

# みんなのポジトリ

国立民族学博物館学術情報リポジトリ National Museum of Ethnology

## The Exhibition of Japanese Cultures in the National Museum of Ethnology

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## The Exhibition of Japanese Cultures in the National Museum of Ethnology

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国立民族学博物館における日本文化の展示

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The National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku) was founded in 1974, and opened its doors in November 1977 as a centre of research for cultural anthropology and ethnology, providing academic communities and the general public with information and the results of research on the peoples, societies, and cultures of the world, to deepen awareness and understanding of ethnological and cultural matters. Given its history as a research institute, the researchers involved with exhibitions at Minpaku are extremely conscious of the integral nature of research and display.

The Culture of Japan Gallery is part of the Regional Exhibitions at Minpaku. Located at the end of the Regional Exhibitions, the Culture of Japan Gallery takes up the largest display space. The first exhibition in the gallery was a two-year project spanning FY 1978 and 1979. After the 1995 Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake necessitated a partial renovation, the exhibition was renewed and updated for FY 2012 and 2013.

In this paper, I will address the renewal of the exhibition, comparing new and conventional approaches in an analysis of the principles underlying the Culture of Japan exhibition at Minpaku.

国立民族学博物館（以下Minpaku）は、文化人類学・民族学に関する調査・研究をおこない、その成果に基づいて世界の諸民族の社会と文化に関する情報を人々に提供し、諸民族についての認識と理解を深めることを目的として、1974年に創設され、1977年11月に開館した。このような研究機関としての設立

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\*National Museum of Ethnology

**Key Words** : museum exhibit, culture of Japan Gallery, regional exhibitions, Japanese cultures and lifestyle, production of the exhibition

**キーワード** : 博物館展示, 日本の文化展示, 地域展示, 日本の生活文化, 展示制作

経緯をもつMinpakuの展示は、研究と展示の一体制を強く意識したものとなっている。

Minpakuの地域展示（Regional Exhibitions）の一角をなす日本の文化展示場（Culture of Japan）は、地域展示場の最後に位置し、最大の展示場面積である。本展示場は、Minpaku開館後、1978年度と1979年度の2年度にわたって最初の展示が作られ、1995年の阪神・淡路大震災で一部展示の改修を余儀なくされた後、2012年度、2013年度に新しく展示が再編される。

本稿では、今回の日本展示の更新にともなって、従来の展示の考え方と今回の新しい展示の考え方を整理し、Minpakuにおける日本展示のあり方について検証する。

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## Introduction

The Culture of Japan Exhibition was put together by the Japan Exhibition Project Team, one of the Main Hall Exhibition Project Teams, comprised of members of the Minpaku Research Department. As the Culture of Japan exhibition takes up the most floor space of all Minpaku Regional Exhibitions, it will undergo restructuring from FY 2012 to 2013. The new exhibition will be constructed around four major themes: 'Ritual, Festivals and Performing Arts', 'Everyday Life', 'Life in Okinawa (tentative title)', and 'Foreign Nationals in Japan (tentative title)'.

In this paper, I describe how the Japan Exhibition Project Team perceives the ethnic culture of Japan, and how we are planning to put together the exhibition for this institute called the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan.

### 1 Outline of the former Culture of Japan Exhibition (the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan Exhibition)

I will begin by giving a brief outline of the Culture of Japan exhibition that existed prior to the upcoming renewal. The former exhibition, like its upcoming

counterpart, was created over two fiscal years: 1978 and 1979. Details of the former exhibition are described by Moriya Takeshi (Moriya 1984: 323–344).

The Culture of Japan exhibition is located at the far end of the Main Exhibition Hall. This design reflects the intent to have museum visitors encounter the various people around the globe through the exhibits, and as the final part of their visit, to come face to face with Japanese cultures and lifestyles. In short, it prompts visitors to rediscover their own culture and lifestyle with eyes, which have, in a sense, been around the world. This design is continued in the overall plan of the renewed exhibition.

