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Special Theme: The Present and Future Ethnology Museum

The editorial panel of the *Newsletter* invited Professor Yoshida to speak freely around a range of topics and questions. The interview, conducted by Peter J. Matthews (PJM) on April 14, 2022, took place in person at Minpaku. The following text is an edited transcript, with editorial notes added in square brackets.

The Present and Future Ethnology Museum: An Interview with YOSHIDA Kenji

YOSHIDA Kenji

National Museum of Ethnology

Peter J. Matthews

National Museum of Ethnology

Professor YOSHIDA Kenji (Director-General, Minpaku) (hereafter YK) has been closely involved in the management of Minpaku for many years, alongside his personal research in expressive culture, representation, and cultural heritage (see short biography in margin, next page). As a graduate student he majored in art history, but pursued an interest in anthropology alongside formal studies. He was first appointed to Minpaku as an assistant professor in 1978 and has been Director General since April 2017. In 2021, he began a new two-year term.

PJM: Please tell us about Minpaku during the current Covid 19 pandemic. Since March 2020 there has been no lockdown in Japan, but we have all spent much more time working at home compared to previous years. As a museum director, did you "gain" any time because of not travelling? Did you also work from home, like most of the staff?

YK: I did work from home a bit more often, but as for gaining time, yes and no. In the early part of the pandemic there was some extra time. Like other staff, I could no longer go abroad for fieldwork or meetings. It was also difficult to invite foreign scholars to the museum so we had fewer international interactions, which was a big loss for the museum. So, yes, there was some extra time but then the online meeting systems became popular. This made it easier to organise meetings and invite foreign scholars to join. Face to face meetings require travel of at least a week to attend, which makes it difficult to arrange schedules. An online meeting allows shorter notice for invitations, and requires less time to attend...so research meetings became more frequent than ever! And more people could be invited. The increase in activity was a gain academically, but deeper discussion is not so easy online. Because it is so easy to arrange such meetings, there have been so many meetings over the last year...a continuous chain of meetings. I had to strongly

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YOSHIDA Kenji is Director-General of the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka. He has carried out long-term fieldwork on the expressive culture and cultural heritage of southern Africa, especially in Zambia. He also specializes in the representation of culture in museums, and has organized exhibitions on art and culture based on collaborations between art and other cultural museums. His major publications include *Images Other Cultures* (exhibition catalogue, ed. with John Mack, 1997, NHI/Service Center); *Discovery of Cultures (Bunka no Hakken, 1999, in Japanese)* and *Preserving the Cultural Heritage of Africa: Crisis or Renaissance?* (ed. with John Mack, 2008).

reject all other meetings to find the time for our interview today [held face-to-face, with clear plastic screens on a table for separation].

PJM: How will our pandemic experience change the museum in the future?

YK: Telework has some good points. The reduced time spent for travel gives staff more time for their own work. Connecting computers from home to the museum system and online journals is a convenient working mode. Perhaps in the future I will continue to recommend that staff combine work at the museum office with telework, to work more effectively. We don't have to go back completely to the previous working style. But for museum activities related to the public, we need staff to be present in the galleries and to support events. For our academic work, the hybrid style is recommendable. In the future I will try to keep at least one day each week for telework. At the office I cannot focus on my own research or writing, or one topic.

PJM: For me, the pandemic period has been a useful pause for reflection on past fieldwork, and for writing.

YK: Yes! I've asked staff to focus on what can be done when we are not doing fieldwork or going abroad for other reasons.

PJM: There may be other changes to working styles. Previously we travelled long distances for short visits and meetings.

YK: Now we can focus on longer-term fieldwork, or more intensive discussions that take more time. We can combine the different styles of telework and travel to be more effective and more healthy.

PJM: Perhaps this can be part of a shift to saving energy and being carbon

neutral, and being more conscious of sustainable development goals. That aside, even if we can travel out of Japan, the situation is still difficult in many other countries, because of the pandemic, or other reasons. I'm hoping to go to Papua New Guinea within the next year, but I'm not sure it will be possible.

YK: Yes. The situation is difficult for staff planning fieldwork, and also difficult for me, because when you travel, I am the one who signs the document that gives you permission. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has a travel advice and warning system for Japanese travellers to other countries. The strongest is level 4: "do not go and do not stay". At level 3, the "refrain from travel" recommendation usually means we do not allow staff to travel, but Ministry safety gradings are slow to change in response to conditions on the ground. If a staff member is very familiar with a particular country and situation, and can make a convincing argument that a planned trip is safe, then I might allow it.

In anthropology, our face-to-face encounters are most basic. Definitely we must go back to the field, the question is when.

PJM: Apart from online activities, have we gained anything from the present situation?

