

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK: Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan

KAJIHARA, Hiroyuki
Aso Tanibito Ecomusée

<https://doi.org/10.15017/2344470>

出版情報 : 九州人類学会報. 37, pp.1-34, 2010-07-10. Kyushu Anthropological Association
バージョン :
権利関係 :

article

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK: Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan

Hiroyuki KAJIHARA (Aso Tanibito Ecomusée)

Keywords: public anthropology, practice, ecomusée (ecomuseum),
tourism, sustainable, cultural relativism, Japan

I Science and the Field

1. The Concern of Anthropologists Working in Museums

This is a brief report discussing the issues faced by anthropologists attempting to solve social and environmental problems in the field through conducting public anthropological research¹⁾.

"What are you asking me for?" So many anthropologists or fieldworkers may hear this in response to questions. "Who are you and what will change as a result of my answer?" We sometimes face these questions and even find ourselves examining what may come from collecting the results of such information.

Many scientists — both of natural and social disciplines — work in museums, but anthropologists in particular have much more potential exposure to negative comments from interview subjects. In the

social sciences, archaeologists and historians study historical materials, the original owners of which have long since passed away, so they are able to study their materials purely from a scientific perspective, without being asked to justify their motives. However, anthropologists are often confronted by their interview subjects and asked why they are carrying out their fieldwork, or what will change as a result of the research because their subjects are still living there. That is the concern of anthropologists working in museums.

2. Anthropology in Practice

In Japan, many human scientists had not fully answered for the social, economical or environmental problems in the country, and those who had were negative. Although they had not addressed those issues, they had researched eagerly or gathered statistics in their fields. They had

*FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:
Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)*

thought that drawing conclusions for social issues directly was not a task for scholars although of course they had their own ideas about the matter.

Also in Japan, there was a remarkable discussion in 1998 in a symposium of The Folklore Society of Japan entitled "Present-day Society and Folklore Practices" (Ito and Masaoka, 1999). Scientists argued whether folklorists could solve or give suggestions for the social, economical or environmental problems in the field, or whether such attempts could be regarded as science. Yukawa (1999) reported a huge social and environmental problem of the *Kawabe* River Dam construction near *Itsuki* village, *Kyushu*, very near the famous *Suye* village that American sociologist John Embree (1908-1950) had reported on previously²⁾.

From Yukawa's report:

"The meaning of the word "practice" generally carries with it the implication of an action. However, I do not think this is always so and science in practice means, I believe, preparing correctly to explain some phenomena or movements in present-day society whenever scientists are asked."

Many scientists worried about this dam construction problem have joined the discussion with great expectations for Yukawa's plans. However, Yukawa regarded "practice" merely as "description", so many scientists were disappointed, felt that Yukawa's plans were too negative and did not meet their expectations.

Negative or positive—I do not think these are important problems. Would you say that, in the *Kawabe* River Dam problem for example, I should state my case clearly to the dam building council whether the program is right or wrong, or should I protest against the program and take some actions to make my opinions appealing? I'm afraid this "practice" would be beyond the category of science.

Yukawa was certainly right, but the situation has also changed and his opinion is now far from the general consensus. His argument would not be accepted in the present day because people think that "science" can hardly solve social problems. Nowadays in Japan, not only dams but museums and other cultural buildings are also being criticized by citizens strongly because many

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

politicians and governmental officials have continued to authorize these huge constructions without any public consensus, and worse, the cost is taken from local government funds. Now anthropologists in museums must justify their jobs to the citizens, or lose their positions.

In Japanese folklore society, scientists have begun to realize that they are now facing a crisis of the academy and consequently to refer to "practice". Suga (2008) explained public folklore as follows:

Public folklore is an applied and practical folklore with some social activities at arts councils, historical councils of cultural heritage, libraries, museums, non-profit organizations of folk arts or folk knowledge, and practical activities, not only research or recordings in the field, but also activities to create public programs or educational items such as special educations of performance or folk arts, displays, events, sound recordings, radio and television programs, videos and books...

He introduced an American public folklore and ended his report with this comment: Japanese folklorists have to think

more seriously about practical and applied attempts to make folklore valid in today's society, too.

Anthropologists have also attempted similar movements in the Japanese academy. In January 2005 an international symposium entitled "Indigenous Movements in Plural Societies: The Canadian Inuit and the Ainu of Japan", was held for three days in The National Museum of Ethnology in *Osaka*, and many anthropologists joined to argue over socio-cultural plurality or cultural anthropology in social practice. Makio Matsuzono, the former manager of The National Museum of Ethnology, committed himself to the task of today's anthropology at the beginning of the symposium.

Globalization and localization have advanced at the same time over the world and highlighted new problems that we cannot cover by any conventional research methods or points of view. In times such as these, we can understand how people request that we reorganize present human-social sciences and create a new science field at the same time. Additionally, people ask us to reduce the theoretical results of our anthropology and to put our efforts into applied and

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

practical research which will solve issues.

He also regarded this symposium as an attempt of public anthropology to reach a mid-point between society and anthropology and explore undeveloped subjects in Japan. New movements like these have occurred in Japanese anthropology and folklore since the start of the 21st century.

In the United States, many anthropologists or folklorists have realized the peril of their position in society early and shifted their interests to focus on social problems. These new disciplines which previously were called "applied anthropology" now rather are known as "anthropology in practice" or "public anthropology". Many anthropologists in American universities have referred to anthropology in practice or public anthropology and tried to take anthropology "out of the academy". The Department of Anthropology of Tufts University in Massachusetts explains public anthropology as follows:

In public anthropology, we take anthropology out of the academy and into the community. Public anthropology includes both civic engagement and public scholarship more broadly, in

which we address audiences beyond academia. It is a publicly engaged anthropology at the intersection of theory and practice, of intellectual and ethical concerns, of the global and the local. As with other forms of public scholarship, it requires us to become involved in issues of public interest both across the world and down the street³⁾.

Rob Borofsky, a famous public anthropologist who now works at Hawaii Pacific University, referred to the focus and hope of this new discipline in his essay entitled "Public Anthropology: Where To? What Next?"⁴⁾:

Public anthropology seeks to address broad critical concerns in ways that others beyond the discipline are able to understand what anthropologists can offer to the re-framing and easing — if not necessarily always resolving — of present-day dilemmas.

California University Press has also published a series on "Public Anthropology" since 2001, now standing at twenty-three issues⁵⁾. To introduce some of the titles: "Organ Transplants and the Reinvention of Death", "The Anthropology of Genocide", "Health, Human Rights, and the New War on the Poor", "Refugees,

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

Citizenship, the New America", "Race, Class, Violence, and Sexuality in a Rio Shantytown", "Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century", "Cambodia in the Shadow of Genocide", "Human Rights and the African Poor", "Experiences and Politics of AIDS in South Africa", ...

In fact, Rob Borofsky was a member of the editors of California's new series, and was the man who named this new discipline "Public anthropology". He introduces and defines this term personally on his website:

In the late 1990's, when searching for a name for the new book series Naomi Schneider and I were developing at the University of California Press, we considered various possibilities. We chose Public Anthropology because it seemed to best represent a key goal of the series: addressing important social concerns in an engaging, non-academic manner. Public, in this sense, contrasted with traditional academic styles of presentation and definition of problems.

He has tried to "re-frame" and reinvigorate the traditional discipline and public conversation about broad

concerns with anthropological insights. However, many of the California titles deal with serious social problems such as death, genocide, war, AIDS, violence, poverty and murder. I will consider why they tend to deal with such morbid things in the final section, but in this paper I would like to deal with serious modern problems not specifically pertaining to human tragedy, such as the preservation of our "nature", and what we can do if we decide to preserve it. The issue of preserving "nature" (or making it sustainable and encouraging co-existence) has become more and more a global topic (for instance, the dam problem mentioned before), and we must think over what "nature" is and how we can become more eco-aware.