According to Moriya, who was Project Leader for the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan Exhibition, that exhibition was organized from two perspectives: ‘*hare* (auspicious)’ and ‘*ke* (mundane)’. The ‘*hare*’ facet comprised ‘festivals and performing arts’. While the ‘*ke*’ aspect covered ‘Japanese Housing’, ‘Tools of Everyday Life’, ‘Crafts of Everyday Life’, and ‘Boats and Fishing Equipment’ (Moriya 1986: 166–167). Here, the world of ‘*hare*’ is one of the annual ritual events, a rite of passage, and a part of the performing arts which are closely linked to such ceremonial practices. That is, so to say, they exist in a time and space outside the realm of the ordinary, daily routine. In the exhibit, the ‘artifacts’ used in festivals, ceremonies, and performing arts were displayed to the greatest possible extent, so that visitors might experience the excitement of being in the midst of a live festival. Nakamaki Hirochika, who led the ‘festivals and performing arts’ component of the exhibit, relates how the starting point of the display was filled with decorative fans in consideration of the Ainu Culture section preceding the Culture of Japan Gallery. A giant Neputa float from Hirosaki City in Aomori Prefecture was installed in the centre. This display was followed by wall exhibits, which featured festivals and performing arts, each arranged so as to highlight the contrast between eastern and western Japan. The central area was composed of ‘masks’, ‘costumes’, ‘dolls’, ‘floats’, and ‘portable shrines’ which serve as a loose link between festivals and performing arts (Nakamaki 2013: 4).

The major characteristic of the Festivals and Performing Arts component of the exhibition was that, rather than dwelling minutely on each individual festival or performance, the visitor was given a comprehensive grasp of the culture of festivals and performing arts in Japan as a whole, by displaying the ‘artifacts’ used in every conceivable kind of festival and performance all over Japan, to the greatest possible extent. In addition, the materials exhibited revealed the rich creativity within the culture and daily life of Japan, and the exhibit was, as emphasized by Moriya, a new vantage point for the understanding of Japanese cultures (Moriya 1984).

As we have seen thus far, the Festivals and Performing Arts component of the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan Exhibition gave Japanese and foreign visitors alike an overview of the Japanese world of ‘*hare*’, and stimulated an interest in Japanese cultures.

The display in the ‘*ke*’ component, in contrast with the extraordinary time and space of the ‘*hare*’ section described above, showed various aspects of ordinary life.

More specifically, as previously mentioned, the exhibit was organized around the themes of ‘Japanese Housing’, ‘Tools of Everyday Life’, ‘Crafts of Everyday Life’, and ‘Boats and Fishing Equipment’.

In ‘Japanese Housing’, models of typical Japanese vernacular housing, and the replica of *chuumon-zukuri* thatched farmhouse seen in the Akiyama District of Sakae Village in Nagano Prefecture, were set up to introduce the regional culture that developed, and to show how accommodation has been adapted to suit the regional climates of Japan. Displayed here were one-tenth scale models of private residences, each featuring combined thatched and tile roofing (*Yamatomune*), a distinct steep roof configuration (*Gasshou-zukuri*), an L-shaped floor plan (*Magariya*), and a divided ridge structure (*Futamune-zukuri*). In a detailed report describing the production of these models, Kawazoe Noboru elaborates on the challenges of creating at a one-tenth scale, which he describes as being almost on a par with building a full-size house; there is no room for abstraction or fudging, and every detail must be reproduced, down to the texture of the materials and the tactile sense against the skin. What is more, as Kawazoe points out, a model on this scale has no meaning unless it goes beyond mere architectural reproduction; the folk house model must work in synergy with the materials exhibited around it, to offer a vibrant sense of the real life of the common person (Kawazoe 1980: 38–51). Conveying this kind of lived-in quality is a critically important frame of reference, and a universal theme in exhibitions of culture and lifestyle at Minpaku.

In ‘Tools of Everyday Life’, the display featured various tools of production and trade. Here, a variety of implements was selected: tools, clothing, and footwear for farming, transporting, logging, and forest management, headgear, and household equipment. These articles were from the age before mechanization, and the display was designed to encourage visitors to reflect on life as it used to be, a life whose threads still connect to us in the modern day.

The ‘Crafts of Everyday Life’ component focused on wooden *kokeshi* dolls, utensils for eating, and Japanese paper-making (*washi*). As with the tools displayed in the ‘Tools of Everyday Life’ element, these articles, although no longer regularly used in our modern lives, have become the focus of renewed interest as traditional handicrafts for the beauty of their engineering. The display conveyed the beauty of Japanese tools, which had moved beyond their utilitarian role, to be rediscovered as works of art.

The ‘Boats and Fishing Equipment’ unit offered a view of the fishing industry which flourishes in Japan, as the nation is entirely surrounded by the sea. Here, a display of fishing equipment and boats prompted the visitor to reflect on the development of the industrial technologies that support our daily lives.