YK: We have. Many scholars in anthropology have started to carry out research on foreign communities in Japan, and students can do this too. For example, students who joined the Graduate University for Advanced Studies (Sokendai) recently have not been able to carry out any fieldwork. This is an issue not just for Sokendai students at Minpaku, but for all universities with students who need to go abroad. If a student is planning to go to Zambia, for example, I would recommend making a start by developing a personal network with Zambians living in Japan, before working in Zambia in itself. The connections made could be very useful. Students can start with the diasporas that have reached Japan.

Some Minpaku staff have taken this approach. For example, Itsushi Kawase has been carrying out a filming project in Japan in collaboration with the Adeyabeba Ethiopian Association in Tokyo. And last month, Shota Fukuoka hosted the "Performing Arts and Conviviality" webinar with Japanese and foreign researchers reporting on Filipino and Korean musical activities in Japan.

PJM: Practically, how did the museum



Itsushi Kawase (left) from Minpaku at an Ethiopian Orthodox Church community gathering in Tokyo, April 22, 2022. (Photo courtesy I. Kawase)

manage operating during the pandemic so far?

YK: We had to postpone some events for a year. Our new auditorium opened in February 2021, but the first occasion to use the whole stage was a workshop organised by Kojiro Hirose alongside and exhibition that had been postponed for one year [*"UNIVERSAL MUSEUM" – Exploring the New Field of Tactile Sensation*, Sept. 2 – Nov. 30, 2021]. The usual meaning of term "Universal Museum" in English is problematic, referring back to "universal survey" museums of the past. What Hirose means is an inclusive museum that can accept anyone, and for the workshop and exhibition, that meant especially a focus on touch [not just for blind visitors, but everyone – see Issue 53 of this Newsletter]. This was challenging under the circumstances. We had to develop a range of prevention measures. No cases of infection were found during the exhibition, so [probably] the coronavirus was not really transmitted by touch. Air transmission seems to be the main route.

PJM: Mask wearing has been universally practised in Japan throughout the pandemic. The government did not legally have power to impose mandates, but cultural acceptance of mask wearing made a big difference for Japan, compared to many countries.

YK: Yes. This is the power of culture, and etiquette. Our museum response was rather strict. We organised a special committee to develop rules. Whenever the national or especially the Osaka prefectural government makes new announcements, we closely follow their advice. We took strong measures to prevent spread of the virus. For example, the ventilation system was made 1.5 times stronger than previously, and we measured the quantity of air in each room to fix the limit of people in each room. We also clarified the level of activities in a diagram published on our website, on the top page... so it was very clear for audiences and visitors what was happening. Handwash stands were placed everywhere, as well as all the desk screens. Our procedures were reported at research meetings on museum operations, and became a model for other museums.

Now the rules are changing again. Recently we cancelled the visitor registration system at the main entrance. For the last two years a person was placed at the entrance to ask visitors to write their information on paper. From April 1 this year this was discontinued as it is no longer needed. Identifying close

contacts was originally done by public health care centres. Now all companies or organisations should do this, but since our galleries are huge it is impossible to follow who has close contact with whom, and registration at the entrance has no point. We also shut down the online booking system for [ordinary] visits to the museum. This no longer had a practical purpose and we had to pay someone to manage it. We still ask people to register when joining meetings or other events in closed spaces. We also employed extra staff to sit near the main entrance to check the temperatures of visitors arriving, but only until the end of April. Now we can begin reducing costs and start going back to normal.

PJM: Now I would like to ask about Minpaku's future development. Officially, there is a six-year, mid-term plan developed within the framework of the National Institutes of the Humanities (NIHU), which includes Minpaku... but beyond this, what does Minpaku plan or look forward to as an Institute?

YK: Human civilization today is facing the greatest turning point in several centuries. Up until recently, the group that was regarded as central ruled and controlled in a unilateral manner the groups regarded as peripheral. The dynamics of this power relationship seem to be changing now. These days, we witness contacts and interactions, including the creative and destructive, that are occurring worldwide bilaterally between the entities that used to be regarded as central and peripheral.

In 2020, we were forced to confront a situation never experienced before by humanity: the almost simultaneous spread of the novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic around the world. This has compelled humans to review customary practices and rules that had been regarded as normal in daily life, i.e., the formation and state of every

Peter J. Matthews is Professor at the National Museum of Ethnology, specialising in ethnobotany and prehistory in Asia and the Pacific. His main work concerns the natural and cultural history of taro, a globally-distributed root and vegetable crop. Recent articles include: (with M. E. Ghanem) "Perception gaps that may explain the status of taro (*Colocasia esculenta*) as an 'orphan crop'" in *Plants, People, Planet* 3 (2021) and "Plants as Records of Human and Biological History: Exploring the Ethnological Collection" in M. Han and N. Niwa (eds) *Rethinking History* (Senri Ethnological Studies 110, 2022).



