his works.

The Attic Museum was established in the attic of Keizo's mansion in Tokyo. When he started a modest private museum, he was still a

student at Tokyo Imperial University. His friends donated private or family materials to his museum, and they also collected souvenirs, toys, and other items for his collection, when they travelled.

At the beginning, it was a small museum created for his own pleasure. But Keizo and his friends gradually became interested in serious study and began to investigate folk toys. At that time in Japan, toys were in fashion as a hobby subject, but they considered it a subject of study. Various toys were collected under the slogan 'toys research as teamwork'. After Dharma (a good luck doll) was chosen as a subject, their research became deeper. They classified the different types and made distribution maps of Dharma production areas and related fairs, as well as making collections, and tried to clarify the genealogy and cultural diffusion of Dharma traditions.

The interest of this group was also focused on handmade objects used daily by the common people. Keizo called these objects 'mingu', which means 'traditional folk tools' in Japanese. He recognized the importance of studying 'mingu' and he encouraged others to collect them. Moreover, he published a handbook of 'mingu' and sent

it to his many acquaintances across the nation. Many cooperated with Keizo in collecting 'mingu' and his collection reached more than 20,000 items in total. This collection became a precious resource for research on Japanese daily life in the first half of the 20th century. The materials are held as a fundamental collection in our museum.

Keizo has been called the 'organizer of scholarship' and the 'father of Japanese ethnology' for his many academic contributions including the vast sums of his own money that he spent



Various Dharmas collected by attic museum members from all over Japan in the first half of the 20th century (Yukiyo Daido, 2013)

throughout his life on assisting research and publishing. In this exhibition we introduce this aspect of his life and also the results of folk research dealing with his collections, and related comparative studies.

Keizo and his fellows planned and carried out many cooperative research projects in the Attic Museum under the slogan 'harmonious development as teamwork'. In this exhibition, we have arranged collections according to the research themes of Keizo and his team.

At last, with regret, we must report an obituary. Professor Masaki Kondo, chief organizer of the special exhibition, died suddenly of heart failure on August 3, 2013. All who were engaged in preparation of the exhibition and its opening have inherited his aspirations.

Hiroki Kimura
Member of Exhibition
Committee
Ryukoku University

Conferences

Can Cultural Heritage Forge Communities? Efforts in Africa

*International Symposium
May 27 – 28, 2013*

This symposium was held as the first meeting of the Minpaku Core Research Project 'Anthropology of Cultural Heritage: Communities and Materiality in Global Systems', aiming to relate practices for safeguarding cultural heritage and for the development and empowerment of communities.

The symposium was focused especially on efforts in Africa. We plan to discuss other areas in later symposia. The hypothesis we began with was that a community can be built up around a core of cultural heritage and memory, and not necessarily the reverse.

Cultural heritage can surely affect communal identity at various levels. Allen Roberts



Excursion to Ise Shrine, where the renovation every 20 years is supported by local communities (Yukako Yoshida, 2013)

(UCLA, USA) and Chantal Radimilahy (University of Antananarivo, Madagascar) reported national-level identity formation in Senegal and Madagascar. Itsushi Kawase (Minpaku) and Mary Jo Arnoldi (National Museum of Natural History (NMNH), Smithsonian Institution, USA) reported both converging and diverging reactions to their own cultural practices (filmmaking for Kawase and museum exhibitions for Arnoldi) among members of the African diaspora and communities resident in Africa.

Local movements regarding UNESCO heritage policy were also discussed. Katsuhiko Keida (Kumamoto University) reported on Sacred Mijikenda Kaya Forests (World Heritage, Kenya), Oussouby Sacko (Kyoto Seika University) on Old Towns of Djenné (World Heritage, Mali), and Taku Iida (Minpaku) on the Woodcarving Knowledge of the Zafimaniry (Intangible Cultural Heritage, Madagascar). Each case showed that registration by UNESCO as world heritage throws local communities into new circumstances. The people in world heritage areas are never passive but are always starting new practices in their lives. Sometimes they collaborate with others who live outside the designated area, expanding their communities as a result.

