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Ethnographic museums: principles and problems

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Group of women and children in Kharoro Charan village, Thar Parkar district, Sind Province, Pakistan.
[*Photo:* ©Françoise Cousin, Collection Musée de l'Homme, Paris.]

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Ethnographic museums: principles and problems

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In Fanla village, Vanuatu, 1966. Upper portion of a drum *(atingting)* carved from the trunk of a bread-fruit tree. The deteriorated portion has been sawed off, imitating the procedure used by a French colonial administrator who removed the top of a drum so as to put it in a normal-sized box which would get through customs without difficulty. The drum was sent to a dealer in Paris, who sold it to the Museum of Primitive Art in New York. In 1963 the present drum was offered to Jean Guiart, who refused it since his museum would acquire authentic and intact objects only. Three years later it was displayed on a stone platform surrounded by ornamental shrubs so as to suggest a ritual use and induce some passing European to acquire an 'authentic' ensemble.
[*Photo:* J. Guiart.]

In this issue...

This issue on ethnographic museums presents a number of standpoints and problems, some recently expressed, some looked at afresh. It also provides case-studies of museums and museum activities in various regions of the world—living proof, if proof be needed, of the crucial importance of the 'ethnographic' heritage to the cultural identity of peoples at all levels of economic development and in different social systems.

While the ethnographic museums created late in the nineteenth century in Europe and North America were essentially 'anthropological', seeking to collect and present evidence of man in other cultures, the category now includes many whose ethnography is that of their own. The latter are growing in number and sophistication; they at once express a society's powerful nostalgia for a lost world and its determination to conserve or at least document ways of life that have all but vanished. In many cases, they also reflect the ethnographic vision of contemporary culture, presenting the ordinary environment of everyday reality. Such museums appear to pose fewer problems of concept or method than those whose ambitions are anthropological in nature. The latter have undergone deep self-questioning in the past decade. This issue explores some of the principles and new directions which have emerged. Speaking at the opening of the totally renovated Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam on 13 June 1979, the Director-General of Unesco characterized the new type of ethnographic museum as one in which

> the visitor finds himself in direct contact with the thousand-and-one objects which make up the universe of others—and becomes individually impregnated by them, at his own pace, reconstructing step by step the life-style of a people through its types of dwelling-place and tools of production, discovering its forms of thought and its spiritual universe through its objects of worship, its musical instruments or its masks.
>
> Thus the museum gives encouragement to the strengthening of ties between worlds which seemed destined to remain ignorant of each other; and thus it gradually gives consistency to a feeling of the unity of the species beyond the plurality of its cultures. Thus it contributes to the strengthening of mutual understanding between peoples over and above the diversity of their ways of life and forms of expression.

Beyond industrialized Europe, however, ethnographic museums face the double challenge of shaking off the colonial imprint and redefining a role in conserving cultures gravely undermined by rapid change. Many such institutions were products of an outsider's curiosity, seeking the 'primitive' elements, the exotica, rather than the cultural differences which made up the rich mosaic of their civilizations. They have catered to the interests of urban élites, whose vision often perpetuates that of their former colonial masters. Today, these museums must speak relevantly to a much broader public and shoulder new responsibilities. They must become true museums of the *ethnos,* whose tasks include the preservation of rapidly disappearing material culture, together with the human knowledge and skills that have created it, the strengthening of mutual understanding of cultural diversity and the affirmation of that multifarious national identity on which each people's creativity is based.

This is the background against which this issue presents a selection of critical opinion, of statements of principle, ethics or method and of representative case-studies.

SOME PRINCIPLES

Ethnological research: an infinite richness

Jean Guiart

Since 1947 has spent most of his time in the South Pacific conducting ethnographic fieldwork. Directeur d'Études (religions of Oceania) at the École Pratique des Hautes Études, Paris, since 1957. Maître de Conférences (1969) and subsequently Professor of ethnology at the Sorbonne. Holds the chair of ethnology at the Muséum National d'Histoire Naturelle in Paris. Director of the ethnology laboratory at the Musée de l'Homme since 1973. In charge of the Oceania section at the Musée National des Arts Africains et Océaniens, Paris. Teaches at the Institute of Art and Archaeology (University Panthéon-Sorbonne, Paris) and at the École du Louvre. Has published numerous works on New Caledonia, Vanuatu and Oceanic art including; *La mythologie du masque en Nouvelle Calédonie* (The Mythology of the Mask in New Caledonia), Paris, 1966; *Système des titres aux Nouvelles Hébrides du Centre, d'Efate à Epi* (The System of Titles in the Central New Hebrides, from Efate to Epi), Paris, 1973; and *La terre est le sang des morts* (The Earth is the Blood of the Dead), Paris 1983.

The article below is a condensed version of the opening speech delivered by the author at the first international symposium, 'Evidence and Methods: The Researcher in his own Culture', which took place on 12–14 November 1982 at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris.

No scientific progress can be made if preconceived notions are not subjected to critical analysis, in spite of the inevitable resistance of every generation to this intellectual exercise, still carried out so often in private. Any new opinion appears under these circumstances somewhat provocative. The only real problem is that a new opinion must be well founded, and I think this is true of the one we are going to discuss.

The challenging of Western thought, I should say extreme Western thought, became inevitable when it was realized that the official process of decolonization, and formal independence, had not indeed done away with dependence or fundamentally affected the economic pre-eminence of the North over the South. In material terms, this challenge expresses itself in the great difficulties experienced by our researchers in certain countries and in the refusal of others to accept them. A solution put forward in an official report in France is that researchers should systematically return to their own country or go to more hospitable areas of the world. At one time, because of the closure of South-East Asia, at least one Western researcher was to be found in every village in the Sepik Valley in New Guinea. They were not always well trained, had read nothing, and would come to us repeating in an outlandish way the old nineteenth-century views about tribal societies dominated by witch doctors. This they did on the pretext of studying the mental health of other people.

Returning to one's native country is no solution and seems rather like running away. If ethnology, a discipline that grew up abroad, were to give up because it is being challenged, it would be acknowledging that it is a mere offshoot of colonial expansion, whereas it has always claimed to be something else. One could presume that the young generation will manage to find a way, but this will not necessarily be the case, given that in our society patterns of behaviour tend to be perpetuated. Internationally there are, if we simplify matters, at least two trends. One is to try to adapt field-working methods, continuing the process, begun a long time ago now, which led to the superseding of the question-and-answer technique—with the white man questioning and the black man answering. It welcomes the emergence of a class of national academics and researchers with whom co-operation can be established as between equals. The second trend is to reject any challenge to Western science and to react by adopting an intellectual stance bordering on arrogance. It does away with the long-established pair—the ethnologist and his informant—and puts in its place the superiority of the Western researcher who alone is capable of top-class theoretical work. Fortunately, most researchers do their job without sound or fury. However, their fate, or the fate of those who come after them, may depend on the consequences of the attitudes, not always well thought-out or opportune, of a minority who are unaware of the conclusions that may be drawn from the adoption, in perfectly good faith, of certain ideas.

It might be of interest to look at the historical causes of the difficulties which Western-based research sometimes has in adapting to certain not yet stable circumstances of decolonization (if such adaptation is possible at all). There is a sort of specious received wisdom which seeks to explain failures of understanding as representing the sort of scholarly detachment needed to produce work of quality—a claim curiously contradicted by the notion of participatory ethnology. I believe

these causes go far back into the past, back to the images implanted in people's minds in earliest childhood. The idea of a linear evolution of human societies and of a hierarchy of the levels reached by different societies is still causing havoc in the unconscious of our political and educated classes. The automatic paternalism of our top people, which we ourselves find very difficult not to assume and only then by paying very close attention to every gesture and every word, was the root cause of the severance of relations between African or West Indian leaders and the parties which had supported them over a long period.

We might legitimately wonder if certain aspects of the Western, and purportedly ethnological, study of peoples are not precisely what is most shocking to those peoples, transformed as they are, willy-nilly, into the subject-matter of intellectual speculation. Once again, it must be pointed out that apart from the end of the Pacific War, when the most extraordinary theories flourished to explain the aggressiveness which was attributed to the entire Japanese people, the East has given rise to little theoretical study. Given the mass of written and examinable works available, the West has been easily satisfied with applying its classical methods of historical, literary and philosophical research. Once outside the large areas covered by the revealed religions, however, explanations had to be found for fetishism and animism, the depths of the primitive soul had to be plumbed, and our best minds gave free expression to their foolish ideas in the shape of the good native, liked all the more because one was firmly convinced of being superior to him. At the end of the war, when Anglo-American anthropology suddenly burst in on minds deprived of intellectual discussion, it led to the belief that this was really a separate science which had to be suitable grounded in a definitive theory. I have always been interested in but also mistrustful of this temptation, having never managed to bring myself to believe that we are equipped to account for the place of every detail in the life of other peoples. The field-testing of any pre-established theory is liable to lead to that very common situation in which a person finds what he sets out to find. The informants provide all that is necessary. A less harmful state of affairs was the one created by the functionalists, who chose a part of culture—considered, but without it being said, as noble—and ignored the rest.

My mistrust stems from my disillusion at the collapse of a theory which had occupied the minds of some three or four generations of researchers, a theory that there were human races whose characteristics could be scientifically defined and that one could therefore identify these races as easily as plant species. It was readily acknowledged that this theory did not work well in France, the scene of so many invasions, but that it worked perfectly well elsewhere. I never, in the field, found any trace of the Melanesian race described in the lectures attended as a student. On the other hand, I noticed that doctors who had become physical anthropologists were in the habit of selecting for measurement men and women whose physical appearance was closest to the expected type. Similarly, although there had been much pillaging of cemeteries in the search for bone specimens, this had been done selectively, following predefined criteria, so as to eliminate cases of what was supposed to be cross-breeding. The predominance of such preconceived ideas, in a system as logical as it was attractive, led to the distinction being made between men and submen. This idea underlay everything said about coloured people having a keen intelligence at birth, which they lose at puberty with the sudden appearance of uncontrolled sexual instincts. The theory developed by honest teachers has led to consequences among their disciples which are as unexpected as they are tragic, and one wonders what should be the real criteria by which to judge a theory, however impressive it might be. Should it be possible to verify it as universally applicable, and therefore applicable to the class to which the originator of the theory belongs? There is no denying that a theory which is more particularly applicable to the Australian Aborigine deserves very close scrutiny. We have only an incomplete knowledge of the Aborigine. He has willingly endeavoured—in the desert where he is forced to survive—to explain his systems of kinship and marriage to us, slowly providing Western curiosity with the means of comparing stated cultural standards with what is actually the case. At the same time, however, the Aborigine has managed to ensure the survival of conceptual and religious systems so sophisticated that no researcher has managed to understand them.

I would not like to give the impression that I am against all theories, especially where the teachings of structuralism are concerned. Claude Lévi-Strauss, a genius when it comes to developing new ideas, has opened more doors for us than we have entered. I am not sure whether his lessons have all been properly understood. Let us take variants for example. To realize that there has never been an authentic tradition, but variants, each one having as much value as another, each one being as worthy an object of study as another, and all forming part of a culture and having a social function to be decoded, is to break free at last from the hold of Western tradition which expects to find authentic gospels and apocryphal gospels, people who tell the truth and others who do not. Thus vanishes the European researcher-cum-judge. The researcher's task is no longer to determine good and evil—i.e. scientific good and evil—but the meaning of what is said or shown to him, a meaning which may be implicit. This implies rejecting the temptation to choose from the information received the items which are considered to be of value and to ignore those held to be of less value or of no value at all. It also implies rejecting the idea that fitting an acquired text into a chronological series would give it more or less value depending on the date attributed to it.

The date is now a piece of information like any other. This rejection of value judgements takes ethnology away from the romanticism of the exotic, and this is still necessary because the battle is never fully won.

Another lesson, learnt at a later date, supports what I have just said. This is the recognition of cultural areas organized as 'systems of transformation', i.e. as logical groupings with indefinable frontiers, given that one is always in a position to make further progress by means of permutation between the minimal symbolic units. These systems can be conveniently represented by focusing attention on a given theme, but in actual fact they liberate ethnology from the notion of frontiers. Just as the sea, despite all its variations, is one and indivisible, knowledge of mankind consists of a single mass of information, consistent at all levels, organized both vertically and horizontally, comprising endlessly interrelated systems which are as complementary as they are contrasting and which, even when precisely located, never exactly overlap. From the consideration of differences—those differences which fascinate us as much as they elude us—we arrive at a view of universality.

We will still have to resign ourselves to acknowledging that the notion of eth-

Nékwé village, Houailou Valley, New Caledonia, 1955. Roof pole from a traditional hut in imputrescible wood. Chief Mindawé, owner of this piece, embedded it in a cement base so as to ward off constant pressure from colonial officials who wanted him to give or sell it to them. Recently it was stolen during the night and will one day turn up in a private collection. [*Photo:* J. Guiart.]

nic group has become our substitute for the idea of race, abandoned because of its bad smell. We must also acknowledge that exchange networks never come to an end anywhere, not even at a shore, since there is always another shore beyond. We have to recognize that what are known as marriage systems are always moving, fluctuating, are perpetually re-interpreted and re-adapted to an uncontrolled demographic reality; and that power strategies are as alike as they can possibly be. Hypergamy has been described as a characteristic of the Tongan islands, but I could use the same term in connection with the marriage of my own parents, and I am not even sure that I myself have not reproduced the model. An ethnology which discovers strangeness only in other people and describes as normal specific types of behaviour existing within its own society, raises the issue of naïvety. Alice's looking-glass is birefractive. One can use it both to look at oneself and to go into another world. To be scientifically justifiable, the two operations must use similar methods. One cannot claim to describe and examine the society of other people if one is incapable of looking clearly at one's own. This would be like breaking the taboos of other people while keeping a protective taboo round oneself. This, on the universal level, would match what in another context is characteristic of the colonial system, namely a form of protection of privileges by affecting to know nothing of their existence.

By force of circumstance, ethnology has been very much a Western discipline. It must become the property of all, or else it will fall into oblivion. It is not enough to be interested in other people, even if, for a long time, this has been a sign of real progress. There must also be the wish for what they have to say to be of equal weight to what we say. Knowledge of mankind cannot be colourless and the property of one school. It has an indefinite number of facets and its value will not emerge from the dim light of over-simple ideas, near the Arctic Circle, but from the light of the midday sun, from the infinite richness of the vernacular expression of ideas and behaviour which, notwithstanding our illusions about ourselves, we all share.

Perhaps the time has now come for us to try to escape from the urban ethnocentrism of the large cities of the West, and to realize that we are never anything but ignorant individuals, acting in good faith, who are desperately striving to be less ignorant and who can only escape this curse if other people accept us as their friends.

Finally, I would like to say that there is some degree of selfishness involved in this enterprise. There will never be enough ethnologists in our universities to cover the inhabited world and to gather all the potential knowledge. We have to devolve and spread and do more than just delegate authority. Experience shows that when the sons and daughters of those who welcomed us, fed us and taught us everything, decide to assume the role of ethnologists in their turn, something extraordinary occurs, unforeseen by current thinking on methods, which is that information about which generations of Western researchers have remained ignorant is brought to light, opening the way for new studies to be made. We patiently and laboriously constructed the mechanism which made the take-off possible. We now have to take pride in the initial results and set up a system for co-operation between equals so that the gathering and circulation of knowledge and theoretical work involving more parameters can make a fresh start. If this venture is to succeed, we must no longer be the only ones in charge of it. Every one of our guests is part of a movement to master once again the values of his own tradition and could explain to us *his* problems and *his* vision of what this world of universal knowledge should be—a world which, for the most part, is based on the unceasing encounter between all kinds of differences. We are here to listen to them first, and then to hold a dialogue with them.

[*Translated from French*]

COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE, London. From the exhibition *Women—The 25-hour Day* (15 October to 26 November 1982): an Indian woman labourer breaking rocks for road-making.
[*Photo:* Commonwealth Institute.]

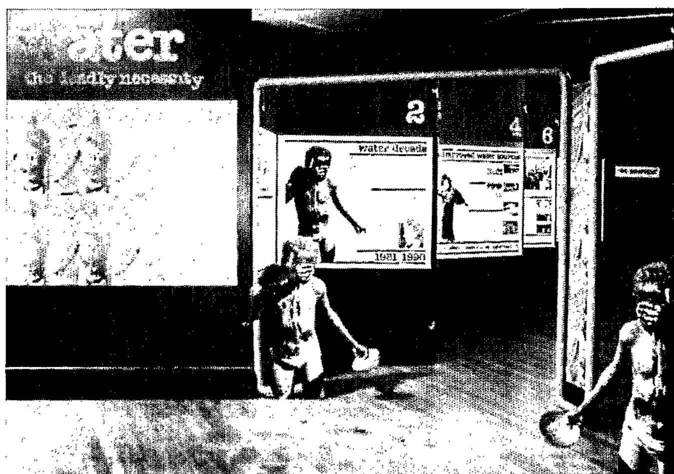
New approaches to other cultures in European museums

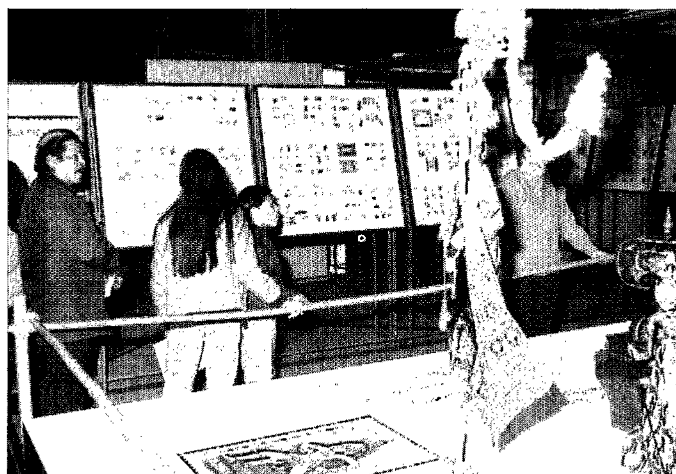
Fred Lightfoot

Organizer of large-scale international exhibitions. Responsible for interior display of British Pavillion, Expo 67, Montreal. Member, Society of Industrial Artists and Designers (United Kingdom). From 1972 to 1982, Deputy Director, Commonwealth Institute, where he initiated the institute's international links in ethnography. Member, United Kingdom Government Advisory Committee on Development Education, 1977/78. Founder member Extra European Arts—Committee for the Promotion of Non-Western Arts at European Festivals. Secretary of ICOM's International Committee on Museums of Ethnography (ICME).

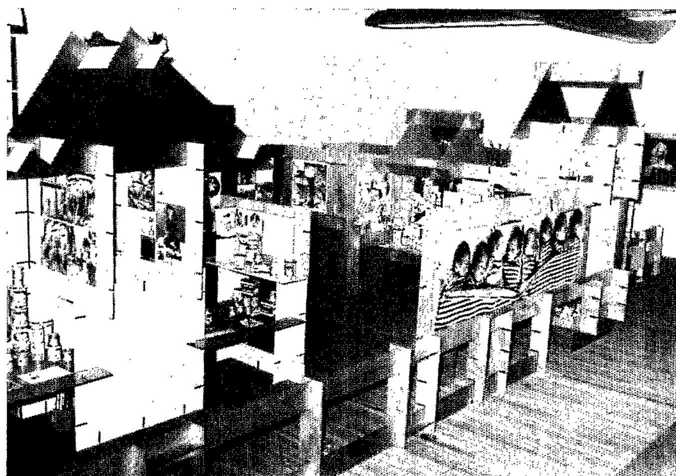
Walk into any museum anywhere in the West and you are almost certain to find some evidence of the revolution in museology that has taken place during the present decade. If it is a large national or municipal museum it will be surprising if there is not a sizeable temporary exhibition in process (or even more likely just closed or starting the next day!). Very often this exhibition will have as its subject an aspect of non-Western culture. The museum may have a shop. Among the things on sale it would be unusual if our visitor did not find some object reflecting a cultural style that was not his own. At the very least there will be a picture postcard. Quite often the person who sells the postcard or issues the admission ticket or checks personal property in the vestibule will be non-Western in origin. If there is a café or restaurant in the museum it is possible that some item of non-Western food will be on offer along with more familiar fare.

The world is changing fast and with it the museum. Today's museum director more often than not is aware that he or she is in the business of communicating across national and racial frontiers as much as that of scholarship. In the ethnographic museum this new awareness is of particular relevance. The advent of mass communication, especially television, or personal experience as part of the tourist explosion of recent years, has meant that many of the objects displayed in museum cases, previously regarded by visitors as symbols of inaccessible and exotic worlds, now evoke more comfortable and familiar feelings. Increasingly, they make sense as part of a widening appreciation of cultural differences and sometimes of cultural similarities. Some ethnographic museums have sought to encourage these new attitudes towards non-Western cultures by re-arranging their collections so that cultural objects are placed in context like illustrations in a book. Designers have been set to work and displays thinned out to allow a point to be made clearly. Even the skills of the journalist have been employed to provide thematic explanation that is readable and often enjoyably so! All this can be regarded as an advance although not every museum person would agree. The backwoods still contain their dinosaur curators!





COMMONWEALTH INSTITUTE, London.
Water—The Deadly Necessity, an exhibition to mark the launching in the United Kingdom of the United Nations World Water Decade (1981).
[*Photo:* Commonwealth Institute.]



TROPENMUSEUM, Amsterdam.
Moedermelk—Poedermelk, an exhibition on breast-feeding versus powdered milk in the Third World, organized in co-operation with UNICEF.
[*Photo:* Tropenmuseum.]

UNIVERSITETETS ETNOGRAFISKE MUSEUM, Oslo.
Ellen Andersson demonstrates the craft of Sămi root-binding.
[*Photo:* Tom Svensson.]

In some ethnographic museums the presentational aspect of the collections has been taken much further. Three-dimensional environments have been created, making use of the modern techniques of the theatre—light, sound, and film and slide projection. (In some extreme cases even smells have been introduced in the search for 'authenticity'.) The classic example of this approach is to be found in the United States at the Milwaukee Public Museum. Others are at the Tropical Museum in Amsterdam and the Commonwealth Institute in London.

Notwithstanding these developments, the real qualitative change in the Western approach to other cultures has been manifested in more fundamental form, where the totality of the philosophy of the museum has been consciously moved forward in an effort to get to grips with the essential challenge. That challenge expressed simply is 'to interpret non-Western cultures honestly and sympathetically to European museum audiences'. By 'honestly' one means without condescension and by 'sympathetically', that the interpretation should take into account those distorting internal/external pressures that exist in any culture.

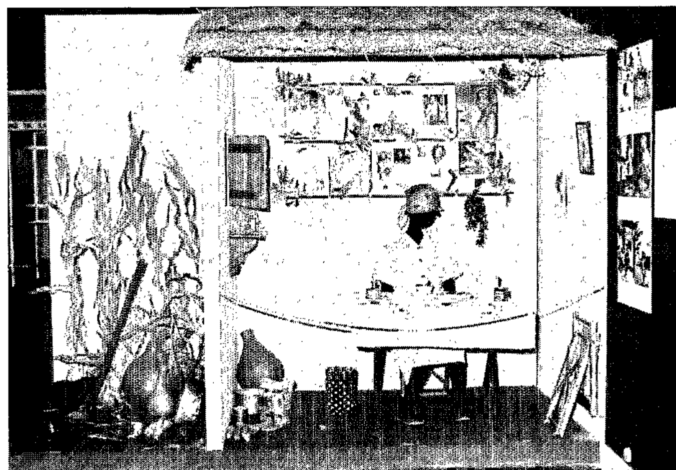
This radical 'total' approach has several essential elements. First must come the realization and acknowledgement that objects, however imaginatively and sensitively displayed, are not enough in themselves to effect a satisfactory portrayal of a cultural style. Secondly, there must be a willingness, even an eagerness, to become a protagonist on behalf of the cultures that the museum is exhibiting. Thirdly, there must be sufficient resources, including human resources, to carry policy into effect. On these foundations it is possible to build an infinitely variable structure of policies and activities. The aim is simple enough: to provide within the museum arena a meeting place of cultures.

Joining forces for a battle of ideas

A number of northern European museums and ethnographical institutions who share this policy objective (at varying degrees of commitment, it must be said) have linked themselves together informally to exchange views and to engage in practical co-operation wherever possible. Representatives of these nine museums meet, usually once each year, to

TROPENMUSEUM, Amsterdam (left). The exhibition *Tropenpost* (12 February to 21 March 1982) displayed stamps depicting life and work in tropical countries as well as development and international co-operation. [*Photo:* Tropenmuseum.]

The Kenya section of a special exhibition on the condition of women around the world organized at the National Museum of Denmark.
[*Photo:* The National Museum of Denmark.]



THE NATIONAL MUSEUM OF DENMARK. The permanent Greenland exhibition in the Department of Ethnography.
[*Photo:* The National Museum of Denmark.]

The Philippines section of the special exhibition on the condition of women.
[*Photo:* The National Museum of Denmark.]

discuss ideas and attitudes and to review progress.[1] These gatherings have the positive character of any similar meeting of like-minded individuals who share a sense of purpose and a record of achievement in their chosen area. There is nothing institutional about this 'Ethnographical Club'. It has no constitution, no membership structure, no rules and no policy other than the shared enthusiasm of the individual representatives for the idea of a new type of ethnographical museum—that of a centre of activities designed to illuminate the different values and life-styles of other cultures. Each of the 'club' museums has its own distinctive set of policies and in some cases these policies are enshrined in the museum constitution or in statements made by responsible government ministers. Thus in 1970 the then Netherlands Minister for Development Co-operation, Dr B. J. Udink, in delivering the annual address to the Royal Tropical Institute in Amsterdam, said:

> I would like to examine the possibility of expanding the museum's field of operation to make it a national centre for exhibitions about development co-operation ... a dynamic meeting place which would make use of audio-visual techniques with an appeal to a wide public, which would stage ever-changing exhibits in order to present the many facets of development in a clear fashion to vast numbers of visitors, a centre every bit as vital as the process of development itself.

Nine years later the newly constituted Tropenmuseum (Tropical Museum) re-opened with a symposium on 'Vision and Visualisation', and visitors were able to see for themselves the transformation that had been made. Today the Tropenmuseum plays a leading role in the battle of ideas for the new ethnographic museum.