Signs at the museum entrance, reminding visitors to cover mouth, avoid crowding, and wash hands (Photo: Matthews, April 14, 2022)

institution and standards established in modern history. The significance and the reasons for existence of such institutions and standards have been re-examined. A sense of the discrimination latent in society has surfaced, and new developments that divide the world are emerging.

I believe that the wisdom of cultural anthropology is needed now more than ever to establish a world where, while respecting diverse cultures, we will be able to live together by bridging the gaps between different languages and cultures. These are extremely grave responsibilities faced by Minpaku as an international and core hub for anthropology.

Our institute is already quite distinguished as an anthropological organisation with global scope. Humans will always need to understand humans, so our basic purpose is clear. The future plan is to strengthen our activities, in research and exhibition – though the physical facilities might become separate in the future. As a research museum, we should become more of an international hub. The exhibition facilities can become stronger as an international centre for cultural heritage information... for accumulation and dissemination.

In 1994, we held an international symposium to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the museum opening. John Mack [then Keeper of the Department of Ethnography of the British Museum] was invited from the United Kingdom. That was when I first used the term "forum" to describe museum activities. The symposium title was "Ethnology and the Ethnological Museum in the 21st Century: How to Present Other Cultures". It was Duncan Cameron who coined this use of the term [see "The Museum, a Temple or the Forum" in *Curator: The Museum Journal*, 1971]. He contrasted the museum as place where objects are worshipped with the museum as place where people meet to discuss issues and begin new activities. This paper was translated into Japanese and circulated among anthropologists in Japan in a private newsletter. In 1997 the museum as a forum was again introduced in the catalogue that accompanied *Images of Other Cultures* [special exhibition first held at Minpaku in 1997; see essays, *Minpaku Anthropology Newsletter* 5]. Since the 1990s, the idea has spread worldwide and many museums now identify with the role of forum.

While planning for the 1997 exhibition, we began using the phrase officially – "the museum as a forum" – and it has become a defining characteristic of Minpaku. This is

reflected in the titles and objectives of our six-year plans: "Building an Info-Forum Museum for Cultural Resources of the World" (3rd mid-term plan), and "Constructing Forum-type Archives of Humanities" (present 4th mid-term plan, from April 2022). Underlying these broad plans are many research activities. In the future we will lay more weight on international joint research, and the mission statement of Minpaku has recently changed to highlight the role of our museum as an "international hub". [Note: Under what are termed "umbrella themes", the museum supports "Special Research Projects" comprised of many sub-projects. Titles for these themes, projects, and sub-projects can be found in the annual *Survey and Guide*. The most recent English version, for 2021-22, is available online.

At the same time, our museum facilities should become more inclusive, by creating "universal media" that combine real object display with information technology.

PJM: One previous example can be found in the Music exhibition in the Main Exhibition Hall of Minpaku. Recorded sound has been added to the displays using pipes to localise the sound.

YK: The key thing is our multi-lingual portable guide. You can select a topic – music, or food, or religion and so on – and then the guide will lead you to the related exhibits. If you watch the entire explanation for one display, then the portable guide will remember this in the Videoteque (our video display area), and Videoteque will automatically recommend videos related to the displays that caught your interest. The biggest problem is that guests may not see the object, but instead the monitor. For this reason, we made explanation texts that encourage portable guide users to see the object, or a particular object part, and always encourage them to look carefully. And guests cannot watch the screen while moving... the system screen is designed to go black when it is moving.

To help make the galleries universal, we are now developing a new mobile wheelchair that uses IT to be safe. This will auto-stop if other people go in front of it. To develop this, a mobile phone type system identifies the location and facing direction of the guest. The chair can move automatically, for elders or handicapped people, and has a monitor with visual and audible guidance. This should be ready by 2025 or 2026, and preferably by the earlier date to be in time for the 2025 World Exposition in Osaka.

As a member of NIHU, Minpaku

will also carry out projects related to three themes: (1) global area studies, (2) "creation of a science of communication conviviality", and (3) a new digital library of humanities. The second theme includes an extension of the work of the Sign Language Linguistics Research Section (SiLLR) that was previously established at Minpaku with grants from the Nippon Foundation [April 2017–March 2021].

Under the communication conviviality project, SiLLR will evolve as a collaboration with the National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL), and the National Institute for Informatics (NII). This will also be linked to exhibition development in our galleries.

The third area will be an extension or expansion of the DIPLAS project (Digital Picture Library for Area Studies) that was funded by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) for the last six years. By coming under the NIHU-supported umbrella, and again in collaboration with NINJAL and NII, this will no longer be limited to working with archives generated by JSPS-funded research. We can now support digitalisation of any sound, photo, or film archives from many sources. Minpaku will focus on still and moving images, and NINJAL will focus on sound archives.