Heritage from the past has an active role in the present. This is understandable since the notion of heritage itself is a product of objectification by the

present culture in the modern or postmodern moment. An example of this was provided by John Mack (University of East Anglia, UK) who discussed royal funerals in Madagascar and Ghana at the beginning of the colonial age. According to him, funerary practices create social bonds between past and present as the participants seek to overcome the dislocations of individual death. Similarly, as Kenji Yoshida (Minpaku) reports, contemporary Zambian ethnic communities strengthen their identity by reviving or even creating festivals.

Thus it is evident that cultural heritage, in certain conditions, can help to forge or renew communities. However, heritage-related cultural practices cannot be consistent. They respond to intervention, are negotiated, and adapt to conditions. Cultural heritage is not a product but, Arnoldi says, a process. The life of communities and changes in cultural heritage will be explored further in this project.

Taku Iida
Convener
National Museum of Ethnology

Transforming Arms into Art: Reviewing the Peacebuilding in Mozambique

*International Workshop
July 13, 2013*

The International Workshop



'Cycle of Life' with the artists, Fiel dos Santos (right) and Cristóvão Canhavato (Kester) (left) (Yoshida, 2013)

'Transforming Arms into Art: Reviewing the Peace-building in Mozambique' was held on July 13, 2013 in conjunction with the opening of a four-month exhibition entitled 'Transforming Arms into Art: Peace-building in Mozambique', which was shown until November 5, 2013.

Currently, some parts of Africa that have experienced civil war are trying to overcome conflict and work on building peace. Especially in Mozambique, something remarkable is happening.

Mozambique became independent in 1975 and the civil war continued until 1992. Even after the war ended, large quantities of weapons were left among the citizens. Now a unique program is in place to exchange these weapons with useful tools such as hoes, plowshares and bicycles, to help disarm the people, and to transform the exchanged weapons into artworks. This project is called the TAE (Transformação de Armas em Enxadas/Transforming Arms into Plowshares), and has become noted as a model for peace building after the end of civil war.

Last year (2012), a new work entitled 'Cycle of Life' was created by two artists, Fiel dos Santos and Cristóvão

Canhavato (Kester), and collected by Minpaku. The work is composed of figures of a father and a mother with a baby riding a bicycle. As for bicycles, an NGO called Ehime Global Network based in Matsuyama in Shikoku, Japan, has been sending bicycles abandoned and then collected in Matsuyama to Mozambique for the last fifteen years. Those bicycles have been exchanged with the guns

held by many people. The 'Cycle of Life' thus depicts a peaceful life realized by handing over guns to the TAE project, through the image of a family riding a bicycle.

For the workshop, we invited the two artists who created the work and a senior coordinator of the TAE project, Nicolau Luis (Christian Council of Mozambique), together with a representative of the Ehime Global Network, Yoshiko Takeuchi. Each of the panelists presented his/her own idea about why and how he/she has been involved in the project. A commentator, Masahiro Ushiroshoji (Kyushu University), noted that TAE works have transformed destructive weapons to creative art works, demonstrating art's power to transform society. Though nowadays art is often considered as something aloof from society, in fact art has been and still is deeply embedded in social settings, and cannot exist otherwise. The TAE works clarify this basic nature of art in a very persuasive form, Ushiroshoji added. The TAE works have the power to make us question the prevailing notion of art itself.

During the discussion, it also became clear that while

the TAE project has gained worldwide recognition, it is not yet fully acknowledged within Mozambique. In fact, about one million arms have been collected so far, but some millions of arms may still remain in the country. The workshop provided participants with a unique opportunity to think about what we can all do for peace — as individuals, artists, and organizations such as the museum.

Kenji Yoshida
Convenor
National Museum of Ethnology

Information

Awards

Four Minpaku researchers have recently been given prestigious awards for their exceptional academic and social contributions.