Such was the structure of the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition, when the Great Hanshin-Awaji Earthquake struck on January 17, 1995, and created the need for a major modification. Much serious damage was sustained, and the glass in dis-

play cases was broken (Uno 1995: 96–113). In order to meet new seismic building codes drafted following the earthquake, some of the walls were reinforced with diagonal bracing. Furthermore, the Japan Exhibition Project Team's decision to add the theme of 'Ethnic Communities' to the new Culture of Japan exhibition plan prompted a review of the display space. Due to these developments, the 'Crafts of Everyday Life' and 'Boats and Fishing Equipment' displays, were removed (Kondo 2006: 216–217).

I have thus far given a retrospective overview of the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition. Looking back, we notice that a major characteristic of this exhibition was the conscious choice not to have detailed themes. That is, the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition adhered strictly to illustrating the entirety of Japanese life and culture, with a powerful orientation toward combining mutually relevant materials to reveal the diversity of the culture and daily life, rather than by infusing meaning into every individual object. And by achieving this kind of exhibition structure, it became possible for the viewer to experience a sense of Japanese life and culture from the same standpoint as from the other Regional Exhibits, by gaining an awareness of Japan in the world. Precisely herein lies the significance of displaying Japanese life and culture in a Japanese national museum of ethnology.

On the other hand, this kind of display style entails the challenge of explaining the regional diversity of Japanese life and culture to visitors, and particularly the Japanese visitors who make up most of the museum's traffic. This task was gradually addressed through such means as Videotheque programming (Takemura 1984: 334–344) and electronic guides (Kurita 2006: 231–232), which provided more detailed information on unique regional characteristics. In this way, mechanisms were put in place to enhance understanding of both general and detailed information concerning life and culture in Japan.

## **2 The newly redesigned Culture of Japan Gallery (2<sup>nd</sup> Culture of Japan Exhibition)**

### **2.1 Considerations of the exhibition production**

In redesigning the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition, I decided to focus on the differences between the researcher's intent in creating the exhibition, and the understanding of its audience.

Since the 1980s, the relationship between exhibition creator and audience has been discussed in several studies relating to museum exhibitions. In one such discussion, Hata Nobuyuki pointed out how, since the 1980s, the significance of museum displays has begun to shift from being one of safekeeping and showcasing precious articles (such as national treasures and important cultural properties), to being a place for communication between the museum and its audience (Hata

2000: 5–25). Kurita stressed the importance of the exhibition space as a place for providing the latest academic information to an increasingly intellectually demanding populace with a growing appetite for lifelong learning, and with a higher level of intelligence (Kurita 2000: 131–146). In a separate report, Hashimoto Hiroyuki pointed out that ‘efforts must be made to reconcile the creator’s intended message with the personal processes of interpretation carried out by the audience’ (Hashimoto 1998: 537–562). These observations have important implications concerning the relationship between us as researchers creating the exhibitions, and the visitors who view the displays. By its very nature, the creation of museum displays is a process of researchers setting themes and arranging exhibition materials in accordance with those themes. However, it does not necessarily follow that the visitors who come to see the exhibition are viewing and understanding the displays from exactly the same perspective and intent as the researchers who put them together. It is here that a discrepancy in understanding arises between the exhibition creator and the audience. To address this discrepancy, I decided to set up an exhibition theme premised on this discrepancy, and explore the implementation of separate activities to achieve mutual understanding between creator and audience.

As a guide to our approach to visitors, I used the results of visitor surveys on the newly updated exhibition. In 2010, Minpaku began conducting visitor surveys on the newly updated galleries to determine how positively or negatively our audience was assessing the displays. Visitors were asked how interesting they found the exhibits to be, how easy it was to understand them, and whether the galleries were pleasant and comfortable<sup>1)</sup>. When we focused our analysis on visitors’ ease of understanding, we discovered a tendency for original specimens, familiar objects, and/or symbolically prominent items combined with helpful audio-visually and commentary, to be assessed as more readily understandable. Building on this finding, we made several decisions for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition: we would display original specimens to the extent possible, select themes that the audience could relate to in their own lives, set up symbolic exhibition corners, and make a conscious effort to have a helpful commentary in each of the corners. On the basis of this approach, we decided to add new perspectives and new themes, while carrying on the principles of the previous Culture of Japan exhibition.

I will now discuss the details of the newly installed ‘Rituals, Festivals, and Performing Arts’ and ‘Everyday Life’ sections of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition.