PJM: How can we balance or develop existing and new methods needed for our own digital archives?

YK: Here at Minpaku we have many individual photo collections [donated by staff or acquired from other sources] but we have not had enough capacity to develop them fully.

For DIPLAS, we invited applications from researchers each year and accepted proposals for up to 20 plans per year. For each photo collection, it took one year to build a basic archive or database. Further information can be added by the researcher later so that the photos may be shared among research group members and the public.

One example of a DIPLAS project was our collaboration with Akita University to study the work of Motoko Katakura [1937–2013] in Saudi Arabia, where she also collected objects and took photographs in the 1960s and 70s. Staff from Akita and Minpaku took old photographs to the same area in Saudi Arabia and compared scenes with the present situation. They tried to meet the children or grandchildren of the people photographed 50 years earlier, and to get permissions to display particular photos in an exhibition. Eventually, with special

regard to images of women, only 20 out of 100 photographs (approximately) could be displayed [see report of the Minpaku exhibition, June 6–Sept. 10, 2019, in *Newsletter* 49:11]. This was a big task, but it was a good way to build a new relationship with a source community. By using old photos and new fieldwork, we can historicise anthropology.

With DIPLAS, Minpaku has already completed 46 photographic collection databases [the total number may reach 56, to be managed as a part of the ongoing Digital Library of Humanities]. These not only record the lives of people at certain times but are also testimony to the interests of each photographer. Many photograph collections and databases disappear when a particular project ends, but those maintained and operated by museums can exist as long as the institution exists. The life of a museum is not eternal, but is long-term at least.

These issues [methods of digitalisation and database longevity] are also relevant to the "info-forum" databases for objects in our collections and sharing information about them.

PJM: When we think about "historicising anthropology", we can also think about how Minpaku records and presents its own history. The history of our museum presented to the public on the Minpaku website is not complete. [In reply, YK took PJM to his computer and together we examined the website and had a separate discussion – a possible topic for a future *Newsletter* issue. See: www.minpaku.ac.jp/en/aboutus/history/]

PJM: Turning again to the future of the museum, what are priorities for the employment of future staff, in general terms?



"Cycle of Life" made with dismantled weapons. Made by Fiel dos Santos and Cristóvão Canhavato (Kester), and collected by YOSHIDA Kenji in 2012 (Africa exhibition, National Museum of Ethnology; Minpaku Virtual Museum on the Minpaku website)

YK: A strong point of the Museum is the global scope with diverse staff. I treasure this character. Today we have 53 [full-time research staff], but at the time when NIHU was established, in 2004, we had 63. We do not want to let this number drop further, or lose our scope and functions. Within the next five years, 15 staff will retire! So, we must try to hire at least three new staff each year. We can hire staff at the junior level of "Assistant Professor" which puts them in a tenure track position. Who we select depends (partly) on the current composition of teams responsible for the different regional exhibitions. We always consider experience in geographical areas as well as the subject specialisations of potential new staff. Language skills are also considered. When local and foreign scholars apply, we look at the mix of skills and interests.

PJM: In my case, I could offer English language skills and also experience and interests in biology, anthropology, and a wide geographical region.

YK: I also came to the museum with experience and interests in different disciplines, in art history, material culture, and anthropology. As a student I attended evening meetings originally organised by Tadao Umesao [1920–2010; the founding director of Minpaku who originally trained as a biologist; see *Newsletter* 51:12 and 32:1–11]. The meetings were not just about anthropology. The speakers included scholars from primatology and the natural sciences, archaeologists, historians, medical doctors, and so on. Those attending could broaden their knowledge and interests across disciplines. But anthropology is always a border-crossing discipline, in all senses.

PJM: In recent years, under the title of "Info-Forum Museum", the Museum has also focused on building links with source communities across Japan and internationally. Concerns with accessibility, outreach and the ownership of cultural heritage also extend to ideas around the concept of "The Universal Museum" (*Newsletter* 53, 2021).

YK: Even our main museum collection database is still not accessible in English, except as an experimental version. We are now trying to accumulate experience in considering authorship, copyright and cultural concerns for publicizing images. Our priority is to encourage responsible engagement and trust building or rapport between researchers and local communities. Agreements can be oral, but researchers should at least

record their activities and discussions in field notes. Fieldwork in the community is the starting point for thinking about how to handle images and objects. The judgements of the photographer or collector are important. This is how we have been working since before access, display and copyright issues became so important [in the digital era].

PJM: Research methods keep changing in ways that change what can be learned from object collections. The source materials for most cultural objects are biological, so there is DNA, and now there are methods that can be used to look at old DNA in materials...but this is beyond our capacity at Minpaku. We can't do this kind of work ourselves.