Yukako Yoshida (Research Fellow, Department of Advanced Studies in Anthropology) received a JASCA (Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology) Promotion Award for her recent published work (Temporal face and temporal body: Balinese masked dance drama as an assemblage of humans and material things, *Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology* 76(1), 2011). This award recognizes excellent publications during the previous year by researchers under 35 years of age (June, 2013).

Shigeharu Tanabe (Professor Emeritus) received The 28th Daido Life Award for Area Studies for his life-long contributions to Northern Thailand area studies and theoretical contributions. This award was established by The Daido Life Foundation in order to recognize excellent areal studies in Asia, Africa, Central and South America and Oceania (July 12, 2013).

Toshio Asakura (Research

Center for Cultural Resources) has recently received the Ok-gwan Medal (Jeweled Crown), Order of Cultural Merit, Republic of Korea for his long contributions in anthropological studies of Korean society and in promoting personal and cultural exchanges between Japan and Korea at Minpaku (October 19, 2013).

Kazuko Matsuzawa (Professor Emeritus) received an Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Neck Ribbon from the Japanese government for her life-long contribution to cultural anthropological studies in Taiwan. The Ribbon is a prestigious award given to scholars and artists who have made a prominent contribution to science and art (November 3, 2013).

In memoriam

With regret we note the following:

Masaki Kondo, Professor. Studied folk materials and folklore. Minpaku 1990–2013; d. August 3, 2013; **Chikasato Ogyu**, Professor Emeritus. Studied folk taxonomy and social structure of the Tupi-Guarani Indians. Brazil, Paraguay, South America. Minpaku 1974–1993; d. August 29, 2013.

New Staff

Yuzo Marukawa

Associate Professor, Department of Advanced Studies in Anthropology



Marukawa studies the use of information services for managing cultural properties. From 2003 to 2012, he was involved in

the research and development of an information service for Japanese cultural properties

using 'Associative Search', at the National Institute of Informatics (NII). Before joining Minpaku in October 2013, he was an associate professor at the Office for Virtual Resources of the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken). One of his research outcomes at NII is the website 'Cultural Heritage Online' (<http://bunka.nii.ac.jp/>). This portal provides information about cultural properties in the collections of art and other museums all over Japan.

Hironao Kawai

Assistant Professor, Center for Research Development



Kawai was educated at Tokyo Metropolitan University, where he received his PhD in social anthropology in 2009. Since 2001,

he has conducted field research on landscape and built environments in Okinawa, China, and Overseas Chinese communities. He previously worked for Jiaying University and Sun Yat-sen University in Guangdong, China, and the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan (Research Fellow, November 2011 – August 2013). His research interests are: urban anthropology, the anthropology of landscape, and ethnological studies of the Han Chinese. He is currently working on urban spaces and cultural landscapes among Hakka people in South China and Southeast Asia.

Atsushi Yamamoto

Research Fellow, Center for Research Development

Yamamoto specializes in prehistoric Andean civilization. His research interests are the formation of complex societies, emphasizing the activities of ceremonial centers, inter-regional interactions, and social changes during the Formative Period (3000-50 BC).



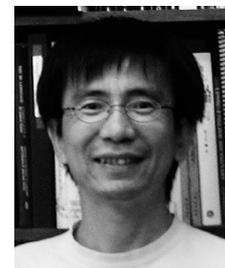
Since 2001, he has conducted fieldwork in the northern highlands and tropical lowlands of Peru.

Activities included excavation of ceremonial centers and field surveys to identify archaeological sites and exchange routes. He is also involved in the protection and management of archaeological heritage in the Cajamarca region in northern Peru. He received his MA from Saitama University (2003) and PhD from the Graduate University for Advanced Studies (2012).