During the latter half of the 20th century, Japan's economic growth has been relatively rapid, while at the same time many environmental issues have occurred throughout the country. Young people have moved from their home towns in favor of urban cities, and as a result of this the population density in many rural districts has decreased to the extent that many once-thriving farm areas have become neglected and gone to waste. Since, people have re-examined rural districts and the relationship between humans

*FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:
Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)*

and nature. They concluded that circumstances could be improved by employing a modern life-style in a rural environment, or generating a new relationship between urban and rural districts. "Sustainable ecosystem" and "cooperative co-existence" are catch phrases used in Japan in reference to environmental issues.

People living in both urban and rural areas encounter problems. Young people move from rural areas to big cities where job opportunities are greater; however, when the city environment proves itself to be uncomfortable they escape back to the rural area on holidays or after they have retired. Presently, not only farming but tourism as well is important for rural people, but they cannot control the situation well and do not know how to appeal their situation to urban people. They sometimes even spoil their precious natural environment by constructing ugly, showy buildings because they think urban buildings will appeal more than traditional rural ones. They remodel their atmosphere from rural to urban so as not to disappoint urban people and to attract more visitors. Museum anthropologists have lived in the field and observed these situations for a long time, so in this paper I would like to investigate what museum

anthropologists can put into practice for the benefit of the field.

II Museums and Locals

1. Three Generations of Japanese Museums

Many museums are usually both in the academy and society. The task of curators or educators in museums is to research nature and the culture of the society, and to talk to citizens. They face citizens every day and have to answer their various questions quickly with non-scientific explanations. Individuals with whom archaeologists or historians deal have usually since passed away, but those with whom anthropologists deal are still living there, so researching their culture or society is related directly to considering their way of living and their future.

In Japan, anthropologists in museums were simply collecting data and modestly displaying them in museums. Visitors coming to the museum would simply glance at the data. We sometimes feel that a museum doesn't adequately portray the human connection from which the data was collected, but simply the material itself. Of course, collecting and displaying materials is not a bad thing in itself and certainly one well-suited to a museum, but the

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

anthropologists' task came to be one of simply collecting, not considering citizen's futures or what they should do with that data. They refer to previous times but not to the future of society. In Japan the phrase "*Hakubutsukan-iki*" (*lit.* headed for the museum) is a phrase that carries an implicit meaning of "having nothing more to do with something", suggesting that a museum is just a warehouse with many old useless materials.

Of course, in the beginning museums were just collecting rare materials that they found in the field (in Japan we call this age the "first generation"). Then, they began to exhibit their materials in display windows ("second generation"), and now they are proposing that local citizens take part in the museum's activities and programs ("third generation").

Toshiro Ito (1947-1991) classified all Japanese museums according to three generations; the first generation is for collection, the second one is for exhibition and the third one is for participation. His classification has been found to be so useful in Japan that many museologists have used this to explain Japanese museums. Ito said that at first the mission of museums had been collecting rare materials and researching them (exactly as it is today) but now

citizens ask museums to arouse their curiosity and join or experience many interesting programs. Citizens do not want scholars to simply collect or research alone in a small laboratory anymore, and scholars have begun to open the door to the public. Now interesting cultural facilities have started to appear; for example, museums with various functions like restaurants, bars, market places, hotels, movie theaters, public halls, tourist bureaus, and so on⁶). We sometimes call these facilities "post-third generation" or "fourth generation".

But these new movements in Japan are typical in urban districts. To my disappointment, museums in rural districts are still just a warehouse and have no curators or educators. These museums are, so to speak, schools without teachers. In such situations, what can anthropologists do for society?

2. Museological Practice in France

During the 1960s in France, intensive centralization and migration to urban districts became more and more remarkable and many people moved from their home village to the capital city, Paris. Few young people remained and unfortunately many rural areas went to ruin.

*FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:
Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)*

Georges Henri Rivière (1897-1985), famous French folklorist and museologist, and first head of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), was anxious about this situation and investigated the reformation of old museums and their museological applications for rural society. He referred to the purpose of this new museum, the ecomusée, as follows:

This is a museum for the purpose of contributing to the progress of a region through researching the developing processes of people's way of life and historical natural and social environments, and preserving, educating, and displaying the nature, culture, industries and heritages of the region⁷⁾.

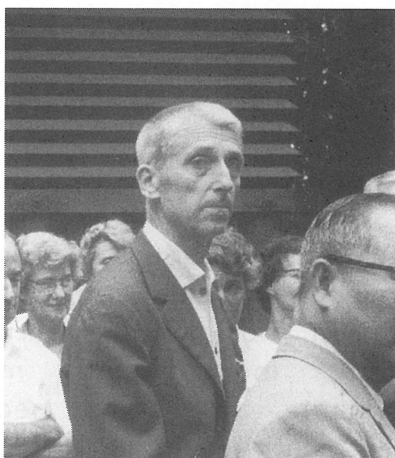


Fig.1 a portrait of Georges-Henri Rivière (1897-1985), Japan, September 1960. From Japan Ecomuseological Society ed.(1997)

In particular, his comment on ecomusées and how he stresses their contribution to the progress of the region is a point which deserves discussion in contrast to the situation in Japan. Museums in Japan are prescribed by the Law of Museums, not for contribution to the progress of the region but for the progress of education, studies and culture of the nation⁸⁾. For the region and for the nation, this is the largest difference between ecomusées and old museums. These points include some important suggestions for current anthropology in practice.

Although many years have passed since French museologists created the new museum ideology and many ways of thinking about ecomusée have arisen in various countries, many people who try to adopt this new museum system in their region follow in the steps of the French. They usually first delineate a territory, establish a "core" museum as an information center, designate many natural, cultural, industrial "satellites" (in English) or "*antennes*" (in French) all over the region, and tie these sites by paths (sometimes called "discovery trails"). Then the whole area is called an "ecomusée".

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

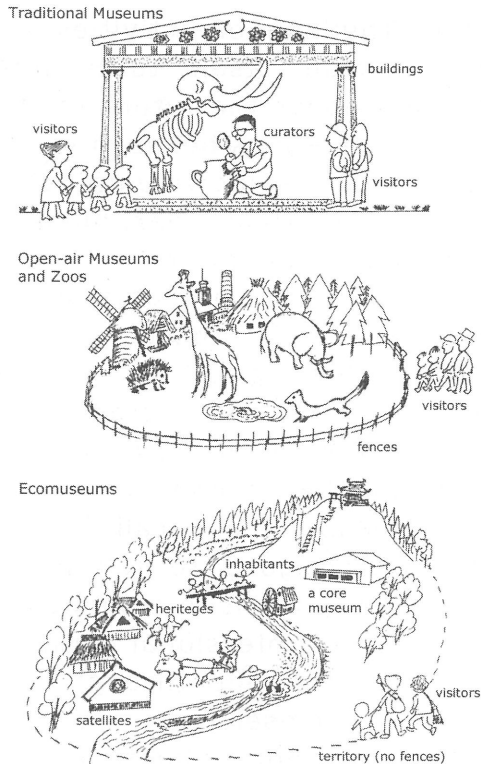


Fig.2 Comparison between traditional museums, open-air museums, and ecomusées. From Japan Ecomuseological Society ed.(1997) *et al.*

Ecomusées have some peculiarities: they do not have huge buildings but instead have wide territories; they do not collect and keep materials in buildings but instead conserve and display them in the field; they do not require an entrance fee but charge money for activities. Both curators and locals or officers take part in these activities together and mutually decide policies and courses of action. All of the above characteristics are quite

different from traditional museums. Has there ever been a museum in the past that gathered no collections? French people have invented a quite unique type of museum⁹⁾.

An ecomusée resembles a field museum or open-air museum but they are not the same. Although they both are located outdoors, open-air museums are merely museums with no roofs – they gather many collections (old ethnic houses, for example, or small, traditional factories) in one divided space and charge visitors an entrance fee. This system is much the same as a traditional museum. On the other hand, ecomusées do not gather any collections, have no fences or walls, and no entrance fee is charged because the locals are spending their daily lives there. Therefore, ecomusées are often called “living museums”.