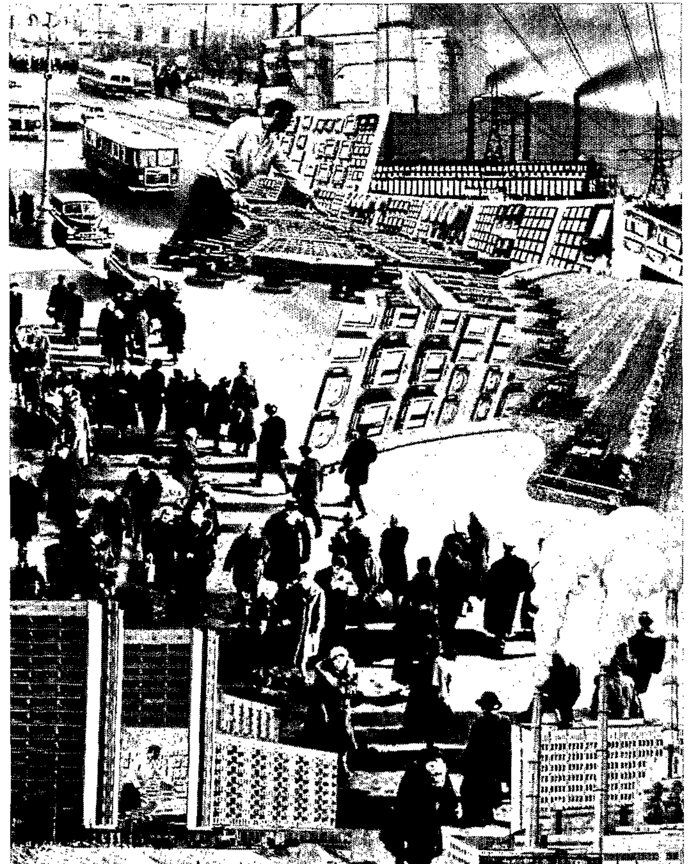
In Stockholm in 1982 another reborn

1. These nine museums are the following: Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Moesgaard Museum and the National Museum of Denmark, Copenhagen; Volkenkundig Museum, 'Gerardus van der Leeuw', Groningen, the Netherlands; Ethnographic Museum, University of Oslo, Norway; Museum für Völkerkunde, Hamburg, Federal Republic of Germany; Ubersee-Museum, Bremen, Federal Republic of Germany; Ethnografiska Museet, Stockholm, Sweden; and Commonwealth Institute, London, United Kingdom.

museum opened its doors to a new public. A policy statement issued in 1979 jointly by the board and staff of the Stockholm Ethnographic Museum said:

> An ethnographical museum is a meeting-place—in time and space. There you can acquaint yourself with the life of an African village as well as with the conditions of a South American shanty town. You can follow the Silk Road Caravans on their way to China. You are given insights into the social life of the Classical Mayan empire. We contemplate our own culture, comparing it with other ways in which man can arrange his life. The hunter in the Kalahari Desert is the centre of the world just as much as the inhabitants of the big towns in the West.
>
> An ethnographical museum should offer the opportunity of following parallels and connections, of seeing the cultural multiplicity of the world, but also of understanding the reasons behind the very different conditions of life of the peoples of today.
>
> An ethnographical museum should be an important means by which to understand the world around us. It is an information and documentation centre for the public and for researchers in Sweden, but also for institutions outside this country. Co-operation with the Third World is of great significance in the museum's activities.
>
> It is our task to convey information about, and vitalize the knowledge of, other cultures. We attempt to do so keeping an international perspective in mind, but also following the conditions required by other people. We try to convey their experience and their solutions of social problems in the way they themselves conceive of them. By doing so, we can, at the same time, introduce new points of view into the social debate going on in our own country today. We see the relation of this country to the Third World from many angles. Thus, the activity of an ethnographic museum should always be on the offensive. We shall convey knowledge of man as a social citizen, create understanding of and respect for the ways of life that differ from that of Sweden and illustrate conditions prevailing in other countries.
>
> Objects are an important part of the working material of the museum. New collections are gathered in collaboration with the countries of origin. We are actively engaged in the international work of solving the problems of how the cultural heritage of other countries might be returned to them. The research activities of the museum are planned in collaboration with cul-

MOESGAARD MUSEUM, Højbjerg, Denmark. The *Afghanistan* exhibition in 1976: the city bazaar, showing a petty trader's shop and a modern Afghan lady. Organized by museologists together with students and teachers from the Department of Ethnography and Social Anthropology of Aarhus University, the exhibition aimed at presenting an anthropological analysis of Afghan society. Part I, on the city bazaar, was meant to be the 'uninterpreted reality' of the old city of Kabul. Its narrow streets were reconstituted and, together with photographs and background sounds, the desired impact was achieved without the help of written texts. Part II analysed social and economic relations, while Part III dealt with the country's contemporary problems. [*Photo:* Klaus Ferdinand.]



Collage of Soviet Russia, an industrial society, from the same exhibition at Hamburg.
[*Photo:* Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde.]

tural and research institutions in the Third World. Our work should be of interest also to the countries in which we are working. Research should give perspectives on the past and also deal with the present.

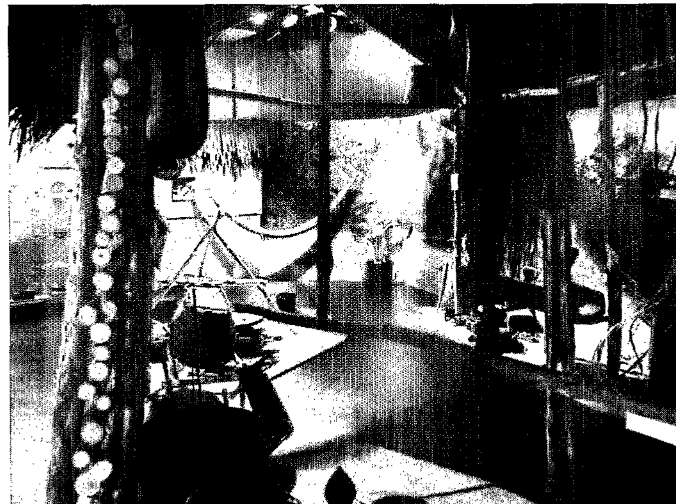
This clear statement of purpose could be the manifesto for the New Ethnographical Museum.

The 'club' and its innovations

What kinds of activities, then, are presented by the 'club' members and other museums of similar outlook? There is an infinite variety, from exhibitions, demonstrations and workshops, to films and video shows and live performances in and out of the theatre. (Several of the 'club' members are fortunate enough to have buildings that incorporate auditoriums). To take a few random examples, last year the Stockholm Ethnographic Museum presented an exhibition of costumes of the hill tribes of northern Thailand. The costumes were shown in their social context. At the University Museum of Oslo, three exhibitions were mounted on the Sămi, the Yanamanŏ and the Navajo, illustrating areas of conflict between the dominant industrial societies and politically weak ethnic minority groups. This museum also works in the area of craft revival, and demonstrations are arranged. A recent example was of Sămi root-binding, when Ellen Andersson demonstrated this feature of Arctic culture.

The Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam has mounted temporary exhibitions on many subjects that would be regarded as 'no go' areas in most museums. They have included photographic exhibitions on everyday life in the Socialist Republic of Viet Nam, the Karachi slums, and apartheid in South Africa. A feature of these exhibitions was the involvement of special interest groups outside the museum. The museum has a bureau for cultural manifestations and its own theatre, and many performances are given by individuals and groups from developing countries. Another important aspect of the Tropenmuseum's work is its expertise and involvement in co-operating with the national television services. Programmes on Third World subjects are often televised live from the museum, which also makes a notable contribution to the content of the programmes.

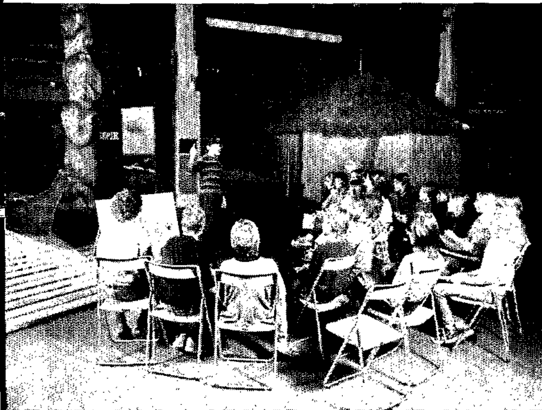
In London, the Commonwealth Institute has, since its formation twenty years ago, but more especially during the last decade, been actively engaged in the presentation of non-European cultures by means of informational and educational programmes of many kinds, as well as permanent and temporary exhibitions,



VOLKENKUNDIG MUSEUM 'GERARDUS VAN DER LEEUW', Groningen, Netherlands. Exhibition on the Wayana Indians of the Amazon, which focused on their food habits. Visiting schoolchildren were able to taste different kinds of food.
[*Photo:* Volkenkundig Museum 'Gerardus van der Leeuw'.]

HAMBURGISCHES MUSEUM FÜR VÖLKERKUNDE, Hamburg. *People of Russia before and after the Revolution: Ethnic Minorities before the Revolution:* collage by H. Jorgensen and M. Treite.
[*Photo:* Hamburgisches Museum für Völkerkunde.]

ETNOGRAFISKA MUSEET, Stockholm. Schoolchildren being taught how to teach themselves.
[*Photo:* Bo Gabrielsson © Etnografiska Museet.]



Exhibition on the people of Molucca at the Volkenkundig Museum, which aimed to inform the public about this minority group and their problems in Netherlands society.
[*Photo:* Volkenkundig Museum 'Gerardus van der Leeuw'.]

live performance of the arts, and crafts demonstrations. As early as 1952 it was noted that changes in the composition and the current viewpoint of the Commonwealth meant that the institute's aims and objectives needed drastic revision if they were to continue to be relevant, and that it should give greater emphasis to social and cultural activities in the wider sense. In short, 'the main emphasis should shift from products to persons'. The Tweedsmuir Committee, in its report on the Institute, recommended that it should be reconstituted as a Commonwealth Centre and become a focal point for the dissemination of information on cultural development in the Commonwealth.

Thus the Institute has an established tradition of programmes of temporary exhibitions with Third World themes. Some recent examples are *Water—The Deadly Necessity,* marking the British launch of the United Nations World Water Decade, and *Life in Cities,* pinpointing the increasing trend of migration from rural to urban areas and the problems caused when city infrastructures are stretched to the limit. More recently, *Women—The 25-hour Day* explored the role women play in national economies, in both developed and developing situations. The exhibition included an audio-visual portrait of a day in the life of a Sri Lankan tea-picker and her family and also took an hour-by-hour look at the seemingly endless day of the average working woman.

A pioneering development of the Institute has been its closely focused and many-faceted treatment of a particular culture. In 1978 *Festa Malaysia* provided a rounded representation of the arts, culture and industry of Malaysia. A *Festival of Masks* followed in 1980, constructed around an important exhibition of ethnic masks from collections all over the world, and the 'masks' of today's contemporary society.[2] In 1981 a successful *Festival of Sri Lanka* was mounted.[3] In 1982 the institute made a major contribution to the *Festival of India* in London.[4] During the same period the institute also mounted a number of programmes focusing on the Australian aboriginal people, their arts and their present social and economic position. The second half of 1982 also saw a masked dance drama from Thailand, two plays by the Tara Arts Group (one of Britain's leading Asian theatre companies) and a Christmas musical performed by a multiracial cast from the 'La Mama' theatre of New York with music played entirely on traditional instruments. Exhibitions included a major show of Guatemalan Indian costumes, with a shop selling Guatemalan, Indian and Mexican textiles and demonstrations by a Guatemalan strap-loom weaver; *Artimo—Art in Action,* a display of work by a black Azanian (South African) artists' co-operative; paintings and drawings by Tony Jadanarth, a young artist from Trinidad and Tobago living in London; and work by Kofi Kayiga, a Jamaican now living in the United States.

In the space of this article it has only been possible to touch on a few of the manifold activities of a small group of ethnographic centres that share a common goal—that of bringing alive to their own national communities the realities of cultures other than their own, especially those of the developing world. It is work that is often experimental, where mistakes are made but also where lessons are learned and put into practice. Such activities provide a pointer, no more, in the direction which museums of ethnography and perhaps museums in general may take. It is an exciting world but it is also the real world.

2. See *Museum,* Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, 1981.
3. See articles by J. E. van Lohuizen de Leeuw and James Porter, *Museum,* Vol. XXXIII, No. 4, 1981.
4. See *Museum,* Vol. XXXIV, No. 4, 1982.

Changing assumptions

Museums in general, and the ethnographic or anthropological in particular, inherit their roots from the world of the past. The majority were founded around the turn of the century or a little earlier, in an epoch of colonial expansion and growing scientific interest in 'distant peoples': information about them played a functional role in maintaining overseas rule and in propagating links with colonies and dominions. At the same time the knowledge crystallized in museum presentations served to satisfy the appetite for the alien and exotic. With the advent of decolonization academics and museums began to go their separate ways. For the museums, this heralded a gradual severance from the academic élite in favour of the general public: the cultural anthropologist became an interpreter of other cultures for the benefit of a new audience.

One of the platforms for the expression of concern for man and his problems is the anthropological museum. Direct, physical contact with that person out there, that other world, is the strongest means of awakening genuine solidarity. The next best solution is to bring the so-called Third World westwards by communicating the basics of everyday life, themes and things which are familiar to us. We Europeans have reached a point in our cultural history where we are ripe for such presentations. Accustomed as we have been to traditional museums with cases stuffed with art objects, the moment has come to make that leap into another world. But while I argue the case for a modern, contemporary-minded and committed ethnographic museum, I still respect those which are more traditionally inclined. I would even go so far as to say that our institutional survival depends on a symbiosis between the two kinds of museum and on the creation of a real meeting ground between two hemispheres: north and south.

Of course our very conception of the world colours and even determines our concept of the south. It is only too easy to criticize the notions of our forebears, ideas which also served to provide a rational justification for colonization. Yet naïve as that ethnocentric point of departure undoubtedly is, it is equally naïve to think that the Third World can be perceived through unbiased eyes. The writer Den Hollander once stated: 'In talking about another people, we are almost always talking about ourselves, or, at any rate, from our own limited viewpoint.'

We might even question whether we are at all capable of appyling standards other than those derived from our own world, or of looking with different eyes. If we are not able to do this then we ourselves will have to serve as the measure of all things, bound to evaluate others according to our own norms and values. The converse of this would be knowing ourselves through the other. And if we do try to put ourselves into another's skin, doesn't that often mean letting the other get under our own skin? In this perspective anthropological museums would not so much convey the reality of the Third World as show how we Westerners perceive it, which elements and phenomena strike us and what we consider as important. They would tell us more about ourselves than about others.

Acknowledgement of the problems of the Third World can also provide a solution to problems whose substance is, quite simply, the process of development itself. While Western culture has been considered as either the zenith or the nadir (depending on one's point of view) the possibility of other paths, however, has not been seriously considered. Our reasoning as regards development and development processes is still dominated by assumptions exclusively rooted in our Western world. This, then, is the experience we impress upon the Third World.

Perhaps, however, the societies of other continents are evolving quite differently. As museum people aspiring to communicate understanding of these current developments with the emphasis on Everyman's day-to-day life we have to tackle several questions. What is the exact nature of the non-Western world and how does it correspond to or differ from ours? What kind of interaction does change involve? Answers can only be attempted from a combination of standpoints—social, economic, cultural, political and ideological/religious—seen in the light of contemporary history and environment.

Such attempts should yield a *regional* approach focusing on certain features of history, socio-economic development, behaviour patterns, etc., common to a number of societies and countries in a particular part of the world.

There should also be scope for a *thematic* approach in which attention is focused on issues of universal concern affecting the course of the world as a whole. This category includes chains of cause and effect and parallels between similar problems and phenomena discernible in different regions.

Finally, our museums should provide fully for *study and logistic services*, so that the specific components of the collections can be deployed to general advantage and utility.

Nico Bogaart, Director,
Tropenmuseum, Amsterdam,
and Chairman of ICME

Alpha Oumar Konaré

Born in 1946 in Kayes, Mali. Former Head of the Historical and Ethnological Heritage Division of Mali, and former Minister of Culture of Mali. Currently Professor of History and Archaeology at the Institute of Higher Training and Applied Research, Bamako, Mali.

Towards a new type of 'ethnographic' museum in Africa

NATIONAL MUSEUM OF MALI, Bamako. The new building. The architect was Jean Loup Pivin, in collaboration with Pascal Martin Saint Léon, Moustaph Soumaré and Mamadou Dembelé. The museum is designed in such a way as to ensure minimum costs in terms of construction, functioning and maintenance, and employs 'soft technology' (construction using a mixture of earth and cement, systematic use of natural lighting, general use of natural ventilation). See A. O. Konaré, 'Birth of a Museum at Bamako, Mali', *Museum,* Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, 1981.
[*Photo:* Georges Meurillon.]

The ethnographic museum as we know it today is doomed, and new types will have to be created in its place.

At its inception in the early 1900s, the ethnographic museum was the work of colonial administrations in search of objects to display at colonial and world exhibitions. Their aim was to charm the population in the home country with the 'exoticism' and 'folklore' of African countries, and in so doing, justify their presence there.

These collections were comprised of an odd assortment of objects—masks, statuettes and ornaments for the most part—having absolutely nothing in common between them, more often than not a mixture of souvenirs collected by travellers, missionaries, colonial administrators and military personnel. Many of these objects had been stolen or confiscated from their owners. From the outset, therefore, violence and the violation of indigenous cultures and sensibilities were associated with this endeavour. Neither was the local population consulted, nor did it want its 'goods' taken away to be subsequently stripped of all value and displayed in places inaccessible to their creators. These places we call museums, designed as they were for foreigners and tourists and which claimed to present a 'cultural overview' of the country, were constructed in the style typical of official colonial palaces; indeed they were known locally as the 'residences of the chiefs'. The new owners of the cultural objects in question deprived them of their original function and projected their own vision of the world and value systems on to them, reducing them to the level of commonplace consumer goods.

Once the countries concerned had achieved independence, they did not, in general, challenge the goals of the educational and cultural systems inherited from the colonial administration. Many ethnographic museums were built, reflecting the growing need felt by each country to rediscover its past and to assert its identity, and implying at the same time a desire to idealize the past, and to assign a historical and sentimental value to the cultural heritage.

Despite this creative endeavour and the effort made to train national technical staff, these museums have remained institutions reserved for a minority of foreigners, tourists and intellectuals from urban areas. Much remains to be accomplished in the effort to halt the destruction of the cultural heritage (resulting from the introduction of a monetarist economy, religious intolerance, poor conservation conditions, the breaking up of social structures and modernization) and to check illicit traffic in these objects. The traditional museum is no longer in tune with our concerns; it has ossified our culture, deadened many of our cultural objects, and allowed their essence, imbued with the spirit of a people, to be lost.

It is not our intention here to furnish a model for an ideal museum. Each people, each ethnic group and each cultural community will define its own particular conservation structures, based on its own traditions. It is, in every instance, for the Africans themselves (and not foreigners, however 'expert' they may be in the matter) to decolonize existing museums and create the types they need, breaking free from all cultural alienation and rejecting foreign concepts. These museums must be created in response to local needs, and not at the request of tourists or other foreigners. To this end, we must first establish an inventory of every type of conservation structure.[1]

In some family compounds, there are rooms where family relics are stored, entrance to which is occasionally prohibited (to young people, for example). Certain areas of the family compound are protected as they house the tombs of ancestors or the guardian fetish of the family. Some family communities revere a whole area when it represents the 'great house', the home of the patriarch which is open to all men and women of the clan. These communities often share taboos and to-

1. See Keith Nicklin, 'Traditional Preservation Methods: Some African Pratices Observed', *Museum,* No. 138, 1983.—Ed.

tems and participate in certain social activities together (circumcision, marriage, death ceremonies, etc.).

In addition, some village communities also undertake to protect certain sites because they are used for initiation ceremonies and sacrifices; consequently, all objects within this area are protected. Occasionally entire villages are regarded as sacred, and are thus preserved. Certain guilds, traditional associations of young people and women and initiation societies are responsible for the conservation of these sites and objects. In many cases, conservation is directed towards the spiritual rather than the material aspect of culture, and is reflected in a process of continuity, the repetition of gestures, and the transmission of knowledge. However, there are no public places open to all, where an individual may go as he pleases and have access to cultural goods. Often only a select audience enjoys this privilege, access being granted only to initiates and members of associations, each bound by strict rules governing his role and position. In the rare case that non-initiates are admitted, they are passive and do not participate.

Important questions

How can the hierarchization, specialization and separatism prevalent in most traditional societies be reconciled with the need to democratize and popularize culture?

How can taboos existing for certain categories of persons (women in particular) be lifted in order to allow them to view the masks, statuettes and other objects of male initiation societies?

How can we enable those outside the caste to perform specialized activities?

Can a museum be considered as such if access to it is limited?

Should museums be designed according to social categories?

Segregation of this type, based on the intangible principle of the community's right to control its own culture, must be condemned, however, on the basis of the principle of the equality of all peoples.

The answers to these questions will reveal that the museum cannot be confined to one single type.

A museum which aspires to serve the broad mass of the population and national cultures cannot opt for a 'universal' approach, which would place it in the hands of moneyed interests.

These aspirations could lead to the creation of several types of museum, and even specialized ethnographic museums where required. Instead of a single ethnographic museum or a single type of ethnographic museum, each country should possess museums representing all cultural areas, even extending beyond administrative boundaries to the regional level. We should perhaps cast aside the word 'museum', leaving it to designate simply one facet of the activities of a larger, more open institution.

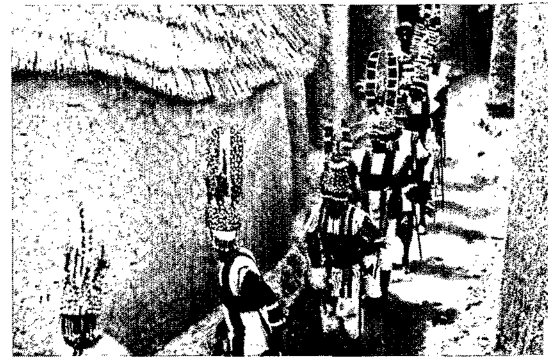
New forms

Of the different models of museums existing in Europe today, Africa would do well to examine the ecomuseum system. Ecomuseums represent first and foremost a given area, a population at work, a 'heritage of collective memory', and 'activities representing a whole set of concrete social practices in real-life situations'; in short, everything that gives these cultures life. Consideration should also be given to new forms of ethnographic museums which would be more closely associated with, and controlled to a greater degree, by the populations themselves, as regards their planning, construction and management. In setting up these new museums, account must be taken of the resources of the population in question, whose participation should not be based on any policy imposed from above.

These new types of museum (with simpler structures, if necessary) would be more like family and community museums. They should break out of their walls and install themselves in public places, schools and places of work; they should maintain traditional associations and encourage those that engage in modern and diversified activities. Their external aspect should be familiar to the local populations, and should resemble traditional dwellings of the area. The choice of a mud hut in preference to a stone building does not necessarily indicate a shortage of funds but rather a choice dictated by the environment, the way of life and philosophy of the local people.

Ethnographic museums should be veritable cultural centres which collaborate with other organizations (universities, traditional and modern learned societies, archives, etc.); they should draw up an inventory of the cultural heritage, ensure its conservation and restoration, participate in research activities, and play an organizing role. The development of ethnological rescue operations is urgently needed, not so much for the collection of specimens as the bringing together of significant, evolutive and comparative series of objects, for it is not a question of rescue for the sake of rescue. Nor is the aim to rescue everything, but to ensure conservation so that preventive action may be taken and the permanency of the object safeguarded.

Village procession. A beautiful sight! [*Photo:* A. O. Konaré.]



Research and the development of community involvement can signify new life and meaning for the object, and the bringing into being of a context conducive to renewal and fresh creativity.

In their function as cultural centres, ethnographic museums are ideal settings for bilateral and multilateral exchanges. However, these exchanges must be free of all traces of paternalism and 'exoticism', and must be carried out on an egalitarian basis. Museums may define points of convergence and of divergence in order to arrive at *rapprochement.* They should present man, in all his diversity, in his social and natural environment: all his artistic expresions, material culture, social organization, ideology, etc., all that exists, is in the process of being created, or whose advent is imminent.

Ethnographic museums must no longer concentrate solely on the past and on the rural environment. Cities and villages are involved as well. These museums should give special attention to the study of pre-colonial society, expose the everyday realities of colonialism, and denounce racist theories. Emphasis must be placed on the struggle of the people in today's world to control their environment, and on the technology that will

enable them to keep pace with economic development. They should be museums of mankind in general or of specific groups, museums of culture or of cultures (and, when necessary, be specifically designed as part of a development effort), and should evolve in relation to changes in society.

Ethnographic museums often tend to disregard the wealth of local experience and knowledge, and yet without due heed for this, the goals of democratization will never be attained. These 'living libraries', steeped in popular wisdom, should be closely associated, together with museologists, with national ethnologists who have received the technical training for carrying out every museum activity: collecting, conservation, research and the organization of activities involving the community. Through their expertise, the scope of their learning and their knowledge of the environment, their merit and competence will be recognized. Museum activities will attract an increasingly wider public and become all the more dynamic as they will be conducted in the national language of the areas involved. This use of a familiar language is in itself the expression of a cultural heritage.

Collecting: what and how?

The local populations must themselves decide which objects are to be included in a collection. Emphasis should be placed on those articles which they consider to be the most significant and which they consent to show to others. No longer

Boo mask. Light is used to bring life to the mask. National Museum of Mali, Bamako. [*Photo:* Georges Meurillon.]

'Yayoroba' Bambara puppet in the village square, Markala, Mali. [*Photo:* C. O. Mara.]

'Yayoroba' Bambara puppet during a performance, Markala, Mali. [*Photo:* C. O. Mara.]

should collections be comprised of cast-off objects deprived of their function. The views of other people may subsequently be taken into account, such as those of neighbours or foreigners who may indicate those items which interest them in a given culture.

In all cases, the opinion of the local population should be a determining factor. The conservation of cultural objects should not be carried out against the will of their creators and customary users. An object preserved without the consent of its creators becomes another thing altogether, imbued with a different content, and holding a different meaning for them.

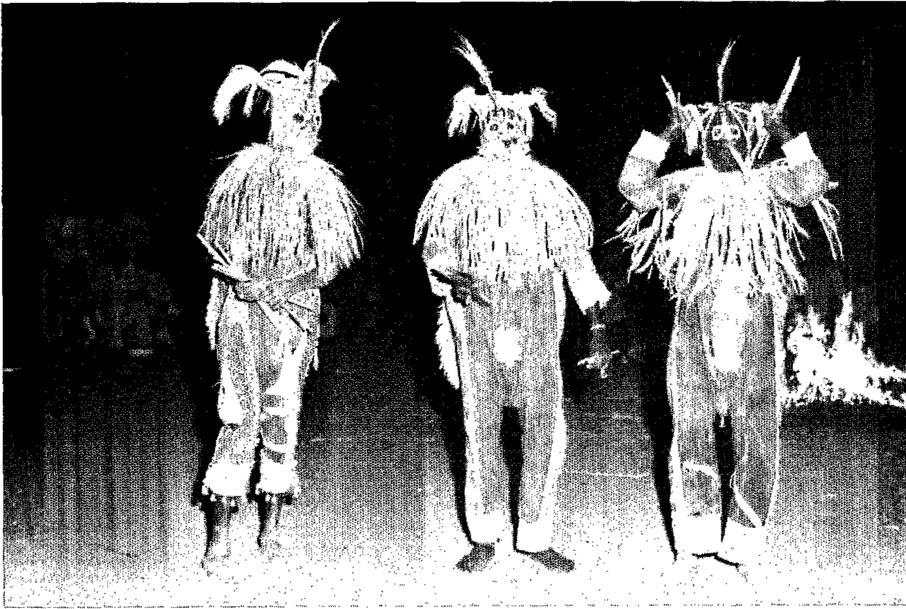
Even though its material form disappears, an object exists as long as its spirit remains. It is therefore essential that craftsmen who create cultural objects be particularly involved in the work of compiling inventories and ensuring protection, for these artists are able to re-create objects according to custom and oral tradition. The objects to be collected should be varied, and should represent all ethnic groups in a given country. This should prevent certain cultures from becoming dominant.

