

## Introduction: Exhibiting Cultures from Comparative Perspectives

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## Special Issue

### Exhibiting Cultures: Comparative Perspectives from Japan and Europe

特集:文化を展示すること—日本とヨーロッパの遠近法を考える

### Introduction: Exhibiting Cultures from Comparative Perspectives

Akiko Mori\*

序:文化を展示することについて比較の視点から考える

森 明子

This special issue is based on the international symposium ‘Exhibiting Cultures: Comparative Perspectives from Japan and Europe’, held in March 2013 at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka. The main objective of this symposium was to explore the complex role of the anthropologist in mediating between those whose cultures are exhibited during the production (and consumption) of ethnographic exhibitions, and museum visitors to the exhibitions. This introduction will summarize some of the overarching themes and reflections that emerged during the symposium’s discussions, while in the other four papers in this issue anthropologists discuss four recent ethnographic exhibitions they curated.

この特集は、2013年3月に大阪の国立民族学博物館で開催された国際シンポジウム「文化を展示すること—日本とヨーロッパの遠近法を考える」の成果である。シンポジウムの目的は、民族誌展示の生産（と消費）の過程で、展示される人々と展示を見る人々のあいだを媒介する、人類学者の複雑な役割を明ら

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**Key Words** : ethnographic exhibitions, Europe, Japan, everyday life, cultural translation  
キーワード : 民族誌展示, ヨーロッパ, 日本, 日常生活, 文化の翻訳

かにすることにあつた。ここでは、シンポジウムの議論から浮かび上がってきた、いくつかの重要なテーマとその考察について要約して述べる。この序につづく4論文で、最近公開された4件の民族誌展示を制作した人類学者が、自らの展示について論じる。

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## 1 The subject of this special issue

The papers brought together in this special issue explore the creative relationship between ongoing anthropological research and ethnographic exhibitions. This relationship was also the theme of an international symposium entitled 'Exhibiting Cultures: Comparative Perspectives from Japan and Europe', held at the National Museum of Ethnology (Minpaku<sup>1)</sup>) in Osaka on March 17, 2013, to commemorate the opening of the new 'Europe' exhibition at Minpaku in the previous year<sup>2)</sup>.

Ethnographic exhibitions are generally understood to be based on anthropological research that has been disseminated in academic texts, whether in the form of theoretical articles or monographs. However, we want to stress that they are produced in a particular material environment by combining objects, texts, visual and sound data. By examining exhibitions as spatial, embodied practices, we hope to reveal the unique possibilities and potential constraints offered by this specific medium. A second assumption we aim to address is that ethnographic exhibitions are effective venues for cultural translation enabling local audiences to gain easy access to the culture of others. The fact that the act of cultural translation takes place in an exhibition hall in a specific local setting is important too. Thus, issues considered less important in written texts have to be taken into account. The specific history, mission and funding of the museum, as well as characteristics of the exhibition space such layout or lighting possibilities will have a huge impact on the final outlook of a show. Other factors to be considered are the character and make-up of the particular urban or rural locality in which the museum is situated.

The four papers following this introduction describe different examples of

ethnographic exhibitions, and pay attention to these often hidden factors that are crucial to the successful production of ethnographic exhibitions. Although the four papers discuss seemingly different approaches to exhibition production and design, by juxtaposing them we hope to reveal a number of underlying conceptual and ideological similarities, and the distinctiveness that reflects the essence of all the projects. We believe that this will enable us not only to fully explore and compare the different approaches underlying each of the four exhibitions, but also to evaluate the strengths and weaknesses of ethnological museums and exhibitions more generally today, and suggest possible future directions.

## **2 Four exhibitions in comparative view**

### **2.1 Four exhibitions of European and Japanese cultures**

The four exhibitions that are the focus of our discussion deal with the display of European cultures in Japan and Europe, and Japanese cultures<sup>3)</sup> in Europe and Japan. Akiko Mori (the author) considers an exhibition of European cultures in Japan using the example of the ‘Europe’ exhibition at Minpaku that opened in March 2012 in Osaka. In contrast, Elisabeth Tietmeyer discusses an exhibition of European cultures at Museum Europäischer Kulturen—Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, abbreviated to MEK, which opened in December 2011 in Berlin. Inge Daniels analyses an exhibition of Japanese cultures in Europe, focusing on the temporary exhibition of contemporary Japanese home life held from March to August 2011, at the Geffrye Museum in London. Finally, Shingo Hidaka reports on an exhibition of Japanese cultures in Japan, focusing on the ‘Japan’ exhibition at Minpaku in Osaka, a part of which opened in March 2013, while another part will open in March 2014.