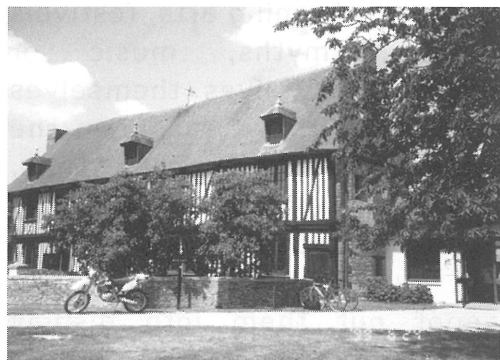


Fig.3 The office of the Ecomusée de la Basse-Seine, France, June 1999. The whole region along the River Seine is an ecomusée.

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

Since ecomusées do not collect materials but rather information about their natural, cultural and industrial sites, they are called "a museum of memories". They collect not materials but memories, displaying them at each outdoor site so that they can exhibit things which people no longer have easy access to or which simply have ceased to exist. For example, if people had an important place that used to exist before, but was since lost, curators collect various memories of it and can tell its history to visitors in the field. Even if the real materials (or sites) have been lost, ecomusées can display the images vividly inside of the minds of visitors. They can recreate things now which do not exist anymore – quite a unique point of which traditional museums are not capable. This also pertains to the displaying of intangible heritages such as performing arts, festivals, beliefs, myths, music or peoples' daily lives themselves which are difficult to put in the display cases of a museum. Thus, ecomusées are ideally suited to museum anthropologists who deal with living people (we cannot put them into display cases, of course).

What kind of information do curators or locals collect and display to the visitors at their

field? Thinking of activities for the museum itself turns into thinking about the future of the society. Relations between locals, between those individuals living in rural and urban areas, humans and nature, adults and children, past and future—an ecomusée is not simply a museum that collects "ecological" things, or presents articles from an ecological point of view, but is a museum that connects various relationships "ecologically".

It's also good to tell many local stories to visitors by means not only of professional curators or educators but through the locals themselves, because people are not enlightened by curators, but learn more from locals themselves. Ecomusées are not museums with huge buildings and collections but, we can say, themselves comprise regional education system in which locals can learn and explain themselves to others. So in Japan, many people who concern themselves with regional citizens' movements or social educational studies are interested in this new system, more so than museologists or armchair scientists (including old curators).

3. New Zoological Attempts in Japan and Museums

The new movements in Japanese museums mentioned

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

above are actually similar to those happening in zoos now.

Presently, the most famous zoo in Japan is the *Asahikawa Asahiyama* zoological park wildlife conservation center (usually called just *Asahiyama Zoo*) in *Hokkaido*, the northern part of Japan. They have a very modest budget, nor do they have any particularly rare or endangered animals, and yet so many visitors come to the zoo every day from all over Japan. During the latter half of the 1980s, the number of visitors had decreased dramatically and the city officers told the zoo manager that it would be hopeless if nothing was done about the situation. In 1983, the zoo received its highest number of visitors (590,000 people) but in 1996 that number fell to the worst (260,000), along with a rumor that the zoo would soon be closed.

The zoo staff thought desperately about what kind of zoo people really wanted to not only come to, but revisit again and again; one which would not only appeal to children but adults too. Eventually, they created a new zoological park and in 2004 the number of visitors (1,450,000) was higher than *Ueno Zoo* in *Tokyo*, the most famous zoo in Japan at that time. What happened at this zoo, located in the far north of the

country, covered in snow for half of the year and being hard for people to get to?

Now, in the *Asahiyama* zoological park, beautiful seals are going up and down through a "marine way" (transparent pillar), penguins are diving into the water, and orangutans are enjoying taking "a sky walk" on a rope seventeen meters above the ground with no fence guards. Visitors enjoy watching them and while they had previously thought of animals as being simply "cute" before, now their impression has changed slightly to describe the animals as "so exciting" or "so cool". Their lively behavior is entertaining visitors every day. The success of *Asahiyama* zoological park has encouraged many other zoos in Japan to introduce this new style of exhibit.

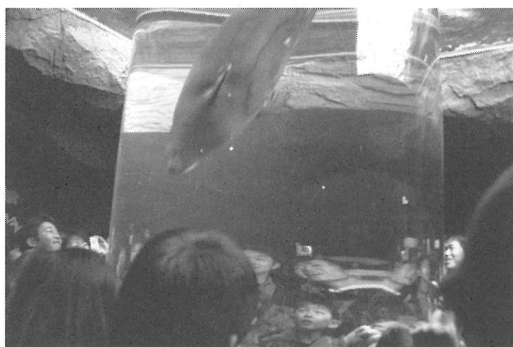


Fig.4 The marine way of seals at *Asahiyama* zoological park (behavioral display).

Zoological parks are also a kind of museum. They are

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

museums that collect, research and display many animals. There are two types of museums displaying animals: one is the museum of natural history and the other is the zoo. The difference between them is that museums of natural history usually display dead animals (stuffed specimens) whereas zoos exhibit living species. So we can also say that zoos display life itself through living exhibits. When Masao Kosuge, the former manager of the *Asahi-yama* zoological park, heard the opinion of visitors describing the zoo as boring, he wondered why they did not enjoy watching animals, as he himself found this fascinating. Tigers prowling around at night are so powerful, monkeys moving from high tree to tree are so thrilling and penguins swimming through the water are so much faster than people usually imagine them. Then he realized that his visitors could not experience seeing the animals at their best because tigers usually move at night and sleep during the day, penguins jump into the water but cannot be seen well after that. Visitors were not seeing the animals in their most animated state, but instead just sitting or sleeping. So he decided he should display the most attractive and natural behavior of animals, and thought of a new style: "behavioral

display".

Both traditional museums and zoos are museums but zoos have thought more deeply about the display than traditional museums. In the history of zoos, they started with just a display of a specimen (each animal in each cage). Next, they tried an ecological display (animals which live in the same ecosystem like savanna, forests or Africa are displayed in one zone). This second method evolved to become the behavioral display. However, traditional museums are still in the specimen display stage.

The reason people working in the zoo could develop the behavioral display is that they are dealing with real living things. They are living with animals, and therefore can spend many hours together thinking about their wellbeing and future. This is quite similar to anthropologists working in the field. We are usually living among our subjects, spend a lot of hours with them and think about their/our happiness and future. We could also say an ecomusée is a kind of behavioral display of humans. "Environmental enrichment" is a fashionable term nowadays which people involved with zoos are often arguing over. "Environmental enrichment" is a movement to get the environment in good condition

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

for animals. This is certainly a similar attempt to that being engaged in now by museum anthropologists (of course the situation between human and animal is not quite the same and there are several problems there but we will discuss them later).

III Aso and the Ecomusée

1. The Social and Environmental Problem of the Aso Region

What can an anthropologist do in the field? Let's start examining the field deeply to uncover the problems.

The Aso region is in the southern part of Japan (*Kyushu* island), has a dynamic active volcano in the center and very beautiful wide grassland around the caldera. The caldera is 18-24 kilometers wide. Aso has one of the largest calderas in the world and is also designated as a National Park of Japan (and now is being prepared to become a World Heritage and Geopark, too). There are about seventy thousand people living within and around the caldera and ten thousand cattle. The highest mountain peak (named *Takadake*) reaches a height of 1,592m, with the bottom of the caldera being 500 meters high. People are using the land from 500m to 800m for their everyday work. It's quite difficult for

people to live in Aso, because of its long and very cold winter, its chilly air (the annual average temperature is 12.7°C), strong winds, a lot of rain (annual 3,250mm at the top of the mountain), snow, frost, and the presence of a volcano. The land is covered with volcanic ash, the soil looks black but is not fertile and contains many large volcanic rocks. To live in this severe natural environment, people have lived with their cattle, and used their compost to cultivate the soil, plowed the fields using cows or horses and cut grass from the mountain for breeding and grazing them. Every spring, the grass is burned in order to prevent it from developing into a forest, and to preserve the grass land.

