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## Introduction

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This book retraces the contents of the presentations given at the International Workshop on Asian Museums and Museology held in Thailand from August 24 to 28, 2014 (See Appendix 1). The International Workshop was organized by the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan, under the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS) program “New Horizons in Asian Museums and Museology”, and supported by the Department of Fine Arts, Ministry of Culture of Thailand.

The National Museum of Ethnology, Japan started the three-year project “New Horizons in Asian Museums and Museology” in 2012, in order to strengthen the international cooperation and network on museology, and more particularly to promote joint research between Japan and Asian countries, especially Thailand, Mongolia, and Myanmar. The project was considered as a new international network initiative for the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan. The National Museum of Ethnology, Japan has been conducting training courses on museology since 1994, in collaboration with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA). From 1994 to 2003, it was a six-month course and out of this, two weeks were entrusted to the museum. After 10 years, it became an intensive course and the operation, planning, and training were the total responsibility of the museum and the Lake Biwa Museum. Thus, with Thailand, Mongolia, and Myanmar, a confidential relation of more than 20 years of friendship and cultural exchange has been established concerning museology and museum activities.

As part of the project, the first International Research Meeting on Museology was held in Mongolia in 2012, and the second in Myanmar in 2013. This International Workshop on Asian Museums and Museology in Thailand was the third of this series of international meetings. The International Workshop in Thailand was composed of a joint research meeting at Kanchanaphisek National Museum on August 25, the JSPS Core-to-Core Program Public Seminar on the 26th at the National Museum Bangkok, and museum visits in Bangkok and Nakhon Phathom Province on the 27th.

### Joint research meeting

The theme of the joint research meeting was “Preventive Conservation”, which was divided into two sessions, “Sustainable collection management” and “Risk management and preparedness measurement”. The research meeting was for

specialists in museology, museum staff, and museology students.

– **Sustainable collection management** –

The presentations focused on the problem of collection management, and more specifically attention was centered on the management of ethnographic collection under normal circumstances.

Patcharin Sukpramool (Head of the Museum Registration, Storage and Information Technology Group, Office of National Museums, Thailand) presented “Museum Storage Management” at the Central Storage of Kanchanaphisek National Museum. The Central Storage collection comprises items received from the King and Royal Family, objects collected from archaeological surveys or excavations, donations by people or governmental sector, and items received from the Royal Thai Police Department and the Customs Department such as stolen or smuggled trade objects. In storage 1, stone and stucco objects are kept whereas storage 2 contains bronze objects, potteries, textiles, musical instruments, weapons, wooden crafts, basketries and religious objects. Creation of a new central storage equipped with a conservation center and ethnological exhibitions is planned in future.

Jarunee Incherdchai (Director, Kanchanaphisek National Museum, Thailand) gave a presentation on “How to Manage Ethnographic Collections: Image of Kanchanaphisek National Museum”. She first described the situation of ethnographic objects pointing out that the materials composing the objects were easily deteriorated by careless environment control or human actions, and that old tradition and techniques were being lost. The objective of Kanchanaphisek National Museum is to collect and preserve cultural material including oral traditions related to the way of life of the Tai and other ethnic groups in Thailand. Its exhibition is considered as a window on ethnic groups in Thailand and Southeast Asia and comprises visible storages. As a part of the activities for the preservation and dissemination of ethnic identity, ethnographical products are created based on museum collections to enhance their values.

Naoko Sonoda (Professor, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan) emphasized in her “Museum Environment Control for Sustainable Collection Management” that museums today were required to pay consideration to their environmental impact. Two environmental issues affecting museums are protection of the ozone layer and climate change. The former led to a comprehensive review in Japanese museums of policies regarding the use of chemical fumigants to protect cultural properties. The latter posed a dilemma on how to reduce energy consumption without adversely affecting the control of temperature and humidity within the museum. Examples of pest control based on Integrated Pest Management (IPM) and energy efficient climate control measures adopted at the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan were presented.

### – Risk management and preparedness measurement –

The presentations comprise measures to address all eventualities that may affect the collection under normal circumstances and in emergencies.

Sopit Panyakhan (Scientist of the Science for Conservation Group, Office of National Museums, Thailand), who deals with the conservation of organic materials, presented a case study on “Conservation of Palm-leaf Manuscripts of Wat Phananchong, Ayutthaya Province”. The palm-leaf manuscripts had deteriorated due to water or humidity after fire extinguishment that caused fungal damage, and an inappropriate conservation environment. She described the conservation treatment for these manuscripts that consisted of eradicating fungus and removing palm leaves adhering together using mechanical and chemical methods, and humidification. After the conservation treatment of the manuscripts, she recommended keeping them in a proper conservation environment (low illuminance level, control of ultraviolet radiation, control of temperature and relative humidity).