YK: Minpaku has developed "joint use facilities", so we can work with outside experts, and they can work with us. For our 2018 special exhibition *Beads in the World*, we used X-ray equipment at Minpaku to identify bead sources, and Shingo Hidaka – a Minpaku researcher – provided expertise that was transferred to other project members from other institutions

So... the museum needs researchers with different approaches to the materials as well as anthropology. Since Covid 19, it has become even more obvious that when we study the culture of human beings, we need to know about the biological world around us. The decline of civilizations has often been connected to pandemics and human to animal (cross-species) transfer – like the coronavirus for Covid 19 from bats, malaria from mosquitos, and so on. We need to be aware of plants and animals when we study cultures and civilizations. This is another reason why we need colleagues from the natural or environmental sciences.

PJM: My own challenge, as a biologist, is how to develop a general understanding from long observation in the field.

YK: What I learned from Umesao is that to carry on anthropological research is not just a matter of attaching myself to people as closely as possible. We must also keep a birds-eye view to see the situation of the world as broadly as possible. I have travelled back and forth to one village in Zambia for the last 40 years. While sticking to a particular community, I always try to place movements of the community in the context of the wider world. This leads me to a wider view of the world.

Exhibition

The Vibrance of Indian Fabrics

Thematic Exhibition

October 28, 2021–January 25, 2022

In South Asia, a region in which India is central, the forms, colors, patterns, and uses of fabrics differ depending on time, place, and application, with clear differences depending on religious rules and local custom and the occasions on which they are used. What has, until now, drawn attention to India is the clever use of a single piece of fabric as clothing in a variety of ways. But in India fabric is not used exclusively for clothing. It plays a varied array of roles, as gifts in rites of passage, as offerings to deities, and as symbols of social movements. Depending on the occasion, people choose from a wide variety of fabrics those most suitable for their goals and the functions the fabric performs. The diverse relationships between people and fabric are deeply connected with India's multiplicity of religions, caste system, and several hundred different languages.

This thematic exhibition, *The Vibrance of Indian Fabrics*, was an attempt to articulate the diversity and universality of the social, religious, political and economic functions of Indian fabrics. The theme of the first section was "Delimiting Place, Connecting People." Here our focus was on the use of fabrics to differentiate sacred spaces and separate self and other, while at the same time connecting individuals and groups. The second section, "Fabrics Presented to Deities," drew attention to the roles and functions of fabrics in religious ceremonies and everyday rituals. The third section, "Fabrics Propelling Politics," explored the message communicated by use of handwoven fabrics as a symbol during India's Independence Movement. The fourth section, "Fabrics in the Global

Economy," introduces the development of global markets for Indian fabrics and clothing.

Indian fabrics define places, connect people, mediate relations between people and deities, propel politics and create new global economic ties. Shedding light on the current situation of Indian fabrics, this exhibition was also part of a larger effort to understand the dynamics of social and cultural continuity and change in today's increasingly globalized India. The exhibition emphasized the diversity of roles played by fabrics in the ongoing construction of Indian

society, and displayed results from a six-year (2016-2021) collaboration between the National Institutes for the Humanities' MINDAS Center for South Asian Studies at the National Museum of Ethnology (Principal Investigator MIO Minoru) and the Fabrics Team (Principal Investigator UEBA Yoko).

Yoko Ueba

National Museum of Ethnology



Exhibition entrance (Ueba, 2021)



Dance costumes displayed in Section 4 "Fabrics in the Global Economy" (Ueba, 2021)

Slash-and-Burn Cultivation Viewed by SASAKI Komei: From Itsuki Mura to the World

*Thematic Exhibition
March 10–June 7, 2022*

Slash-and-burn cultivation (also known as swidden farming) is distributed all over the world. Practices vary greatly in terms of the crop species used and how they are cultivated, but the common element is a rotation between planted and fallow fields to allow vegetation to regenerate in the fallow fields. When fields are taken out of fallow, vegetation is slashed, left to dry, and then burned to clear the ground surface. Traditional slash-and-burn systems with relatively long fallow periods helped to maintain natural and agricultural biodiversity, with less soil erosion than conversion to permanent open fields.

This exhibition introduced the diversity of slash-and-burn farming systems and compares them from an international

perspective. For example, in Laos in Southeast Asia, upland rice is grown instead of minor grains as in Japan. Slash-and-burn farming in the mountains and forests of Itsuki-mura in Kumamoto Prefecture was introduced in this exhibition as an example from Japan. In 2020 (Oct. 3–Dec. 13), an exhibition under the same English title was held in Itsuki-mura itself, but focused solely on Itsuki-mura's slash-and-burn fields (*Newsletter* 51: 14). The exhibition at Minpaku had an expanded focus, linking Itsuki-mura, a small village (mura) deep in the mountains of Kyushu, to the wider history of slash-and-burn systems in the world.