For ages people have burned the grass on the mountain in spring, grazed cattle in summer and cut grass in autumn. As a result, Aso has a wide and beautiful grassland and a grass ecosystem — a secondary ecosystem maintained by humans. Now not only human and cattle but so many wild flowers, insects, birds or animals are able to live in this region. Wild flowers (600 species), butterflies (105) and birds (150) living in the grassland are in particular so precious (Aso has 1,600 species and almost 20% of the plants in Japan) that the Japanese Ministry

*FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:
Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)*

of the Environment works hard to preserve this grass ecosystem.

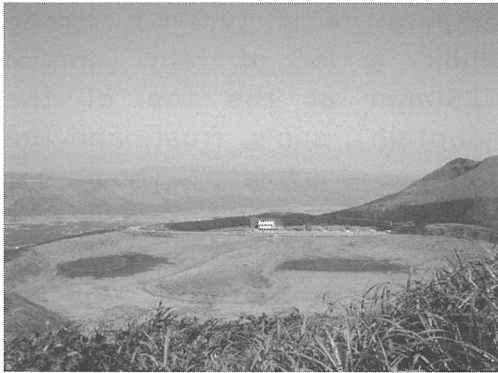


Fig.5 A glance at Aso's caldera and the grassland, August 2004.

Josef Kreiner, famous Austrian scientist on ethnology and Japanese studies, has researched Aso's history, culture and society since 1968 and reported some results. He had studied Japan at Wien University in Austria at first, but between 1968 and 1969 the Gross National Product of Japan became higher than that of Germany and Japanologists at the time couldn't explain why. The German government summoned him to Bonn University after he returned to Europe. So Wien and Bonn University became a key location for studies on Aso. He and his colleagues have studied with the aim of discovering new Japanese cultural studies, not former European Japanology (it's too theory-based), not Japanese studies by American anthropologists like "*The Chrysanthemum and the Sword*"

by Ruth F. Benedict (it's too monistic), but more synthetic studies from cultural pluralism. Their studies are based on their own thinking of Japan (in contrast to their thinking of Europe) through Aso research and are, thus, not considerate of the future of the inhabitants of Aso, but we can also get an insight into some problems of living in Aso in his report.

[Aso's] Stockbreeding industry does not have as good economical results as they expected in the beginning. It seems that farmers' income is still lower than that of other regions, and the Japanese average. Needless to say, this economical situation has a big influence on the population and social change. (Kreiner, 2000)

Honestly, this poor situation has not changed yet; rather, it has gone from bad to worse. Instead of agricultural industries, the relatively new tourism industry has increased in recent years, but as Kreiner wrote in his report, it seems quite difficult for Aso's people to rectify their situation. Kreiner wrote that the contradiction between developments in tourism and modernized agriculture was still a major problem, and in my opinion he is correct.

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

To identify the problem concerning the inhabitants of Aso, I have lived in this field since 1997. Locals showed me a vacant house in the beginning, and I repaired it to use as my home, and began working at a post office in the village as a part-time job. I also opened a small school to teach children some studies to earn my livelihood. I also gradually joined several social groups like a firefighting team (*Shobodan*), the youth society (*Seinendan*) or the association for preservation of traditional performing arts (*Kagura Hozonkai*) to play Japanese traditional flute because there was no one who could play it at that time. I have since been asked to take over the running of this arts group. I have had many opportunities to talk to the locals – adults and children alike – about the problems they face living within the caldera.

As with many other rural districts in Japan, Aso was actually a depopulated village. Young people were flowing away to urban cities and the major industries of Aso (farming with grazing and forestry) were deteriorating. Some new inhabitants were also moving to this region (someone to run a guest house or restaurant, or simply to enjoy their post-retirement years), but the relationship between them was

not so good because no one could mediate them. Long-time inhabitants and newcomers to the area were living in quite different worlds. The key feature I thought the most symbolic for Aso was the grassland. Many new inhabitants or people living in cities who often drive to Aso on the weekend really love this wide grassland. Several volcanic eruptions (the last and the largest one was ninety thousand years ago) have composed the huge landscape of Aso and its beautiful view – the dynamic volcano, big calderas and cattle grazing slowly on the wide, blue grassland – always make people happy. Visitors take pictures eagerly and new inhabitants like to build their houses on the hill to be able to look around them everyday. But the situation for Aso's original inhabitants is not the same. It is not the purpose but just a result for them to live in the grassland area. They have worked so hard with cattle to live in this severe environment that as a result they got the grassland. They have kept the grassland not to preserve nature, of course, but purely for the benefit of their family or daily lives (they sometimes lose even their lives when they burn the mountain because the burning is quite dangerous).



Fig.6 Burning the Aso mountainside, March 2008.

If people don't need cattle, they neither need grassland. In recent years, the grazing situation in Japan has become worse and worse –the problem of BSE, the trade liberalization of beef since 1991 and the aging and decrease in number of farmers. Aso's farmers have begun to de-prioritize cattle grazing in favor of other farming sectors. This means that we are in danger of losing our great Aso heritage (many flowers, insects, birds, animals, human beliefs, events, cultures based on the grassland). The loss of grassland will lead to the loss of tourists and the tourism industry, visitors who buy Aso's agricultural products, and, finally, farming itself. I discovered this social and environmental problem of Aso through my fieldwork research (participant observation), and I came to think that there was a lack of information between rural

and urban people and between children and adults. Therefore, I made up my mind to correct the imbalance and to treat the whole Aso region as one ecomusée, like the French have (because it seemed to be convenient for an anthropologist with an insufficient budget), and to develop some museum activities there¹⁰⁾.

2. Two Attempts by a Museum Anthropologist

I have tried many activities in Aso but in this paper I will explain two of them: one an attempt by the museum anthropologist on his own, and the other an attempt by the museum working with local organizations.

(1) Promotion of Interchange with Urban Children

At first I decided my target in describing the difficulties of Aso. Since long ago, Aso has had many visitors: climbers, riders or drivers, people of religion, nature-lovers, foreigners, sightseeing tourists, and so on. Children in particular often come on a school trip to the area every spring and autumn, so I decided to make tourism programs for the school children first.

The first year I started this attempt, in 2001, I had just one junior high school from *Gifu* prefecture (located in the central

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

part of Japan) but later seven junior high schools and elementary schools in 2003, nine schools in 2004, ten schools in 2005, twelve schools in 2006 and fifteen schools and over one thousand children in 2007. It means that teachers coming to Aso on a school trip also want to utilize more scientific and detailed information for their studies (not only to study the volcano but also the grassland and environmental problems of Aso) and to be a partner with museums rather than just sightseeing at shops or amusement parks.

The aim and purpose of this tourism program is because although many visitors come to Aso each year (around twenty million people), the majority of them don't know why Aso is covered with wide grassland and has very few trees. They don't know how people living in Aso maintain this precious ecosystem with great effort, and worry that they will soon face a crisis. So many visitors come to Aso and enjoy shopping but the money they spend in this region does not reach the farmers because almost all of it goes back into the local tourism industry. In fact, most of the businesses here are set up just to earn money, with no consideration for this area's wellbeing or its inhabitants. The farmers who essentially made

this great landscape (which itself attracts many tourists) are watching their businesses grow weaker year by year. As Kreiner said; there is a conflict between tourist developments and modernized agriculture, so I aimed at making tourism programs that allow many visitors to understand Aso's circumstances and to appreciate people's efforts or existence, and to ensure that much money and public interest returns to the farmers directly.

To visiting schools, I offer the chance to introduce some local Aso people to them when they contact me. For example, if the school has a hundred children, I will introduce 8-10 local people, such as cattle farmers, housewives who are good at cooking traditional local cuisine, researchers of nature, or artists who are inspired by Aso's beauty. Then children choose the person whom they want to meet and make a small group. To help them, I visit the school before they come to Aso and talk about Aso's nature and culture. During this talk, I give them one point to think about before coming. They prepare for the trip, and actually come to Aso, meet people and learn about Aso's real nature and culture through their lives or work. Then, after going back to school, children report on their learning experience in Aso to

their friends and parents. This is not just an experiment program but one of exchange. In this program, the people of Aso become a "display" of the ecomusée.



