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## Preface

Since the mid 1980s, a great many interdisciplinary discussions have been made on the representation of other cultures by Europe, America, and maybe by Japan, involving many academic fields such as art history, anthropology, history and so on. Among others, there resulted a general increase of the world's concerns about contemporary African art in the 1990s.

Two major agendas were brought to light by this series of discussions. First of all, the one-way representation of other art and cultures by European, American and Japanese museums was exposed to severe criticisms. In these criticisms, the issues of self-representation, or, in our context, the representation of African art and cultures by Africans themselves, was often taken up for discussion. Secondly, the notion of art, which had been considered universally applicable, was put to a radical reexamination. From a historical point of view, art is not universal but a changing cultural category. Thus the distinction between art and culture; i.e. universally acceptable value and locally prescribed value system, was also put into question.

Under these circumstances, today at the very beginning of the 21st century, the voices demanding a direct dialogue between African countries and Japan on the issue of representation of art and cultures are getting much louder than before both in Africa and Japan.

Fortunately in November 2001, the Japan Foundation invited 11 art-related professionals to Japan from English-speaking Africa to promote cultural interchange between Japan and Africa. The program was initiated by the policy speech made by the then prime minister of Japan Yoshiro Mori during his official visit to Sub-Saharan Africa in January 2001. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, the Japan Foundation, the Setagaya Art Museum, Tokyo, the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka, and Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) Osaka International Center agreed to take this opportunity for organizing symposiums in Tokyo and Osaka. Through a direct dialogue between Japan and Africa, our understanding of the issues concerning the representation of African art and cultures has been greatly deepened. This volume of *Senri Ethnological Reports* contains a record of the symposiums.