The curiosity and personal interest of the collector are no longer essential criteria for selection. Common interest should take precedence, and the concept of the quantity of objects to be collected should be of little importance. In much the same way, criteria as to the relative worth of objects should be re-examined. Quality must be determined by an object's importance to the local population. Imported evaluation criteria, especially in regard to aesthetic values, should no longer prevail. This would help to eliminate the possibility of cultural piracy—theft, illicit traffic and ill-considered commercial transactions—by denying the assignation of a market value to these objects. Conditions governing their acquisition should be defined by the populations themselves, in accordance with local customs.

Some administrations have organized teams of 'official collectors' who are often recruited from within the village communities. They form, in actual fact, a band of tricksters and touts who encourage 'cultural prostitution'. Antique dealers in Africa generally serve as Trojan horses for foreign smugglers. Their function should be re-examined, and intervention by the state and local communities encouraged. 'Private ownership' of cultural objects substitutes the concept of property rights for that of the traditional right of tenure in respect of cultural goods, which, in our view, represents the best assurance of an object's protection and the broadening of the scope of its public. Moreover, protection of the ethnological heritage calls for the framing and adoption of specific legislation and regulations: right of ownership, provisions to guarantee the inalienability and imprescriptibility of the movable and immovable property administered by museums, and provision to prohibit the export of such property.

Exhibits should display these objects in their natural surroundings by using technical resources to create appropriate settings for them. How dramatic is the difference between a mask displayed in a showcase and that same mask used in its living context! Audio-visual equipment represents one of the more interesting new technologies, as it offers new possibilities for storage, conservation, documentation and large-scale cultural activities. Museums, in their work of protecting the ethnological heritage, which, in turn fosters the development of the individual and society and understanding between peoples, must become more democratic, and function on the basis of a 'self-management' approach to culture which alone can overcome parochialism, surmount the barriers created by territorial boundaries—often artificial—and have due regard for different sensibilities and different cultures, including those of minority groups. These museums must reject both 'bureaucracy and theology' as Georges Henri Rivière termed it. Only a conscious policy of decentralization of this kind can foster cultural initiative and responsibility on the part of individuals and peoples.

[*Translated from French*]



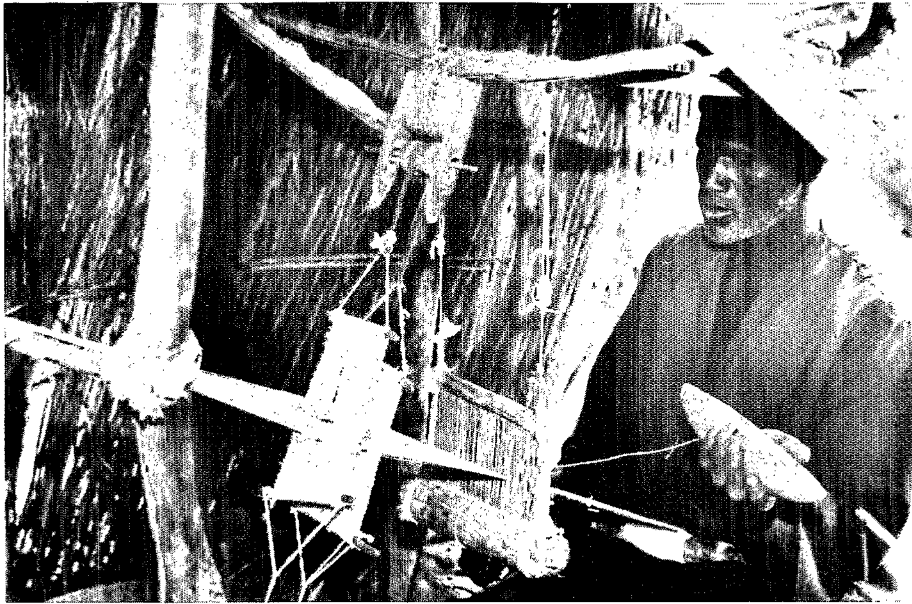
Masked dancers.
[*Photo:* Département des Arts et de la Culture, Mali.]

Pottery at the Faladié market, Bélédougou.
[*Photo:* Département des Arts et de la Culture, Mali.]

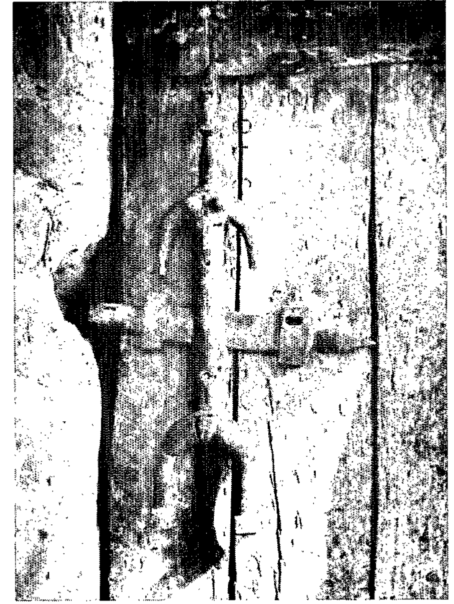
Ethnological rescue

Mali was one of the first countries to follow up the recommendation made by Unesco's Intergovernmental Committee for promoting the return or restitution of cultural property that case-studies be carried out on the identification and protection of the cultural heritage in different countries. As early as 1975 the Malian authorities had begun to plan an experimental cultural heritage inventory with the active collaboration of Dr Herbert Ganslmayr, Director of the Ubersee Museum, Bremen. This ethnological rescue operation, as A. O. Konaré puts it, certainly does not aim to preserve everything but more precisely to ensure a form of preventive action against the irrevocable loss of a vital component of the country's cultural identity. The inventory was launched in 1982 with the financial assistance of Unesco. The following is based on a report prepared in January 1983 by Claude Daniel Ardouin, Director of the National Museum at Bamako, and Kléna Sanogo, Director of the Institut des Sciences Humaines.

The project was drawn up by a working group which met at Bamako in January 1981. Its aim was to collect data with a view to drawing up a full-fledged national inventory, to collect documentation on traditional culture and to make an inventory of both material culture (functional objects used by the people, historical monuments and sites) and the non-physical heritage (oral traditions and traditional technologies). The inventory would be prepared exclusively by teams of Malian specialists, and the documentation gathered could be used effectively in the fight against the illicit export of cultural property. Two regions were chosen for the experimental plan: Bélédougou (located between the Senegal and Niger rivers, north of Bamako) and Bakhounou (bounded on the east by the Sambourou, on the west by the Kingi, on the north by Mauritania and on the south by the Dabo).



Moussa Sidibe, a Soninké weaver, in his workshop, Bakhounou region.
[*Photo:* Département des Arts et de la Culture, Mali.]



Lock on the door of a dwelling at Dina, Bakhounou.
[*Photo:* Département des Arts et de la Culture, Mali.]

An exploratory contact mission was undertaken in October and November of 1982. Data gathered from both written sources and oral traditions enabled the researchers to interview local personalities with respect to the project's aims, i.e. the identification and photographic recording of cultural objects held by the people, the collection of information on traditional culture and a reconnaissance of sites and monuments.

The first mission took place in December 1982. Its purpose was to reinforce the confidence and working relations built up by the preparatory mission and to begin the collection of data in the selected zones. Once in the field the researchers soon realized that it was impossible to work with their informants individually. The *griots,* who, like the narrators of tradition in many African countries, are informants *par excellence,* are practically non-existent in the Bélédougou, at least in the villages. Besides, respect for hierarchy makes it impossible for any other person to speak about local traditions without the authorization of his elders. It was therefore decided that the teams would work with assemblies of elders in each village; generally the village chief, usually the eldest, would reply to the questions.

The researchers began next to inventory functional and ritual objects and to visit the historical and religious sites of which they had been informed. Afternoons and evenings were generally taken up with traditional ceremonies organized for their benefit. Objects, sites and ceremonies were all photographed and recorded.

The abundance of objects still in use and the willingness of people to provide information about them greatly facilitated the work of the researchers. Thus a hundred and one individual objects were catalogued in Bélédougou and would not be difficult to acquire for a museum collection. The only difficulty encountered here was the people's total silence about cult objects. It was also impossible to obtain precise information about the secret societies the existence of which had been indicated.

In the Bakhounou region work was also carried out according to a planned sequence. It began with a meeting with the village headman and his advisers, to explain the purpose of the mission and to answer questions posed by the local people. These preliminaries were necessary to obtain the agreement of the headman, without which all inquiry would be impossible. The group obtained permission to visit households so as to draw up the inventory. Accompanied by guides, the researchers went to the homes of those inhabitants who had agreed to co-operate. Following this the team toook the initiative of contacting craftsmen and other informants of their choice. Concerning very widely used objects such as tools and domestic utensils, a sample was taken of each series. Thus 112 identification cards were filled out for distinct objects or series, which were duly catalogued and photographed.

Many lessons may be drawn from this first mission. It yielded a significant quantity of data and enabled the team to test the effectiveness of the methodology adopted. It also enabled them to draw some definite conclusions. For example, it would be very difficult to obtain in-depth information on objects and rituals connected with traditional religion, for while the non-Muslims observe the silence characteristic of secret societies the Muslims are loath to speak of them. The problems encountered in the two regions would also be met with nationally, depending on whether the zone surveyed had become Islamized or not. It should be possible to inventory the remaining aspects of material culture provided the next mission were able to strengthen the trust already built up. Finally, it was quite clear that the material cultural heritage of the zones surveyed was of inestimable richness. [*Translated from French*]

SOME PROBLEMS

The rape and plunder of cultures: an aspect of the deterioration of the terms of cultural trade between nations

Hugues de Varine

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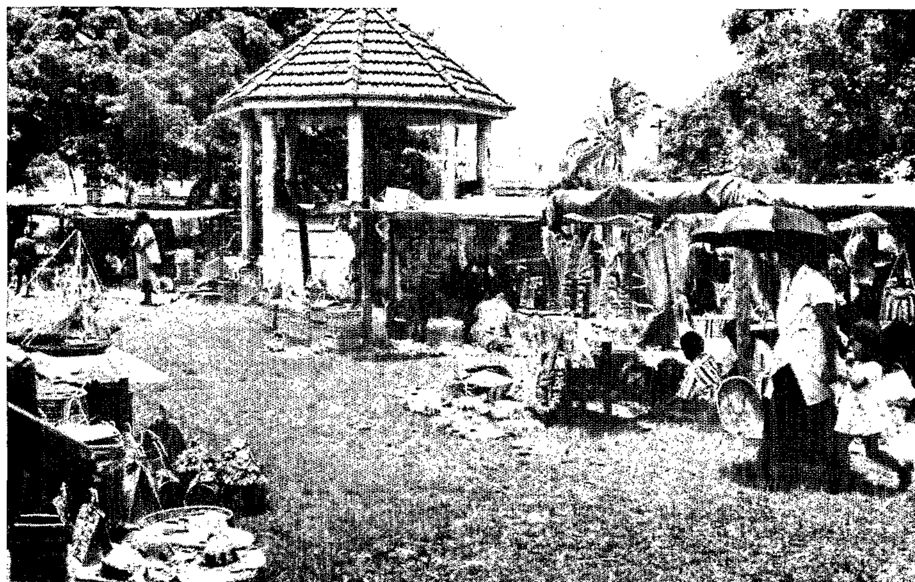
*From 1969 to 1974, the International Council of Museums, of which the author was then director, was much concerned with the problem of illicit traffic in cultural property and worked actively to promote an ethic of acquisition among museum professionals. At the end of that period, Hugues de Varine took stock of the experience that had been amassed, and analysed the phenomenon of cultural heritage transfer from the poor countries to the rich. In the catalogue of a recent exhibition (*Collections Passion*) at the Ethnographical Museum at Neuchâtel, Switzerland (see page 157), he reproduced a substantial extract from this analysis, which to his mind has lost little of its contemporary relevance.*

The author remains convinced that it is upon the demand that action must be focused, that is, on the urge to collect that, in the affluent world, accompanies the disappearance of spiritual values and the loss of creative capacity. As regards the supply, so frequently bound up with the poverty of the oppressed, he makes it clear that it is pointless to suppress it by law and the use of the police so long as the traffickers continue to be encouraged in their profitable trade by the existence of public and private buyers whose clear consciences are bolstered by the certainty of contributing to 'cultural exchanges' between peoples.[1] *This argument is substantiated in the pages that follow, which contain an abridged version of the text printed in the 'Collections Passion' catalogue. We are grateful to the author and to M. Jacques Hainard, Director of the Ethnographical Museum at Neuchâtel, for their kind permission to reproduce it in* Museum.

Writers, doctors and psychologists have said repeatedly that one of the essential causes of the catastrophic development in the scale of drug trafficking and use lies in a certain disintegration of post-industrial society, above all among the young. Is there not a similar problem at the root of the sudden increase in the illicit trading in and thefts of art objects, antiquities and other cultural goods throughout the world today? What we shall endeavour to do in these pages is not to map the development of a trend but to apprehend a contemporary situation, one that is more complex than it at first appears, since it is not one phenomenon but several that we shall have to take into consideration.

The primary phenomenon—one that in fact governs the others—is the emergence of the concept of cultural goods or property. Paradoxically, it is only when goods have been divested of their intrinsic purpose, losing their primary functional utility, that they are termed cultural property, providing they are considered worthy to be preserved, admired, i.e. used for another, secondary function. Such may be the fate of a crucifix, the music of a ritual dance, a steam engine or an *incunabulum.* This concept of cultural property is closely linked with those of 'traditional values', the concern for continuity, the search for 'cultural roots'. It is this very combination that has given rise to most public and private collections, the listing of monuments and the creation of learned historical societies. Moreover, the very rarity of these vestiges of the past leads to their enhancement

1. The author points out also, however, that 'this does not mean that researchers, ethnologists and museologists must give up their efforts to explore and present other people's culture. Their work, difficult in the extreme, is becoming ever more necessary: artefacts—providing that they are not confiscated, but exchanged—remain the best mediators between peoples and between individuals.'



Nukualofa, Tongatapu, Tonga, 1974. Souvenir market selling pandanus-leaf ware made mainly by women and offered to tourists on an Australian and New Zealand cruise ship: mats, grass-skirts, baskets, boxes, hats and animal figures. [*Photo:* J. Guiart.]

both in intellectual terms ('what is rare is beautiful') and in economic terms ('what is rare—or scarce—is dear').

Here, a question arises. Do what are customarily termed cultural goods not undergo a process of cultural transformation? Is a thing created by man for a specific purpose and then discarded not re-created by another man (or by society) for another purpose? It is at this point that the museum and its role must be considered. There are two types of museum: those that present artefacts isolated from their context (generally—and significantly—referred to as 'works') and those that, artificially but as honestly as possible, re-create complete units that may be termed ecological units. The transformation which occurs in the former case has every likelihood of prompting the viewer to interpret the artefact as having a 'sacred' value, thus resulting in the twin forms of enhancement referred to above. If, then, this line of reasoning is accepted, the museum (which in fact reflects the main trend of present-day education in the fields of art, literature and history) merely creates a new consumer item, of which only the material substance is derived from the vestige of the past that it had been intended to present.

Another illustration of this confusion between cultural goods and consumer goods may be found in the recent evolution of so-called 'contemporary' art. The economic tandem of the museum and gallery (the latter being understood in the commercial sense) operates not so much as an instrument of cultural development but rather as an advertising medium for an essentially marketable type of production. Under the guise of other, nobler notions, we find the same concepts of promotion, marketing, distribution, production—whether mass production or not—and technical progress that characterize the whole modern economic system.

The second phenomenon, also of an essentially modern kind, is the rapid development of the international circulation of persons and goods, which enables an ever-broader and untrained public to gain an insight into societies and cultures that would otherwise have remained for it swathed in the mists of legend. Such exchanges, so conducive to understanding, coexistence and co-operation among individuals and peoples, nevertheless have their negative features, even if these have, for obvious reasons, hitherto been kept out of the public eye wherever possible. This is in our view a mistaken attitude inasmuch as it is always wise to learn as much as possible about what cannot be prevented, in order to devise appropriate remedies or palliatives.

The third phenomenon, a direct consequence of colonization, at first of a political and subsequently of an economic and cultural kind, might briefly be defined as an artificial acculturation of the exotic. The two phenomena already referred to have resulted in a profound failure on the part of the Europeans to understand the real values enshrined in non-European cultures, combined with the ever-more pronounced rejection of these same values by non-Europeans, themselves subjected to an intensive bombardment of concepts and techniques imported in the name of development. This has led to a sudden discovery of 'primitive art' at the very moment when its creators are turning away from it in a search for the symbols of so-called modern civilization. The trend to invest cultural goods with materialistic values, which began in Europe and the United States, is thus spreading rapidly to the rest of the world.

Should we, indeed, express our indignation, or even astonishment, at the fact? In a world in which the rich understand little other than the power of money and where the poor are reduced to making the most of what wretched resources they possess, it seems quite natural that all the factors mentioned above should combine and bring about, initially, the mass 'desacralization' or 'defunctionalization' of the products of ancient or present-day cultures and, subsequently, either their destruction or their economic recycling as a result of their 'resacralization' and also their 'monetization'.

We use the term 'monetization' here quite intentionally. During the 1960s, there was a move in the wealthy countries, which rapidly gained ground, to diversify ways and means of saving, speculating and making profitable investments. One of the consequences of this has been the discovery of the rapid appreciation in the value of 'works of art' initially and, later, of all 'cultural goods', which for some at least appear to be taking over from gold and precious stones as a source of profit. The increasing rarity of such goods, added to the growing interest that they arouse in ever-more highly intellectualized peoples, the differences in price levels between producer and consumer countries (the Third World and the industrialized countries, Europe and North America, South-East Asia and Japan, to mention the three pre-eminent exchange networks), the

small scale of the 'commodities' concerned and the fact that they are little affected by currency devaluations have all proved to be weighty arguments, whose incalculable consequences will one day have to be analysed.

The fourth and last phenomenon—albeit a very old one—is snobbery, which has launched many on their careers as collectors and has led to the inordinate enrichment of certain museums, the mounting of stupendous and often artificial exhibitions, and the publicity given to the prices reached at public auctions and to values fixed for insurance purposes. In the most privileged social classes, the possession of works of art purchased, even illegally, for a king's ransom constitutes a patent of nobility, the token of belonging to a 'higher culture'.

Thus we may fairly say, at the risk of oversimplifying a complex problem, that cultural property as a whole passes from the cultural to the economic sphere and, accordingly, is henceforth subject to the laws of the latter.

The demand

Naturally, the demand for cultural goods, essentially in liberal capitalist countries, has in principle no direct bearing upon the licit or illicit nature of the supply. We may even regard it as being essentially normal and honest, the result of a series of causes and circumstances as described above. This demand is generated by certain sorts of people.

First, research workers need materials that they can use directly if they are to accomplish their work: artefacts and specimens, works of art, documents collected on the site, manuscripts, etc. These researchers tend to try to have the materials they collect as primary documents shipped home to their usual place of residence and work in order to study them in the best possible intellectual and technical conditions. This sometimes leads to their resorting to illicit practices. However, it is the intensification of research that must above all be taken into account. A discovery concerning the Anatolian Neolithic, a tribe in the Philippines or a Maya site, which formerly would have remained limited to a very small number of specialists, all of them scientists, is known almost immediately today by thousands or even millions of people whose interest in it is no longer purely professional but is prompted above all by curiosity and sometimes by greed or snobbery.

Secondly, museums, closely associated with research and with the various scientific disciplines, are in much the same situation, but are far more open to public curiosity. They play a much more extensive role in transmitting information and moulding the public's taste. Most (one is tempted to say, almost all) have little chance of enriching their collections except through occasional purchases at public sales, from dealers, or thanks to donations by collectors. Indeed, it must be recognized that the museum is the normal final resting-place for all cultural goods that have been shorn of their sacred and functional properties.

Thus while museums alone account for only a tiny and virtually negligible proportion (in quantity if not in quality) of the overall demand for cultural goods, they neverthelesss are, in a way, its justification. This is true more especially in the United States thanks to the particularly favourable conditions from which donations benefit in terms of tax relief. From this it should not be concluded that museums have no direct impact upon demand. Their impact is in fact exercised in three ways: through field research or by making the type of purchases described above; through the publicity which they give to certain art forms and certain cultures, in particular by means of exhibitions and public relations campaigns; and through their relations with private collections, particularly, but not solely, in the case of private museums (i.e. in the United States).

Thirdly, collectors are by far the most important factor serving to swell demand, particularly for illicitly obtained goods. They constitute an increasingly large and, in social, economic and cultural terms, relatively diversified international caste. Their motives are many and varied, but whatever the source of their drive, virtually all collectors are, in this respect, self-centred: the sole criteria by which they are guided, within the limit of their financial resources, are their own pleasure and interest. Such collectors are for us of the greatest importance in so far as they are concerned by the licit or illicit nature of their acquisitions only if they run a major risk. Moreover, being generally neither scholars nor scientists, they do not require any precise identification, certificate of origin or related documentation.

In the rich countries, and in the upper social classes of the poor countries, collectors represent a considerable market on their own, whose operation is little known. One will finance clandestine excavations in Peru in order to stock a private museum with gold artefacts culled from tombs (at the cost of totally destroying the rest of the funerary furniture). Another collector in the Philippines is known to have approached village priests with an offer to exchange comparable pieces of deal or plywood furniture of recent make for more or less worm-eaten but ancient, sacred church furnishings. Yet another, at the beginning of the century, paid peasants to plough up the earth in the Fairies' Grotto in Arcy-sur-Cure in order to extract the finest specimens of Palaeolithic tools, thereby disrupting for ever an outstanding stratigraphy.

The social status of these individuals is frequently their best guarantee of impunity before the law. It also means that practices sanctioned by success and profitability are held up as examples to be followed. The fact is that collectors are regarded as patrons of the arts, without whom so many works of art or archaeological units would either have been destroyed or overlooked. The sequence can be easily re-established on the basis of these premises: from the financing of reprehensible or truly criminal acts the collector progresses easily to the encouragement of such acts, then to the ready agreement to spontaneous offers. The risk for the collector himself dwindles, happily compensating for the rising prices he is required to pay. If, in addition, it is borne in mind that the same people who collect on their own account are frequently members of museum boards or other cultural institutions, creators of philanthropic foundations, diplomats, fashionable lecturers or respected intellectuals, it is easy to show how complex is the problem and how virtually impossible it is effectively to combat a trade in which they play the leading role.

Fourthly, tourists, although themselves generally not collectors, today represent a nursery and school for them. Once the traveller has gone beyond the stage of the tasteless souvenir, he immediately starts to hanker after 'genuine', old artefacts, which will acquire a prestige value upon his return home. The countries which encourage tourism are partly responsible for this by failing to ensure that the quality of modern craftwork is maintained, allowing it to degenerate into the 'airport art' so pilloried by the best specialists, but still flourishing. Naturally, the ancient artefact purchased at a market in Mexico City, Lagos, Delhi or

even in southern Italy or Istanbul is more often than not just a skilful fake. Nevertheless, the phenomenon persists, and the intention of purchase is the same.

To this satisfaction of bringing back a high-quality souvenir is added the guilty pleasure (for the tourist frequently suspects the illegal nature of his action) of spiriting a prohibited article past customs officers who, when not snowed under with work, are either insufficiently informed or corrupt.

Collectors and museums only seldom have an opportunity to acquire items at source, partly, indeed, because such acquisition is illegal and because they do not possess the logistic infrastructure required for clandestine operations. While in some cases, as was witnessed in 1969 during the affair of the Raphael painting sold and apparently transported by members of the Boston Museum staff, no intermediary is involved, it is generally with specialized dealers that the purchaser must do business. Accordingly, while the dealers essentially constitute one of the main cogs in the machinery—which will be studied below—that keeps the trade going, they are also one of the components of the demand for cultural goods. Possessing, as they do, substantial resources, they are frequently the 'creators of trends in taste'. The best known of them are also collectors, patrons of the arts, members of academies and of museum boards, and can afford without undue risk to turn a blind eye to the law, if not of their own country, then at least of others. They do not dirty their hands by engaging in shady dealing and appear as (or make themselves out to be) benefactors of mankind intent on bringing cultures and works of art to the notice of the general public.

Together with museums, the dealers have become the true promoters of this demand which, in liberal economies, operates as the driving force of all markets. Naturally, they are also—since the concept of scientific research conducted in the field is both unfamiliar and unthinkable to them—the agents of the transformation of cultural items into consumer goods. For them, the artistic, ethnographic or archaeological object is what the fillet of veal is to the butcher or the necklace to the jeweller: an article to be sold, for profit, even though the one is considered nobler than the other.

What is described above is in no way new, with the exception of the impact of tourism. What is perhaps more serious, for we have no idea how it may escalate in the future, is the recent phenomenon of investment funds operating in the art market. Many companies of this kind have been set up in recent years, first in the United States and subsequently in Europe, occasionally in tax havens, which obviously boost their profitability and afford them a greater measure of impunity. They operate both as buyers and sellers on every market, and possess their own economic forecasting agencies as well as considerable advertising resources.

This creates a major risk, inasmuch as it may quite conceivably lead to a rapid increase in the proportion of the artistic heritage thereby withdrawn from the present-day market, the creation of a parallel market between investment funds, the drawing of a veil of secrecy over transactions (facilitated by the anonymity of the partners involved) and the systematic use of statutes of limitations (involving periods ranging from five to thirty years) in order to 'legalize' artefacts that have been stolen or clandestinely exported from their countries of origin. What in any case is undoubtedly to be feared even more is the role played by funds in boosting the demand for and 'monetizing' cultural goods, thereby leading to the final transformation of the consumer item into substitute legal tender or gold bullion, serving indefinitely as currency but acquiring a bonus value as a result of the contemporary cultural boom.

The supply

In any market economy, the supply follows, or endeavours to follow, the demand, at least in principle, for means exist of artificially boosting demand. Such means have not yet been developed to the full, in so far as cultural goods are concerned; it is, however, possible to distinguish between those that are deliberate (manipulation of public opinion by art galleries and certain critics, exhibitions arranged to promote sales) and those that are unintentional (government policy of mounting exhibitions on a bilateral basis for prestige purposes, so-called 'cultural' tourism).

Thus supply tends to follow demand yet seldom manages to catch up with it, since art prices rise far more rapidly than do other values, even when allowance has been made for inflation and the risks involved. One has only to visit auction rooms, bazaars and souks or antique shops in order to realize the plethora and variety of the goods on offer, whether the prospective purchaser be a museum, the typical keen collector or a speculator. However, these merchants of culture are simply unscrupulous, albeit essential, intermediaries between the illiterate peasants and the magnates, between the ruined aristocrats and the American museums, between the hardened criminals and the strong-rooms of Swiss banks. They stimulate supply though they are not suppliers themselves. However, their role is a vital one, since without them it would be absolutely inconceivable for the Anatolian labourer or the Andean shepherd to be aware of trends in taste in the major cities of the industrialized West.

Most of the poorest countries in the world today happen to be the richest in cultural terms, by virtue both of the complexity of their still vital spiritual and human values and of the stratification of civilizations that have succeeded one another for hundreds and indeed thousands of years. However, precisely because of their constantly evolving present-day cultures, these countries have not yet acquired the urge to 'sacralize' the past, which as we have seen leads straight to the 'monetization' of cultural goods. For the majority of Africans, Asians and Latin Americans, an object shorn of its functions or, *a fortiori*, one that is found buried in the ground, loses all meaning and may be re-used however one pleases, either to form part of a treasure trove possessing symbolical or mythical virtues or, more frequently, for some entirely new purpose. For example, the stones of a temple may be used to build modern houses, or the ancestral tombs may be plundered for their gold, as occurred throughout the ancient Mediterranean civilizations. In no case does the artefact acquire a cultural significance. It is in a way destroyed. Likewise, brutal changes of political regime bring considerable destruction in their wake as a result of the imposed transformation of cultural values.