Fig.7 Tourism program: Aso farmer explaining his work to children on a trip, September 2005.

I expect teachers and children to understand and appreciate Aso, to be a cooperator or a fan of Aso, and to tell others about Aso's real circumstances. I set up this program to educate people about rural life, understand the relationship between rural and urban, and how to contribute to the development of rural regions.

(2) Creating Tourism with Local Organizations

Having seen my activities, the local Society of Commerce and Industry asked me to join their project. They were looking for a new way to arrange and introduce the information about villages to urban people and were

planning to make the whole village attractive because they noticed that it would be no longer effective the old way. They noticed that promoting the whole area would be much more effective than creating many advertisements for each small attraction. This was such a nice encounter that I have taken part in it as a member of the project, along with many other village people since 2007.

In this project, we had set three main themes: eating, exchanging, and exploring. We thought long and hard about what the main attractions of Aso are, and what we should focus on. Finally we decided to focus on the grassland and cultural ecosystem of Aso (humans and cattle are co-existing with many other plants, insects and animals on the grassland), and made some plans to highlight those factors.

The "eating" theme was chosen to highlight the keeping of the grassland by consumption of beef (of course Aso's famous brown beef) and to raise the local farmers' income. We campaigned and appealed to the tourist industries (restaurants, pensions, hotels) in Aso to create new dishes using Aso's beef and vegetables, and we explained to visitors that around 7.5m² of grassland would be saved if you eat 100g of beef and asked them to feel free to have more. It

quickly became apparent that not only enthusiastic persuasion, but also delicious rewards are very effective in convincing people to help save natural and cultural resources.

The “exchanging” theme was to understand Aso’s people by enjoying experiencing their works and lives – farming, cooking, crafts, and so on, and talking with, and cultivating relationships with them.

The “exploring” theme was to experience not only tourist places but real living areas by walking around with local guides. Visitors walk, observe, hear and get to know the field. This is similar to the work carried out by fieldwork anthropologists, so we can say this is also an attempt to make fieldwork open to the public.



Fig.8 “Exploring” program with the locals
Society of Commerce and Industry, October 2008. The locals picking wild plants for visitors

became involved with all these themes, giving advice as a curator through the eyes of a stranger (which was expected of me by locals). This advice was of course based on the scientific data I had gathered since I came to this village. I drew many maps for exploring and added a lot of points - not only tourist sites but comments from locals because this program is not just for simply sightseeing, but for teaching people about Aso’s circumstances now.

3. Results and Analysis

Let’s take a look at the result of the two attempts: by the museum on its own, and by the museum with local organizations, respectively.

(1) Attempts by the Museum on its Own

In order to research teachers, I gathered information by way of a questionnaire. I asked them three questions: (1) What was your image of Aso like: more natural or human? (2) Did you know that Aso’s wide grassland is maintained by the locals? (3) Do you think that it is useful for our society to learn about Aso’s nature and culture through exchange with Aso’s people? I received completed questionnaires from 46 people across 12 schools in 2007.

I, a museum anthropologist,

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

Table 1: What was your image of Aso like: more natural or human?

Answer	# of Persons
1. Almost all natural.	27 (59%)
2. Mostly natural.	16 (35%)
3. Equal.	3 (7%)
4. Mostly human.	0 (0%)
5. Almost all human.	0 (0%)
Total	46 (101%)

Aso possesses both great nature and famous historical sites (like the Aso shrine or *Saigandenji* Buddhist temple), so I wondered which image teachers who were choosing Aso as a destination for school trips had. The result was that no people had a human image. This means that almost all people coming to Aso have no idea about the people who live here. I'm afraid that this might lead to people's misunderstanding Aso's culture.

Table 2: Did you know that Aso's wide grassland is maintained by the locals?

Answer	# of Persons
1. Yes.	0 (0%)
2. I thought so.	18 (39%)
3. I had some idea.	18 (39%)
4. Not very well.	9 (20%)
5. Not at all.	1 (2%)
Total	46 (100%)

However the secondary answer shows that teachers are

still concerned with Aso's grassland problem. The first and second questions show that general understanding is not increasing but the number of teachers who have an interest in coming to Aso is increasing. They may be joining this program because they don't understand but heard it on TV or something else and developed an interest. The teachers who organized the trip will likely have an interest in Aso but a school doctor, for example, coming with the trip and looking after children may not have a good understanding (22% of participants answered negatively).

Table 3: Do you think that it is useful for our society to learn about Aso's nature and culture through exchange with Aso's people?

Answer	# of Persons
1. Yes, very much.	28 (61%)
2. Yes, somewhat.	16 (35%)
3. I don't know.	2 (4%)
4. Some problems.	0 (0%)
5. Not at all.	0 (0%)
Total	46 (100%)

I was relieved to see these results, because I could see that the people who felt that there were any problems with my program were very few. Now I can say that the efforts of ecomusée are relevant to school teachers and children.

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

I also asked for the impressions of the hosts of this tourism effort. It was a first time for most of them to accept school children and teach them about their work, so at first they were afraid and surprised, but gradually got used to it. I heard some people said that this experience was so significant for them because they could see value in their jobs again and saw that young students were genuinely interested in learning about their work. I also noticed that older people tend to accept these programs as volunteer work (they usually refuse any payment because they think of themselves purely as farmers), but younger people are easier to accept the job not only as volunteer work but as a chance to show the general work of present-day farmers to outsiders. They have studied about green tourism at schools for farmers and recognize that growing crops and finding people to buy them are also the task of farmers now. Asking farmers to accept visitors is so often a painful task, so it is very nice when they gladly accept the opportunity. To keep this program running, it cannot survive only on volunteer work. It will eventually be necessary to introduce a sustainable system, through which farmers can get more financial rewards for their help. On the other hand,

accepting visitors so often would make it difficult for them to perform their daily work. If they were to eventually neglect their real work (if tourism were to become more profitable, for example), it would only drive them to do the opposite of what I hope to happen. This is one of the difficulties of ecomusée dealing with living people (and also the difference between this and zoos) so we must have many companions or colleagues to share the work and keep a good balance with everyday life.

(2) Attempts by Museums with Local Organizations

According to the project report issued by the Society of Commerce and Industry of Southern Aso Village, 264 people joined the exchange program and 218 participated in the exploring programs in 2008. We got 362 opinions from the eating program, too.

Table 4: Was the brown cow's beef of Aso delicious?

Answer	# of Persons
1. Yes.	382 (90.6%)
2. Yes, quite.	28 (7.7%)
3. No.	4 (1.1%)
4. No answers.	2 (0.6%)
Total	416 (100%)

From the data of Society of Commerce and Industry (2009)

In Japan, as in many foreign countries, people have begun to

*FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:
Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)*

prefer to eat meat which contains a lot of fat. For a long time before modernization around 1868, Japanese people did not eat beef because of Buddhist beliefs. They began to eat beef during the Meiji era after seeing foreigners eat it. People have believed that beef having a lot of fat is more delicious and the market price is also higher than lean meat (now most cattle has changed from brown cows to black cows because the latter is more likely to produce fatty meat). Cattle grazed in Aso's grassland are "too healthy" because they get good exercise every day in the mountains. The museum pointed out in a conference that this is a difficult and confusing situation. The more people graze healthy cattle, the cheaper the market price becomes. This contradiction is frustrating for Aso's farmers. Then the museum and many local economic organizations tried to market Aso's beef by creating new dishes and introducing them to the people in the exploring program. We could at last hear the voice of visitors who felt that the brown cow's beef was delicious. Because of its low fat content, it tasted like pure beef.

Table 5: How was the program?