## 2.2 Outline of the ‘Rituals, Festivals, and Performing Arts’ section

The ‘Rituals, Festivals, and Performing Arts’ section inherits the world of *hare* from the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition. The goal we set for this section was to convey the deep spiritual side of the human beings participating in the festivals and performing arts—the petitions and prayers, and the desires for beauty, joy, and stimulation. While the basic structure of the exhibition would remain, it would be



further enriched by the addition of new display materials. In addition, we set up subsections with the following themes: ‘*Hare*: The Archetypes of Ritual’, ‘*Hare*: The Ritual Spirit’, ‘*Hare*: The Embodiment of Spirits’, ‘*Hare*: Ritual in Practice’, and ‘*Hare*: Ritual Design’. By doing so, we believe we have better delineated the strata of the displays in this section, and have made the exhibited content more readily comprehensible.

I will now describe the content of each subsection. For ‘*Hare*: The Archetypes of Ritual’, we focused on the shape of the decorative folding fan. A folding fan is a holy symbol for summoning the divine spirits, with its spreading shape believed to bring good luck. Here, the shapes of these objects are a visual cue for perceiving the spiritual archetypes of *hare* (Figure 1).

In ‘*Hare*: The Ritual Spirit’, we express the human desire for happiness and peaceful prosperity, introducing the objects used in seasonal festivals and annual ritual events, as well as a wide variety of artifacts created for the purpose of summoning divine spirits or for preparing the festival site (Figure 2).

In ‘*Hare*: The Embodiment of Spirits’, we present dolls and masks (Figure 3), and giant figures of divine entities to show the shapes that people have given to these spirits, as well as the rich creativity by which they are imagined.

In ‘*Hare*: Ritual in Practice’ (Figure 4), we showcase the tools used by performing artists at festivals and annual ritual events. Whether held in the hand or worn on the body, these tools have been transformed from their usual practical existence, either in terms of their use or by their elaborate and excessive ornamentation.

‘*Hare*: Ritual Design’ is arranged so that the vivid colours and lucky patterns employed to decorate *hare* artifacts can convey the atmosphere of festive resplendence, and the aesthetic sensibilities nurtured through the ages (Figure 5).

Additionally, we installed four large figures in the four corners to serve as symbols for the ‘Rituals, Festivals, and Performing Arts’ section: ‘*Neputa* (Lantern float)’, ‘*Yagoroudon* (Yagoroudon float)’, ‘*Ushioni* (Ushioni float)’, and ‘*Nio* (the *Nio* statue is made of wild plants)’. Our aim was to make the audience constantly aware of being observed by these large figures, and enhancing their sense of being in the midst of these festivals and performances.

### 2.3 Outline of the ‘Everyday Life’ section

I will now address what was the ‘*ke*’ component in the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition. This component was revised in its entirety, and re-emerged as the ‘Everyday Life’ section in the new exhibition. Here, the three perspectives of ‘general’, ‘regional’, and ‘contemporary’ were the pillars on which we built the displays. Firstly, for the ‘general’ perspective, we focused on the day-to-day lives being led in the living environments of ‘countryside’, ‘seaside’, ‘town’, and ‘mountainside’, and set up the subsections of ‘Village Life’, ‘Fishing Life’, ‘Town Life’, and ‘Mountain Life’ around the already installed residence replicas. Out of these subsections, ‘Vil-



lage Life', 'Fishing Life', and 'Mountain Life' had already been established themes in the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition, with displays of tools and equipment used in the trades and occupations in those environments. To these we added the new life-style element of 'Town Life' for the second exhibition. The urban culture and life-style that developed in 'Town Life' gradually took root in the Edo period, with the development of a monetary economy. The Edo period forms one of the fundamental layers of modern Japanese cultures, and has exerted a great influence on contemporary lifestyles. For these reasons, we decided on its addition as an essential theme for the 'Everyday Life' section.

Further, to serve as symbolic materials representing traditional Japanese housing, we installed a replica of a house with a combined thatched and tiled roof (*Yamatomune*) in the 'Village Life' subsection, a reconstruction of an Akiyama-go house, and a replica of a steep-roofed (*Gassho-zukuri*) house in the 'Mountain Life' subsection, as well as a replica of a southern L-shaped (*magariya*) house in the 'Tohoku Life' subsection. These were put in place with the aim of reminding visitors of their own everyday lives and the culture with which they are familiar, by seeing the houses as places for daily living.

The subsections, each structured with the perspectives described above, can be summarized as follows. In 'Village Life' (Figure 6), we focus on agriculture in the Japanese archipelago. With an emphasis on rural housing, rice cultivation, and crop farming, we guide visitors through the growth of cash crops, which began to flourish with the development of a monetary economy, and the development of farming tools and equipment, which enabled increasingly efficient agricultural processes.