Such acts have a cultural value in themselves, man having a perfect right to rework his own materials in order to build a new edifice which will mark a stage in his evolution. There is no suspicion here of artefacts being placed on any market, either national or, *a fortiori*, international. By contrast, the phenomenon which we are analysing here is altogether more serious because it is of an essentially negative kind; moreover, it is occurring at a time when the relative poverty of the Third World countries is increasing at such a vertiginous rate, above all where

MOESGARD MUSEUM, Højbjerg. The *Afghanistan* exhibition in 1976 included this presentation of ethnographica in its modern context, that of the curio-searching tourist and wholesale transfer of arts and crafts to the rest of the world.
[*Photo:* Klaus Ferdinand.]

the poorest sectors of their populations are concerned. When such a situation is compounded by the existence of a pressing demand, it is only to be expected that objects of no practical value are offered for sale in vast numbers, since there is no natural moral law against it. Why invoke national laws, about which people usually know—or can find out—little or nothing, or the alleged duty to protect the national heritage—an invention of intellectuals? Such criteria cannot penetrate the world of the poor and the illiterate. Can a peasant be asked to give up, for legal or ethical reasons, the opportunity to boost his annual income through the occasional sale of items of pottery turned up by his plough? Now, it is only a step from the lucky, and profitable, find to the systematic collection of such objects, a step that is quickly taken when the middleman from the city or the collector 'boss' is constantly clamouring to buy ever more. So it happens that tens of thousands of peasants in Costa Rica find it more remunerative to devote their energies to clandestine archaeology than to traditional crop-farming; that Peruvian highland-dwellers are busily destroying thousands of Inca tombs, bringing the gold jewels plundered from them to the millionaire Mujica Gallo, whose famous Gold Museum is so admired by tourists, themselves indifferent to the mountains of documents and artefacts thrown onto the rubbish heap; and that the ritual sculptures of the Yoruba of Nigeria become the temporary property of Hausa traders in Ibadan.

To this it will be retorted that museum staff themselves, from the director to the attendant, sometimes sell off the collections in their charge. What is astonishing, however, is not that such dishonest stewards exist, but rather that there are so few of them. It should not be forgotten that there are still museum directors who earn less than $20 a month, even when their duties and responsibilities are of a higher level than those of a university lecturer. Let no one say, with the placid logic born of a clear conscience: 'What hope is there, since those people sell off their own museums? Their artefacts would be better preserved and more highly respected in our countries.'

It is therefore quite in the normal order of things not only that poor countries should be exploited for their cultural heritage but also that their people should become the accomplices of this exploitation. We ourselves have on several occasions noticed, in Africa, in the Middle East and elsewhere, the contempt shown by local officials and intellectuals, all trained in Europe, for their own traditional cultures, which they regard as being at once unworthy to be shown abroad and an obstacle to the modernization of their societies. To be sure, these same worthies do not hesitate at international meetings to chant the time-honoured slogans about the illicit export of cultural property. But once they return home, what do they do to stop it, to show their pride in the past, and to carry along their peoples in that continuous process by which man creates himself, a process compounded of traditions, external influences and useful technology, and which is the only true development process?

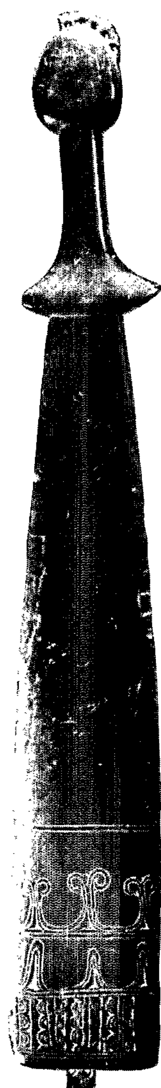
It should not be supposed, however, that it is only the poor countries that supply the international market with cultural goods. The demand that generates this supply knows neither geographical nor economic boundaries. The rich countries are also plagued, for no less various but extremely different reasons, by this modern affliction. First of all, the existence of an art and antiques market in every country, the mobility of cultural property and even its exportation are long-established and perfectly natural phenomena which have, over the past few decades, simply grown out of hand as a result both of the organization and general extension of the market and of the increasingly artificial notion of the art work or *objet d'art*, itself linked to the concept of the museum and the sacredness of culture.

The supply, determined as it is by a growing demand generally situated beyond the country's borders, cannot by itself account for the real situation. The simultaneous expansion of cultural gangsterism, the legal international circulation of cultural goods in the form of spectacular exhibitions, and the soaring prices charged on the major art markets inevitably lead to the intervention of the insurance companies. The values involved (in monetary terms) are such that no one, whether museum director or private individual, would accept the risk of destruction or theft without adequate cover. Hence the emergence of a new form of trafficking that does not fit into the previous categories: kidnapping, or rather, 'artnapping', holding the insurance companies to ransom for the return of the stolen property, or claiming the reward for its recovery. While only two

recent cases of political extortion have to date come to light, one in Italy perpetrated for social reasons, the other committed on behalf of the people of Bangladesh (the theft of Vermeer's *Love Letter* in Brussels), cases of criminal extortion solely for profit have become increasingly frequent in recent years folowing the spectacular theft of Goya's *Wellington* in London in the early 1960s. Negotiations are generally conducted in secret, with the result that the general public and even the specialists are unaware of what has led to the discovery of stolen works after a varying length of time. The most disquieting feature of this process is the danger to which it generally exposes works of art of the highest quality, since the purpose of the exercise is not to resell them in good condition but rather to restore them to their rightful owner. As in all cases of extortion, such operations would seem to be conducted by isolated, not very well balanced or well organized individuals; their actions are unpredictable and safeguards are therefore not possible.

To conclude by way of a tentative moral judgement, it would seem proper to emphasize the fundamental responsibility of the countries, museums and collectors that form the demand, a responsibility that cannot be attenuated by the fact that the suppliers also exist. There will always be suppliers, whenever an opportunity arises to make a quick profit, one that appears unlikely to have any serious consequences. The rule whereby, in any society in which liberal capitalism prevails, it is the supply that generates the demand for consumer goods through advertising cannot be applied to cultural goods. In the case with which we are concerned here, there is, indeed, advertising of cultural goods directed at potential consumers, but this is carried out by the museums and dealers in their own countries, under the pretext of providing education in the case of the former, and of carrying on normal commercial promotion operations in the case of the latter.

[*Translated from French*]



Trobriand Islands, Papua New Guinea. Mace in the collection of the Musée National des Arts Africains et Océaniens, Paris. This piece, found in most major museums with international collections and which figures in all works on Oceanic art, has turned out to be the expression of a purely intellectual construct—imagined by the local people merely to satisfy European demand for objects which were easy to transport and hang up on a wall. Such maces did not exist before the Europeans arrived. Since then, Trobriand sculptors have also begun to produce drawing-room tables but in this case museums have not followed suit!
[*Photo:* J. Guiart.]

Collections Passion

Hugues de Varine's article may seem surprising in an exhibition catalogue. But Collections Passion *was an unusual sort of exhibition, one that sought to analyse the phenomenon of collecting itself, mainly as it has developed in Western society, that 'part of humanity which has set about the museography of the rest'. In his introduction to the catalogue Jacques Hainard, Curator of the Musée d'Ethnographie at Neuchâtel, who conceived and directed* Collections Passion *(5 June to 31 December 1982), explained the ideas and methods behind the exhibition: the extracts quoted below will speak for themselves. The catalogue (285 pages), however, deserves special attention in itself. It is far from being just a scholarly guide to the objects displayed. Its twenty-six entries explore aspects of collecting behaviour from a variety of viewpoints: straight museology, of course, but also social and intellectual history, cultural anthropology and social psychology, even 'tyrosemiology'—the semiology of cheese packaging! In all, a collection of insights which contributes much to our understanding of the urge to collect, its forms and its consequences. The volume is available from the Musée d'Ethnographie, 4 rue Saint-Nicolas, CH–2006 Neuchâtel, Switzerland (Price: 20 Swiss francs).*

Because the management of the past—which appears to be assured of a future—is a flourishing activity, and because of the extraordinary diversification of museum collections, it was natural that we should pause to reflect on what induces one section of humanity to put the other section into museums. The first step was to consider the link between collections and the institutions in which they are conserved.

This naturally drew our attention to private collectors and

their passion, from which the exhibition derived its title. And this in turn led us to examine this phenomenon, the passion for collecting, in an endeavour to understand and explain the motives by which the collector is driven. There are some people who would explain collecting in terms of the desire to possess, the urge to accumulate, the search for aesthetic pleasure, the pursuit of scientific or historical knowledge; and we are of course not unaware of the fact that the possession of a collection confers prestige, notoriety and power besides, in many instances, wealth and dominion.

Then there is the argument that a collection acts as a mirror, reflecting the ideal image of himself the collector wishes to have and show to others. A mirror which, unlike that of Snow White's stepmother, would always reply: 'You are the fairest, the best and truly the greatest of all collectors!'

Then what about the theory that collecting is perverse on the grounds that it bars others from the possession of the object coveted? And what about those who regard collecting as a form of speculation, an attempt to triumph over death? In short, when preconceived ideas had been swept aside, we found ourselves at a loss for an explanation.

Do animals collect? Black kites pick up at random heterogeneous objects which they place in their nests for no structural purpose. Can this be considered as a form of collecting? The ortolan of Oceania decorates his nuptial couch with magnificent 'collections' in order to attract the female, this form of 'collecting' clearly obeying a sexual impulse. And lastly, the hamster stores up food in enormous quantities from ten to forty times as much as it consumes: does it 'collect' impelled by a drive for food? These examples bring us directly to consideration of the behaviour of man, with his urge to accumulate and collect, and also raise the question of whether collecting is related to a desire to build up a surplus.

The behaviour of budding collectors throws a certain light on the motives for collecting. Children are not alone in building treasure troves; age has little to do with it, adults sometimes behaving in a similar way. Perhaps collecting may be regarded as a first attempt to bring order into the world?

Collecting and the economy. Our society encourages collecting by sales in kiosks. It is with sweets, jujubes and advertising tokens that children and adolescents acquire the collecting habit, so widespread as to create an enormous market.

In this connection, mention should also be made of the collecting of copies, the problem of authentic objects and fakes, the money aspect, and the social contacts established between collectors through journals and specialized associations.

What do people collect? Everything, or nearly everything. And this we have tried to demonstrate, without actually saying so, by exhibiting precious objects deliberately interspersed with objects considered dull and commonplace—matches, corkscrews, a Korean Buddha dating from the seventh century A.D., eighteenth-century Chinese frogs and toads, a Berber necklace side by side with strange everyday objects displayed outside the context of their practical usefulness.

Collections and institutions. Under this heading, we have illustrated some of the main outstanding events of our history and prehistory, with the examples of Auvernier and Cortaillod stressing the very principles of collecting.

Egyptian grave-goods, votive offerings from the Graeco-Roman world, relics and sacred objects, princely treasures and collections of antiques all lead from tombs to museums, by way of cathedrals and castles; right down to the time of the Renaissance and the Great Discoveries, which set off the inexorable process of making collections of the world and collections of mankind. Linné and his classification work leads the way, the natural sciences being taken as the model; private collections become public and the ethnographical museum, descended from the cabinet of curiosities, comes into being. The invention of photography makes it possible to 'collect' men with greater precision, since this kind of document, existing in several copies, bears the stamp of authenticity.

The Dakar–Djibouti Mission (1931–33) constitutes an important event in the history of ethnographic, scientific and particularly official collections. We have illustrated this episode with documents of the period and objects brought back by the mission, including in particular the famous 'sucking pig' of the Kono cult, the 'acquisition' of which is described by Michel Leiris in *L'Afrique fantôme.*

Lastly, there is the question of the role played by the museum, the place where collections are sanctified and attain special status, thanks to the entrance ritual, the inventory and the cards with descriptions and photographs of the exhibits.

A third section is devoted to private collectors who indulge their passion by collecting dolls, fans, frogs, weights and scales and specimens of decorative art. We have given special prominence to an exemplary collection, the Georges Amoudruz collection contained in the Geneva Ethnographical Museum, which serves as a model for the study of storing, accumulation, classification, systematization, obsession, domination and possession—all facets of the passion for collecting—both providing answers and posing further questions.

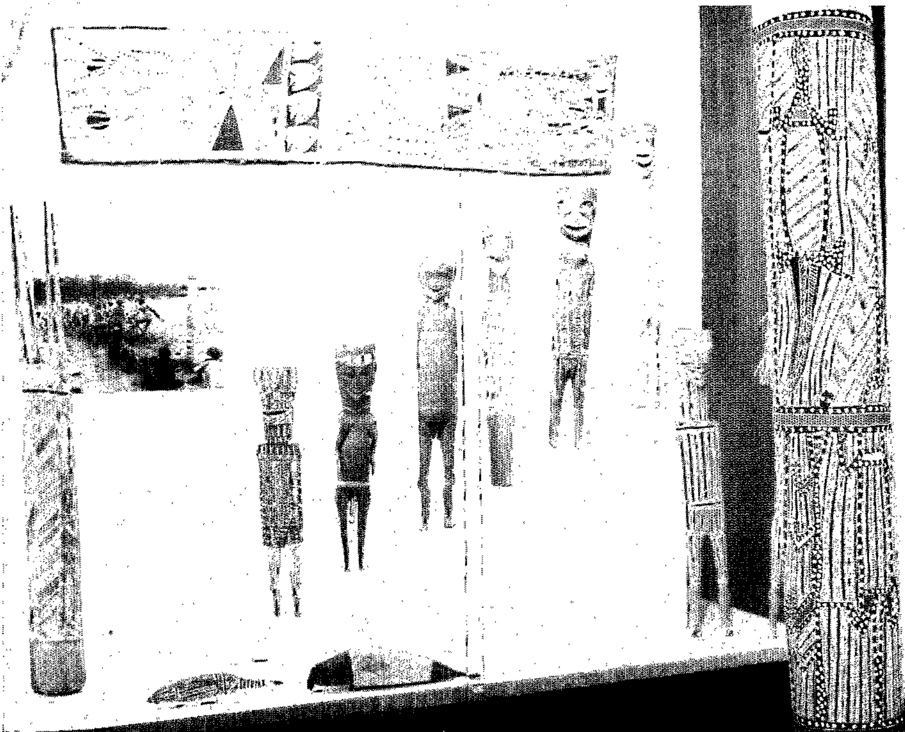
In a fourth section, we have suggested several elements in the manifestation of the collecting spirit, the link with the preceding part of the exhibition being a collection of cameras, evoking the image of the Other, captured, fixed and preserved.

In order to emphasize that the museum has broken away from its traditional ethnographic function, we have invited contemporary artists to illustrate their views on the role of museums and museum collections. Herbert Distel's 'Museum in Drawers' constitutes an admirable introduction to the problem of the classification, conservation and encapsulation of knowledge. And lastly, thanks to a creative collector, a modern Meacenas, who has invited artists to illustrate two collection themes—cigars and the Matterhorn—we pass from the realm of reason to that of the unfathomable, and there everyone can find his place.

Our journey ends with collections of weird and unusual objects: polaroid negatives, jujubes, carpet-beaters, pictures of sunsets and Camembert boxes lead the visitor to have himself 'collected' by the computer—the collector of the modern age.

We have not been able either to say or to show everything; but it may be concluded from our study that everyone collects, for collecting means, first and foremost, arranging, classifying systematizing, putting in order, and then abandoning, only to start again, with a view to bringing order into the environment and everyday life. Collecting is part of living.

[*Translated from French*]



Mortuary posts and carved spirit-figures illustrate aspects of burial ritual documented by Emeritus Professor R. M. Berndt at Yirralla, north-eastern Arnhem Land, in 1946.
[*Photo:* J. E. Stanton © Anthropology Research Museum.]

Communication and communicators: some problems of display [1]

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This paper is a direct response to an article by Robert Hodge and Wilfred D'Souza, which appeared in *Museum* in 1979.[2] It is a response not only to the content of that article, but also to some of the underlying assumptions of the approach displayed therein to the problems of display and design. Many curators of anthropology lack significant involvement in display design: the complex nature of curatorial–preparatorial relationships have been elaborated on elsewhere, but it will suffice to note that anthropological emphases are too often ignored in the development of gallery design. In fact, the role of the anthropologist is crucial in maintaining a balanced, coherent statement of information and it is indeed fortunate that design staff have been in a position to appreciate this in some instances.

For a paper by academics specializing in communication, the *Museum* article is singularly uncommunicative, if not obtuse. The jargon with which the authors seek to render 'scientific' their more subjective analysis serves only to confuse many of the issues involved. Their approach to the problem is inadequately grounded: one suspects that semiotics enters into the investigation at a superficial level only. Nevertheless, the paper is thought-provoking, not only for its inaccuracies and conjecture, but also for some of the problems that it raises. As Rivière commented at the end of the article, many of these are subjects for controversy, and all are worth further detailed discussion and debate. This article can seek to deal with only some of them.

The problem of the cross-cultural transformation of information does not concern just museums and museology: it is an issue basic to the traditional nature of anthropology, as well as to the multi-ethnic society in which we live. The communication of symbolic information,

1. This paper was delivered at the Third Conference of Museum Anthropologists, Shepparton, Australia, 1980. It was first published in COMA—Bulletin of the Conference of Museum Anthropologists, No. 11, October 1982. This bulletin is edited by Richard Robins and Michael Quinnell of the Queensland Museum. We are grateful to the author and to the editors of COMA for kindly authorizing us to reprint it here.
2. R. Hodge and W. D'Souza, 'The Museum as a Communicator: A Semiotic Analysis of the Western Australian Museum Aboriginal Gallery, Perth', *Museum,* Vol. XXXI, No. 4, 1979, pp. 251-67.

which includes language, is necessarily complex even within a single society. It is even more so when a number of different societies are involved.

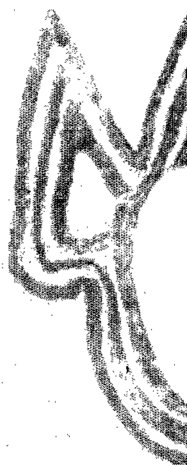
Such a problem, however, need not always be insurmountable. Familiarity with a portion of the symbolic systems of another society may be achieved in two ways. First, through the presentation of selected cultural items within an appropriate socio-cultural context. It is essential, however, that these contain an adequate means of translation, for it is in such a manner that many societies endeavour to enculturate 'outsiders'. Secondly, through the exercising of a certain willingness on the part of the recipients of such information as may be provided. This should not be regarded as a purely passive involvement—the creation of interest, of fascination, of receptivity, requires a stimulated concern by the observer. In the Western Desert region, an old Aboriginal man will say '*kulila*' to me when he is about to impart information. This word is a symbolic marker, eliciting respect and receptivity. In the museum gallery there is nobody to say '*kulila*—listen'—and this is the core of the problem.

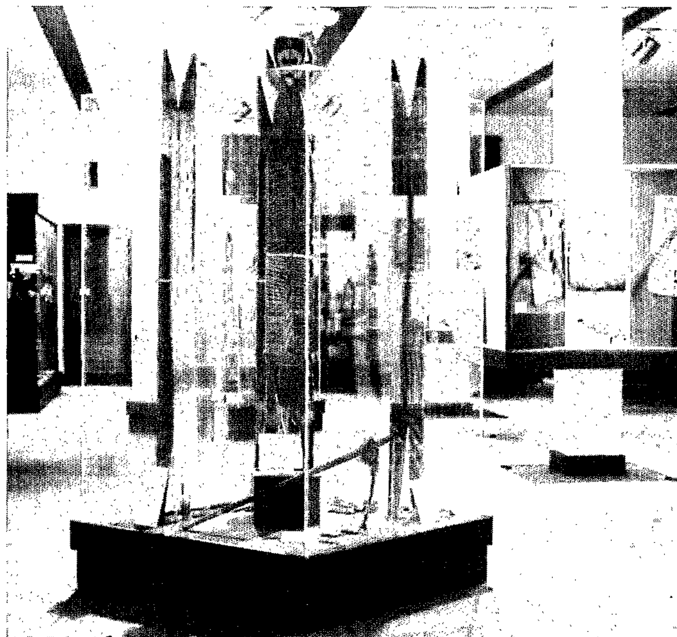
Displays such as those at the Aboriginal Gallery at the Western Australian Museum are mounted to teach, to explain, to fascinate, and to 'convert' attitudes (sometimes hostile but more likely apathetic) into an appreciation of Aboriginal culture, however superficial this may be initially. In order that this task be performed successfully, something must be known about the characteristics of the intended recipients of the information. In the case of the Aboriginal Gallery, potential visitors cover a broad spectrum: everybody from schoolchildren to pensioners, interstate and overseas visitors as well as metropolitan residents. There are special interest groups as well. For instance, the gallery is frequently visited by people of Aboriginal descent, since this is one of only a handful of places in Perth where Aboriginal culture is represented.

Such a range of visitors presents particular problems in the design of displays, but these are not so pressing as, for example, at the Anthropology Museum at the University of Western Australia, which caters for a much more restricted range of potential users. Nevertheless, the bland assumption by the authors that children, members of the working class and Aborigines are more likely to experience communication through objects than through extended written prose is highly debatable.[3] It reflects more of the simplistic attitudes of the communications 'experts' than any real understanding of the means by which this communication takes place. While it is to be admitted that very young children may be unable to read this written material, this is an exception, and one which may be

3. Hodge and D'Souza, op. cit., p. 261.

The Aboriginal Gallery also displays a number of contemporary items of decorative art, which often reflect alien (i.e. European) influences. Here, a figure of *Murundani* (said to be a historical character) tells the story of the arrival of missionaries in northern Australia bearing bolts of red calico to be worn by the then naked men as *laplaps*. The figure appears standing up before a strip of red material in the accompanying display photograph. [*Photo:* J. E. Stanton © Anthropology Research Museum.].





ANTHROPOLOGY MUSEUM, The University of Western Australia, Nedlands. The Aboriginal Gallery. [*Photo:* J. E. Stanton © Anthropology Research Museum.].

offset by the appointment of an education officer who can formulate special study guides for children of any age. Similarly, most Aboriginal visitors to the museum are literate: those who are not will often possess the personal experience necessary to place the items displayed in cultural perspective.

Having defined the nature of the potential audience, which in the case of the Aboriginal Gallery is very broad, it is necessary to consider how the ideas behind the display can best be communicated. Since the Aboriginal Gallery seeks to place the post-contact experience of Western Australian Aboriginal groups within the context of pre-contact society, it is necessary to show examples from Aboriginal societies both before and after contact with Europeans. While the display is strong on traditional art and material culture, there is only minimal coverage of the Aboriginal response to the coming of the Europeans, and this tends to be restricted very much to particular adaptive items of material culture which are distinctively Aboriginal rather than European in origin. Many people are already familiar with the basic utilitarian items of traditional material culture, but it is important that they be exposed to the idea that Aboriginal societies in all their variety are continuing to sustain themselves and to develop in the face of pressures from the contemporary situation in which they find themselves. They are not dying out or stultified despite massive adaptations that have been and are being made as deliberate strategies for survival.

Despite the deficient coverage of post-contact experiences (which is to some extent related to the shortage of space and difficulties of involving Aboriginal participation in the contemporary section of the display), the gallery communicates a wide range of information about the variety of material objects produced by Aboriginal societies and the differing environments in which these items are used. The display does not seek to perpetuate the stereotype of a single, unified Aboriginal society, and concentrates on emphasizing the diversity of regional patterns, as exemplified by the south-west, the Western Desert, the coastal north-west and Kimberley societies, which are all culturally distinctive. A succession of displays exhibit objects against a backdrop of large photographs—used not, I think, for reasons of economy (as the authors suggest on page 260), but because of the unique quality that 'larger than life' photographic images possess. They establish an imposing and sometimes suffocating presence in the gallery, which assists in reminding the visitor of the living identity of Aborigines, in contrast with the material relics on display. The people are there in the photographs, images of the past reflecting on the present.

A significant problem emerges at this point. This is the imbalance between the past and the present, which has already been noted. The orientation towards the past, together with the photographic documentation, serves to create in the mind of the viewer a certain archival quality, which may be intentional. Several excellent simulations, particularly the gallery of rock paintings, serve to emphasize the unchanging nature of the religious basis of Aboriginal societies: the land and everything living on it. However, this message requires further elaboration for it to be wholly effective. The fact that the authors thought that the deserted *wiltja*, or humpy, was merely a model is a serious comment on the inadequacy of the information being conveyed by this section of the display.[4] A scale is provided by the full-sized utilitarian objects scattered around it, but ignorance of the traditional style of living resulted in a clear (and unintentional) misunderstanding. Certainly, a human figure could have provided a more specific scale, yet for many Aboriginal people the sight of a crude and unsightly manikin is an unkind mockery (to say the least), serving to perpetuate the 'embalmed' nature of more traditionally structured displays.

The assertion that objects alone can speak, that only they can convey the information of another culture, is one which calls for debate. Certainly the superficial physical qualities of an object may be appraised by the viewer, but as with many cultures, Aboriginal societies place a high value on the symbolic information with which cultural objects are coded. Likewise the display of functionally similar objects found in an Aboriginal society should not blind the viewer to any distinctions which may be made between the objects by those who use them. I have argued elsewhere[5] that the decorative art on items of Aboriginal material

4. Ibid., p. 258.

5. R. M. Berndt and J. E. Stanton, *Australian Aboriginal Art in the Anthropology Museum at the University of Western Australia,* Perth, University of Western Australia Press, 1980, p. 3; R. M. Berndt, C. H. Berndt, and J. E. Stanton, *Aboriginal Australian Art: A Visual Perspective,* pp. 41-4, Sydney, Methuen, 1982.

Aboriginal bark paintings from northern Australia depict mythological beings from the totemic past. String figures (foreground) accompany mortuary ritual in the same region.
[*Photo:* J. E. Stanton© Anthropology Research Museum.].

Aboriginal dancers decorated with ochred kapok down dance before students during the first Indian Ocean Arts festival held in Perth in 1979. This was the first time that these traditionally oriented dancers from the remote inland area of Australia had performed to a European audience. Later, they painted and sang at the Anthropology Museum, and assisted in the further documentation of field materials. [*Photo:* J. E. Stanton © Anthropology Research Museum.].

culture represents a range of highly developed and complex visual communicatory vehicles that were designed originally for specific purposes, chiefly religious, and that any appreciation of the significances of an object depends on knowledge of its initial context: by whom and in what circumstances was it manufactured and used? Such information cannot be readily communicated by the objects themselves: in many instances of decorative art, design and function may be apparent, but in many cases this is not so. Reliance must then be placed on alternative means of communication.

The annotative label has always played an essential role in any display. As the authors note (p. 261), labels assign names and organize perception. They do more than this, though, when they contain detailed textual information that elaborates on that already available to the viewer. It is always to be debated whether labels should be omitted from displays because of their allegedly unpleasing appearance. Although they may be incorporated in study guides or catalogues, the search for keyed numbers diverts attention from the objects of the display more than the use of annotations adjacent to objects. Labels may elaborate on the theme expressed by the display, but they cannot directly assert it. The written annotation of items is quite essential when we are dealing with highly complex philosophical expressions of any society.