Answer	Person
1. Very good.	138 (69.3%)
2. Good.	59 (29.7%)
3. Average.	2 (1.0%)
4. Bad.	0 (0%)
5. So bad.	0 (0%)
6. No answer.	0 (0%)
Total	199 (100%)

From the data of Society of Commerce and Industry (2009)

In this program, visitors were given a tour, not by curators only, but by the locals as well. The anthropologist just researched and drew up some plans, the locals examined them, and guided their visitors to those areas. Only when they could not answer questions from visitors (those questions involving history or ecology for example), would the anthropologist step in to help. Impressions of the locals' attitude were also very good, as 97.5% of visitors valued the hospitality highly and none of them felt disappointed. This means that the anthropologist can help locals to interact with visitors and that ecomusées can become the social tool for this interaction.

*FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:
Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)*

Table 6: Do you want this program to be continued more?

Answer	Person
1. Yes, I'd love it to.	134 (67.3%)
2. Yes, I hope so.	63 (31.7%)
3. Either will do.	1 (0.5%)
4. No, I don't want it to.	0 (0%)
5. No, not at all.	0 (0%)
6. No answers.	1 (0.5%)
Total	199 (100%)

From the data of Society of Commerce and Industry (2009)

The results showing that most visitors wanted the program to continue have encouraged the local people a lot. Some visitors said traditional meals were so unique that they longed for the old days, and some visitors were surprised to find so many interesting things in an area through which they had just passed in cars before. They were pleased not because the program was cheap or comfortable but because they were dealing with the real taste or memories of living life. We can say that ecomusées can display these memories of taste, places or ages, which are intangible.

IV Anthropological Problems and Perspective

1. Roles of Anthropologists in

Japanese Museums

There are many farmers in Aso now, but not all of them wanted to become farmers from the beginning. The farmers in Aso are sometimes the eldest sons and other brothers or sisters had already left for urban cities to work or marry. Many of the eldest sons also wanted to go out like their brothers or sisters but couldn't, because they feel an obligation to continue the family business, so many farmers are facing the closure of their business rather than a hopeful future.

One day the anthropologist came and asked them to accept some visitors and to explain their everyday work with him. Of course, this request was met with some concern because they had never been presented with such a situation before. However, they had heard good reports of this program and that visitors appreciated them. Then they began to think for the first time that what they were doing was a good thing and that farming will be worthwhile. People are always pleased when their work is appreciated. Farmers can get not only money but encouragement from visitors' appreciation of their work.

Japanese people generally don't like to admire themselves and being modest is seen as good manners in this country. In fact,

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

Japanese people can be too modest, and this can cause a problem when talking about their work to others. So in Japan the existence of an anthropologist as a third-party is important. They research the field scientifically and talk enthusiastically about the locals and environment to visitors instead of the locals themselves, and the locals are also beginning to realize the necessity of the anthropologist. He would not be asked by the locals any more why he is there. In my case for example, locals used to complain if I took pictures or made notes during the local works (they thought I neglected the work), but now locals often call me and tell when they find something to record. It means that an anthropologist can live in and can be welcomed by the locals as a recorder of them.

One of the roles of a museum anthropologist is researching scientifically the social and environmental situation in the field, identifying the gaps in links, and trying to improve and arrange it to be sustainable not only for visitors but of course for locals. In Aso's case, a lot of visitors are coming to enjoy seeing the beautiful grassland but these tourist situations have not committed at all to the happiness of the locals who have really made the landscape that which visitors love to see. So the

anthropologist tried to make a new sustainable tourism system: a lot of visitors come to see the beautiful grassland, the anthropologist explains to the visitors about the grassland situation and local effort, visitors understand and offer some finances and encouragement directly to the locals, the locals become energetic and work hard, as a result the grassland is saved and visitors can come to see it again.

The anthropologist has to draw out the local's great efforts and difficulties, then appreciate them and try to build up a sustainable system there, not with a dry lecture but rather with a practical (sometimes delicious) style. Connecting various things "ecologically" (holistically) is the best result we can hope for with ecomusées.

However, we also have to bear in mind not to introduce ecomusées simplistically. Simplistic introductions will lead us to misunderstand what we have to do, and eventually we will settle into a preservation style. An ecomusée is not a final goal but just a tool; one of the ways of being happy. Japanese ecomusée appear to be misunderstood in some ways.

2. Several Problems of Japanese Ecomusées

For this study, I have

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

researched a lot of Japanese ecomusées but found few to be good examples. I will put the problems of Japanese ecomusées into perspective briefly.

The reason why ecomusées came into fashion in Japan between the 1980s and 1990s was simple. They were expecting a marked improvement in their communities with this new system and on a shoestring budget. Contrary to their expectations, the situation became more and more complicated.

Ecomusées in Japan are roughly classified into the following four types. (1) neighborhood actions, (2) conservation movements, (3) tourism reorganization, and (4) museum improvements. Indeed, there is a society of ecomusées in Japan¹¹⁾, but so many people with various aims are contributing to it that now it is in a state of disarray. Nobody has a clear definition of what an ecomusée should be or what to do next. One person insists on a cooperative spirit of the community's people, another insists on the conservation of nature, and someone works hard at his new business, while very few museologists observe the situation. They certainly had their own problems in the community at first, but they somehow lost their way and

wandered into the "ecomusée forest" without realizing it.

There are many problems in Japanese ecomusées¹²⁾ but two are particularly bad. The worst one is that Japanese ecomusées are never museums. In Japan, the word museum means merely "there are various things". There is also a law for museums in Japan but people who manage ecomusées do not appear to go by it. The law states that there must be a curator stationed in a museum, but almost all Japanese ecomusées have no regular curators. An ecomusée without curators is no better than a school without teachers.

Naoko Chiba (2009) gathered extensive information on Japanese ecomusée. She sent a questionnaire to 56 ecomusées in Japan and received answers from 33 (one of them was incomplete so her data was constructed from 32)¹³⁾.

Table 7: Do you recognize ecomusées as scientific museums?

Answer	Percentage
1. Yes.	41%
2. No.	31%
3. Other.	25%
4. No answer.	3%

From Chiba's data (2009)

According to Chiba's other data, 69% of Japanese ecomusée have no curators and only 25% have some (6% of those are

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

preparing to introduce a curator now). But the 25% answer includes both curators in law and all inhabitants as a curator, so we must be careful in reading this data. She also asked the 69% (having no curators) whether curators were necessary or not for ecomusées. 47% of them answered Yes but 48% said No. Some answered they have no curators because they have no budget, but others said that they don't feel the necessity of a curator at all. It means that being a Japanese ecomusée recognized as a scientific museum by foreign countries will be quite a difficult task.

Table 8: What is the purpose of an ecomusée?

Answer	Per.
1. Social reconstruction.	48%
2. Cooperative community.	19%
3. Natural conservation.	14%
4. Other.	19%

From Chiba's data (2009)

People who regard ecomusées as a social reconstruction project (48%) are expecting the area to develop (31%), civic cooperation with administration (31%), cooperation with each other (13%), environmental preservation (19%). Chiba also asked them whether they have intentions to act as a museum and 87% responded No. This in

particular is a discouraging result. In other categories (as a Cooperative community or Natural conservation), people's expectations for ecomusées are simply as social movements in the local community, and very few people are treating it as a museum. It is very disappointing.

It is certainly important for us to get along with each other or to have interest in our community but the focus of Japanese ecomusée is to emphasize neighborhood concerns and not to act as a museum. Most locals draw maps without any scientific knowledge so we can not have much confidence in their information of natural history (this is another reason why general curators in Japan do not regard ecomusées as museums) and as a result their activities will not be able to continued, either.

I know it'll be fun for the local people to experience some activities of museum and is also important for them to think of their culture or nature by themselves, but the activities held by museums are not always fun. Sometimes they will be very difficult to carry out but we must persevere and collect data for a long time.

In Japan most of the local people have fun just as a result (not participating in ecomusée as educational activities but just as

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

tourism activity), so working together is still difficult. Therefore many Japanese ecomusées cannot continue their activities. They will get tired of the activities after a while.