In 'Fishing Life' (Figure 7), we illustrate a lifestyle based on the bounty of the sea: '*Tairyo-bata* (festive big-catch banners)', and '*tairyo-iwaigi* (celebratory big-catch robes)' signify the people's prayers for abundance, while an introduction to different fishing methods and displays of various marine equipment brings visitors into the world of nets and hooks, coastal diving, and marine cultivation.

In 'Town Life' (Figure 8), we depict the townscape, where people of various occupations and history form a community. The displays show merchants, craftspeople, and townsfolk at work and in interaction with one another.

In 'Mountain Life' (Figure 9), we shed light on life on the mountainside. Mountains account for roughly 70% of the nation's land area, and provide a wealth of resources for hunters, beekeepers, livestock farmers, slash-and-burn farmers, and gatherers—all of whom are introduced in this subsection.

I will now discuss the 'regional' perspective. Given the long north-south stretch of the Japanese islands, there are enormous regional differences in living environments. Likewise, the culture that arises and develops in each region is also extremely diverse. We address this diversity in the new 'Tohoku Life' exhibition (Figure 10), which turns our attention to the Tohoku region to represent northern Japan. In this subsection, visitors can see the unique culture manifested in the living

spaces, spiritual beliefs, and craftwork that arose and developed in the harsh environmental and historical conditions of the Tohoku region. There is also an introduction to the activities of Minpaku to restore the cultural properties damaged by the Great East Japan Earthquake. For the ‘regional’ perspective, we will add a new theme in March 2014 to reflect southern Japanese life and culture: ‘Life in Okinawa (tentative title)’.

Okinawan region has a unique history of having been an independent kingdom called Ryukyu, which had close ties to Japanese cultures even as it cultivated its own distinct civilization. Okinawan culture contains elements from Chinese, Korean, and even American cultures. In this subsection, we intend to showcase the distinctiveness of Okinawan culture to give visitors a sense of the regional diversity of lifestyles and cultures in Japan. In addition, our focus here on ‘locality’ has led to the realization of the forum exhibition being listed among the second phase exhibit basic concept. In the production of regional exhibitions in Japan, we held discussions with local residents and researchers in the region of interest of the exhibition, and as a result of building mutual cooperation we received borrowed or donated exhibition objects. As a result, the display reflects both the points of view of Minpaku as the display producer, and also the opinions of people in the target region. This has become a model case that shows the potential of the forum type of exhibition. In this way, the exhibition was born from the interactions of local people and the museum.

For the ‘contemporary’ perspective, we set up photographic panels at the beginning of the ‘Village Life’, ‘Fishing Life’, ‘Town Life’, and ‘Mountain Life’ subsections, to depict their contemporary counterparts. By doing so, we can continue to maintain a certain degree of real-time updating, to keep abreast of the changing landscape. Another addition to the ‘contemporary’ perspective will be a theme titled ‘Foreign Nationals in Japan (tentative title)’, which will be brought on board in March 2014. The presence of foreign nationals residing in Japanese society can no longer be ignored, as they are assuredly a component of Japanese society. In the newly redesigned exhibition, we hope to enhance mutual understanding between Japanese people and the foreign nationals who live in Japan by presenting the lifestyles and cultural identities of the latter.

## 2.4 The positioning of the ‘Culture of Japan exhibition’ as a permanent exhibition of Minpaku

What we most valued in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Exhibition was continuing to exhibit the content of the 1<sup>st</sup> Exhibition. At Minpaku we employ two perspectives as we strive to present human lifestyles and cultures around the world. The first is regional, geographically categorized into Oceania, the Americas, Europe, Africa, West Asia, South Asia, Southeast Asia, Central and North Asia, and East Asia (Korea, China, Ainu, and Japan). The second is cross-cultural, emphasizing two cultural elements

shared across human societies: music and language. The aim of our exhibitions is to instil in our audience a spirit of understanding, while taking an interest in and respecting one another's cultures. In light of this spirit, we recognize how the display themes selected in the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition were extraordinarily suited to introducing the spirituality, lifestyle, and culture of the Japanese people, and that by consciously presenting the entirety of Japan, the exhibition was able to avoid becoming too narrowly focused on each individual phenomenon, with the end result being a dynamic presentation of Japanese cultures. This standpoint is consistent with the objective of setting themes to which the audience can easily relate. For these reasons, we decided to continue with the basic approach used for the 1<sup>st</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition, with the addition of more rigorous corner categorization and helpful commentary<sup>2)</sup>.