It is possible, owing to recent developments in electronics, to elaborate on information in an alternative manner. Such techniques can be used to bring Aboriginal people even more forcibly into the realm of the display. Sound and video recordings can provide the rich detail of knowledge which is difficult to communicate without the spoken word. Unfortunately, problems in communication can emerge again here, since the speakers of languages and dialects that are not standard English may not readily be understood by others. In this sense, then, the use of electronic devices to perpetuate the living character of the subjects of the display could sustain the myth of Aboriginal 'primitiveness' in the minds of the viewer. However, as we have already seen in the BBC film series *Disappearing World*, people are willing to watch subtitled material, and this technique permits a certain level of communication without imposing a commonality of language. Such electronic devices could appreciably improve the communication of ideas encapsulated within a display. At the same time, such facilities are a means by which Aboriginal people can remind the visitor more effectively that they are living individuals, speaking their own mind and communicating their own ideas. They could help destroy the 'glass-case' syndrome which all passive museum displays tend to encourage in the mind of the viewer. It would be quite naïve to suggest, as the authors under question have, that museums can divorce oral traditions from the material expressions of the same socio-cultural experience.

This brings us to the use of physical barriers in displays, and the impact this practice has on communication. Fragility and/or value precludes the open display of certain objects in many situations; in other cases, where environmental insta-

bility results from crowds of visitors periodically occupying a particular air-space, the enclosed display provides a buffered micro-climate in which the object may be better conserved. For many curators, the preservation of the collections in our care is regarded as our single most important duty, and this conflicts (sometimes directly) with our other obligations to ensure that materials are available for inspection. The authors' criticism of glass barriers (p. 258) is well founded, though attempts have been made to minimize reflections and monotony in display-case design. A number of museums have already exhibited utilitarian items which visitors may handle directly. This is an advantage particularly for teaching, whether of school pupils or university students, since it permits the visitor to decode certain kinds of information without relying on the cues provided by the museum display. The problem is, though, that the visitor may possess only a very restricted range of experience and this will not be sufficient to permit him to decode more complex kinds of information, such as the use of particular ceremonial items and the meanings of the designs that they bear. This is not to say, however, that the two styles of display should not be complementary. In a number of museums, though, such as the Anthropology Museum at the University of Western Australia, many non-secret but holy items are displayed in accordance with the wishes of the Aboriginal donors. Often, one condition is that items shall not be directly accessible to visitors; that is, they are not to be touched—if indeed their ochred surfaces would permit this in the first place. This is because the act of touching has specific religious meaning to those who made and used the objects. Such matters must be treated with caution and respect.

Many curators of anthropology would support the notion that the living dynamics of Aboriginal society, past and present, must not be 'embalmed' in the minds of museum visitors by shortcomings in the nature and organization of displays. Indeed, a number of Australian museums have already made significant attempts to confront some of these problems. It is not just a matter of curatorial practice or display design: the fundamental purpose of museums to preserve for the future precludes the kinds of experimentation with objects of material culture which might take place, for example, in a schoolroom or in a less structured environment. The goals are different; indeed, for some museums matters such as research and conservation take higher priorities than display. There are many traditionally oriented Aboriginal communities today who are able to appreciate the purpose of museums better than they can understand the term 'anthropology'. This is because fundamental to their own societies are the preservation and appreciation of the material manifestations of their religious charter. This is not to say that Aboriginal societies have ever been static or inflexible; merely conservative, in the true sense of the word. Less traditionally oriented Aborigines are seeing museums more and more as the repositories of knowledge lost elsewhere, sources of information about themselves. This is precisely why so many Aborigines come to see the Aboriginal Gallery at the Western Australian Museum and the Anthropology Museum at the university.

This is where, in my opinion, the Hodge and D'Souza article misses the point of displays such as those at the Western Australian Museum. The authors mistakenly identify communication as a universal constraint on the cross-cultural transformation of information. To an anthropologist, though, the nature of communication differs according to the cultural context. Semiotics appears to add little to our understanding of Aboriginal communication: all it facilitates is an understanding of how the descendants of the European scientificist tradition perceive the nature of communication. The assumption that 'natural symbols' can be translated cross-culturally has been a matter for anthropological debate for several years. Symbolic images are interpreted differently according to the cultural basis of the transformation. Whilst the authors have raised a number of interesting points, and have certainly provoked a number of curators with their comments, they have shown nothing but a superficial understanding of the nature of cross-cultural communication as typified by museum display-gallery design. Indeed, they have evaluated the display in accordance with preconceived notions about the nature and significance of symbolic images, without recognizing the noteworthy contribution that this particular example has made to contemporary museum design and practice. I do not suggest that this gallery is perfect, though. A number of alterations have already been suggested, and others will in fact be required when and if the gallery is moved from its present location in the administration building to the premises vacated recently by the Western Australian Art Gallery.

The authors see a museum, in its mediation between different communities and different cultures, as offering its own physical and temporal unity as a guarantee that a resolution of differences has occurred. Since it is an institution of the alien colonial society, a museum may well assert the status quo. The fact that a particular display seeks to inform the public of an alternative interpretation of events is surely not a suppression of differences and antagonisms in the society it serves[6] but a recognition of these unmistakable social realities. It is the authors, rather than the display designers, who are failing to understand the full complexity of communication processes. Communication certainly is inseparable from cognition, but these processes are culture-specific. Any assertion of a monolithic transcultural system of communication can only be regarded at best as naïve, and at worst as an expression of the very aspects of cultural domination and arrogance that so many of us have been seeking to avoid!

6. Hodge and D'Souza, op. cit., p. 265.

Stelios Papadopoulos

Degree in history and archaeology from the University of Athens; diploma in museology from the École du Louvre, Paris; D.Litt., University of Salonika. Extensive research in the post-Byzantine archives of the Monastery of St Jean de Patmos on the techniques and art of the period from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, and research in northern Greece on coppersmiths and the technique of copper-beating. Organized the exhibition of the Treasure of the Meghisti Lavra at Mount Athos, 1962/63. Created and directed the series of art publications of the National Bank of Greece, 1968–74. Organized and directed the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, Návplion, 1976–79. Director of the Ethnographical and Ethnological Museum of Macedonia at Salonika since 1979. Author of several books and articles on neo-Hellenic history and handicrafts.

The museological 'discovery' of the peasant in Greece[1]

The discovery of the peasant in Greece dates from the beginning of the century. It was the work of a very small élite in the capital (collectors, writers and students of folklore). There were at the time many archaeological museums, but modern life was hardly considered worthy of a museum. In Greece, a country of farmers, stock-breeders and mariners, there is still no museum of agriculture, stock-breeding or forestry, or even a merchant navy museum. Agronomists, forestry engineers and wealthy shipowners never thought of creating museums covering their fields (in the modern sense of the term 'museum' i.e. a scientific research centre for the preservation, study and display of material documents of human activity) or even of making collections. The state did not think of doing so in its cultural and educational policy either: it was and still is pro-classical.

The rediscovery of the peasant by museums has only just begun and as yet only hesitantly.

Interest in popular traditions dates from the nineteenth century and is mainly focused on language. As a result of the efforts of N. Politis, who founded the Greek Folklore Society in 1908, this interest increased in scope and depth and the study of popular language was introduced into university curricula at the very beginning of the twentieth century. But interest in folklore, developed by the society's efforts, reflected in studies in which the methods of classical philology predominated, remained confined to the capital. The few specialists there were at that time worked mainly on second-hand material. Students of folklore did not go out to the peasants themselves; rather, they compiled inventories of their vocabulary and their traditions on the basis of secondary sources of information.[2]

In 1931 Professor S. Kyriakidis, the successor of N. Politis, made the following comments on folklore studies:

> It is known that at least part of the work on Greek folklore, the study of songs and popular tales, had its origins in the romanticism of the early nineteenth century, to which folklore owes its birth. It is also a product of the archaeological and primarily patriotic interest which led people to try to demonstrate the purity of the origins of the Greek people by pointing to traces of antiquity in its contemporary traditions.[3]

Mention must also be made of the work of foreign collectors (diplomats, archaeologists) and also Greek collectors since, from 1910 onwards, possessing a collection of peasant costumes, embroidery and jewellery and taking an interest in handicrafts were marks of distinction for all upper-middle-class families in Athens and for some rich provincial families which closely followed the fashions in the capital. In many cases this interest displayed by the aristocracy was, like the interest previously displayed by foreigners, associated with philanthropic activities by well-to-do women who created collections to preserve and renew handicraft traditions. They founded charitable organizations which opened handicraft workshops or schools and organized exhibitions. Poor women, orphans and, later, refugees provided cheap labour.

Costumes and handicrafts were in fashion. Rich Athenian ladies were photographed, or had their portraits painted, in local costumes. They did embroidery or weaving after the patterns of popular art; the furnished or decorated their houses in traditional style. At entertainments for charity, their daughters took part in country dances, dressed in original local costumes.

During this period (1920–30), Athenian women were particularly interested

1. This text was originally a communication to the symposium on 'The Rediscovery of the Peasant by the State in Central and Balkan Europe (Nineteenth–Twentieth Centuries)', organized by the research group on cultural identities in peasant societies of Central and Balkan Europe in the French Centre National de Recherches Scientifiques (CNRS).

2. 1903: publication of the popularizing review *Noumas;* 1904: N. Politis's book *Studies on the Language and Life of the Greek People,* begun in 1898, is completed; 1907: publication of Skliros's book *Our Social Problem;* 1908: founding of the Sociological Society and the Greek Folklore Society; 1909: first issue of the Greek Folklore Society's magazine *Laographia;* 1910: founding of the Educational Society and the Order of Students, both of which devote themselves to national language and education; 1911: founding of the Lycuum of Greek Women, among whose aims was the promotion of 'the conservation and renaissance of Greek customs and traditions and of national life in general', using for this purpose 'the cultivation of artistic and musical sensibility [and] the collection and conservation, by means of organized festivities or publications, of national costumes throughout Greece; 1912: publication of the book by D.K. Tsopotos, *Land and Peasants in Thessaly under Turkish Occupation;* 1918: founding of the Folklore Archives 'for the safeguard of the spiritual treasures of our national tradition'; 1923: publication of D. Zographos's *History of Greek Agriculture* (3 vols.).

3. S. Kyriakidis, 'Le folklore en Grèce de 1919 à 1930', *Byzantion* (Brussels), Vol. VI, 1931, pp. 737-70.

in costumes, embroidery and jewellery. They were the first to create the richest collections. One of these collectors, Angheliki Hadjimichali, became the best known folklorist in Greece; another, Anna Apostolaki, was the first director of the first museum of folklore opened in Athens, known significantly as the Handicrafts Museum. The Athenian aristocracy invented (i.e. imagined for a particular use) the Greek peasant; and they have imposed their invention and their vision on Greek museums right up to the present day.

Art of the people—soul of the people

The folklorists of the 1920 and 1930s can be divided into three groups.

The first consisted of academics, most of whom had been trained in classical philology in Germany and were interested primarily, if not exclusively, in the oral tradition (considering it as material to supplement their classical studies). They wrote in academic language, and their work was recognized in the educational policy of the state, which was still focused on the classical world and on the principles of the purity, unity and continuity of the Greek nation and civilization. It was the academics who tried to formulate principles for the science of Greek folklore, principles which the provincial amateurs adopted—or rather adapted—as they thought fit.

The second group consisted of people who may be described as non-academics. They were also few in number, and often they were self-taught. Unlike the members of the first group, they worked in the field and they were highly motivated in their feelings. They endeavoured to describe in minute detail various aspects of material culture, and each of them had his or her own characteristic approach. The most important among them was D. Loukopoulos, a schoolteacher who undertook ethnographical research which was of the very highest quality from the point of view both of conception and description. His work reflects a sound critical approach, although he never wrote a single word of theory. It also shows that he was little influenced by the academics.

It was he who really discovered the peasant world and gave a detailed description of the region studied. But his research, like that of P. Fourikis who worked along the same lines, found no place either in academic teaching or in museological programmes. His books are out of print and have never been republished. The cultural and educational policy of the state has remained resolutely pro-classical and has never crossed the bridge which Loukopoulos and Fourikis built between the capital and the provinces.

The best-known folklorist in this second group was A. Hadjimichali. After gradually developing her own method, she published a large number of important books and had a considerable influence on amateurs who, like her, were interested in folk art. Like several other writers who had ventured into the same field at their own risk and peril, she studied attractively designed articles of material civilization regarded as folk art and, as such, endowed with a mythical status. Nobody had yet advanced a theory or method (apart from questionnaires), and this omission has not been made good even today.

This absence of theory and of any practical activity is the principal cause of the poverty of all the para-folklorist works which constitute 90 per cent of the ethnographical bibliography of the 1920s and 1930s. Most of these works consist of a mixture of local chronography with a biographical basis and nostalgic memories of the village of the author's birth, with its customs and traditions. The texts were mostly produced by provincial *loghioi* (men of letters), fervent admirers of Hadjimichali (art of the people) and the academics (soul of the people) and victims of the stereotypes of others, of their own enthusiasm and of the absence of any effective criticism. They constitute the third group of folklorists, which was the most amateurish of them all. These *loghioi* did not discover peasants. They were born peasants, and then did everything possible not to remain as such. Their work was not characterized by participation (they adopted a petty-bourgeois attitude) or observation (they wrote from memory and often with much false lyricism).

During this period (the 1930s), there was also the Centre for Asia Minor Studies, where Melpo Merlier and D. Loukopoulos were doing outstanding work. They produced remarkably good general pictures of life in various regions of Anatolia based on the recollections of their informants. Their work did not influence that of others.

It was official educational policy at the time, at once backward-looking and focused on the capital, which, in the final analysis, determined the marginal position of traditional culture and the impotence of those who studied it. It was remembered only on national festive occasions at which local costumes and folk-dancing were the order of the day.

There was no co-ordination or osmosis between these few and scatterd groups, which never had adequate resources and never succeeded in founding a discipline, in creating a solid scientific tradition, in training personnel and establishing institutions, or in 'discovering' peasants objectively and, as far possible, globally. They did not achieve any results which were capable of influencing the educational and cultural policy of the state.

Up to the 1930s, there had been several collections, some of them quite large; but there were only two museums open to the public. The Handicrafts Museum, founded by a poet in 1918, offered visitors an exhibition of fine costumes, embroidery and jewellery until the 1970s but did not undertake systematic research. Secondly, there was the private collection of A. Benaki, the Greek millionaire from Egypt. This was open to the public in the owner's luxurious house which was turned into a museum in 1930. The museum retained all the aspects of a very rich collection but it was not a research centre.

The endeavours of the élite (the poets and the rich Greeks of the 'diaspora') were similar from the standpoint of their vision and invention of the peasant world and their way of presenting it in a museum. Their invention was determined by the theory of the academics with regard to the soul of the people, and by the practice of certain non-academics and collectors with regard to the art of the people, the one being a reflection of the other. The academics made only very brief mention in their teaching of the handicrafts which were the principal concern of the non-academics. Between the metaphysics of the soul, the fashion for art and the poets' bucolic vision of the life of the people, there was no longer any room for reality—a reality, besides, which got in the way.

The museological programme in the above-mentioned museums was bound only to be a reflection of this ahistorical character of the peasant which each of them had in its own way invented, or as the *Oxford English Dictionary* would define it, 'created by thought' or, worse still, 'concocted'. Accordingly the exhibitions in these museums, and in those which followed their example, contained only fine costumes, embroidery and jewel-

lery. They consisted only of dummies, dressed always in festive costumes (peasants only live on Sundays!) and accompanied only by a brief indication of their place of origin. These dummies, with the features of young people, displayed their costumes and jewellery attractively but rarely held tools or, if they did so, it was only to produce a picturesque effect and not to show peasants at work. They were surrounded only by beautiful objects. There was no point in looking for any dates or maps or, even less, any photographs of real poor peasants. At best, one might see some idylllic landscapes. These peasants—are we not reminded of pictures of travellers enchanted by the exotic East?—lived outside time and space. Only good-looking dummies were displayed. The same approach was evident, also, in the illustrations contained in books on folklore that were published at that time.[4]

There was no attempt, either, to build up any sort of general picture—or scenes of daily life—or even sets of functional objects. The objects displayed (vases, tools, furniture) had a non-functional existence, like the peasant dummies. They were neither 'products' nor 'utensils'. Any object that was spoilt, worn or imperfect was excluded from the exhibitions. There was no detailed information to explain them. The objects, like the peasants, were beautiful and existed *in vacuo.*

With rural life conceived and presented in this way, there was no place for science. The technological, economic, sociological and ideological aspects were glossed over: only beauty existed—nowhere, in all the thousands of books in the bibliography, is there a single trace of a definition of this concept of rural life. Not one of those who spoke of it ever thought of defining it.

This invention of the peasants at the museological level has not changed even today, although rural sociology studies have progressed since the Second World War and some interesting works have been published by certain foklorists. At the national level, there has been no qualitative change. Thereare still few specialists and few active centres; budgets are inadequate and there is no co-ordination between the various specialists studying rural life.

However, in spite of the persistence of ideas dating from the beginning of the century, specialists have on a number of occasions advocated the adoption of a scientific museological policy. They

4. A. Hadjimichali and N. Sperling, *Greek National Costumes*, Athens, Benaki Museum, 1954. Two folders with eighty-five prints each and one booklet (86 pp.).

Daily life at Ghida (Nea Alexandria, Macedonia), recorded by a photographer before the Second World War.
[*Photo:* Benaki Museum, Athens.]

Museological presentation (1973): Ghida costumes at the Ethnographical and Ethnological Museum of Macedonia, Salonika.
[*Photo:* Ethnographical and Ethnological Museum of Macedonia.]

have often criticized the inefficiency of amateurs' collections and existing museums. They have suggested modern models and have approached the competent authorities on the matter. As long ago as 1931, an expert on folklore, K. Marinis, in an article entitled 'For a New Museum' and dedicated to the Minister of Education, suggested the establishment of an ethnographical museum. He reverted to this idea in a detailed study in 1936. In 1937, Professor S. Kyriakidis, in an article entitled 'Folklore Museums', severely criticized the museums of the day and suggested the establishment of a new one for the preservation and regular presentation of all aspects of material civilization (with open-air displays). In 1945, the aesthetician T. Moustoxydis, in his polemical pamphlet entitled *What is a Museum?,* raised the question of the fundamental museological principles to be adopted. In 1952, D. Loukatos drew attention to the need for scientific ethnographical museums with open-air extensions. In 1950, and again in 1953, Professor G. Megas criticized the delays in creating museums and made the same proposal. In 1967, he made representations for the establishment of an open-air museum. In 1973, M. Faltaits, another folklorist, referred in an article to the major problem of regional museums. None of these articles or representations had the slightest result. The nineteenth century prevailed over the twentieth.

In the meantime, from 1930 to 1980, the rural world had changed considerably. Unbeknown to it, the peasant 'invented' the capital city, the population of which grew from 300,000 in 1940 to over 3 million in 1980.

Throughout this period, the rural world was still ignored in the educational and cultural policy of the state. In the 1970s a revival of interest in tradition was noticeable in the cultural life of the country; but on this occasion, the 'soul of the people—art of the people' model created sixty years earlier was slavishly copied. There was, however, one interesting difference: it was the sons of the peasants of yesterday who were now attempting to 'invent' their parents. And they invented them, not as they had known them in their childhood, but as the poets and ladies of the upper classes in Athens had imagined them. Such is the durability of certain models!

The few exceptions to the rule suggest that, since 1970, folklore experts and those in charge of museums have begun to change their ideas.[5] Nowadays some reflections of daily life do find their way into museums in the form of photographs linking the dummies with scenes from ordinary life, or drawings and models showing peasant activities. Engravings and drawings of the period are used to explain the social differentiation of costumes, or photographs are used to present a picture of peasant life different from that provided by dummies in show-cases. The technological approach also is being discovered. However, much remains to be done to develop a new museological programme for presenting the rural life of the past and the present.

The changes now occurring began with the recognition of the fact that the peasant must be rediscovered in the countryside and that this rediscovery must be reflected in museums. This is not, however, the responsibility solely of folklorists, sociologists or ethnographers; it behoves the state to adopt a general policy, and especially an educational and cultural policy, that takes into account the present as well as the past, and the provinces as well as the capital.

[Translated from Greek]

5. An example is the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation organized in accordance with modern museological traditions (see p. 168). See also the study on its organization by S. A. Papadopoulos, 'The Organization and Functioning of an Ethnographical Museum', *Ethnographica* (Návplion), Vol. 1, 1978, pp. 131-58 (in Greek).

An artistic view: *Portrait of a Woman* (in the Ghida costume) by the folklorist and painter A. Hadjimichali.
[*Photo:* Benaki Museum, Athens.]

A scientific presentation: Ghida costume, painted by N. Sperling in 1954, in *Greek National Costumes.*
[*Photo:* Benaki Museum, Athens.]

CASE-STUDIES

The Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation

Joanna Papantoniou

Learnt Greek dancing from the age of eight onwards at the Lykeion Hellenidon, Athens. In 1954 she became a member of the Lykeion's dance group. Taught dancing in this group and was responsible for two costume sections of the Lykeion, 1954–56. Studied theatre and costume design at the Wimbledon School of Art, 1967–70. Since 1971 has been designer for over 100 theatrical works in Greece and abroad. Founded the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation in 1974 and donated to it her collections of ethnographic objects and her personal research archives. President and Consultant Director of the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation. In 1982, received an award from the Greek National Academy for her museum heritage preservation and theatre activities.

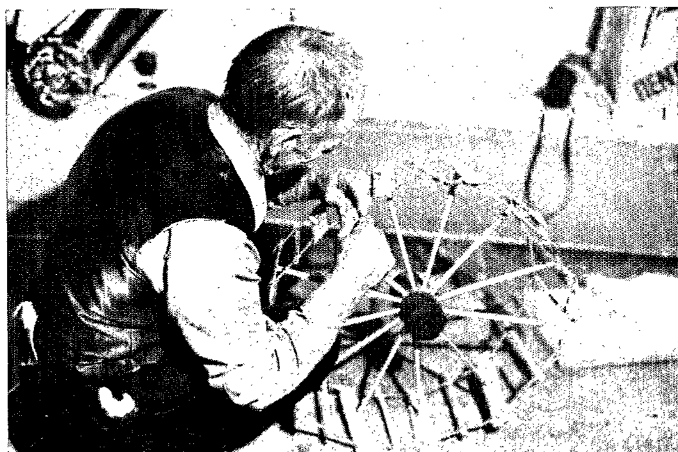
Research on costumes at Olympos in Kapathos, in the Dodecanese. One stage in the creation of a regional head-dress. [*Photo:* PFF Archives.]

In 1982, the Folk Art Museum in Návplion, Greece, was named Museum of the Year by the European Museum of the Year Award (see article by Kenneth Hudson in Museum, *Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, 1981, pp. 57-8). Previous issues have included articles on prize-winners in earlier years (the Ironbridge Gorge Museum, in Vol. XXXII, No. 3, 1980; the Museum of the City of Russelsheim, in Vol. XXXIII, No. 1, 1981). Last year's winner of the main award took the selection committee to the far reaches of 'the Council of Europe's Europe'. 'Both nationally and internationally the museum is exceptional', said the judges. 'It also marks the beginnings of a broad spectrum of museums in Greece where archaeology has so long predominated'. Yet even among ethnographic museums, the Folk Art Museum at Návplion has earned itself a very special place within its community. Its founder and director explains why. As her article makes clear, the museum itself is part of the Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation, an institution whose work to preserve and bring alive the Greek heritage is truly exemplary.*

The Peloponnesian Folklore Foundation (PFF) is a trust based at Návplion. Founded in 1974, its purpose is to study and disseminate the folk culture of Greece. It carries out research on material culture, music and dance, which have been neglected by other similar research establishments in the country. The results of each study are presented through exhibitions in the Folk Art Museum itself or elsewhere, various cultural programmes, publications and gramophone records. Educational programmes for children play an important role, for to the PFF children are like average Greeks who, in recent years, have just begun to be aware of their cultural heritage. Few Greeks visit museums; many of them do not even know what a museum is.

The PFF has a 25 per cent share in a private company (Ae Kyknos) which ensures it an autonomous source of financing. The state provides one-tenth of its budget, about 14 million drachmas. The foundation also earns considerable revenue from the sale of the books, postcards, posters and records of folk-music that it produces, the latter being regarded as models throughout the Greek-speaking area. The PFF also publishes a scientific periodical entitled *Ethnografica.* The museum's shop, open from April to October, also brings in much revenue. The PFF has created, for sale in this shop, a series of original objects and model dresses inspired by various items in the museum. These are presented in a special display in a well-known Návplion hotel. In addition, generous donations are sometimes received from private individuals. It should be noted that there is no entry fee for the museum and that it offers cultural programmes free of charge.

Till 1978, emphasis was placed on the research infrastructure of the foundation, and studies were made of research infrastructures of European museums. In Greece, museology as such is almost unknown. Most Greek museum collections are not catalogued. Air-conditioning, good lighting and adequate security precautions are even today thought to be a luxury, and no attention is given to the difficulties involved in the display of museum objects. In the first phase, therefore, the PFF collections (which number over 9,000 items) were properly catalogued. A small restoration department was established and store-rooms with ideal storage conditions were built. Air-conditioning, anti-theft and fire-fighting systems were installed. A library was opened and now contains about 4,000 Greek and foreign books and periodicals. Lastly, there is a collection of 400 copies of folk costumes which are loaned free of



Craftsman Mirkos Stambolis assembles a *tsikriki* used to spin goat's wool. He brought the *tsikriki* from his workshop at Volaka in Macedonia specially for the museum's exhibition.
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.]

Mirkos Stambolis weaving goat's wool on a standing loom set up for the museum exhibition.
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.]

charge to schools and other interested parties.

The museum collections

The collections cover the whole spectrum of Greek folk life—agricultural, pastoral, maritime and urban. Most of the items date from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries and a few others from earlier times. Up to now, little interest has been shown in the Greek industrial revolution, a fairly recent occurrence; thus the collections contain few objects illustrating industrial civilization.

Greek regional costumes and fabrics in general, which account for a major part of the collections, were a decisive element when a theme for the museum's first big exhibition had to be selected. It was decided to present a display of the production and use of natural textile fibres in Greece from the mid-nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century. Special reference was to be made to the technical aspects and the various professions which are associated with the production of fabrics for costumes or household objects. The research took five years, and the planning one year. The exhibition itself took four months to set up. Form and colour are emphasized, both in and outside the show-cases; the theme itself is illustrated with exhibits, photographs and sketches—rather than texts—in order to help the visitor to learn without getting bored.

The introduction explains how and why man first dressed himself. It presents the invention of weaving and the earliest looms, both in general and more specifically in Greece. Information is provided about natural weaving fibres, and their production is illustrated in a series of separate show-cases for cotton, flax, hemp, broom, silk, sheep's wool and goat's wool.