This global perspective was special as slash-and-burn systems in temperate regions such as Japan are less well known than those in tropical regions. With this perspective, the exhibition highlighted the basic versatility of slash-and-burn cultivation.

Kazunobu Ikeya
National Museum of Ethnology

Conference

Interdisciplinary Research and the Info-Forum Museum

*International Symposium
March 6, 2022*

Due to the pandemic of infection caused by COVID-19, the Minpaku symposium "Interdisciplinary Research and the Info-Forum Museum" was a hybrid event with face-to-face and online participation. Since 2014 and in collaboration with national and international research institutions, universities, museums and source communities, Minpaku has been working on development of the Info-Forum Museum as a fundamental concept and practical approach in sharing cultural resources and promoting collaborative research. Our primary aim is to build multilingual and multimedia digital archives that allow international sharing of diverse cultural resources and support collaborative research. In this symposium we introduced the results of several individual projects, and considered the significance of the Info-Forum Museum as a comprehensive project for diverse research themes and fields.

To enrich discussion, presenters uploaded videos of their presentations to a special website in advance, so participants could watch the video presentations before the symposium. This made it possible to watch the presentations repeatedly, and may have allowed participants to better grasp the contents of individual presentations.

The symposium included four sessions. In the first, the process of collecting ethnographic information on the Peruvian collections held by Minpaku was presented, and the significance of the database constructed was discussed. In the next session, the significance of collections and archives based on them was discussed in relation to the work of a naturalist, Toshio



Harvesting tools and tray in the exhibition (E. Takei, 2022)



Crop specimens (corn, millets) and photos in the exhibition (E. Takei, 2022)

Asaeda. The Toshio Asaeda Collection at Minpaku is part of a wider range of scientific records produced by Asaeda during his participation in expeditions across the Pacific region in the 1920s to 30s. Many examples of his scientific illustration or photography are distributed and duplicated in research centres and museums around the world. The third session introduced the history of the collection of Sarangi music of the Gandharbas, a Nepalese caste of musicians, in the 1980s. Recordings from that period are held in the collection of the Minpaku. Sarangi music was previously rooted in daily life, but is now in danger of disappearing.

The final session concerned a ten-year project by Minpaku to document performing arts on the island of Tokunoshima, in southern Japan. A focus for discussion was the role of researchers and museums in working with (i) people who are trying to maintain a tradition of performing arts, and (ii) local government officials who support them – in a community where it is increasingly difficult to maintain performing arts due to an ageing and declining population.

The symposium also had to connect Tokunoshima (Japan), Nepal, the UK, the USA (Washington and California) and Peru, crossing several time zones. People in the source and academic communities working together on each project commented on its significance and their expectations for the future. From Nepal, the current Gandharva caste of musicians actually performed their music and presented it online for a mixed audience at Minpaku (researchers and members of the public).

During the symposium, Professor Hiroyuki Kurita, Vice-President of the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, joined as an audience member and commentator at Minpaku and raised a fundamental question concerning the *raison d'être* of the project: How to develop a new academic approach that does not fall into the category of "salvage anthropology" that has been

criticised previously? The strengths and potential of digitised ethnographic materials for cultural creativity and historical reconstruction require further study and discussion. Our aim is to transcend the idea of rescuing "lost cultures". Dr Peilin Yu, from Boisei University in the United States, joined online and offered important perspectives based on her own practical research, including long experience with Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) programme. Her comments emphasized interplay between the economic and political vitality of a source community, emotional connections, and the challenges of ownership and stewardship of materials. These

are important reference points for evaluating the Info-Forum Museum and related projects.

As a national inter-university institution, Minpaku currently pursues education and research in the same way as national universities, with work carried out over mid-term planning periods of six years. The Info-Forum Museum project was carried out over our third mid-term planning period (April 2014 to March 2022). In the future, we will promote use of the constructed archives by source communities, for interdisciplinary research in the humanities, and for developing new research areas.

NOBAYASHI Atsushi
National Museum of Ethnology



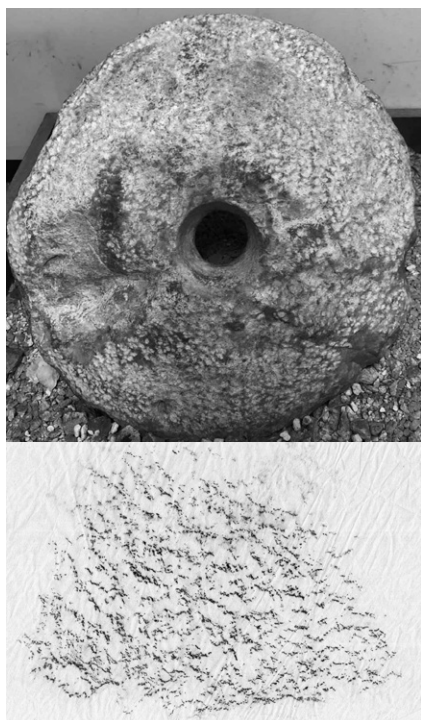
Participants at Minpaku watching an online performance of singing with Sarangi playing by Mr. Buddha Bahadur Gayek in Batulecaur (Pokhara, Nepal) (Photo: Nobayashi, 2022)