We were also aware of the flaws in the 1<sup>st</sup> Exhibition—a lack of attention to the regional cultures of Japan. The Japanese archipelago, with its long north-south stretch, is home to an extraordinarily varied range of lifestyles and cultures, which have developed to accommodate each kind of environment. Naturally, our visitors, most of whom are Japanese, incorporate the perspective of Japanese regional cultures when they try to compare foreign cultures with their own. For this reason, we undertook to have display corners within the 'Everyday Life' section of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Exhibition, which called attention to the regional characteristics of Japan. For instance, under 'Village Life', we presented rice farming in the Yamato Basin and crop farming on the Sagami-hara Plateau, while for 'Fishing Life' we focused on rock fishing on the Shimane Peninsula, *ama* women divers of Ise, and divers of the Amami region to showcase coastal fishing, and on seaweed farming in Tokyo Bay to represent marine cultivation. Under 'Town Life', we turned the spotlight on the *urushi* craftspeople of Nara, and for 'Mountain Life' we introduced Tsushima beekeepers tending to Japanese honeybees, and the '*natsuyama fuyusato* (mountain in summer, village in winter)' system of cattle grazing practiced in the Kitakami mountain range.

## Conclusion

The guiding principles for the Minpaku exhibitions when it first opened are summarized in the '*Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan ni okeru Tenji no Kihon Kousou* (Master Plan for the Exhibitions at the National Museum of Ethnology [Master Plan])' compiled in December 1975 (Kawazoe 1985: 227–244). In the Master Plan, museum exhibits are discussed in three categories: '*Kobutsu kanshou shugi* (appreciation of individual objects)', for artistic expressions that deal with displayed objects as precious treasures or works of art; '*saigen shugi* (faithful reproduction)' or '*seitai-teki tenji* (ecosystem display)', for impressionistic presentations of the situations around the displayed objects, that is, the circumstances of their use; and

‘*setsumei-teki tenji* (explanatory display)’, when ample commentary is added for an explanatory effect akin to leafing through the pages of an ethnology encyclopaedia. In conclusion, the ideal display is described as ‘*kouzou tenji* (structural display)’, in which the explanatory style of display is employed, while the semantic relevance inherent in the surroundings of the displayed object and within the living space is tracked and traced. The approach of ‘structural display’, in which each individual display object is made to relate to the others, in an attempt to represent the regional culture as the main theme, was an approach we continued to use in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition.

The ‘*Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan ni okeru Daini-ki Tenji Kihon Kousou* (2<sup>nd</sup> Master Plan for the Exhibitions at the National Museum of Ethnology [2<sup>nd</sup> Master Plan])’ was compiled in 2001, with the aim of completely revising the permanent displays created under the 1<sup>st</sup> Master Plan. This 2<sup>nd</sup> Master Plan envisions a system wherein the changes that have occurred over time and the advances in academic research are swiftly addressed, and that there is a place for mutual dialogue and enlightenment between the exhibitor (the researcher), the exhibited (the people whose culture is being exhibited) and the viewer of the exhibit (the audience); that is, the museum of ethnology will serve as a forum where ideas can be exchanged (Yoshida 2006: 188–189). Regrettably, preparations for a revision of the displays, made under the 2<sup>nd</sup> Master Plan, were temporarily suspended when Minpaku was incorporated in 2004. However, following the incorporation, the forum-style approach to exhibitions was continued in the ‘*Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan ni okeru Tenji Kihon Kousou 2007* (Master Plan for the Exhibitions at the National Museum of Ethnology 2007 [Master Plan 2007])’, which was newly compiled in 2007. The Master Plan 2007 is organized around four central concepts:

The first is the utilization of the ‘Inter-University Research Institute’ function. Here, there is a powerful drive toward collaboration with outside researchers, amassed from various universities, in an effort to reflect the latest findings of Japanese and foreign universities in our exhibitions. Further, our intent is to make the content widely and readily understandable and available to the general public, so as to share the latest research with society. The second central concept is the manifestation of the ‘exhibition as a forum’. This objective is in line with the approach of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Master Plan, as it aims to embody a place for communication, interaction, and mutual education between the researchers engaging in the exhibition, the people who belong to the cultures being exhibited, and the visitors who come to the museum. The third central concept is ‘improving and deepening the level of information provided’. The aim is to move beyond merely displaying objects, toward developing exhibition technology that achieves an organic connection between the displayed object and many forms of information, including audio-visual materials and computerized databases, to enable the viewer to understand the living, breathing presence of the people who created the objects. This concept is an upgraded version