Visiting Scholars

Weera Ostapirat

Associate Professor, Mahidol University, Thailand



Born in Bangkok, Weera received his PhD from the University of California, Berkeley, and specializes in Southeast Asian

linguistics, particularly comparative phonology and historical reconstruction. His main interests cover genetic relationships of the languages of East and Southeast Asia, and linguistic implications for history and culture in each area. His major works include *Proto-Kra* (Linguistics of the Tibeto-Burman Area 23(1), 2000) and 'Kra-Dai and Austronesian: Notes on the phonological correspondences and vocabulary distribution' in L. Sagart et al. (eds.) *The Peopling of East Asia: Putting Together Archaeology, Linguistics, and Genetics* (RoutledgeCurzon, 2005). At Minpaku, he is working with Ritsuko Kikusawa on historical relationships between Tai/

Kra-Dai and Austronesian, as seen through shared linguistic features and lexicon.

(June 18, 2013 – June 17, 2014)

Pedram Khosronejad

The Goli Rais Larizadeh Fellow of the Iran Heritage Foundation for Anthropology of Iran, Department of Social Anthropology, University of St Andrews, UK



Khosronejad is a staff member in the Department of Social Anthropology, University of St Andrews, Scotland, and associate

member of Groupe Sociétés, Religions, Laïcités, Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique (CNRS), Paris, France. He obtained his PhD at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales (EHESS) in Paris. His research interests include cultural and social anthropology, the anthropology of death and dying, visual anthropology, visual piety, devotional artefacts, and religious material culture, with a particular interest in Iran, Persianate societies and the Islamic world. He is the editor of several publications: *The Art and Material Culture of Iranian Shi'ism: Iconography and Religious Devotion in Shi'i Islam* (I.B. Tauris, 2012); *Saints and their Pilgrims in Iran and Neighbouring Countries* (Sean Kingston, 2012); *Iranian Sacred Defence Cinema: Religion, Martyrdom and National Identity* (Sean Kingston, 2012); *Unburied Memories: The Politics of Bodies, and the Material Culture of Sacred Defense Martyrs in Iran* (Routledge, 2012). He is also chief editor of the *Anthropology of the Contemporary Middle East and Central Eurasia (ACME)*. During his stay at Minpaku, he will be working on 'Visual Representations of Belief and Gender in Iran: Shiite Ritual in Film'.

(August 30, 2013 – August 29, 2014)

Publications

From July to December 2013, we published the following issues and articles:

Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology 38

Issue 1: Muchu, Y., 'A study of language changes in rGyalrong influenced by Tibetan and Chinese'; H. Kawai, 'New trends in Hakka studies in Southeast Asia: Some perspectives from Singapore and Malaysia'; M.V. Mongush, 'Expedition to the Tuvans in China, Russia, and Mongolia in 2012: A preliminary report'; M. Itoh, 'Memoir of field work in the Southwestern Islands, Japan'; and D. Murakami, 'The Tibetan exorcist prayer *Mi kha'i bzlog 'gyur*—text, translation and notes—'.

Senri Ethnological Studies

No.84: Kishigami, N., H. Hamaguchi and J.M. Savelle (eds.) *Anthropological Studies of Whaling*. 366pp.

No.85: Sonoda, N., C. Laroque, H-y. Jeong and G. Chen (eds.) *Research on Paper and Papermaking Techniques: Proceedings of an International Workshop*. 130pp.

Senri Ethnological Reports

No.115: Konagaya, Y., L. Jadamba, M. Rossabi and M. Rossabi (eds.) *The Practice of Buddhism in Kharkhorin and its Revival*. 376pp.

Forthcoming Special Exhibition

The Power of Images: The National Museum of Ethnology Collection

Organized by
The National Art Center, Tokyo
(NACT) and Minpaku

at NACT,
Feb. 19 – Jun. 9, 2014
at Minpaku,
Sep. 11 – Nov. 25, 2014

MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter

The Newsletter is published in June and December. 'Minpaku' is an abbreviation of the Japanese name for the National Museum of Ethnology (*Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan*). 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.

The Newsletter is available online at:
<http://www.minpaku.ac.jp/english/research/activity/publication/periodical/newsletter>

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Editor: Michiko Intoh

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