We compare the displays of European and Japanese cultures because in many ethnographic museums these types of exhibitions are treated differently from those that use collections gathered in other parts of the world. Since both European countries and Japan are considered to be modern and developed, people from these countries are in the privileged position of being primarily the viewers, instead of the viewed, at ethnographic exhibitions. The four exhibitions discussed below challenge this unequal relationship. Each paper is organized as follows:

1. Introductory remarks about the museum
2. The main aim of, or idea behind the exhibition
3. Key points explored in the exhibition
4. Accompanying programs
5. Approaches and reflections on the exhibition

Some of the key points that emerged from juxtaposing the four exhibitions, that will benefit from further exploration, were: the dissimilar understandings about exhibiting the Self and Others, the different objectives and impacts of permanent and temporary exhibitions, and the presumable roles of ethnographic museums in

the contemporary world.

## 2.2 Exhibition frameworks

First, I will introduce the temporal and spatial frameworks of the four exhibitions. The following abbreviations are used: ‘Europe’ exhibition of Minpaku as ‘Minpaku-E’; the permanent exhibition of MEK in Berlin as ‘MEK-E’; the exhibition ‘At Home in Japan’ in London as ‘Geffrye-J’; ‘Japan’ exhibition of Minpaku as ‘Minpaku-J’. The frameworks of the four exhibitions are shown in Table 1.

**Table 1** Framework of the four exhibitions

	Exhibited Cultures, Main visitors (presumed)	Space and Setting in the Museum	Permanent or Temporary, Place of the exhibition
Minpaku-E	Exhibition of European Everyday Life, Japanese schoolchildren to seniors	One of a series of regional exhibitions in an ethnological museum	Permanent, Osaka/Japan
MEK-E	Exhibition of European Everyday Life, Europeans from a young age to the senior generation	The main exhibition of a museum of European cultures	Permanent, Berlin/Germany
Geffrye-J	Exhibition of Japanese Everyday Life, Mixed audience of European, Japanese and other visitors from schoolchildren to seniors	A special exhibition in a historical museum	Temporary, London/UK
Minpaku-J	Exhibition of Japanese Everyday Life, Japanese schoolchildren to seniors and also foreign visitors	One of a series of regional exhibitions in an ethnological museum	Permanent, Osaka/Japan

The main characteristics of each exhibition are as follows:

- Minpaku-E: Diachronically multi-layered ways of life and the changing rhythms of everyday life
- MEK-E: Results of cultural contacts exemplified by decorative artifacts and everyday utensils in a cultural comparison
- Geffrye-J: Lived experience and the material culture of everyday life, discovery and ambiguity
- Minpaku-J: Local diversity of festivals and everyday life

In the following sections, a number of these issues are explored in more detail.

### 3 Exhibiting life-worlds<sup>4)</sup>

As producers of ethnographic exhibitions, we all regard it as extremely important to consider the life-worlds of the cultures displayed. How we present these life-worlds depends on the social and cultural contexts of our exhibitions. Comparing the four exhibitions revealed how the museums' locations impacted each of the exhibitions. The differences between Minpaku-E and MEK-E are interesting in this respect, because although both exhibitions display facets of European' life-worlds, the former presents them as foreign cultures, while the latter presents them as the visitors' own cultures. Minpaku-E deals with four main topics: agricultural-pastoral, Christian, industrial, and European Union (EU). European visitors who are informed about their agricultural-pastoral origins at the beginning of the exhibition might be surprised and feel ambiguous about the display; agriculture and livestock farming is indeed carried out in Europe, but these activities have played a minor role for many years, and don't reflect Europe's main economic activities today. Thus, the exhibition might be seen as giving Japanese visitors the wrong impression. However, Japanese researchers are convinced that this is a needless anxiety because most Japanese are also knowledgeable about the contemporary appearances of European cities and countryside; they are familiar with European arts and crafts traditions and modern artifacts. Indeed, European science, humanities and music have become an integral part of the everyday lives of the contemporary Japanese. The researchers involved in producing Minpaku-E argue that agriculture and livestock farming belong to a basic stratum of European culture that is hidden within modern and post-modern society. This historical cultural grounding is not easy to discern, and should therefore be explained to Japanese visitors.