Some critics' points against traditional museums are also not correct. They say that old museums usually deal only with sophisticated and invaluable culture but ecomusées deal with their everyday life, so ecomusées are not for intellectual people but for ordinary people. They often jump to the conclusion that museums deal only with special archaeology or history (in fact most Japanese curators are archaeology or history majors) but of course, we can also deal with anthropology and folklore. Almost all things people want to deal with in ecomusées - everyday work, food, clothes, houses, societies, annual events, festivals, ritual, religion, myths, music, arts and so on, are exactly what anthropologists or folklorists have done from the beginning in traditional museums. This is also a problem in ordinary Japanese museums - there are few curators who major in anthropology or folklore.

And in Japanese ecomusées, people take part for fun. Each person has other daily work somewhere else and his/her activities for ecomusées are usually voluntary service. This is

also the reason ecomusées will find it difficult to continue. They think they are volunteers and do not have any responsibility, so their activities are usually half-finished. A few officers working at ecomusées begin to show an inclination toward a merchant to get a living wage. They are going to convert their rooms for exhibition into a new space for a museum shop, then a lot of Japanese ecomusées unfortunately become more like shops.

Considering the circumstances, people in Japan have taken notice of ecomusées as a means not to improve old museums but to unite communities or to reorganize tourism industries, so they are quite careless about scientific preciseness, do not employ curators, and as such activities cannot go on, eventually turn into a shop. To break this deadlock, we need to regard ecomusées as scientific museums and to employ curators or educators and to get working funds not only from shops but from entertaining and interesting educational activities.

Another low point is this: I'm concerned about Japanese ecomusée and their focus on preservation. We often deal with natural, cultural or industrial sites in our ecomusées, but in industrial heritage sites in

particular (such as old mines), people are inclined to preserve the site rather than conserve it. Of course, we might follow this path when dealing with heritage sites, but if we were to preserve any old area, encircle it with walls, and collect an entrance fee while no people are living there, it would be not an ecomusée but simply an open-air museum. It is no use sticking to names but I think that ecomusées should contribute to current inhabitants and their future more directly than things of a bygone era. It is of course not the problem to discuss whether it is right or wrong to preserve or conserve what you want. In Japan the view people are holding of ecomusées is so vague that they often wander into the forest and lose their way; they were trying to conserve at first but eventually turned to preservation at last.

Not only Japan but Asian countries seem to have the same tendency because museums have meant preservation in these countries for a long time. For example, a closed gold mine in *Jiufen* in the northern part of Taiwan, is now presented in such a way as to appeal to tourists. Some people call it an ecological park or the first ecomuseum in Taiwan¹⁴⁾. The park is separated from the surrounding living area, although many tourists are coming and so many people are

living in *Jiufen* now that you will understand the old features of the area when you visit this park. However, I don't know whether you can understand the new features or the present day circumstances.



Fig.9 Entrance to the Gold Ecological Park, Taiwan, March 2009. The park is separated from the surrounding living areas.

The reason I insist in this paper on the availabilities of French ecomusées or anthropological curators is, I'm confident, that museums connect past and future. To observe inhabitants living in an area now is more relevant in the present day¹⁵⁾.

3. Cultural Relativism and Its Reexamination

The American anthropologist Erve Chambers (1985) referred to applied anthropology and the five roles of applied anthropologists: (1) representative role, (2) facilitator role, (3) informant role,

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

(4) analyst role, and (5) mediator role. For most museums anthropologists, these points are quite agreeable because they aptly portray the daily work life of an anthropologist. I submit that these roles are all in turn founded on the "appreciator role". All of the anthropologist's tasks start with this point of view at first and the locals will also expect those roles of us.

But now we are seeing another ambivalent problem. Anthropology has overcome, with great effort, issues such as racism, nationalism, ethnocentrism and ethnic evolution, and at last achieved a perspective of cultural relativism. This was one of the greatest tasks of modern anthropology and we came to see the culture equally without any discrimination or prejudice. But now if we are trying to represent, facilitate or appreciate again, we must have a questioning, or even judgmental attitude. We have to bring the question "which culture is better?" into the field. Should we throw science away or go back to armchairs? This is the new worry of anthropologists now.

Most sciences more or less will be lead to such difficult problems as this, in other words an ethical one. In Aso, for example, where people hope to keep the grassland in better condition, at the same time they

must be asked why; why should they keep the grassland so well-maintained? Some people suggest that progressing ecosystem from grassland to forest is quite natural in Japan, and that Aso's people are thus against natural principles. Alternatively, it could be suggested that Aso's inhabitants are harming the environment by burning the mountain because this practice creates a lot of CO₂ gas.

Natural scientists are using the term "natural diversity". Once we lose one life, we'll never get it again. There are so many species in Aso that we must maintain its diversity. One day, during a conference held by the Japanese Ministry of the Environment, people were arguing what they could do to make keeping the grassland easier, because most farmers are aging and the work to maintain it becomes harder and harder. One person proposed that it would be good to arrange the fireproof buffer zones to be straight. Those zones are currently curving so much along the designated area perimeter that it is adding unnecessary length (the Ministry says that it is 640km in total). But the proposal to arrange the fireproof buffer zone from curving to straight was denied gently by some natural scientists because it was really good for

*FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:
Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)*

living things for the buffer zone to be long and wide. Scientists explained that those buffer zones are generally boundaries between neighboring ecosystems (grassland and woods for example). The wider these zones are, the more species can live. Hearing the explanation, the locals agreed to leave the curving zone as it is because they now think that natural diversity is necessary for them, too. This means that, thanks to Aso's diversity, its people have begun to think about their own identity. There is also a good possibility that public anthropology can assist in this area too. When people think of "nature", it no longer means only wilderness but includes humans, so the problem is not a simple binary opposition in the manner of "nature" and "human".

From the point of cultural relativism, we have thought that all cultures are relative and we should not judge whether one culture would be good or bad from the point of view of another culture, and that scientists should also not meddle in social problems, even though they have their own ideas in mind. However, if we view things from this perspective, all things human related would have to be protected as a culture. Constructing the dam is one culture, and not constructing is

one culture, too. You would say it'll be right, but speaking in the extreme, would you assert that you are right if someone kills or sacrifices people to uphold their ritual belief, for example? You might not say it is a kind of human right or that the ritual must be continued as one culture. That is to say, conflict of views and overlap of beliefs may exist and scientists now must identify the boundaries and propose solutions carefully. We remember that Californian public anthropologists are making intensive studies dealing with serious and terrible themes like death, genocide, war, AIDS, violence or poverty, because we can judge them absolutely bad for humans, and we can see that anthropologists are now trying to cling to the stance of human rights in each field.

At the same time, the stance or position of curators would also come to matter. Explaining or displaying the region to visitors would turn into representing the local cosmology — museums possess a potent power of representation. Who on earth has a right to do this? In the case of ecomusée, curators or inhabitants? In Japanese ecomusées, people often use a catch phrase of "All inhabitants are curators", but it has hidden the fatal defects of Japanese ecomusées as a result. Although

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

traditional museums and ecomusées are not alike at all, do we still have to think of ecomusées as being the same as museums? Of course traditional museums also could collect regional memories or conduct educational activities outside of their buildings. Examination of ecomusées would lead us to reexamine the concept of museums itself.

While some advanced anthropologists are preparing to respond to extremely bad problems, others also have to prepare answers to problems which are quite delicate—in Aso's case, whether people should keep their grassland or not. Scientists are no longer allowed to say that keeping is a culture and not keeping is also culture. Anthropologists must come up with the solution from the local daily life and make some proposals - not tourist-centered proposals which would exhaust the locals, but empathize with the locals and think about what is best for them. Local people are now expecting anthropology to be put into practice in society, and to put forward significant suggestions. The time to act is now, now or never.

Notes

¹⁾ I have reported a part of this paper at the autumn seminar of The Kyushu Anthropological

Association in 2002 and published in 2003. I wish to express my hearty gratitude to Mr. Chris Nimmo and Mr. Jeff Gayman for checking English spelling and expression, and to Dr. Daisuke Takekawa for offering a picture of Fig.4 (all photographs except Fig.1 and 4 were taken by the author).

