

## Relationship between Myanmar Museums and the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan in the Field of Museum Activities and Museology

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## **Relationship between Myanmar Museums and the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan in the Field of Museum Activities and Museology**

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### **1 Beginning of Cooperation**

More than two decades ago, cooperation between Myanmar museums and the National Museum of Ethnology, Japan (NME) started. Our memory goes back to the 1990s when my late Director-General of the Department of Cultural Institutes, Dr. Ye Htut, visited NME, Japan and returned to Myanmar. He mentioned that he had discussed with the Director-General and Prof. Katsumi Tamura of NME at that time about the training of Myanmar museum staff in NME.

#### **1.1 Training museum staff in the JICA program**

As a result of the discussion, the first candidate, Daw Thein Thein Win, who was working as an Assistant Curator at the National Museum of Myanmar, was the pioneer trainee in museology at NME in 1993-1994. The next year, 1994-1995, two candidates, Daw Nu Mra Zan, Assistant Curator of the Rakhine State Cultural Museum in Sittwe, and Daw Thida Tun, Assistant Curator (grade 2) of the National Museum in Myanmar, had the opportunity to study museology at NME, which included part-time participation in the JICA training program. Daw Htay Htay Swe, official from the National Museum of Myanmar studied museology there as well in 1997-1998. During her stay, Daw Mie Mie Thet Nwe, who was trained in Tokushima Prefectural Museum, visited NME to study museology for the short period. After that, U Tin Aung Soe of Rakhine State Cultural Museum visited to study there for the short period. Then, U Than Win, official from the National Museum of Myanmar, was also able to study museology under the JICA program at NME in 2000. Daw Myo Myint Myint San, Assistant Curator (grade 2) of the Mandalay Region Cultural Museum, studied museology at NME as one of the participants of the JICA program in 2013\*.

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\* The last trainees of 2014 were U Khin Maung Soe, Assistant Curator of the National Museum (Naypyitaw) and Daw Khin Saw Win, Assistant Curator (grade 2) of Bagan Archaeological Museum.

## **1.2 Joint video-shooting project**

The joint video-shooting project took five years from 1998 to 2003. The NME, with the cooperation of Toppan Company, provided video cameras and the National Museum of Myanmar took part in shooting a video concerning the customs and traditions of the Myanmar people. At the end of the project, Daw Mie Mie Thet Nwe, curator, and Ko Aung Myo, video cameraman, went to NME, Japan and did the final editing of the video programmes for the NME.

These are the initial cooperative activities between NME and the Myanmar museums.

## **2 Cooperation Work for Museum Projects in Myanmar**

Cooperation work for museum projects between NME and Myanmar museums started again in 2010 when Daw Nu Mra Zan (Deputy Director-General of the Department of Archaeology and National Museum at that time) came to NME as Visiting Professor, and she conducted research on the many functional works of Japanese museums. After she arrived back in Myanmar in 2011, display renewal works started to upgrade three museums, namely, Mon State Cultural Museum in Mawlamyaing, Kayin State Cultural Museum in Hpa-an, and Ayerwady Region Cultural Museum in Patheingyi, by applying the concepts and certain techniques of display technology studied in Japan.

### **2.1 Museum seminars in regional cultural museums of Myanmar**

In 2012, Prof. Katsumi Tamura of NME came to Myanmar to pay visits to Mon State Cultural Museum in Mawlamyaing and Kayin State Cultural Museum in Hpa-an, holding museum seminars on museum functions highlighting the intangible cultural heritage of their regions. He also gave the same lecture in the National Museum (Yangon).

### **2.2 “Joint Research Meeting or Seminar on Museology”**

The “Joint Research Meeting or Seminar on Museology of Japan, Mongolia, Myanmar, and Thailand” was conducted by NME as a new program entitled “New Horizons in Asian Museums and Museology” for FY2012-2014, with support from the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science (JSPS). This program on museology and museum activities promoted joint research between Japan and three Asian countries (Myanmar, Thailand, and Mongolia), and a seminar program in Mongolia started in 2012. Myanmar held a two-day joint research meeting and a one-day public seminar at Bagan Archaeological Museum and National Museum (Yangon) on September 23<sup>rd</sup>, September 26<sup>th</sup>, and September 27<sup>th</sup>, 2013, respectively, as the most effective museum cooperation work between Japan and Myanmar.

### **3 Future Plans for Myanmar Museum Development by Cooperating with NME, Minpaku**

From the results of the above-mentioned museum projects, we can draw future plans for Myanmar museums development by cooperating with NME as follows:

- (a) Upgrading museum exhibitions at the National Museums of Yangon and Naypyitaw
- (b) Renewal works for regional museums by applying museum exhibition techniques of Japan
- (c) Encouraging and training Myanmar museum staff for more active museum functions
- (d) Holding seminars, research meetings, and workshops concerning technical assistance from NME