On the other hand, the MEK-E exhibition is designed for European visitors who are familiar with their own cultural context. The first part the exhibition shows examples of cultural contact—whether trade, travel, migration or religion—while the second part exemplifies reactions to global encounters, raising questions about a sense of belonging and identity for individuals as well as groups. This exhibition also reflects ongoing internal discussions in Europe about European identity. Without prior knowledge of the historical and actual context of this period, it will not be easy to understand the researchers' or curators' intentions, even if texts and media offer the necessary background information.

The Minpaku-J exhibition compares festive and quotidian life by exhibiting a variety of artifacts and lifestyles from across Japan. This exhibition is intended to be comprehensible both to Japanese and foreign visitors. For Japanese with knowledge of diverse local festivals it is easy to grasp the regional variety of festive cultures, while for foreign visitors the contrast between festive and quotidian life is easy to comprehend because it is remarkably similar across cultures.

The Geffrye-J exhibition focuses on everyday life within Japanese homes.

Because it is aimed at a mixed audience of European, Japanese and other visitors, it uses different kinds of texts and a variety of objects and visuals to allow different individuals to engage with the displays, depending on the extent of their previous knowledge of Japan, including their experiences while living in Japan. Thus, most Japanese visitors do not feel it necessary to read any of the texts, but they seem to enjoy exploring spaces representing everyday life, while being genuinely surprised when seeing and touching familiar objects that often evoke memories of home. Those who have never travelled to Japan similarly experience the domestic spaces through touch, but they also feel more inclined to read some of the textual information provided in order to be able to contextualize the material culture of everyday life.

Exhibiting life-worlds from other cultures can bring a fresh perspective that challenges our own deeply ingrained point of view. Thus, the mundane material culture inside Japanese homes exhibited in Geffrye-J casts light on both the differences and the similarities of everyday life across cultures, while the exhibition of a variety of European breads in Minpaku-E demonstrates that this common, everyday staple reflects both a pan-European similarity, and the distinctiveness of colourful European cultures with their specific regional and historical backgrounds<sup>5)</sup>.

## 4 Forms of cultural translation

### 4.1 Researchers' and visitors' techniques

One of the key issues explored in the symposium was where and how cultural translations occur in exhibition spaces. What kind of information should we offer, and which devices are most effective for conveying specific kinds of information? In most exhibitions, some standard textual information continues to be offered, but in recent years, additional access to information might be provided through portable devices such as digital guides, or in external spaces through online search engines, video on demand, or catalogues and other reference books.

Although researchers always have multiple types of visitors in mind, their ways of translating between cultures have limitations, and often miss highlighting the complexities and ambiguities of cross-cultural understanding. This is especially so because visitors often do not read the texts provided in the exhibition space, and may opt for their own type of cultural translation instead. Although too little information might lead to frustration, allowing visitors to explore and discover museum displays on their own can result in a more intuitive and satisfying personal learning experience.

Geffrye-J illustrates what such an exhibition might look like. Daniels agrees that, although all cultural encounters necessitate some kind of translation, this can occur on a variety of different levels, using different media. Geffrye-J aimed to convey more conventional, contextual, and historical information using texts on image-

text wallpapers. However, many people did not read these texts, and a visitors' study confirmed that cultural translations often happened on a more informal level inside the museum spaces, with visitors who were familiar with Japan frequently acting as cultural brokers for their companions. Although the knowledge that these visitors passed on may be mistaken, the fact that they had visited Japan meant that the information conveyed was generally taken at face value. Because this exhibition focused on the material culture of everyday life, even those who had no prior knowledge of Japan were able to translate their encounters with the foreign cultures into a valuable experience, by making comparisons with the practices and objects in their own homes. The familiarity of some aspects of Japanese home life, such as eating and cooking, were much appreciated in this respect, but in other spaces such as the tatami room, visitors left to their own devices were unsure how to engage with the displays. Daniels argues that this uncertainty mirrors the ambiguity that is characteristic of cultural encounters. Indeed, when we are confronted with unfamiliar spaces and people, most are initially unsure about how to behave, and even when one has lived somewhere for a long period of time, a certain 'awkwardness' remains.

Tietmeyer, on the other hand, is more sceptical about such an approach, and she raises the following questions: What do visitors 'learn' about another culture if they do not know anything about the context in which the object was produced and used, or about the meaning(s) of the objects? Would they be able to define the objects without having any knowledge of them?