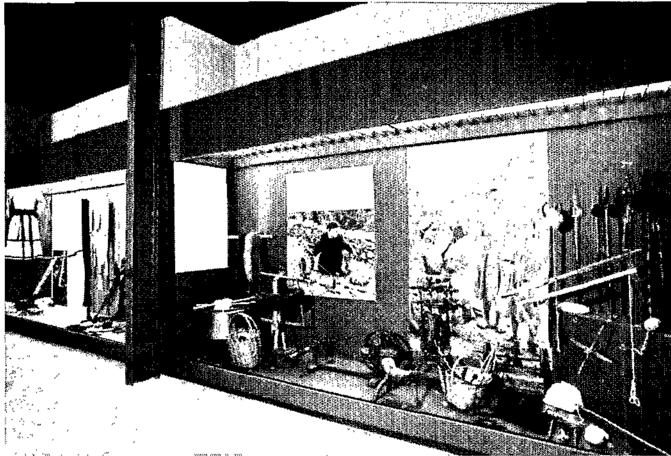
Next come displays of the processes involved in the production and dyeing of yarns. A separate show-case houses a display of the various types of looms used to produce straps, belt and cords. The three types of loom most commonly used in Greece are shown in a free-standing display, together with examples of the most representative type of work that they produce. Sketches and documentary photographs reveal the different stages in the assembly and 'dressing' of the loom. The fulling of fabrics is explained in the same way.

The next show-case is dedicated to the dyer, the specialized craftsman who dyes, waterproofs and pleats the fabrics, mostly cotton. Next to it is a show-case illustrating the work of the professional seamstress and embroiderer; it contains outer garments decorated with cord piping, in gold and other colours. A photograph of a newly wed couple from Florina introduces the visitor to the theme of the wedding dowry. For their dowries, Greek women have embroidered items which are famed throughout the world for their perfect technique, their combination of colour and design and the variety of the different stitches used. Fabrics embroidered by women are presented in two show-cases. Another contains examples of bridal aprons, with a note emphasizing their symbolic and magical meaning. Next comes a display of lace and knitting, and the exhibition ends with an illustration of methods of decorating fabrics: batik, hand painting, funji and block printing.

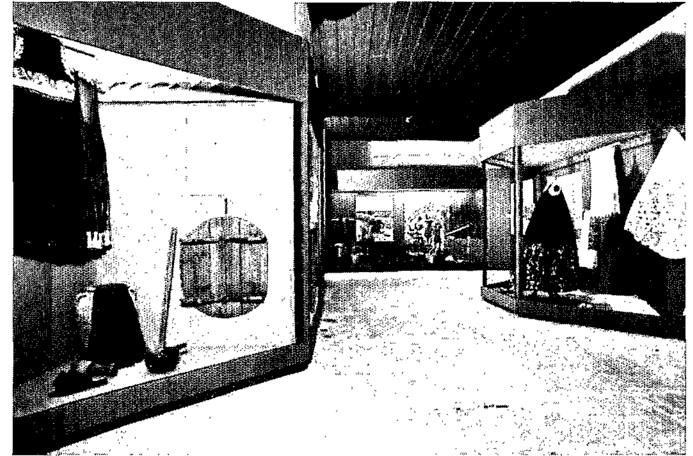
This exhibition occupies the whole of the ground-floor of the museum, and the costumes of the Peloponnese that the PFF has studied are now on display in a room on the first floor. The exhibition is temporary, since there are plans for another which will occupy the whole of the first floor once the research centre

Boys dressed as bears for the masquerades that take place on 7 January at Volaka, Macedonia. This photograph was displayed in the exhibition entitled *The Life Cycle* organized by the PFF at the City Hall in Brussels, 1 October to 1 November 1982, in the context of *Europalia-Hellas 1982*. The exhibition illustrated life, religion and work in Greece from the middle of the nineteenth century until the middle of the twentieth century.
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.]

FOLK ART MUSEUM, Návplion. Show-case presenting the dressing of yarns and dyeing with natural dyes.
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.]



Left, the show-case presenting the dyeing of fabrics; right, the embroidery show-case; and, background, the dressing and dyeing of yarns.
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.].



facilities, which are there at present, have been moved to another building.

Buildings

The greatest problem facing the PFF is lack of space. Návplion is an old town whose buildings are protected, and available space is rare. The main PFF building is an old neo-classical house, to which a new wing in the same architectural style has been added. The museum is in this house, occupying the whole of the ground-floor area and part of the first floor. The research centre and the fabric-conservation department occupy the rest of the first floor. On the second floor, there are store-rooms for the collection of fabrics, costumes, jewellery, wickerwork, ceramics, musical instruments and folk-art and folk-theatre items. Wooden, metal and stone objects are kept in a rented storehouse next to the museum building.

Another building used by the PFF in Návplion houses the lending wardrobe, the conference centre and guests' quarters. There is an apartment for staff who live outside Návplion, and there is also a rented hall in which Greek dancing is taught. In Athens there are an office and two store-rooms for keeping the books and gramophone records that are produced. The PFF recently bought another old building in Návplion from the state, and plans have been made to restore and transform it during 1983/84, so that it can house the research centre, the library and the conservation centre. During 1984 and 1985 the museum exhibition area is likely to expand to include the whole of the first floor of the old building.

Research

Three long-term research programmes are under way, the first two—on ceramics and costumes—on a nationwide scale, the third—on music—being confined to Cyprus.

Ceramics. All kilns, workshops and homes of ceramic workers are registered and described, regardless of whether the persons concerned have stopped working or are still active. Types of ceramics are listed and those still being produced are studied as fully as possible. Any changes which occur in the course of time, and the reasons behind any change in production (type, quantity, quality, etc.), are noted. Examples of present-day production are purchased, as are examples of earlier production if they still exist. The structure of each enterprise (homecrafts, handicrafts) is examined and movements within the families of ceramic workers and co-workers are observed. The centres are recorded as ceramic workshops, centres for the manufacture of bricks, tiles, and decorative architectural forms, etc. Lastly, records are made of the distribution of products, and note is taken of the sources of purchases of ceramics from centres inside and outside the historical Greek area. The initial research is based on published works and archives, wherever the information is classified and at the researcher's disposal. This kind of work is fraught with problems in Greece because most archives are unclassified, unknown or inaccessible to the public. The outcome of this research is to be published in a forthcoming book and heralded by exhibitions in Athens, Salonika and Návplion.

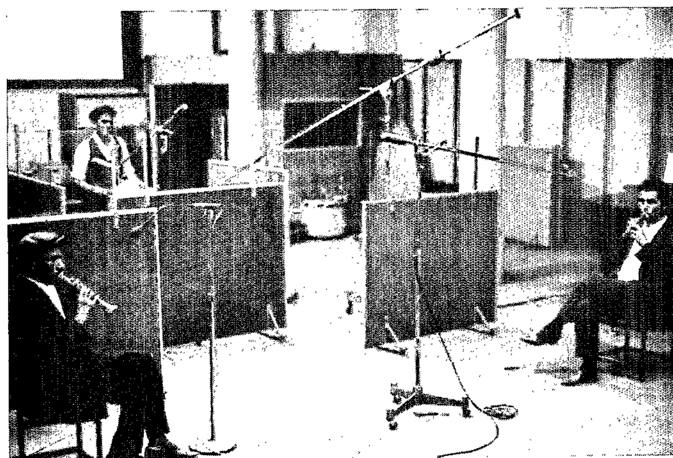
Costumes. Note is taken of all books written by foreigners who visited the historical Greek area between the fall of Constantinople and the middle of the twentieth century. Marriage contracts are another interesting source of information. At the same time, a critical bibliography of books on Greek costume is being prepared. Costumes in Greek collections are being recorded and photographed, and technical sketches are being made of them. Later, inventories of foreign collections will also be prepared. In addition, inquiries are being made in villages, to record the costumes found there. These records will be added to the author's own archives, compiled between 1958 and 1974, which she has donated to the PFF. The historical, geographical, commercial and socio-economic context of each village is examined; and note is taken of the techniques involved in making each costume, together with the names of craftsmen who help in its creation. Particular attention is paid to costumes for special occasions such as wedding dresses, carnival dresses and costumes for May Day, etc. The specific custom associated with a costume is recorded, to facilitate assessment of the significance of that costume and its accessories. Clothes are filmed and photographed, as is the process of dressing. Anything else which contributes to the final overall impression, such as hairstyle, make-up and markings, is recorded. The development of folk costumes over the years is studied—changes and the reasons for them, as well as the reasons for apparent geographic standardization. A future study will examine the recent 'urbanization' of costume, which has no specific local character being rather a

A tailor from Karditsa in Thessaly making a woman's bodice of the type worn in that region.
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.]

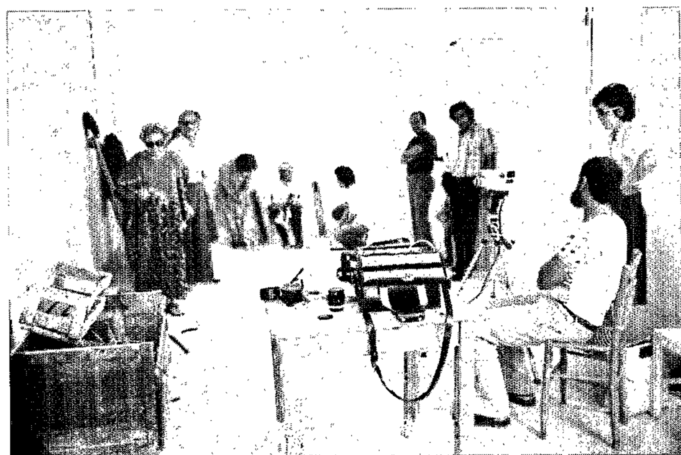
Decoration of ceramics, Madamados, on the island of Lesbos, in the eastern Aegean. This craft is among those studied.
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.]

Research on national music: recording of musicians from Gastouni, Ilea, Peloponnese, playing pipes and *davoulaki.*
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.]

Renée Bauser and Vasiliki Minaiou, a curator at the PFF, watch a craftsman making combs for the loom at Kosmas, Kinouria, in the Peloponnese.
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.]



Research on weaving techniques: video-filming the making of combs for looms at Kosmos, Kinouria, in the Peloponnese. Renée Bauser from the Ethnographic Museum of Basel, Switzerland, is also part of the group.
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.]



Children from the PFF dance group, on their way to plant flowers on May Day in Návplion.
[*Photo:* PFF Archives.]

manifestation of fashion. Another project planned is a comparative study of garments from other countries, in an attempt to discover the origins of each costume. Particular attention is given to the linguistic interpretation of the special names of costumes which differ from village to village. The results of all this research will be published in leaflets which will eventually constitute a body of information on Greek regional costumes.

Folk-music in Cyprus. Research into this is being undertaken in collaboration with the Greek Ministry of Culture and Science and Cyprus Radio. Music, songs and narratives are recorded live in the Greek area of Cyprus. Details are taken of each musician, singer or 'troubador'. The musicians are filmed so that their techniques can be recorded, and films are also made of the different local dances. The results of this research will be published in the form of a series of records with an accompanying leaflet, commenting on the findings from the historical, geographical, social and economic points of view, and from the standpoint of the history of national music. The material which has been assembled is very striking because Cyprus appears to have preserved important elements of Greek ethnographical riches which have been lost elsewhere.

Cultural programmes

It is the PFF's policy to communicate with the people and to co-operate with all the other academic foundations in the country. Priority is always given to the child. The PFF works with the schools in the district in a joint programme entitled 'What is a Museum?'. Under this programme a mobile exhibition will tour initially the villages of Argolis and then the whole of the country.

In order to draw the attention of other Greek museums to the need for co-operation in cultural programmes, the PFF has instituted round-table discussions with museum officials, teachers and children on the topic of 'The Museum and the School'. The first meeting was held in Návplion in 1982 and the second in Salonika. The objective is close co-operation between museums and schools based on the children's own opinions.

The PFF's programmes for 1983 included a month of shadow and puppet theatre in February. With the information which the children acquired from demonstrations of the two different kinds of theatre and from talks on this theme, they were required to form groups in order to write, produce and present plays. Prizes were given to all the children who participated in these performances.

Another programme includes a series of lessons on the theme 'Fabric in the Greek Tradition'. Lessons will be given in spinning, weaving, weaving straps, dyeing with natural dyes, embroidery, knitting and crocheting, plaiting cords, making lace, etc.

In Návplion the PFF teaches Greek regional dances free of charge to young and old alike. It has even formed two small dance groups which present programmes in Greece and abroad. One is composed of children and the other of adolescents. There are now over 100 young people in these groups, and many of them help in managing the PFF's lending wardrobe. They also try to maintain disappearing local traditions. For example, they are often seen in the streets of Návplion, dressed in regional costumes and singing Christmas carols, dancing the *gaitanaki* at carnival time or planting flowers and singing special songs on May Day. Today the initiative comes from the young people themselves and their pursuit of folklore is a whole way of life. Up to now, the problem with dancing lessons has been lack of space. Previously, lessons were given in the local gymnasium, working-men's club or the museum garden. However, the children have found an old hall which the PFF has rented for them. They have converted and decorated it, and now have their own meeting place where they can dance, listen to music and enjoy themselves.

[*Translated from Greek*]

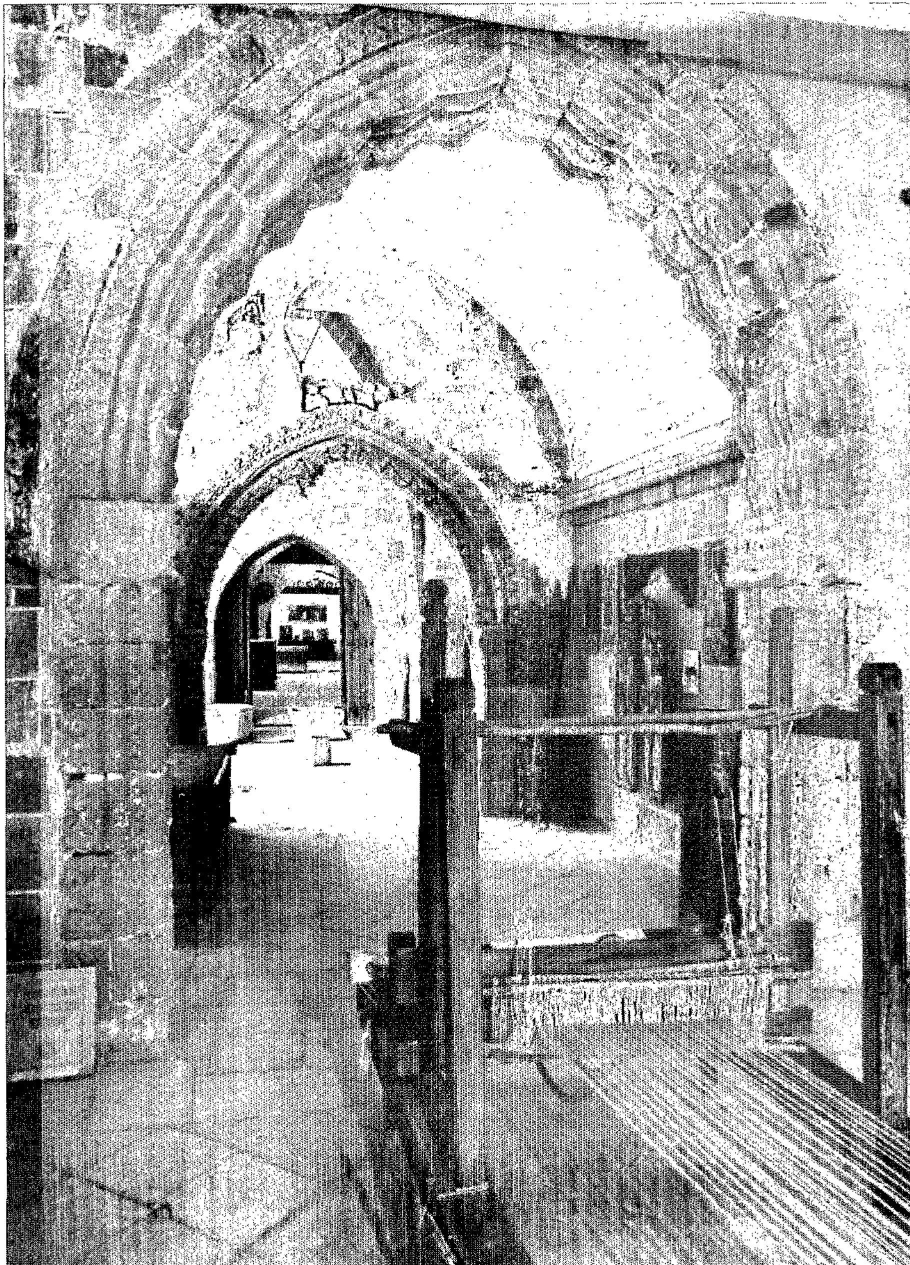
Adamantios Diamantis

Born in Nicosia, Cyprus, in 1900. ARCA London, painting. Drawing prize, 1923. Taught art in Cyprus at the Pancyprian Gymnasium, 1923–24 and 1926–62, and the Teacher's Training College, Morphou, 1937-49. Held yearly exhibitions of his students' work and a retrospective in Athens, 1926–50. Has taken part in several group exhibitions. Held one-man shows in Cyprus, Athens and London, and a retrospective exhibition in the National Gallery, Athens, in 1976. Honoured by the Greek Academy. Last retropsective exhibition in London, 1979. Member of the Council of the Society of Cypriot Studies since 1948. Responsible for the organization and running of the Cyprus Folk Art Museum since 1950.

The Cyprus Folk Art Museum

The re-awakening of interest in the folk art of the Greek people of Cyprus was a continuation of that shown previously in folklore as a whole. At the end of the nineteenth century Cypriot and other scholars began to produce works on the Greek Cypriot dialect and to collect information on customs and manners, everyday objects of material culture, etc. At the time of the First World War old practices had already begun to decline, as the effects of industry gradually encroached. The movement for their protection took root during the 1920s and was supported by students who, returning from their university studies in Greece, brought with them the ideas about and plans for folklore and folk art which flourished there. Times were propitious. A small group of people interested in the subject took the opportunity of creating a museum of folk art and in September 1931 formed a committee and approached Nicodemos Mylonas, the Metropolitan of Kitium and representative of the holy synod, to ask for the sup-

Front view of the old building in 1970. On the ground floor is the entrance to the Folk Art Museum. The first floor was the seat of the Archbishops of Cyprus till 1961. [*Photo:* Cyprus Folk Art Museum.]



CYPRUS FOLK ART MUSEUM, Nicosia. General view from the entrance, facing west (1982). [*Photo:* Cyprus Folk Art Museum.]

port of the Church. The response was very encouraging. The plan was first to create a collection and to organize an island-wide campaign to collect contributions with the help of women's organizations under the auspices of the Church. The Archbishop of Cyprus had considerable power and rights, and enjoyed the respect and regard of all classes. Folk art material was to be found among the villagers, who upheld tradition and crafts and the old ways of life, while the people of the towns were motivated by a desire to rediscover their roots and were keen to lend support. Unfortunately, the sad events of October 1931, which took the form of civil disturbances against the British administration, and the ensuing period of repression, put a stop to the endeavour.

A new opportunity arose with the cooperation of a few scholars, who in 1936 founded the Society of Cypriot Studies (SCS) with much wider aims: the conservation, collection and study of material connected with the history of Cyprus and the study of the Greek Cypriot dialect and of folklore in general, as well as the creation of the Cyprus Folk Art Museum.

Dr Constantinos Spyridakis, principal of the Pancyprian Gymnasium (PG) was elected president of the SCS. Two other masters of the PG were elected as councillors. The main activities of the society were the production of an annual publication and the creation of a basic collection for the museum. Already there existed three private collections formed by Cypriot ladies who had studied in Greece and were connected with the movement there. From the first collection the SCS obtained in 1946 forty choice old embroideries. The second, whose creation was based on family heirlooms, was the most important and has been recently acquired by the Church of Cyprus. The third collection was made in Paphos.[1] Many individuals simultaneously discovered that collections could be started from mementos preserved in their homes. Cyprus folk art was becoming a subject of general interest. We had many contributions from people connected with the SCS. Thus a basis was created for the museum collection with donations and small purchases.

In 1947 we celebrated the tenth anniversary of the SCS with the first exhibition of folk art ever held in Cyprus. In 1949 the SCS took part with a separate stall in the Panhellenic Exhibition of Folk Arts and Crafts in Athens. At last we had sufficient material for the first public presentation of the collection and the creation of the museum.

The finding of suitable premises was now tackled systematically. We finally decided to use what was offered to us—a small part of the ground floor of the old archbishopric, opposite the PG. This impressive building was a medieval Roman Catholic monastery which passed to the ownership of the Greek Orthodox Church before the Turkish conquest of 1570. Our section consisted of three intercommunicating spaces 65 square metres in area. (see Fig. 1). We organized the exhibition with simple means: we used cupboards from the collection, the tops of chests and two show-cases for the display of old embroideries and jewellery. It was opened on 28 December 1950 by Archbishop Makarios III in the presence of the Mayor of Nicosia, the Director of Antiquities, officials, art lovers and many others. At the opening the collection consisted of 435 articles: 187 of woven material, 84 costumes and pieces of clothing, 75 embroideries, 49 pieces of jewellery, 17 varieties of baskets and 17 small articles. It was an accomplishment of collective work, a cultural necessity and a lesson in self-knowledge. The siting of the museum on the ground floor of the old building, with the seat of the Archbishop on the first floor (see Fig. 2), facilitated the work that was carried out.

After the opening the museum remained closed to the public. All of us

1. First collection: Antigone Ioannidhou. Second collection: Maria Eleftheriou Gaffiero. Third collection: Angeliki-Paschalidou-Pieridou. During the last fifty years collections have been put together by communities, schools, institutions and private homes. Among these are: the Yeroskipou-Paphos Folk Art Museum, belonging to the Antiquities Department, completed in 1980/81; the Kyrenia Harbour Folk Art Museum, belonging to the Antiquities Department, organized by Angeliki Pieridou; the Pierides Foundation Museum, Larnaca; the Limassol municipality collection; and others.

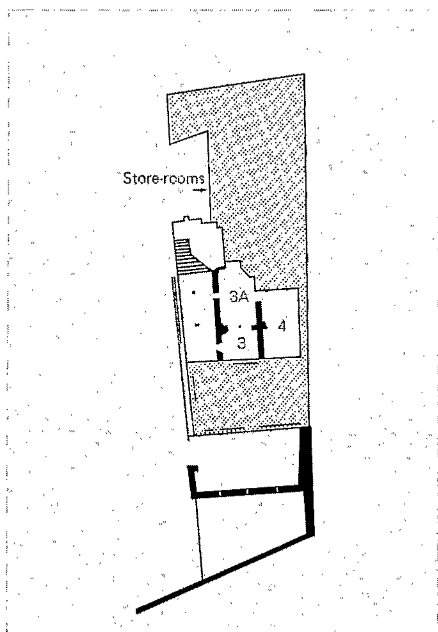


FIG. 1. Plan of the Cyprus Folk Art Museum, 1950–64.

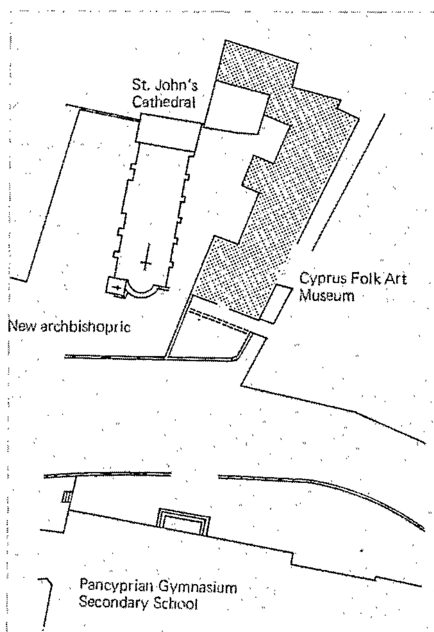


FIG. 2. The seat of the Archbishop of Cyprus, until 1961, was on the floor above the Cyprus Folk Art Museum.

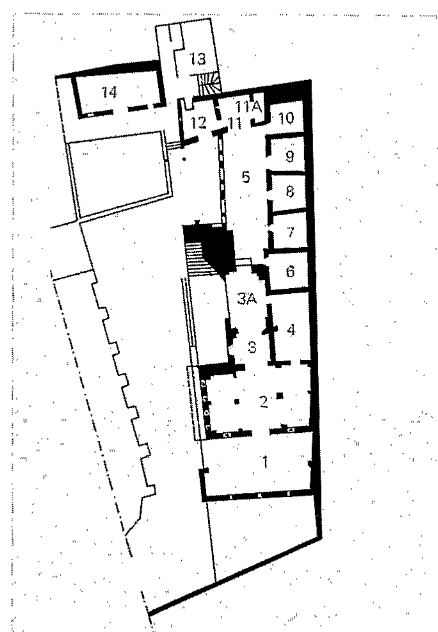
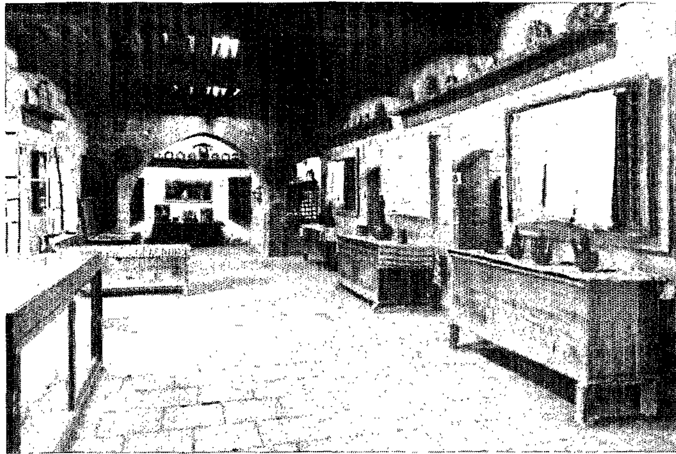


FIG. 3. Plan of the Cyprus Folk Art Museum after 1964.

Space 5 with room 11 at the far end (1982).
[*Photo:* Cyprus Folk Art Museum.]



'Pastos', the wedding room. From the 1982 exhibition *Chypre, les travaux et les jours,* Musée de l'Homme, Paris.
[*Photo:* Cyprus Folk Art Museum.]

who worked in the PG went to the museum in our free time, and it was open to pupils on Sundays and Thursday afternoons. Visitors who wanted to see it would telephone the PG and someone would accompany them there. It was not a good arrangement, but the only one possible. The enrichment continued. Some of the artistic kind of exhibits were impressive, but our small collection of tools, not on show, urged us to investigate further this important area.

The late 1950s were years of political upheaval. The demand for the union of Cyprus with Greece had been voiced by the Greek Cypriots from the earliest days of British rule. The continuation of the occupation after the Second World War provoked strong opposition from the Greek Cypriots which finally took the form of open rebellion. In March 1956 Archbishop Makarios was exiled; clashes continued; the military authorities searched the area of the museum. On three occasions we found the museum door broken in, though fortunately we did not discover any damage. Through the intervention of the British Director of Antiquities the harassment of the museum ceased. In spite of this, fears for the safety of the exhibits persuaded us to remove them. We placed the lighter articles in chests and cases and took them to friendly houses far from the danger zone. The museum remained closed for almost a year during 1958/59.