of the Information Booth Exhibition concept advocated in the Master Plan. Fourth is the concept of an exhibition that ‘satisfies the diverse demands of the audience’. Here we address the reality of the increasingly heterogeneous nature of Minpaku’s clientele in every imaginable aspect, including age, nationality, and language. This concept relates to the creation of an exhibition space that spearheads the Universal Museum, meeting the needs of a wide visitor base by maximizing the use of various media to accommodate everyone from the grade school child to the undergraduate or graduate student, foreign visitor, or visitor with disabilities.

Of these concepts, I would like to discuss the second, ‘exhibition as a forum’ objective, by introducing the methods we employ at Minpaku to communicate with our audience.

At Minpaku, we offer the ‘Minpaku Weekend Salon’ program every Sunday. The Salon program consists of Minpaku researchers giving public lectures on topics ranging from exhibition-related themes, to the researcher’s latest research. The Salon is an opportunity for visitors to have closer contact with researchers. We also have a variety of other modes including symposia, research presentations, seminars, and Friends-of-the-Museum lectures, to bring researchers and audience closer together. These activities are becoming a central part of exhibition-hall management. These and other endeavours are part of the ‘Minpaku Forums’ in the exhibition halls, where the displays have been newly updated. For example, in the Culture of Japan gallery, the 2013 Minpaku Forum will be ‘Japan in the World, Japan in Minpaku’. Here the Japan exhibition project members are the primary drivers for a range of programs, including quizzes for the ‘Ritual, Festivals and Performing Arts’ and ‘Everyday Life’ sections, the hands-on program ‘Touch the Goze Culture’, the hands-on seminar ‘Thoughts on Japanese Urushi’, the research presentation ‘Ogatsu Houin Kagura Performance in Minpaku’, three consecutive Minpaku Seminars, three consecutive Weekend Salons, and two consecutive Friends of the Museum lectures.

In fact, these points of contact with the audience provide excellent opportunities for researchers to converse with visitors, or with the people belonging to the regional cultures being exhibited. As such, it is desirable that these opportunities for interaction be more actively developed as a pivotal part of exhibition-hall management. Other systems, including the Videotheque booth and electronic guides that were installed when the museum first opened, as well as the Exploration Square, which opened in 2011, provide the audience with information that cannot be covered by the commentary accompanying the displays. These, too, provide noteworthy opportunities for dialogue with museum visitors.

Exhibitions at museums, particularly those at ethnology museums, can be described as devices for creating opportunities for visitors to become interested in the lifestyles and regions where people of various cultures live their lives. We also consider follow-up to be an important component to be incorporated into the Mas-

ter Plan—that is, identifying how visitors who develop an interest in intercultural understanding go on to cultivate that interest.

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## Notes

- 1) At Minpaku, we conduct questionnaires during the years in which exhibits are updated. Here, as mentioned in the main text, we evaluated how positively or negatively museum visitors regarded the following criteria: how interesting they found the exhibits to be, how easy it was to understand them, and whether the gallery was pleasant and comfortable. We also conduct interviews on the good and bad points of the new exhibits, to identify these points specifically and report to each regional exhibition project team. Each project team analyses the questionnaire results, and holds discussions with the team as to what can be improved, and puts the results together to formulate a revision plan for the gallery, which is implemented the following year.
- 2) In the gallery revision, which began in 2010, we strove for a more readily understandable environment for our audience, by doing such things as adding helpful commentary that can be easily comprehended by teenagers. Below I introduce the commentary for each section and subsection of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Culture of Japan exhibition.

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## Appendix

### Outline of the ‘Master Plan for the National Museum of Ethnology 2007’

In redesigning the galleries of the main exhibition hall at the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku), we worked from the ‘2<sup>nd</sup> Master Plan for the National Museum of Ethnology’, to formulate the ‘Master Plan for the National Museum of Ethnology 2007’. Since then, the main hall galleries have been renewed in accordance with the Master Plan 2007. Here I will outline the basic principles of the Master Plan 2007.

#### 1 Basic principles of exhibition

##### 1.1 Purpose of the exhibition: What is our goal?

###### The exhibition as a forum

The exhibitions at the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku) are designed to promote a general understanding and awareness of the realities and dynamics of societies and cultures around the world, utilizing various media to provide the public with the latest findings of anthropological and ethnological research; and to create a forum for dialogue and interaction that transcends cultural differences, providing a space to put mutual understanding into practice.