Concerning this subject, Hidaka also mentioned the results of his visitors' study. Some visitors liked to engage with various cultures directly, while others were primarily interested in being given explanations about exhibited objects. He argues that we need to attach equal importance to both of these issues when producing an exhibition, and he takes a middle way of doing so by providing only the essential information. In his view, explanatory text should be kept to a minimum, with the objective of stimulating visitors to develop a real interest and curiosity about the cultures displayed. All contributors agree that those who are eager to learn should be given ample opportunities to do so. Thus, though each of the four exhibitions took a different approach, each chose a middle way.

Geffrye-J, however, raises another problem to be considered; we also need to question the assumption that the search for knowledge is the main reason people visit exhibitions. Encounters with foreign cultures and trying to understand them are subjective engagements. We remember here the famous argument by Clifford Geertz; he indicated that anthropologists' approaches to studying cultures are grounded both in experience-distant and experience-near understandings (Geertz 1983: 55–70). Daniels adds that more recently Helen Saunderson made a similar argument within the museum context. She claimed that we could distinguish between two modes of gaining knowledge from museum objects. These were, firstly, what she called 'info-

object’ or ‘seeing the dimensions and texture; feeling the weight, balance point and temperature of objects’. Secondly, she spoke of ‘object-text’, whereby ‘knowledge external to the object is gained from the accompanying context: text, audio guide and discussions with other people’ (Saunderson 2012: 167).

In my view, museums have tended to focus on the former (experience-distant), while several visitors may possibly look for the latter (experience-near). Many people participating in Daniels’ visitors’ study preferred a more immersive, personal experience instead of being lectured by experts. The question remains how can we offer visitors more opportunities for experience-near understanding. Is it done by simulating real-life experiences? If so, we could try to accommodate the diversity of motivations for visiting exhibitions by offering people different levels of access to the material on display, and allowing a range of experiences, from the more academic to the more bodily.

During our discussions, it became clear that the researchers’ interests and foci needed to be considered too. The two researchers, Daniels and Mori (the author), who are engaged in exhibiting foreign cultures, are keen to stress the ‘ambiguity’ and ‘complexity’ of cultural encounters. The other two contributors, Tietmeyer and Hidaka, who are engaged in exhibiting visitors’ own cultures, are concerned that such an approach might result in some visitors not learning at all. This, in my view, reflects their latent different attitudes to the cultures exhibited and to the different aims of their exhibitions.

#### 4.2 Thinking beyond the framework of regional cultures

In this section, I rethink using regional cultures as the framework for exhibitions. In many ethnographic museums, cultures have been juxtaposed regionally or continentally. For example, Minpaku has an official description of its exhibitions, which reads as follows (National Museum of Ethnology 2012: 31).

The regional exhibitions start with Oceania, and progress as if traveling eastwards around the world to finish in Japan. This arrangement allows visitors to view Japanese culture in comparison with other cultures. In designing the exhibitions, the National Museum of Ethnology adhered to the notion that all human cultures around the world have equal value; the notion has remained unchanged since the inception of the Museum.

These kinds of displays offer visitors a bird’s-eye view perspective, while encouraging both a more objective attitude toward other cultures, and a more in-depth understanding of one’s own culture. A relativistic point of view is meaningful because it avoids ethnocentrism.

Thus, cultural relativism is embedded in ethnographic museums, framing exhibitions by means of the regions. This framing depends on the assumption that cultural phenomena are fixed in the discrete region. However, today, due to increased mobility and the acceleration of global exchanges, the contours of regional cultures

are becoming more and more blurred. We therefore need to reconsider the ways in which both regional cultures and cultural contacts are presented<sup>6)</sup>.

The MEK-E exhibition offers a possible solution to this problem as it uses the story of cultural contacts as its guiding principle. Tietmeyer aimed to overcome the traditional regional approach by introducing multi-voiced-ness into the exhibition, and presenting visitors with a range of different narratives (within the available space). Moreover, she insisted that in order to develop multiple perspectives, both the subjects displayed and/or the visitors should be given the opportunity to participate in preparing and realising parts of the exhibition. They could, for example, be given a space where they could present their opinions and organise their own activities as an integral part of the exhibition. She also proposed the articulation of three approaches to the study and presentation of cultures: ‘the regional’, ‘the cultural historical’, and ‘the topical’ (often based on a cultural comparison). All three approaches were presented within the theme of cultural contact in the MEK-E exhibition, and through this organic combination, she hoped to re-energise the ossifying regional culture framework.