With the return of Archbishop Makarios from exile, in March 1959, the re-establishment of normal conditions and the declaration of the Republic of Cyprus, we continued our endeavours towards our next aim which was the expansion of the museum. The articles of the collection increased in number. A new archbishopric was being built and the SCS sought to expand the museum in the old building. After much consultation it was decided that the main and oldest wing of the building should be preserved and taken over by the SCS for this purpose. With the completion of the new building in 1961 the seat of the archbishop was transferred to the new archbishop's palace in the locality. The important question of the reconstruction of the building was studied and it was agreed to carry it out on the following basis: the old building was to be strengthened, the recent additions were to be removed, the original layout of the building was to be restored and the safety of the exhibits was to be secured.

The society faced and solved the difficult financial problems. Work started in September 1962, and was carried out in two stages. The first was completed in April 1963 and covered spaces 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12 (see Fig. 3). We arranged in space 5, the main cloister of the monastery, exhibits of various kinds, such as furniture (chests, cupboards, shelves), woven materials, embroideries and ornamented articles. In space 11, at the far end, we attempted a reconstruction of a village room. We used each of the other spaces, which were formerly cells, for a special display, as follows: 6, exhibits from towns; 7, cross-stitch embroidery; 8, woven embroidery; 9, specimens of weaving; 10, pottery and small tools. In space 4 the display was about the same as in 1950. Finally, in space 12 we installed

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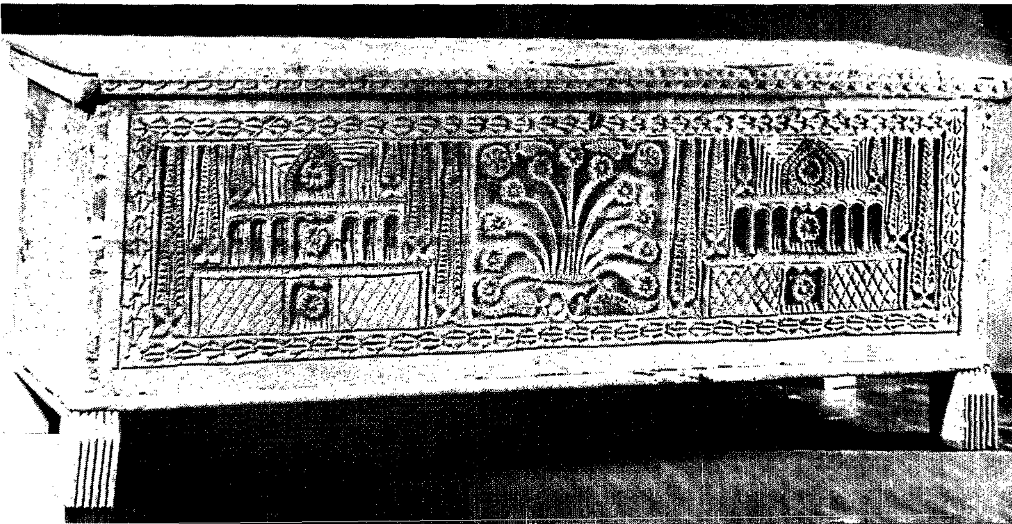
a woman weaver with her loom and we opened the new section using the back door. During the next stage of work the main entrance of the building was restored; at the same time we reconstructed an old addition which gave us space 2 and the semi-exposed space 1, as well as an opening to the east. This completed the reconstruction; the two spaces were joined together and ample room was created in front of the new entrance.

During 1966–68 we faced the important question of acquiring personnel. For the first time we appointed two assistants. The first acquainted herself with problems of storage and cataloguing. In 1968 she attended a course in the Ethnographical Department of the British Museum, an experience which greatly improved her methods of work. At the same time she visited other relevant museums in the United Kingdom and the Musée de l'Homme in Paris. During her absence she was replaced by a second assistant who thus learned on the job. Both assistants were later able to visit the folk-art museums in Greece and, for the second, additional technical training was provided in Cyprus.

In 1967 the museum participated in a threefold exhibition, *Treasures of Cyprus,* by preparing the folk-art section (ancient and Byzantine art were also covered). The exhibition was seen in Paris, Milan, Geneva, Athens, Belgrade, Moscow and Berlin. We also organized a special exhibition at the entrance of our museum to celebrate of the twentieth anniversary of Unesco.

In 1971, at the back of the museum,

Carved dowry chest, Kyrenia district.
[*Photo:* Cyprus Folk Art Museum.]



Coloured carvings: details from two shelves, Akanthou.
[*Photo:* Cyprus Folk Art Museum.]

'Saghies' traditional embroidered female dress.
[*Photo:* Cyprus Folk Art Museum.]

a new two-storey building was erected, with a workshop on the ground floor and offices and storage space on the first (space 13, Fig. 3). We now had ample space and two able assistants, and the opportunity, through the facilities extended to us by the Cyprus Research Centre, to send research missions to the Cyprus villages. In this way, from 1969 to 1974, we collected much material and information. Photographs were taken over a wide field. About ten areas were systematically investigated, taking in sixty villages, about 250 articles were collected and 3,000 photographs taken. Through these missions we became even more aware of the importance of the material discovered, which we described as 'technical folk culture'. This comprises all mechanical contrivances: wheel-wells, machines for turning cotton, flax and silk into thread, mills, etc., and examples of the inventiveness and wisdom of the people before the influx of industry. These last years before 1974, with the help of our small able staff, were the golden period of the museum.

In 1974, however, for the third time, political and military happenings once again interfered with our own peaceful enterprise. In July came the coup, the Turkish invasion and the occupation of northern Cyprus. I was away from the capital and the museum. When I was able to return, four days later, I found the back door of the museum broken in. It was not possible to assess the situation. I merely picked up a tray of photo negatives and left. The Turkish positions were some 300 metres away.

We were under the threat of total destruction. We took steps for the immediate removal of as much material as possible. There was nothing else we could do. We collected the archives, packed up in cases and chests three-quarters of the movable exhibits and moved towards the high mountain villages of the south, to Limassol, to banks, to safe places and institutions. We discussed with Athens the possibility of removing the museum there for safekeeping or for exhibition.

Finally, in 1975, after months of torment and waiting, with the partial stabilization of the situation, but with an uncertain future, we took what we considered the right decision: in October, not without risk, we brought back all the material from where it was stored. With anguish and worry I set myself the task of dividing the exhibits into two parts of equal importance and value. With one part I re-opened the museum while the other I kept packed in cases ready to be sent away. This second part consisted of 412 articles of all categories.

In April 1976 we opened the museum with the sole purpose of saving the exhibits. The museum now functions with a single employee and the weaver. The number of visitors increases all the time—in 1980 it was 26,000. Interest has fully revived.

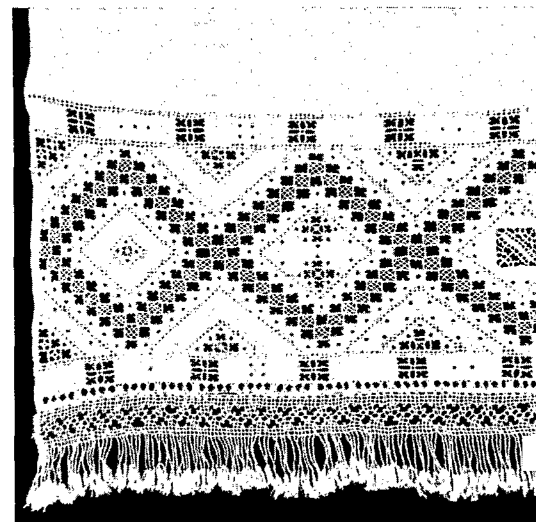
In 1981 we received a substantial donation and were able to reconstruct the last of the old buildings. This has two storeys and faces west (space 14, Fig. 3); it is intended for new exhibitions, and might eventually connect with the open space behind it, where we mean to exhibit the wheel-wells and other devices already described as belonging to the technical folk culture.

In 1982 the main activity was the exhibition *Chypre, les travaux et les jours,* which was shown at the Musée de l'Homme in Paris from February to August. It was organized by the Association Française d'Action Artistique with the collaboration of the Cyprus Folk Art Museum and the Cultural Department of the Cyprus Ministry of Education. This exhibition was an outstanding success. It entered into the spirit and character of Cyprus through folk art and also through examples of art in other periods, from ancient times right down to the Cypriot children's art of today.

Given the dangers still hanging over us and the uprooting of about 200,000 of our people, leaving behind all the vigorous examples of centuries-old folk-art, what has remained in the museum acquires unique importance.

The museum's first aim today is the re-appointment, on a permanent basis, of the two assistants with the necessary auxiliary staff and ample means to undertake a number of vital tasks. The collection needs to be reorganized. Its conservation has to be put on a scientific footing. Its study, publication and projection must also be ensured. But while the danger remains, I believe that a place should be found outside Cyprus, to organize there a Cypriot folk-art museum with the 412 objects selected and preserved for this purpose since October 1975. In the meantime I hope and pray that the international cultural organizations may be able to ensure the safety and protection of the cultural expression of all peoples regardless of political objectives and interests.

Lefcara embroidery: detail from bed-cover. [*Photo:* Cyprus Folk Art Museum.]



Ethnography and the museum in the USSR

Irina Ivanovna Baranova

Graduated from the Faculty of History, Department of Ethnography, of the M. V. Lomonosov Moscow State University, 1957. Since then has worked at the State Ethnographical Museum of the Peoples of the USSR, Leningrad, first as junior research worker, later as scientific secretary and head of the Department of Russian Ethnography, becoming director in 1977. She has earned the distinction of Honoured Cultural Worker of the RSFSR and is the author of a number of articles on ethnography and museology.

In our industrial age with its characteristic tendency towards a general levelling-out of differences in the ways of life of various national groups, it is quite natural that wide interest should be shown in the sources and the national forms of traditional culture. As a logical consequence, new ethnographic museums are being established and increased importance is given to ethnographic materials in exhibitions organized at museums of history, local life and art and at museums commemorating outstanding persons or events. In the USSR, more than 500 different museums possess and exhibit ethnographic collections. There has been a particularly rapid increase in the number of open-air museums of the Skansen type. Half of the thirty open-air ethnographic museums operating in the Soviet Union have been established in the last ten years.

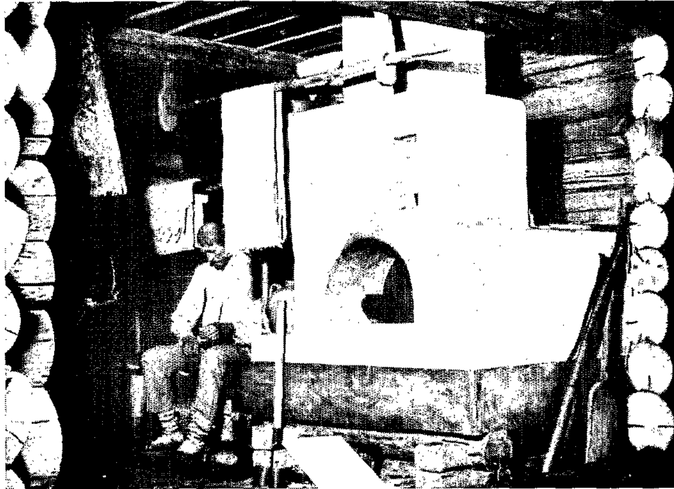
The leading figure in Soviet ethnography, Academician Y. V. Bromley, considers the essential subject-area of ethnography to be the traditional, everyday culture of the *ethnos*.[1] This view is generally accepted today in Soviet ethnography. Ethnographic collections in museums also reflect the specific features of the everyday culture of ethnic groups, and it is the role of ethnographic museums to illustrate this culture in its specific national forms and set it in its historical and socio-economic context.

The development of Soviet ethnography and the experience acquired by our museums demonstrate the need for the ethnographic museum to collect materials relating to the culture of both the past and the present. Museums cannot ignore the modern world and display only relics from the past. Over the years, however, the amount of material available for selection is decreasing, inasmuch as national characteristics are increasingly becoming a

1. Y. V. Bromley, *Etnos i etnografia* [The Ethnos and Ethnography], Moscow, 1973; *Sovremennye problemy etnografii* [Current Problems in Ethnography], Moscow, 1981.

Reconstituted guest-room in a present-day Uzbek house.
[*Photo:* V. P. Peshchanskaya.]

STATE ETHNOGRAPHICAL MUSEUM OF THE PEOPLES OF THE USSR, Leningrad.
Photograph of carpet-sellers in Tiflis (now Tbilisi) taken in 1913.
[*Photo:* State Ethnographical Museum of the Peoples of the USSR.]



Interior of a nineteenth-century Byelorussian peasant house.
[*Photo:* V. P. Peshchanskaya.]

Temporary exhibition *My Dagestan,* November 1982.
[*Photo:* V. P. Peshchanskaya.]

matter of non-material, rather than material, differences. Objects representing the daily life of the past are disappearing without trace and being forgotten.

Ethnographic material provides museums with a potential for fulfilling an educational function although, unfortunately, insufficient use has hitherto been made of it. This potential derives from the multiple functions of traditional cultural objects which may be implements or domestic utensils, ceremonial objects or works of art, while at the same time providing indirect evidence of the ethnic origins, religious beliefs, social and family status, and level of craftsmanship, taste and culture of the original owners. Ethnographic materials help to demonstrate the degree of similarity of the original elements of a culture under given climatic and socio-economic conditions; ethnographic objects undergo little change and thus provide a stable source for the study of the history and culture of different periods. Everyday objects have an immediate appeal and when included in exhibitions thus make a strong emotional impact on the visitor. Opportunities for exhibiting ethnographic collections are, however, limited and it is best to include them in exhibitions in combination with other materials.

The State Ethnographical Museum of the Peoples of the USSR in Leningrad studies these problems and acts as a centre for ethnographic museum methodology in the USSR. It has a collection of 270,000 objects, giving a comprehensive picture of the traditional cultures of more than 150 peoples living in what is now the Soviet Union from the eighteenth century onwards and of the peoples that inhabit the USSR today. The museum also possesses very well-endowed photographic archives containing 160,000 negatives and prints. These materials were collected over a period of eighty years by several generations of ethnographers. The museum acquires each year some 1,500 objects and 3,000 photographs from various sources, mainly as a result of expeditions. More than half the new acquisitions reflect current cultural developments among the peoples of the USSR. Expeditions carried out by Soviet museums for collecting purposes are planned several years in advance and collecting is done on the basis of exhibition and research requirements, taking into account the composition of existing collections.

Principles of collection and exhibition

One of the most important questions of museum theory and practice remains the formulation of precise ideas about the collecting of contemporary materials. This problem in our view warrants special discussion here. As a result of many years' practical work, Soviet ethnographic museums have evolved a principle for selecting such materials. Expressed in its most general form, the principle is that only those objects should be collected which illustrate specific ethnic features. The ethnographic museum neither acquires nor exhibits mass-produced everyday objects.

Soviet museums have already acquired considerable experience in organizing exhibitions and are seeking to identify new and more modern methods of exhibiting ethnographic materials. At the State Ethnographical Museum of the Peoples of the USSR, materials of the period from the eighteenth century to the beginning of the twentieth century are shown in comprehensive displays covering particular peoples or groups of peoples that are historically and culturally related, while present-day materials relating to many different peoples are shown in displays dealing with specific themes. The first type of display includes sections on a variety of peoples—Russian, Ukrainian, Georgian, Uzbek, the peoples of Siberia and the Far East, etc.; the second covers such themes as modern and traditional clothing and dwellings of the peoples of the USSR, folk art of the USSR and so on. Showing the various facets of present-day culture (housing, clothing, ceremonies, applied arts) by means of materials pertaining to many different peoples gives an indication of general trends in the development of ethnic processes and in the emergence of a culture of the Soviet people, a culture that is national in form, socialist in content and international in spirit. These displays also show that progressive national traditions are not only being carefully preserved but are being creatively developed in the conditions of mature socialism.

Photographic documentation is play-

ing an increasing role in ethnographic exhibitions, particularly those displaying present-day materials. Objects of genuine importance in traditional everyday culture, in combination with documentary photographs, have long constituted, and continue to constitute, the basis for ethnographic exhibitions; the various types of audio-visual materials, reproductions, holograms, models and other auxiliary materials can only supplement, but not replace, them.

It is highly important that the different categories of museums should have their own strictly defined area of interest and range of subject matter and should speak to the visitor in a distinct language. For instance, when, as is often the case, decorative and applied folk art, which is an integral part of any ethnic group's traditional culture, is exhibited in museums of art, ethnography, history and local life, museums commemorating particular events or persons or even technical museums, a particular form of presentation should be employed in each case. This is no easy task. The State Ethnographical Museum of the Peoples of the USSR houses a display of contemporary folk art comprising sections dealing with various peoples and arranged according to different art forms. The museum staff are today no longer satisfied with this display and are redesigning it in accordance with modern conceptions of presentation and recent ethnographic research findings. We consider that the country's principal ethnographic museum should not exhibit folk art in accordance with the traditional art history principle, but should show how the artefacts are actually used and how objects of decorative and applied art are produced. We believe that one of the most important themes for the future in ethnographic museums is the use of national traditions in the contemporary arts.

The organization of temporary exhibitions has become an integral part of the modern ethnographic museum's work. At least two temporary exhibitions are organized each month at the State Ethnographical Museum of the Peoples of the USSR. Materials were exhibited from museums and organizations of creative artists in all the Soviet republics prior to the sixtieth anniversary of the founding of the USSR. Ethnographic exhibitions have toured dozens of foreign countries.

Ethnographic museum exhibitions are laboratories where theoretical concepts in ethnography can be applied in practice, and provide a means of acquainting the many thousands of visitors with such concepts. Museum collections are for their part important research sources.

There is wide general interest at the present time in the 'secondary' use of national forms of culture and the importance of ethnographic museums is unquestionably increasing in this regard. The collections and exhibitions of the State Ethnographical Museum of the Peoples of the USSR alone receive each year on working visits hundreds of fabric, carpet and costume specialists, clothing, accessories and footwear designers, jewellers, architects, furniture designers and graphic artists. The museum is constantly consulted on questions of background and costume, in particular for the purposes of film and theatre productions. The museum staff work in fruitful co-operation with craftsmen from small-scale artistic enterprises in the republics. Using elements of traditional ritual, ethnographers also play a special role in devising new ceremonies for such occasions as civil marriage registration and name-giving, wedding receptions and funerals.

By collecting, storing and exhibiting ethnographic collections relating to various periods, these museums fulfil a necessary modern function and exert an influence on the formation of people's tastes and general outlook, and thus, like all museums and museum staff, have great responsibilities in the world of today.

[*Translated from Russian*]

To our readers

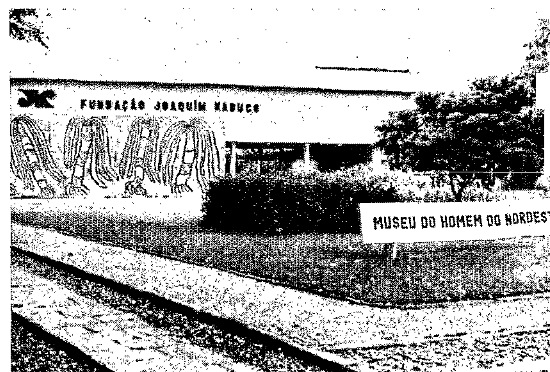
You will have noticed the order form inserted in this and the preceding issues. By passing it on to an individual or institution who might be interested you could help them to benefit from *Museum* as well. Remember, ours is the only magazine that presents so many aspects of museum life in different countries around the world. You can contribute to providing an even broader base to our 'international forum of information and reflection on museums of all kinds'.

Aécio de Oliveira

Born in Recife in 1938. B.A. in museology at the University of Rio de Janeiro. Directed the Folklore Museum in Rio de Janeiro, the Museum of Folk Art in Recife and the Pernambuco State Museum, and co-ordinated the organization of various other museological establishments, such as the Railway Museum, the Piaui Museum, the Metropolitan Art Gallery in Recife and the Museum of North-Eastern Man. Now director of the Department of Museology of the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation and engaged in organizing a mobile unit for museological assistance.

Mario de Souza Chagas

Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1956. B.A. in museology, University of Rio de Janeiro; M.Sc. at the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ). Taught museology, folklore and art history at the *Liceu de Artes e Oficios,* Rio de Janeiro. After several years of museum experience was put in charge of the Joaquim Nabuco Museum in 1980. Helped to set up the Piaui Museum and the Metropolitan Art Gallery and to reorganize the Museum of North-Eastern Man. Now responsible for the Museological Research Section in the Department of Museology of the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation and is preparing an analysis and critical survey of all the museums in the state of Pernambuco.



MUSEU DO HOMEM DO NORDESTE, Recife, Brazil. Façade, with fine examples of redwood in the garden. Panel in the background by the artist Francisco Brennand.
[*Photo:* Severino Ribeiro.]

A tropical experiment: the Museu do Homem do Nordeste, Recife

During the governorship of Count John Maurice of Naussau-Siegen (1637–44), the province of Pernambuco was the scene of the first experiment in tropical museology. Well in advance of its time, a truly living open-air museum was founded in the grounds of the Palace of Vrijburg, with botanical and zoological gardens specializing in the collection, conservation, study and exhibition of tropical plants and animals.[1] This large park, which was open to the public and, as José Antonio Gonsalves de Mello says in his book *Tempo de flamengos,* served 'the whole community', contained, in addition to an enormous quantity of coconut palms, orange, lemon, pomegranate, papaya, cashew, genipap and calabash trees, plus mangabas, uvalhas and Suriname cherries, etc., a large number of indigenous animal species from almost the whole of Brazil and from Africa. 'It was here that Georg Markgraf carried out his natural history studies and here that the drawings of leaves were made for the beautiful books of paintings known as the *Theatrum rerum naturalium* and those painted by Wagner for his *Thierbuch.*'[2]

It is surprising that the ideal to which many of the most avant-garde Brazilian museums aspire—to be centres of both instruction and delight—should thus have been realized as early as the seventeenth century. It is equally surprising to find that this early pioneering experiment in tropical museology was not to be repeated until the nineteenth century. The Brazilian royal family created the Horto Real de Aclimatação, and the Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi was established in 1866 as a 'philomathic society'.[3]

This earlier museological history lends support to our conviction that the adaptation of museums to the tropical environment of Brazil is not only a viable proposition but is in fact essential for the future development of museology in the country.

The Museum of North-Eastern Man: organizing principles

Can a museum with a specified area of interest, covering collections that consist essentially of materials which deteriorate on exposure to the open air, be adapted to tropical conditions? What kinds of measures would best suit that purpose? Where could we look for museological models capable of meeting the manifold needs of Brazilian man in general and North-Eastern man in particular? These were the basic questions to be solved in planning and establishing the Museu do Homem do Nordeste.

The museum, formally opened on 21 July 1979, was designed to serve as a laboratory for museological experiment. Such a plan had to take into account the geographical, psychological and intellectual factors which have shaped the mentality and outlook of the inhabitants of the region. Respect for these fundamental factors should be the aim of each and every museum; it led this one to illustrate significant aspects of the local community in order to become a truly representative museum.

The idea of setting up a museum along these lines led the Department of Museology of the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation to work on the idea of combining three separate museums: the Sugar Museum, the Museum of Folk Art and the Museum of Anthropology. The basic reasoning was that one representative museum is better than any number of entirely unrepresentative or only partially representative museums. This scheme,

1. Gilberto Freyre, *A presenca do açúcar na formação brasileira,* p. 120, Rio de Janeiro, Instituto do Açúcar e do Alcool, Administrative Division, Documentation Service, 1975, 212 pp., illus. (Coleção Canavieira, 16.)
2. José Antonio Gonsalves de Mello, *Tempo de flamengos. Influência da ocupação holandesa na vida e na cultura do Norte do Brasil,* pp. 102–4, Recife, Secretariat of Education and Culture, Department of Culture, 1978, 292 pp., illus. (Coleção Pernambucana, 15.)
3. Paulo B Cavalcanti, *Guia Botânico do Museu Goeldi,* pp. 5-6, Belém, Museu Paraense Emilio Goeldi, 1979, 60 pp., illus. (Série Guias, 4.)

carried into effect in the first half of 1979, had been in gestation since 1974, for it was then that the sociologist, Gilberto Freyre, in his book *A presença do açúcar na formacão brasileira,* deplored the separation of the Anthropology and Sugar Museums and advocated combining them under the same scientific direction.[4]

A study of the holdings of the three museums confirmed that there was a good deal of overlap. Analysis of the area of intersection revealed, in turn, that the new unified museum's principle object should be man himself, as reflected in his art, history, economic life, sociology, ethnology, religion, etc.

The effort to devise museological guidelines for the organization of the museum made it necessary to examine the nature and behaviour of the people of the region as well as the functioning of other museums. It was thus discovered that most traditional museums leave visitors feeling that they have reached saturation point; it is quite common for individuals to complain of headaches, pains in their legs, sore eyes, etc., after going round an exhibition. If this evidence is to be taken seriously, the following questions need to be faced: Why are visitors left feeling that they cannot stand any more? Why are not visits to museums organized in such a way as to make them a useful and constructive form of relaxation or entertainment?

The fact is that tropical man shows a distinct preference for open-air recreation, for bathing in the sea or in rivers, lakes or reservoirs, and for strolling in gardens, parks and zoos. In the same way, fairs such as the Caruaru Fair in Pernambuco, the Santana Fair in Bahia and the São Cristovão Fair in Rio de Janeiro, attract large numbers of people and serve at once social, commercial and recreational purposes.

These seemingly simple and obvious facts convinced the specialists of the museology department that Brazilian museums are faced with two basic alternatives: either they must be adapted to our tropical conditions or they are doomed to remain an alien phenomenon, serving no useful purpose and hence detrimental to our cultural development.

Some programming suggestions

In attempting to find satisfactory solutions to the problem of adaptation, it was agreed that the main aim would have to be to induce people attracted by and accustomed to the open air to enter an enclosed circuit of their own accord. It was therefore decided to merge the internal and external elements. In this connection, recognition of the political, social, historical and economic importance of the fair or marketplace in our society was crucial, since it suggested the possibility of recreating the atmosphere of a fair for the purposes of a museum exhibition. This in turn implied moving away from show-case museography and at the same time bringing the public and the exhibits closer together.

Not only a meeting-place, the fair or market is also a commercial and recreational centre. Unlike a single shop, it offers a variety of goods and choices for all sorts of customers. It is often said of the Caruaru Fair, for instance, that 'anything in the world can be found there'. Besides this wide selection, the fair also has its own distinctive structural organization, represented by the grouping together of ceramics, leather goods, basketwork, foodstuffs, domestic utensils, medicinal herbs, etc. The Museum of North-Eastern Man endeavoured, as far as possible, to maintain this extremely communicative structural organization.

The inclusion in the museum display of exhibits that are actually found in folk fairs, such as straw baskets, bobbin lace, nets, oil lamps, dolls, ceramic utensils, broadsheets, wood carvings, etc., identifies people with the museum, so that visitors feel they are represented, exalted and rewarded, as may be gathered from various of their comments: 'I can make a doll like that too'; 'I have a pot just like that at home'; 'I used to play a lot with these beads when I was small and my children still do'; 'I worked in a sugar mill like that'; 'My grandmother knows how to make bobbin lace'.

All this goes to show how the museum enhances the status of the cultural development of the region where it has been established. Moreover, it is not only the lower-income groups that identify with the museum, since members of the wealthier social strata are represented by crested tableware, silver sugarbowls and cutlery, crystal chandeliers and decanters, portraits in oils, jacaranda and split-cane furniture, fans and handkerchiefs in fine fabrics, painted tiles, etc.