Members of the Sarhua community in the on-site workshops to validate prototype databases (Lima, Peru) (Photo: Y. Yagi, 2020)

From the Archives

Occasionally the Museum receives offers of artefacts held by in private collections or by other organisations. Such offers are referred to research staff who are most familiar with the kinds of material being offered. Many offers, though well meant, cannot be accepted. A range of factors have to be considered, including price (if not offered as a donation), the history of collection and ownership, the relationship to artefacts already held by the museum, and their potential value for research, education, and source communities. Before deciding to accept new materials into the archives, some amount of study and discussion is always needed, and advice from experts outside the museum may also be needed.



Rai stone (above) with outer diameter of about 73 cm. Pencil rubbing on paper (below) showing the stone on stone pecking marks (generally about 1 cm diameter) (Minpaku supplied).

In this newsletter we have not previously reported on donations, but it may be useful for readers to know something about the process. In 2020, the Museum was offered and accepted the donation a *rai* stone (stone money) from the

Rock islands in the Republic of Palau in Micronesia. The offer came from a major Japanese airline that had been given the stone by Palau in 2004. The stone had been displayed for many years in a company office, but it was decided that a new long-term home was needed. Members of the Oceania Exhibition team considered the matter. The stone has a relatively well recorded history, and was made in around 1750. It appears to have been made by pecking a limestone block with stone tools, before iron tools become widely available in the region. The surface details are very different from the polished *rai* stones currently on display in the Minpaku Oceania gallery. Rai stones produced in Palau served as a form of currency in the nearby Yap islands, and have central holes that are used for transport (a pole can be inserted).

We hope that this stone can be shown to the public in future workshop or exhibition as its story, including the connection to an airline, illustrates both ancient and modern aspects of life in Oceania [P. J. Matthews, Oceania Exhibition team leader]

Information

Award

Itsushi Kawase

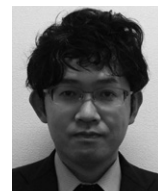
Associate Professor,
Department of Advanced
Human Sciences,
National Museum of Ethnology

Received the 11th Umesao Tadao "Mountains and Exploration" Literary Award (March 2022) for his book, エチオピア高原の吟遊詩人 — うたに生きる者たち (Singer Poets in the Ethiopian Highlands – The People Who Live by Singing), published by Ongaku no tomo sha, Tokyo. The book was acclaimed for its captivating anthropological exploration and depiction of the inner life of musicians and performing arts groups in Africa.

New Staff

Yuichi Matsumoto

Associate Professor, Department of Modern Society and Civilization



Yuichi Matsumoto specializes in anthropological archaeology of the Andes. He conducted archaeological research in

the Peruvian south-central highlands focusing on the Formative Period (3000–50 BC). His main interests are the formation of civilization and early monumental architecture in the Andes. After receiving his PhD in December 2010 from Yale University, he was a fellow at the Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection, Trustees for Harvard University, a research fellow at Minpaku, and an associate professor at Yamagata University. His publications include *Prehistoric Settlement Patterns in the Upper Huallaga Basin, Peru* (Yale University Publications in Anthropology).

Kenji Kuroda

Assistant Professor, Department of Globalization and Humanity



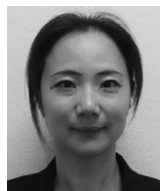
Kuroda specializes in anthropology of politics and Middle Eastern studies, with a particular interest in

Iranian politics and historical relationship between Japan and Middle Eastern countries. At the Graduate School of Asian and African Studies of Kyoto University, he studied the religious segment of Iranian politics after the 1978–1979 revolution and received his PhD from the same university in 2011. From 2012 to 2015, he was a JSPS Postdoctoral Fellow at Hiroshima University. He also worked as Project Assistant Professor for the NIHU Area Studies Project for Modern Middle East Studies at the

National Museum of Ethnology (2016-2022). He published *Religion and Politics in Iran: A Study on Contemporary Shiism* (Nakanishiya Shuppan, 2015, in Japanese) and *Memory of War and the Nation: A Returning Soldier's View of Martyrdom and Oblivion in Contemporary Iran* (Sekaishissha, 2021, in Japanese). In recent years, he has investigated historical relationships between Japan and the Middle East, and published "Pioneering Iranian Studies in Meiji Japan: Between Modern Academia and International Strategy" (*Iranian Studies* 50, 2017).