The Geffrye-J experiment offers us another clue. According to Daniels, it is important to point out that most visitors had some prior ideas (even if stereotypes), or some mental images about Japan, so it is tricky to speak of ‘unknown cultures’ in this respect. One could argue that in our contemporary, interconnected world, it will be rather difficult to find any cultures with which visitors (especially in cosmopolitan cities such as Berlin, London, or Osaka) are completely unfamiliar. It is at this intersection between cultural stereotypes, imagination, and actual everyday lived experiences that Geffrye-J experimented with the notion of uncertainty.

In the contemporary world, where the relationships between people, things, and places are in constant flux, and where there are multiple interactions between people from various cultural backgrounds, ethnographic exhibitions would benefit from focusing on a more complex, performative and reflexive way of understanding.

## 5 Museum settings

Finally, I will turn to the subject of the different museum settings. Of the four exhibitions, only the Geffrye-J was a temporary exhibition. Permanent and temporary exhibitions are, of course, driven by very different motivations. Because one of the main aims of the permanent ethnographic exhibition is to officially present the museum’s profile, it tends to explore long-term issues related to displaying the Self and Others from an ethnological/anthropological point of view. Thus, Minpaku-E exhibits European cultures as multi-layered, and emphasizes the grass roots level; MEK-E displays the plurality and commonality of European cultures regionally, historically and topically; and Minpaku-J shows the local variety and complexity of Japanese cultures, and presents a bird’s-eye view perspective in order to facilitate

comparison with other cultures. Temporary exhibitions, on the other hand, only last for a short-term, but they are often more ambitious than permanent exhibitions in exploring new ideas. Geffrye-J exemplifies how temporary exhibitions can make current academic research accessible, both to other scholars and to the general public.

The museum settings in which the four exhibitions are held also differ. While Minpaku-E and Minpaku-J are two regional exhibitions within the same ethnological museum, MEK-E and Geffrye-J are both independent exhibitions. MEK-E is a permanent exhibition held in a museum that focuses on European life-worlds and cultural contact dating back to the 18th century, while Geffrye-J is a temporary exhibition in a historical museum that focuses on homes and gardens, initially those of the English middle classes, but more recently, the focus has become worldwide. In each of these settings, the visitors' perspectives are framed differently. Visitors to Minpaku are thought to have a regional, comparative point of view; those frequenting MEK-E are likely to have a specific interest in Europe and their own society; and visitors to Geffrye-J seem to be captivated by domestic life across cultures.

Both MEK-E and Minpaku-J aim to display the visitors' own, and closely related cultures; they focus on local differences and underlying similarities, taking historical processes as well as current trends into consideration. Moreover, both exhibitions intend to encourage visitors to question their assumptions about their own cultures and identities from a comparative point of view. However, MEK-E and Minpaku-J differ in their approach to achieving this aim. By focusing on cultural contact, MEK-E suggests that European cultures should be understood as a complex amalgamation of practices and beliefs, associated with European societies as well as external groups. One particular display inside MEK-E illustrates this: there are a couple of costumes—labelled 'European costume'—which are made from a wide range of materials such as blisters, tetra pak, and music sheets. They mix stylistic elements of traditional local costumes and historic fashion ideas. These costumes were created as an art project by a fashion designer and embody a cultural fusion of distinctive regional features from within and outside Europe. Using many kinds of recycled materials, they also address the question of what the design of a fragile yet dynamic European attitude to life could look like (See Figure 7 in the Tietmeyer's paper in this special issue).

By contrast, Minpaku-J presents a variety of Japanese cultures by focusing on basic strata from a relativistic point of view, by comparing them with non-Japanese cultures. Variety is classified into categories based on local traditions associated with ecological patterns such as 'Village Life', 'Fishing Village', 'Town Life', and 'Mountain Life'. Furthermore, in the spring of 2014, Minpaku-J plans to open a section that explores immigrants' cultures in Japan. It will be a challenge to exhibit immigrants' cultures side by side with local substratum cultures inside the framework of regional cultures.

In the case of Geffrye-J, a historical museum in the centre of London, dis-

tinctions between the Self and Others are difficult to sustain. Exhibitions in this museum aim to attract Londoners and tourists from all walks of life. Less than half of those who visited the exhibition were British; visitors belonged to a large number of nationalities. Japan is a well-liked travel destination for Europeans, and even those who have not visited have been exposed to Japanese cultures through a variety of media. Moreover, East London has recently seen the development of a growing community of Japanese artists and entrepreneurs, and more than ten per cent of the visitors to this exhibition were Japanese. Thus, although this exhibit focused on Japanese cultural practices, it transcended discussions about the opposition between the Self and Others.