Nopparat Thepthepha (Head, Exhibition Development Division, National Science Museum, Thailand) reported the “The Emergency Preparedness of National Science Museum, Thailand: The Lessons from Severe Flooding in 2011”. This flood that occurred in 2011 was considered the worst flooding in terms of the amount of water and people affected. Faced with the danger of an impending flood, National Science Museum (NSM) had prepared disaster and action plans, and set up a working committee. An emergency closing period for staff and visitors had been officially announced. During the flood, NSM served as a flood shelter for staff and nearby communities. The museum staff observed the water level, visited nearby communities to distribute necessary supplies and to gather information. The lesson learned from these experiences is the importance of disaster planning and the necessity of scientific data to make correct decisions. Collaboration with other institutions was useful in garnering assistance and social networks were revealed to be effective for spreading news.

Shingo Hidaka (Associate Professor, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan) gave a presentation on “Rescue and Emergency Treatment for Tangible Cultural Properties”. He first explained the rescue operations system for tangible cultural properties in Japan in general. Then he took an example of the rescue operations after the Great East Japan Earthquake with an overview of rescue, temporary storage, and emergency treatment including desalination treatment. He concluded that as the people have not yet returned to their normal daily lives and restoration plans for museum facilities were far from satisfactory, further research and coordination with the disaster-stricken regions was necessary.

### Public Seminar

The JSPS Core-to-Core Program Public Seminar entitled “Social Roles of the

Museum” was open to the public. Nearly one hundred people attended the Public Seminar. It was composed of three parts, a keynote speech followed by two presentation sessions, “Exhibition and Education” and “Museums and Communities”.

– **Keynote speech** –

The keynote speech “Searching for New Ways to Improve Museum” was given by Tsuneyuki Morita (Professor Emeritus, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan). Regarding recent changes, he pointed out three topics and invited the next generation to consider them. The first is the rapid diffusion of social network service and the introduction of electronic devices that resulted in a decrease of information from three-dimensional objects to two-dimensional static or moving images. This does not mean he neglected the new method, but he invites us to reconsider the data value contained in three-dimensional objects. The second is the museum as a self-presentation tool, and he noted that presenting the idea of collection is also a self-presentation of the collector. The last point is that the museum can act as a new source of information, and for this he forecasts that the museum display using visual methods can be considered as a new universal language. He anticipates that possibly the museum age as a treasure house will be closed and that a new one as a communication tool opened, using modern high technologies.

– **Exhibition and Education** –

Watcharawadee Wichiansri (Director, Songkhla National Museum, Thailand) informed us about the “New Exhibition of Songkhla National Museum”. For the new exhibition, a committee group consisting of curatorial staff was set up, and people in Songkhla Province co-operated and became involved in the project. For the new permanent exhibition, it has been decided to focus on Songkhla’s local history, to preserve the historical building, and to create a living museum. The budget was drawn up for fiscal years 2009, 2010, and 2013 to realize this renovation.

Kanokwalee Suriyatham (Head, Roi-Et National Museum, Thailand) drew our attention to “Educational Programs through Exhibition”. She gave examples of educational activities and practical trainings of the outreach programs given at the Roi-Et National Museum. She concluded the presentation with reference to the Committee on education of the American Association of Museums stating that “there is no single ‘best practice’ because one ‘best’ is not best for everyone”.

Kenji Yoshida (Professor, National Museum of Ethnology, Japan) retraced recent movements that are under way in the field of museum exhibition in “Ongoing Movements in the Museum Exhibition 2014”. After presenting refurbishments and/or creations of the African Galleries in major museums throughout the world at the turn of the last century, he cited the refurbishment project at the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan and several special exhibitions he has been curating. His main

concern was to question and overcome the existing wall or barrier built between art museums and ethnographic or cultural museums, art and culture, art history and anthropology, these trials being parallel to the ongoing movements in the field of art and anthropology today. His recent exhibition highlights the diversity and commonality of images and forms created by all “us” human beings.

#### – Museums and Communities –

Wised Phetpradab (Director, Fine Arts Department, Prachinburi, Thailand) held a talk on “The Efforts to Establish a City Museum in Chonburi”. The main concept was to combine nature and culture, maintaining a good balance between culture, commerce, community, greenery, and connectivity. And for this, he used examples of several learning and cultural places in Chonburi Province.

Nitaya Kanokmongkol (Director, Chiang Mai National Museum, Thailand) presented “Chiang Mai National Museum: the Center of Local Community in the Northern Region”. Chiang Mai National Museum, as the center of local community, has two missions. One is to be the preserving organization to maintain ancient and art objects of the region, and the other is to be the center of learning and of tourist attraction on northern Thailand and Lanna (Northern Thai) art and cultural heritage. Recently, Chiang Mai National Museum has also acted as the center of museology in the region and provides training in basic preservation and museology to communities and local museums.