##### 1.2 Target of the exhibition: Who is our target?

###### The adoption of the Universal Museum concept

The Minpaku clientele is becoming increasingly diverse in every aspect including age group, nationality, and language. While dedicated to the latest research, the facilities and exhibits of the Minpaku are based on the premise of being understandable and ‘friendly’ to every individual. This is precisely what is signified by the Minpaku exhibitions being backed by the philosophy of the Universal Museum. Quite naturally, it is unreasonable to expect a single exhibit to elicit the same understanding from every person. Therefore, in the new exhibition, we will utilize a variety of media, creating a system that addresses the diverse needs of a wide audience, ranging from grade school children to undergraduate and graduate students, and individuals with disabilities.

##### 1.3 Framework of the exhibit: What will be our framework for understanding?

###### Exhibits that promote the understanding of living, breathing people

The continuous advance of global interactions has resulted in people around the world sharing common cultural factors. However, this does not mean the cul-

tures of the world have become completely homogeneous. Rather, in each part of the world, we see the assertion of cultural uniqueness and the emergence of new cultures born of interaction and blending. Side by side with these developments are the frequent occurrences of regional and ethnic conflicts, and tensions all around the globe. In this context, the fields of ethnology and anthropology need a new paradigm to take the place of the potentially rigid tendencies of established cultural concepts, a new framework for understanding the 'here and now' of culture. The exhibitions at the Minpaku must also embody these new cultural concepts. In short, the new exhibitions at the Minpaku must show how the people of the world are tied to one another in a myriad of ways, while they live together as contemporaries. The exhibitions must prompt the museum audience to think together with us. In the 30 years since the opening of the Minpaku, the mass media and the Internet have developed to a previously unimaginable extent, and information on the world's cultures is now distributed far and wide. However, much of that information is lacking in historical and social context, and the demand in our society to achieve a broader and deeper understanding of the cultures of the world is, paradoxically, even higher now than it was before. The exhibits at the Minpaku, then, while based on the latest research findings, will be of a nature that actively addresses these demands of our audience, by presenting the historical background of the various cultures exhibited together with the dynamics of cultures today.

Today, the diffused distribution of various kinds of information causes some people to become distanced from the flow of information, assuming the role of bystanders rather than participants. The museum, in this context, by achieving a truly bilateral and interactive exhibition, can become a medium for dialogue and mutual understanding, both by posing questions and receiving criticisms and opinions directly from the audience. The museum's exhibitions should become a microcosm of the ideal 21<sup>st</sup> century society by deepening mutual understanding and self-awareness through dialogue.

#### 1.4 Creating the exhibition: How to create the exhibition: An open process of creation

For the Minpaku to be a forum open to the general public, the creation of the exhibits must not be limited to researchers working in isolation, but must be a process open to outside institutions. In particular, for there to be maximum use of the museum's function as an Inter-University Institute, we must open our doors wide to university researchers inside and outside of Japan, to amass the power of these experts in the creation of our exhibits. Specifically, this entails actively connecting the results of Minpaku's joint research projects and collaborative research within the National Institutes for the Humanities, to the exhibits being created. Additionally, the project teams must be comprised not only of researchers within the Institutes but those outside as well, and also of members of the cultures being

exhibited. Furthermore, to maximize the effective use of the museum facilities, we will reinforce our ties with public and private museums nationwide, including those associated with universities, and will provide a place for the public presentation of exhibits created by universities.

#### 1.5 Managing the exhibition: How to manage and revise the exhibition: Ceaseless updating of the exhibition

While the Master Plan mentions the basic policy of revising the exhibitions to accommodate the new era, this is not only a guide for general revisions of the main hall exhibitions. The intent of the Master Plan is not only to take advantage of large-scale revisions, but also to apply the principles and orientation mentioned here, in the day-to-day management of exhibitions, starting with improvements that can be made. To put it another way, no commitments will be made to maintain an exhibit for so many years following a large-scale revision. The exhibits are to be updated continuously, in response to the demands of the age and the advances in research.





Figure 1 The Archetypes of Ritual



Figure 2 The Ritual Spirit



Figure 3 The Embodiment of Spirits



Figure 4 The Ritual in Practice



Figure 5 The Ritual Design





Figure 6 Village Life



Figure 7 Fishing Life



Figure 8 Town Life





Figure 9 Mountain Life



Figure 10 Tohoku Life