## **6 Exhibiting cultures from comparative perspectives**

To conclude this introduction, I will summarize our discussions under four points. Firstly, to produce their exhibitions, researchers in Japan and Europe focused on very different facets of the life-worlds of Europeans and Japanese. Starting with the consideration that European objects and ideas have become an integral part of the contemporary everyday lives of Japanese people, researchers in Japan designed an exhibition that shows both modern and traditional objects, customs, and ways of life in layers. On the other hand, in Berlin the exhibition of life-worlds aimed to show that the various European cultures developed as they did as the result of cross-cultural contacts, thereby raising questions of belonging and identity. This means that an ethnographic exhibition is also situated in its cultural context.

Secondly, we discussed where and how cultural translation occurs in the exhibition space. Because many visitors have easy access to information about their own, or the other cultures displayed, we need to reconsider the authoritative way in which cultural knowledge is disseminated by researchers, and explore how we might provide visitors with a more individual, multifaceted, experience. This would also mean that museums would have to take the interests and motivations of visitors more seriously.

Thirdly, we examined the frameworks of regional cultures. Rapid growth in the international exchange of things and information, coupled with the increase of peoples' cross-cultural movements, has led anthropologists to question the territorialized notion of culture, and focus instead on placemaking practices and the multitude of meanings people may attach to specific localities<sup>7)</sup>. As evidenced by current interest in immigrant cultures, the focus of life-world exhibitions is also shifting from representing cultures as being associated with a particular region, to describing how cultures are influenced by their encounters with others. Thus, we need to revise the relationship between culture and region, a relationship that has long been central to ethnographic museums.

Fourthly, museum settings influence not only the design of exhibitions, but also

the visitors' perspectives. We have seen that two exhibitions about visitors' own cultures, the MEK-E and Minpaku-J, throw light on a completely different approach to their cultures and identities, both of them highlighting comparative points of view.

These issues have resulted from international and intercultural dialogues, between researchers who are currently engaged in developing exhibitions while conducting a degree of experimentation. We would like to pursue these issues further, and hope that this ongoing dialogue may develop into new anthropological and theoretical thinking about exhibiting cultures. Another possible experiment might include a future joint exhibition about different perspectives on the Self and Others.

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### Notes

- 1) 'Minpaku' is an abbreviation of the Japanese name for the National Museum of Ethnology (Kokuritsu Minzokugaku Hakubutsukan). Below we use this abbreviation in lieu of National Museum of Ethnology.
- 2) This symposium was organized by the author and sponsored by Minpaku. I planned this symposium as a project to reflect on the aims, the process and outcomes of the created exhibition in comparison with three other ethnographic exhibitions. Scholars engaged in anthropological and/or historical research in Europe and/or Japan participated as commentators and discussants. These scholars came from Minpaku and elsewhere. They included Atsushi Miura (Saitama University), Tatsushi Fujihara (University of Tokyo), Mohacsi Gergely (Keio University), Taeko Udagawa (Minpaku), Hiroshi Shoji (Minpaku), and Yuriko Yamanaka (Minpaku). Three of them were actively engaged in the new Europe exhibition as members of the 'Europe-exhibition-group' or as one of those in charge of the Minpaku-whole-exhibition-renewal.
- 3) Here I use 'Japanese cultures' in a plural form. While the singular use of culture at the nation-level, such as 'Japanese culture', is often used publicly, researchers agree that several divergent cultures coexist in Japan. The use of a plural form reflects our understanding of cultures.
- 4) I use the word 'life-worlds' to mean worlds in which people live their everyday lives directly experienced. Such a use is found in several studies (e.g. Otto and Bubandt 2010).
- 5) An eye-catching 'bread' corer is displayed at the beginning of the Europe exhibition.
- 6) Recently some prominent ethnographic museums embarked on exhibitions using cross-cultural subjects rather than regional framings. Minpaku also incorporates this type of exhibition; it arranges the permanent exhibitions—consisting of regional and cross-cultural music and language—and temporary exhibitions highlighting specific topics. How the cross-cultural exhibitions are arranged is one of the key issues to be considered, but we did not take this matter up in the present symposium because our agenda was focused on comparative perspectives from Europe and Japan.
- 7) The new subject called 'Europeanization' and the growing focus on cultural heritage illustrates this situation. See for example Gupta and Ferguson (eds.) (1997); Borneman and Fowler (1997); and Low and Lawrence-Zúñiga (eds.) (2003).

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