Yasushi Kusuoka (Head, Exhibition Department, Lake Biwa Museum, Japan) held a talk on “Community Based Activities of the Lake Biwa Museum”. The Lake Biwa Museum in Shiga Prefecture has extensive cooperation from the local community. Examples of exchange were shown with the example of programs for schools and for the general public, and those conducted in cooperation with the local people. Collaboration between the museum and private companies as well as the network of museums in Shiga Prefecture was also presented.

#### **Museum visits**

On August 26, we looked around five museums in Bangkok and its suburbs in order to learn about Thai models of museums and museum practices and to discuss their possibilities. In the morning, we visited Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles, which opened in 2003 on the grounds of the Grand Palace in Bangkok. It is a kind of research museum that collects, displays and preserves traditional Thai textiles, especially of Queen’s collections. Guided by curators, we observed not only galleries but also storage and textile conservation laboratory equipped with advanced technologies and facilities. After Queen Sirikit Museum of Textiles, we visited the National Museum Bangkok, which is located in the former grounds of the 18<sup>th</sup> century royal palace. It is considered to be the first modern museum in Thailand and

houses the largest collection of Thai art and artifacts in the country. Its Thai history exhibition presents a succinct chronology of events and figures from the prehistoric to the present era, showcasing some national treasures. The other parts of the museum which attracted our special attention include the decorative arts and ethnology exhibition, and the restored Buddhaisawan Chapel, which, built in 1795, retains original wall murals and beautiful Buddha images.

In the afternoon, we visited three local museums in Nakhon Phatom Province, Lamphrya Local Museum, Samrong Temple Museum, and Tha Phud Temple Local Museum. Since the mid-1980s, local museums have been established all over the country. In particular, between the late-1990s and the early-2000s, the number increased sharply, and it now amounts to more than 1,000. The majority of them are founded and operated by their local community, and represent the histories and cultures of that community. One of our findings from the fieldwork is that the local museums have developed within the traditions of Thai popular Buddhism, reflecting the history and traditions of Thai society. By interviewing the caretakers of the museums, we also learned how the development of museums and museum practices is closely linked with the preservation of local culture, education of local identities, and community development.

### **In summary**

The International Workshop on Asian Museums and Museology drew our attention to various types of museums that have been developed and thrive in Thailand today. From this international workshop, some key concepts for the museums of our era can be drawn.

At the Kanchanaphisek National Museum and the Central Storage, as presented by Patcharin and Jarunee, more than 77,000 items are arranged and stored by material type. This Museum and Storage is a good example of visible storage. The Central Storage is not yet systematically open to the public, but this initiative deserves special attention as it allows access to collections that would otherwise be out of public view. Access to the collections goes hand in hand with proper collection care, hence the importance of sustainable collection management described by Sonoda. Collection management refers not only to activities under normal circumstances but also in emergency cases. An example of the former is shown in the presentation of Sopot's with a case study on the conservation of palm-leaf manuscripts. The latter case is illustrated by two interventions, one from Nopparat on the severe flood in Thailand and the other from Hidaka on the earthquake in Japan, both natural disasters occurring in 2011.

Another issue that should be emphasized is the importance of the relationship between museum and people, and/or museum and local communities. Watcharawadee stated that community people cooperated in the refurbishment project of Songkhla

National Museum. Yoshida pointed out in his presentation that museums throughout the world are now increasingly assuming the role of a forum in which participants are not only the exhibitor and the audience, but also representatives of the culture exhibited. It is a fact that museums today are becoming increasingly involved in community based activities as can be seen in the example of Chiang Mai National Museum presented by Nitaya and that of the Lake Biwa Museum by Kusuoka. The relation with local communities is now capturing increased interest as it can be connected with both museum and lifelong education, and for this we can refer to the intervention of Kanokwalee on educational programs at Roi-Et National Museum. The museum is also expected to contribute to the economic and cultural development of local communities, as shown in the remarks of Wised concerning the establishment of Chonburi City Museum.

We therefore conclude, with reference to Morita's keynote speech, that the museum is no longer simply a place to conserve valuable materials, with multiple meanings, nor to visit to admire them. We should make more effort to reveal further unknown visual meaning hidden in the objects and to establish new methods and technologies to activate them. It is time to reconsider the values and new possibilities of the museum.

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As noted above, this volume retraces the contents of the presentations given at the International Workshop on Asian Museums and Museology held in Thailand in August 2014. In the preparation of this book, the illustrations and photographs used at the time of the presentations are included. The translation was wholly revised by the editors responsible. We hope that the volume can serve as a reference book for young museum staff to deepen their knowledge and experience. At the same time, we believe that it is one of the first steps to creating new horizons in Asian museums and museology, based on its respective cultural and historical background.

We would like to acknowledge with gratitude the assistance of all the organizations and individuals who exerted their best efforts to realize the International Workshop on Asia Museums and Museology in Thailand and this publication.