Chisako Miyamae

Assistant Professor, Department of Advanced Human Sciences



Miyamae received her Ph.D. in Engineering from the Tokyo Institute of Technology in 2019. Her research focused on developing an evaluation method for archived digital 3D data of cultural resources. The goal was to construct a systematization paradigm to make the data readily available for many uses. Miyamae wants to make advanced technologies more applicable for cultural heritage studies. Her focus is on 3D documentation and making exhibitions that utilize cutting-edge digital technology. She has worked at Toppan Inc., London Science Museum (internship), and Tokyo Tech Museum and Archives. Her publications include 'Multi-class production framework based on 3D scanning data for archaeological artifacts - The digitalization of *Dogū*' (Archaeological and Anthropological Science, Published by Springer, 2016) and 'Digital exhibition as a bridge to the real collection' (2013 Digital Heritage International Congress, Published by IEEE, 2014). [*Dogū* are earthen ceramic, human-like or animal figurines made during the Jomon archaeological period in Japan - ed.]

Ayako Matsumoto

Research Fellow, Department of Globalization and Humanity



Matsumoto conducts research on the use of art projects and creativity in regional planning. She received her PhD in Global Environmental Studies at Kyoto University (2008). She has worked in the Digital Humanities Center for Japanese arts and cultures at Ritsumeikan University, the Organization for Advanced and Integrated Research at Kobe University, and Center for the study of Co*design at Osaka University. Her publications include "Codesign of Regional Revitalization" (in Japanese, Co*design.10, 2021). She works with social sectors such as Toyonaka City in a regional revitalization school and Hyogo Prefecture in a Tojogawa museum project on water networks, evaluating the progress and effects of these projects through interviews, survey questionnaires, and electroencephalograms.

Publications

Online at: www.minpaku.ac.jp/en/research/publication

Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology 46

Issue 3: R. Ono, R. Fuentes, A. Nakatani, M. Kanetani and Y. Ueba, "Bamboo Hypothesis" Revisited: Functions of Prehistoric Stone Tools and Plant Use in Wallacea"; D. Murakami, "Thoughts on the *klu* (naga) Cult in Tibet".

Issue 4: T. Yamaguchi, "Reading into Ethnographic Objects: A Dog Carving Collected from the Former Netherlands New Guinea"; N. Yoshioka, "Eat a Spoonful, Speak a Night Tale: A omaaki (Hi)story Telling"; T. Nishio, "Ibn al-Marzubn's *The Book of the Superiority of Dogs over Many of Those Who Wear Clothes*: Japanese Translation

with Critical Notes".

Senri Ethnological Studies

108: R. Kikusawa and F. Sano (eds.) *Fijian Languages, Cultures, and Their Representation*. 176 pp. (English).

109: T. Iida (ed.) *Heritage Practices in Africa*. 225 pp. (English).

110: M. Han and N. Niwa (eds.) *Rethinking History: Perspectives on Recording Media, Practice, and Construction*. 247 pp. (English).

Senri Ethnological Reports

154: Mary Rossabi (translation from Russian), Morris Rossabi and Y. Konagaya (eds.) *Master of Mongolia, A. D. Simukov: His Life and Works*. 568 pp. (English).

TRAJECTORIA 2022 Vol. 3

S. Grytter and K. Arnold, "Looking at Bodies: In, At, Up, and Under" (audio-visual essay).

Special Theme – "Ethnographic Collaborations: Crossing Borders with Multimodal Illustration": **I.** L. Haapio-Kirk, "Introduction"; **II.** L. Haapio-Kirk and M. Ito, "Turning Points"; **III.** C. Rumsby and B. Thomas, "The Waters of Death and Life: The Evolution of an Ethnographic"; **IV.** J. S. González, "Story of Mirrors: Together They Cross the Border"; **V.** D. Theodossopoulos, "Collaborative Experiments in Graphic Ethnography: Emulating Political Cartooning"; **VI.** L. Haapio-Kirk, M. Ito, C. Rumsby, J. S. González, D. Theodossopoulos and B. Thomas, "Discussion – Collaborating through Illustration: Motivations, Methods, and Meanderings".

URL: trajectoria.minpaku.ac.jp

Forthcoming Exhibitions

National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka

Special Exhibition

***Homō loquēns* ‘talking human’: Wonders of Language and Languages**

September 1–November 23, 2022



Collection Exhibition

Cormorant Fishing in Contemporary China: Techniques of Fishers

June 30–August 2, 2022



Thematic Exhibition

Maritime People and Art of Their World: Material Culture in Southeast Asia and Oceania

September 8–December 13, 2022

MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter

The Newsletter is published in summer and winter. “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.

Available online at:
www.minpaku.ac.jp/en/research/publication/research-publications/newsletter

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