²⁾ Embree, John F. (1939) *Suyemura: a Japanese village*. University of Chicago Press

³⁾ Tufts University website: <http://ase.tufts.edu/anthropology/public.html>

⁴⁾ Rob Borofsky (2000) *Public Anthropology*: <http://www.publicanthropology.org/index.htm>

⁵⁾ University of California Press, California Series in Public Anthropology. The latest three issues, as examples, are; Erica Caple James (2010) *Democratic Insecurities: Violence, Trauma, and Intervention in Haiti*, Paul Farmer (2010) *Partner to the Poor: A Paul Farmer Reader*, Philippe Bourgois and Jeff Schonberg (2009) *Righteous Dopefiend*.

⁶⁾ For example, there are lots of real noodle shops in the *Shin-Yokohama* Noodle Museum, curators research about Japanese noodle shops and display them in the museum. Visitors can enjoy the Japanese 1930s atmosphere in the museum and can taste the noodle as an eatable display. *Kasasa ebisu* in southern *Kyushu* is also an interesting sort of new Japanese museum. You can stay in this museum (as a hotel), they

*FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:
Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)*

have also restaurants, bars, tea room, movie theater, lecture room, museum shop and so on. As a museum tour, curators sometimes take visitors not only around the gallery but also outdoors in a small ship

7) A quotation from Japan Ecomuseological Society ed.(1997)

8) Article 1, Chapter 1 of the Law of Museums, Japan

9) The reason ecomusées don't collect materials was originally based on reflection on the fact that traditional museums have plundered the treasures of others throughout their history. So their new policy not to collect was set up as an antithesis to the old ages and they wished those treasures would be maintained not by curators but the locals themselves.

10) This ecomusée was named "Aso Tanibito Ecomusée" (Tanibito means, "people living in the valley," for Aso's inhabitants often call their huge caldera "valley"). Established in 1997, eight full-time and guest curators are stationed (archaeology, history, folklore, geology, botany, and zoology). The manager raises capital through research and educational activities and via funds granted by the friendship association (about 140 members). In 2002 the members built a tiny office house by themselves in southern Aso. The museum office is, of course, legal, registered by the taxation bureau, and obeys the law of museums.

11) The Japanese Ecomuseological

Society, founded in 1995.

12) Some scientists criticize Japanese people who concerning ecomusées always refer only to Gerges H. Rivière and don't know other important theories or arguments like those of André Desvallées. *vid.* Suemoto(2005).

13) She looked through literature and the internet for organizations which called themselves "ecomusée" or adapt its notion, and found 56 cases; 47 cases are using "ecomuseum", "ecomusée" or "*marugoto hakubutsukan*" (whole museum) as their name, 7 cases are just "museum", others are "park" and "*shizenkan*" (natural hall). All of them say they regard their whole area as a living "museum" so she researched their awareness as "museum".

14) Gold Ecological Park web site: <http://www.gep-en.tpc.gov.tw/econtent/about/about.asp>
In Chinese countries and Korea, people represent ecomusées in Chinese characters as "ecological museums".

15) An anthropologist reported an interesting case in the *Himalayas*, Nepal. People there are dealing with not only stuffed specimens but traditional medical treatments which are disappearing with rapid modernization, *vid.* Kamata (1999).

References

CHAMBERS, Erve

1985 *Applied anthropology: A practical guide*, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall

CHIBA, Naoko

2009 *Nihon ni okeru ecomuseum*

FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:

Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)

- no genjo to sono kanousei: atarashii hakubutukan no jitsugen wo mezashite* (Actuality and Possibility of ecomuseum in Japan: Aiming at the realization of a new museum), Master's thesis at Kanagawa University, Japan (unpublished, in Japanese)
- DESVALLÉES, André ed.
1992,1994 *Vagues: une anthologie de la nouvelle muséologie* (Waves: an anthology of the new museology), *Muséologie Nouvelle et Expérimentation Sociale*, vol.1 and 2 (in French)
- ITO, Hiroyuki and MASAOKA, Nobuhiro
1999 *naze ima "gendaishakai to minzokugaku no jissen nanoka* (Now why "Present-day society and folklore practice"?), *Nihon Minzokugaku* (Bulletin of The Folklore Society of Japan), No.220, pp1-4 (in Japanese)
- ITO, Toshiro
1993 *Shimin no nakano hakubutsukan* (Museums in citizen), Yoshikawa Kobunkan, Japan (in Japanese)
- Japan Ecomuseological Society ed.
1997 *Ecomuseum, rinen to katsudo: sekai to nihon no saishin jireishu* (Philosophies and activities of ecomuseum: the latest cases of the world and Japan), Makino shuppan, Japan (in Japanese)
- KAJIHARA, Hiroyuki
2002 *ecomusée towa nandattanoka: tokuni gakugeiin no tashasei to adaptation no mondai* (What were ecomusées: the problems of curator's character as stranger, and of adaptation), *Ecomuseum Kenkyu* (Journal of The Japanese Ecomuseological Society), No.7, pp.76-80 (in Japanese)
- 2003 *Assomusée eno kokoromi: ecomusée wo koete* (An attempt for an assomusée: beyond an ecomusée), *Kyushu Jinruigaku Kaiho* (The bulletin of The Kyushu Anthropological Association), No.30 pp.39-44 (in Japanese)
- KAMATA, Yoji
1999 *Kokusai kyoryoku de umareta Mustang ecomuseum: Himalayas ni ikizuku kurashi to bunka* (The Mustang ecomuseum born from international cooperation: Life and culture breathing in Himalayas), *Ecosophia* No.4, Showado, Japan (in Japanese)
- KOSUGE, Masao
2006 *"Asahiyama Doubutsuen" kakumei: yume wo jitsugen shita fukkatsu project* (Revolution of Asahiyama zoological garden: the revival project making dreams come true), Kadokawa Shoten, Japan (in Japanese)
- KREINER, Josef

*FIELDWORK AND FEEDBACK:
Attempts in public anthropology through an ecomusée in Japan (KAJIHARA)*

- 2000 *Aso ni mita Nihon: Europe no Nihon kenkyu to Wien daigaku Aso chousa* (Japan watching through Aso: European Japanese studies and Aso research of Wien University), Ichinomiya town, Kumamoto, Japan (in Japanese)
- Minamiasomura Shokokai
(The Society of Commerce and Industry of Southern Aso village)
- 2009 *Minamiaso Kurashimeguri, zenkoku tenkai project jisshihoukokusho* (The project report of further development of regional resources to the whole country), Japan (in Japanese)
- RIVIÈRE, Geroges Henri
1989 *La muséologie selon Geroges Henri Rivière* (Museology according to Geroges Henri Rivière), Dunod (in French)
- SUEMOTO, Makoto
2005 *Ecomuseum ron saiko: Asahimachi no jissen ni yosete* (Reexamining the theory of ecomuseum: a contribution for Asahimachi's practice), Yukio Hoshiyama ed. *Shizen tono kyosei to machizukuri: ecomuseum no nousanson kara* (Community development where human beings coexist with nature: from a farm and mountain village of ecomuseum), Hokuju Shuppan, Japan (in Japanese)
- SUGA, Yutaka
2008 *American Folklore to Nihon Minzokugaku no taisho: minzokugaku wa kawaraneba naranai* (Contrast between American Folklore and Japanese Folklore: Folklore must change), *Nihon Minzokugaku* (Bulletin of The Folklore Society of Japan), No.256, pp.151-153 (in Japanese)
- YUKAWA, Yoji
1999 *Kaihatsu to mura: Kawabe-gawa dam wo megutte* (Development and the village: in connection with the Kawabe River Dam), *Nihon Minzokugaku* (Bulletin of The Folklore Society of Japan), No.220, pp.14-23 (in Japanese)

(Accepted on June 2nd, 2010)