All these objects, regardless of the social strata from which they come, are treated with like seriousness and are often deliberately shown side by side, in order to highlight particular facets of north-eastern man.

It should be pointed out that the idea of an exhibition borrowing some of its

4. Freyre, op. cit., pp. 46–67.

Entrance hall to second exhibition area. In the centre, a fine example of the boilers formerly used on sugar plantations. [*Photo:* Severino Ribeiro.]

features from the marketplace is not the only museographic approach adopted by the Museum of North-Eastern Man, although it is the predominant one. In some instances, the use of show-cases proved unavoidable for security reasons or in order to provide better conditions for the preservation of the exhibits. Even then, however, an attempt was made to maintain visual balance and to make the display pleasing to the eye and consistent with the aesthetic sensibility of the viewer.

One of the ways of ensuring that the visitor did not reach saturation point was the abolition of lengthy explanatory labels—a didactic approach that had failed to work in practice. With the removal of the labels, the object exhibited was freed from all superfluous appendages and left to communicate the whole of its cultural message through its visual impact alone.

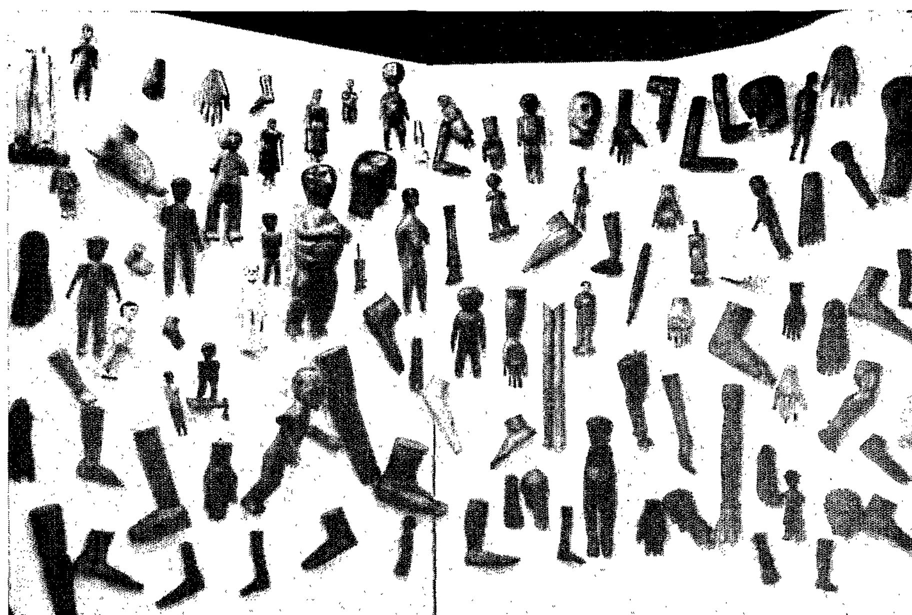
The labels were replaced by micro-monographs, displayed in small acrylic cases attached to the panels and walls, from which the visitor can obtain the information that interests him. These micro-monographs are prepared by specialists in folklore, museology, sociology, archaeology, anthropology, etc., and are written in language readily understandable to the public at large.

The information given in the micro-monographs is suppplemented by a permanent system of guided tours which, besides catering for local visitors, is also designed to meet the needs of foreign tourists and students who can understand Portuguese, Spanish, French or English.

The collection

The permanent exhibition, which is estimated to include some 25,000 items, starts by presenting the states belonging to the North-Eastern region and the ethnic groups that have helped to mould North-Eastern man—and Brazilian man, too—whose biological type is identifiable by certain characteristic features. The ethnographic collection has recently been enlarged by indigenous materials gathered in the states of Pernambuco and Maranhão.

Various aspects of local housing are also highlighted. A large collection of hinges, crossbars and bolts for doors and gates, nails, lianas for mooring boats, hammock fasteners, glazed tiles, bricks, roofing tiles, stones, gratings, decorative plaques, water pumps, etc., supplemented by photographs of various kinds of dwellings, give the visitor an idea of the quality and quantity of components used in North-Eastern houses. The bulk of this material dates from the last century and was collected as houses were demolished.



Ex-votos which faithfully reflect the piety of North-Eastern man are here displayed in much the same way as they are found in churches.
[*Photo:* Josenildo Freire.]

The collection of lamps made of tin plate, iron, glass, aluminium and plastic provides some of the best evidence of the creative skill and inventiveness of North-Eastern man. Many of these lamps are beautiful, successfully combining a pleasing and decorative form with the functional requisites of the object.

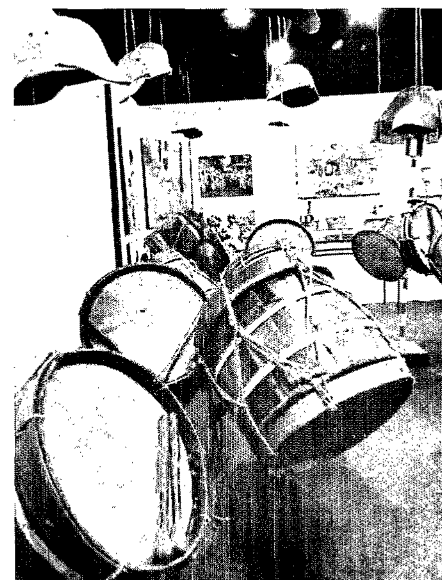
Technology is also represented in the section *Telecommunications in the North-East,* which was opened in August 1981 and contains a selection of old and modern telephones.

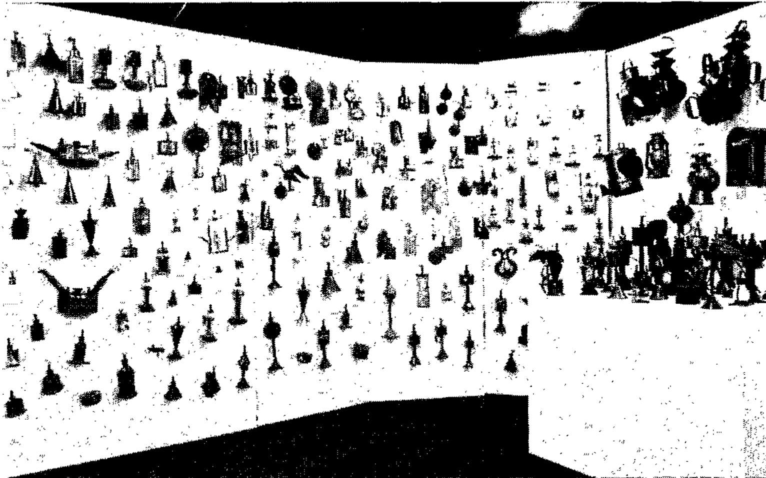
The collection of some 400 ex-votos, initiated by the founder of the Joaquim Nabuco Institute (today the Joaquim Nabuco Foundation), the sociologist, Gilberto Freyre, is one of the most original in the country, consisting of examples in the shape of houses, mills, bottles, animals, tractors, animal paws and hooves, plants and ears of corn, as well as more traditional ex-votos of heads and other parts of the human body.

The divinities of the Afro-Brazilian voodoo rites are shown with the costumes worn to represent them and their appropriate attributes.

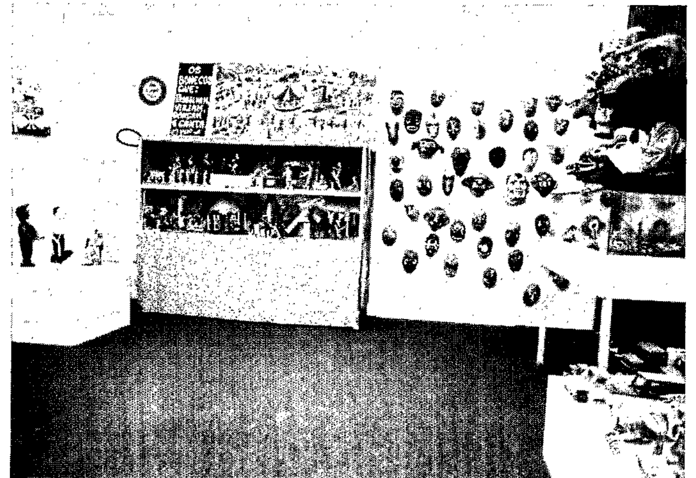
Aspects of folklore, including such fields as cookery and pharmacy, folk-literature, lace-makers' bobbins and pillows, the *bumba-meu-boi,* the *mamulengo,* the *caboclinho* and the *maracatu* (traditional dances and groups of dancers), and aspects of economic life, illustrated by such goods as leather, tobacco and sugar, are also duly represented, especially sugar,

Back section of the Maracatu Elefante exhibit.
[*Photo:* Severino Ribeiro.]





Lamps are simple objects in which North-Eastern man expresses his creativity and adaptive capacity.
[*Photo:* Josenildo Freire.]



Carnival masks, popular toys and movable sculptures. Popular art has a place of honour in the Museum of North-Eastern Man.
[*Photo:* Severino Ribeiro.]

since it has been the basic factor influencing the economic, historical and social development of the North-Eastern region since the earliest days of its colonization. Various tools and machines used in sugar production during the pre- and post-industrial periods are accordingly displayed.

The slaves' labour by which the sugar economy was supported until at least the latter part of the nineteenth century is also depicted, by means of a contrast between the owner's house and the slaves' quarters, a juxtaposition of the furnishings of the drawing-room and instruments of torture.

The exhibition is rounded off with a large collection of rum labels, cloth dolls, popular toys, wood carvings by artists such as 'o Louco', popular paintings by artists such as Bajado, carnival masks, jointed sculptures by artists such as Nho Caboclo and Solon A. de Mendonça, and ceramics by artists such as Vitalino, Tiago de Amorim, Zé do Carmo, Zé Caboclo, Severina and Zezinho de Tracunhaém.

To finish off the visit, what could be better than to sample some candy-floss and take a walk through the Ecological Garden where one can admire the cashew tree, the redwood, the sugar-cane, the cacao tree, the jack tree, the myrtle, the araucaria, the mangaba and a whole series of tropical plants, some native and others not, but all duly acclimatized.

Problems of lighting and storage

The attempt to adapt museology to tropical conditions made apparent the need to devise a suitable lighting system. Brilliant sunshine and bright daylight hamper attempts to make indiscriminate use of darkened or dimly lit settings for the purpose of enhancing an exhibit's effect; visitors leaving premises where this approach is adopted often have to make an effort to readjust their eyes to the new situation. The Museum of North-Eastern Man has therefore avoided this type of lighting, favouring instead the use of concealed fluorescent tubes in aluminium fittings directed upwards at the ceiling. This intense, clear, cold and indirect form of lighting has so far proved the most suitable.

A study of the major Brazilian museums of art, history and science makes it clear that one of the principal factors responsible for the deterioration of objects is the practice of placing them in storage for indefinite periods. Apart from requiring very special environmental conditions that are still beyond the means of most Brazilian museums, storage may mean that objects that could be exhibited without any risk are consigned to oblivion. From the museological point of view, this is absurd, since the basic purpose of a museum is to convey various aspects of human knowledge to the public by means of exhibiting its collections. In concealing part of the heritage belonging to the public without adequate justification, therefore, the museum is failing to carry out its duties. It must be made clear that this does not imply doing away with reserve collections but simply scaling them down and systematizing their function. The only items stored should be those that are in transit or that, for one reason or another, do not fit into the proposed museological programme

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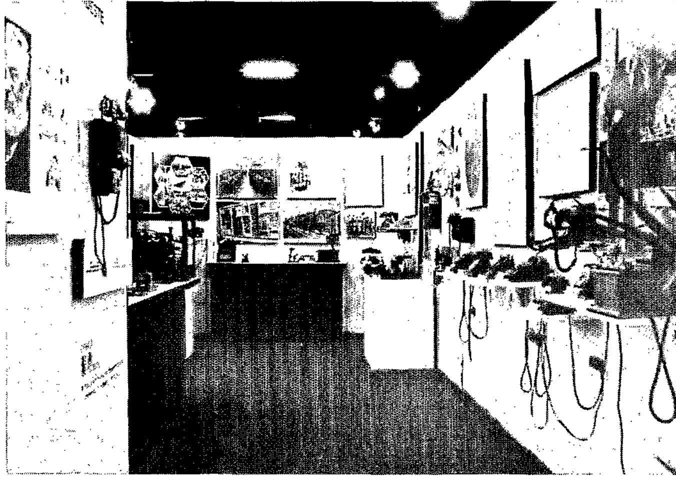


View of the exhibition *Telecommunications in the North-East,* where children can enjoy themselves by making telephone connections and operating a telegraph.
[*Photo:* Josenildo Freire.]

On the left, the standard of the Maracatu Elefante carnival street dancers, disbanded in 1962. In the centre, the costume of Dona Santa, the Queen of the Maracatu Elefante.
[*Photo:* Josenildo Freire.]

but can be used to add life to the museum's activities through temporary or travelling exhibitions.

Our balance sheet

After three years of existence, it is now possible to appreciate the impact of the Museum of North-Eastern Man through the favourable reactions it has produced both among the people of Greater Recife and among the many visitors from various parts of Brazil and from abroad. Visitor figures show that this museum, as a dynamic combination of the three earlier museums, has succeeded in arousing a greater and livelier interest among the general public. Through it they are able to learn about the characteristic features of the people of the region, which can be properly understood only when fruitfully related to other regions, at either national or international level.

In his work *Ciência do homem e museologia,* the sociologist Gilbert Freyre has remarked that

> the new museum is a synthesis of the past, of the life and culture of man in north-eastern Brazil, and as such is not only a centre where regional problems can be studied and clarified, and information about them obtained, but also a cultural body at the service of Brazil itself and of other Euro-tropical nations. It is a museum where university students and schoolchildren, the Brazilian public, and foreigners passing through the capital of Pernambuco or coming from universities in Europe and elsewhere to pursue specialist studies at the Nabuco Institute—as has been the practice for several years—can obtain a sound and reliable impression of the living conditions, types of housing and working techniques of the people of Brazil's agricultural North-East, as compared with the life-styles and rural working techniques of the indigenous peoples or residents of other tropical and Euro-tropical areas, especially, it should be noted, of other tropical regions with more or less the same social background as Brazil, the so-called Hispano-tropical, and above all Luso-tropical, regions.[5]

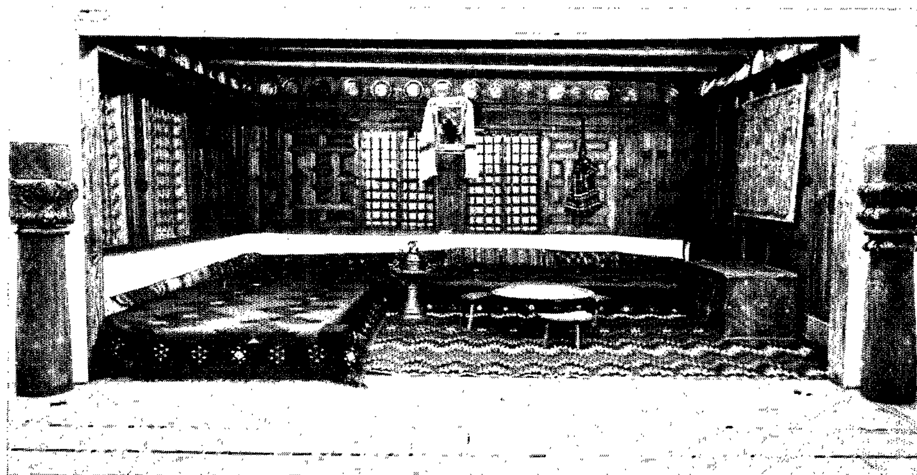
In continuation of the museological activities of the Jaoquim Nabuco Foundation, the Department of Museology was called upon to plan, co-ordinate and set up the proposed Piaui Museum in Teresina, based on the old Piaui Historical Museum. This project was completed and the museum formally opened in December 1980. In March 1981, the Metropolitan Art Gallery was opened in Recife, its museological and museographical projects having been co-ordinated and carried out by the Department of Museology. This same department has also recently drawn up a preliminary scheme for the reorganization of the Museu Paraense Emílio Goeldi and the establishment of the Museum of Far-Northern Man.

As was implied above, the Museum of North-Eastern Man is not to be regarded as a completed, finalized achievement but as one of many possible proposals for the practical application of tropical museology, subject to adjustment and re-interpretation. Two years of activity have already been sufficient to give the museum an idea of the new procedures it should adopt and the main alterations that need to be made.

Most important of all, however, is our firm conviction that, whatever solution may be proposed for the adaptation of museums to the tropical conditions of Brazil, this solution must be centred on man himself. Irrespective, therefore, of the field a museum covers, it must always have a basis in anthropology. It is also generally agreed today that it is less important to increase the number of museums than to overhaul and restructure already existing ones so as to make them truly representative. The Department of Museology is therefore planning to organize a mobile unit to help all establishments requiring services of this kind and to introduce the same tropical bias into museology throughout the whole of northern and north-eastern Brazil.

[*Translated from Portuguese*]

5. Gilberto Freyre, *Ciência do Homem e Museologia: sugestões em torno do Museu do Homem do Nordeste do Instituto Joaquim Nabuco de Pesquisas Sociais,* p. 49, Recife, IJNPS, 1979, illus. (Série Documentos, 14.)



NATIONAL ETHNOGRAPHIC MUSEUM, Sofia.
Interior from the town of Teteven,
nineteenth century.
[*Photo:* Nedialka Kraptcheva.]

The Bulgarian ethnographic heritage,

Penko Puntev

Born in 1938. Graduated in history (with archaeology) in 1964 from the Kliment Ohridsky University of Sofia. From 1964 to 1967, archaeologist at the history museum of the city of Panagyurishte; chief administrator 1967–78. Director of the National Ethnographic Museum since 1978. Member of the Bulgarian National Committee of ICOM. Numerous articles and publications on ethnography, folk arts and museology, including in particular: *Bulgarian Folk Art*, Sofia, 1980; 'Bulgarian Folk Plastic Art', *Folk Arts in Bulgaria*, Pittsburgh, United States, 1976; *The National Ethnographic Museum of Sofia*, Sofia, 1980; *The Ethnographic Heritage of Bulgaria*, Catalogue, Rostock, 1980.

The idea of setting up an ethnographic museum in Bulgaria dates back to 1832 and is closely linked with the names of some of the major patriotic figures in Bulgarian history. Increased interest in the ethnographic heritage was also discernible from the mid-nineteenth century onwards, while the struggle for national liberation was developing. The most famous educators and revolutionaries of the Bulgarian National Revival left us ethnographic studies. Influenced by their ideas, the Bulgarian literary society in the town of Braila, Romania, undertook the collection of material with a view to the creation of a Bulgarian museum.

In Constantinople in 1873, the Bulgarian charitable society Prosveshtenie (Education) organized an ethnographic exhibition of handicrafts which met with striking success. On this occasion, Professor Marin Drinov raised once more the question of the establishment of a Bulgarian ethnographic museum, recommending that it should cover the fields of national dress, jewellery, furniture, customs and rites, agricultural implements, and cottage industry.

The realization of these plans for the creation of Bulgarian museums became possible after the liberation of Bulgaria in 1878. Towards the end of the same year, the Sofia Public Library was set up, comprising a museum section. The first objects selected for display were ethnographic items. Systematic collection of such items began in 1886. At the first agricultural and industrial exhibition, organized in Plovdiv in 1892, a large number of objects used in daily life in Bulgaria were displayed and were handed over to the museum section of the library after the exhibition closed. In subsequent years, the collection increased very rapidly and made possible the creation of a proper museum, the People's Ethnographic Museum, in 1906, together with the constitution of the archives of the National Revival. At the time, the museum possessed approximately 5,000 objects, covering every aspect of traditional Bulgarian culture. Dimitar Marinov, an eminent ethnographer, was its first director; indeed, until 1944 the museum was also a national centre for ethnographic research. Apart from publications of a purely scientific nature, it issued a general information report, fourteen volumes of which were published before 1943. On the eve of the Second World War, the museum had a collection of approximately 20,000 items. Unfortunately, during the air raids on the capital in the winter of 1944, several valuable objects were destroyed, together with part of the extremely precious museum archives.

In 1918, an ethnographic museum was set up in Plovdiv as well, covering southern Bulgaria. Until 1944, these were the only two ethnographic museums in Bulgaria, although there were many private ethnographic collections.

The activities of the two museums during this period, although limited and

Home looms and national costumes, seventeenth–nineteenth century. [*Photo:* Nedialka Kraptcheva.]

Christmas dancers from the Silistra region. [*Photo:* Nedialka Kraptcheva.].

past and present

not systematic enough in nature, were extremely valuable for the safeguarding, study and enhancement of the Bulgarian ethnographic heritage.

After 1944

After 1944, ethnography and ethnographic museums entered a qualitatively new phase of development. The solution of problems posed by the ethnographic heritage required a new approach and new methods of organization. In 1949, the People's Ethnographic Museum in Sofia joined forces with the People's Institute for Science, attached to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, leading to the creation of the Ethnographic Institute and Museum attached to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences, which enjoys the status of National Ethnographic Museum. This constitutes a national centre for scientific and applied ethnographic research and etchnographic museum science. It forms an integral part of the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences and is headed by a director-general, a museum director and a scientific council. The powers of the latter also include the award of degrees and other academic qualifications in ethnography.

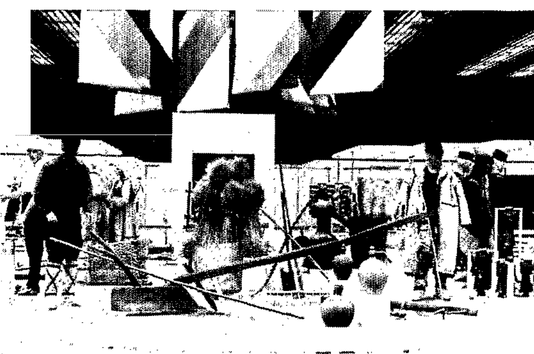
After the socialist revolution, museum science began to develop at a faster pace in Bulgaria. Today, our country has one of the highest concentrations of museums in the world: some 220 state museums and more than 400 public museums. The total number of ethnographic museums has risen from two to forty over the same period, twelve of which are independent and twenty-three of which have the status of departments within the provincial history museums. There are some 150 officially registered public ethnographic museums, whose collections number some 420,000 items. These figures demonstrate that, over the last twenty years, very significant progress has been achieved in the development of these museums.

The need for widespread co-operation between ethnographic museums, as an important prerequisite for their efficient use, led to the creation of a National Co-ordination Commission based on the Ethnographical Institute and Museum attached to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. The task of the commission is to help solve current problems of museum science and it convenes, every two years, the National Conference of Bulgarian Ethnographers.

The rapid increase in the number of ethnographical museums illustrates the special attention that the people of Bulgaria themselves have devoted to their ethnographic heritage; the values expressed in that heritage represent not only a memory of the past but also a living need. This has been a very significant factor in determining the specific nature of ethnographic museum activities and research. Exhibitions, educational work and promotional activities are chiefly aimed at providing contemporary man with a simple and thorough introduction to the treasures of his heritage. This also means taking ethnographic materials out of the museum and making them an indispensable component of present-day socio-cultural life. From being a matter of the past, they have become an issue of the future. This approach and this need call for the pursuit of diversity, freedom and accessibility in ethnographic exhibitions in Bulgarian museums. Traditional architecture provides them with a natural setting in which the visitor comes into direct contact with ethnographic objects and can react to them spontaneously. This approach involves making maximum use of the possibilities provided by open-air museums and architectural and ethnographic sites and protected areas. A typical example of this is the Etara open-air ethnographic museum at Gabrovo, where demonstrations of traditional handicrafts and cottage industry are given.[1] The visitor is shown not merely the object but the whole process of production and operation of machinery, and can even take part in this process. The same principle underlies the establishment of scores of architectural and ethnographic areas, comprising the former craftsmen's and tradesmen's quarters, which have been preserved and restored in towns such as Plovdiv, Tarnovo, Lovech, Elena, Shumen, Triavna, Koprivshtitza, Melnik and the villages of Bozhentsi and Zheravna.

1. See Lazar Donkov, 'Etar Ethnographical Park-Museum at Gabrovo, Bulgaria', *Museum*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 1, 1976, pp. 9–13.

Agriculture, eighteenth–nineteenth century. [*Photo:* Nedialka Kraptcheva.]



National Ethnographic Exhibition, 1981. [*Photo:* Nedialka Kraptcheva.]

Integration with contemporary culture

A feature of Bulgarian ethnographers' museum activity and research is the attention they have devoted to problems related to the active integration of the timeless materials of the ethnographic heritage with the contemporary culture and way of life. Solutions to these problems are closely linked to the national programme of aesthetic education, unique of its kind, which was prepared on the initiative and under the direct leadership of the late Ludmila Zhivkova, a prominent figure in government and in cultural policy. The chief aim of the programme is to form and to develop, in a harmonious and well-rounded fashion, the creative capacities of individuals for whom the pursuit and creation of beauty is of paramount importance. The achievement of this noble aim would be unthinkable without a maximum use of the nation's cultural potential, built up over the centuries, of which the ethnographic heritage is an essential and irreplaceable part.

The specific nature, function and scope of the tasks which have been entrusted to ethnographic museums and scientific institutes required the establishment of a sufficiently broad social basis, aimed at involving the entire nation in their implementation.

In 1964, the Ethnographic Institute and Museum attached to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences contributed to the preparation of a methodology relating to the organizing and to the activities of the Narodno Tvorchestvo clubs of the Pioneer organization. Some 1,200 of these clubs are operating today in our country. They provide an opportunity for children up to the age of fourteen to discover traditional Bulgarian cultural values, produce ethnographic objects of their own and learn folk-songs, melodies and dances. Exhibitions of children's work have been organized in Bulgaria and abroad.

Each year during the summer, schools organize expeditions which give children an opportunity to acquaint themselves with traditional folk culture and to study it in its original context, making use of special methods.

Activities such as these encourage in children a genuine respect for cultural values and, with spiritual enrichment, contribute to their aesthetic education and stimulate their patriotic feeling and their creative aptitudes. Another positive feature is that, thanks to the children's efforts, the problems of the ethnographic heritage are drawn to the attention of a large number of adults.

The activities of professional associations and mass organizations play an important part in fostering a positive attitude towards the immutable values of the ethnographic heritage. Thanks to these endeavours, the museums enjoy wide public support and thousands of people co-operate in the organization of major ventures on a national scale.

A national retrospective

The first national retrospective of ethnographic materials, which took place in 1980/81 under the slogan 'Heirs to age-old wisdom and beauty', was a vivid example of this. It was organized by the National Council of the Fatherland Front (the largest mass organization in Bulgaria), the Committee on Culture and the Ethnographic Institute and Museum attached to the Bulgarian Academy of Sciences. It purposes were: to celebrate the 1,300th anniversary of the Bulgarian state; to enhance the role and importance of the ethnographic heritage of the Bulgarian people, forming part of its historical and cultural wealth; to make available and accessible to researchers and to the public ethnographic materials which Bulgarians have in their homes and which have not found their way into museums or scientific institutes; to stimulate new ideas for the protection, development and utilization of the ethnographic heritage under present-day conditions; and to contribute to the patriotic and aesthetic education of the Bulgarian people. Participation was on a voluntary basis and the ownership and security of the materials lent for the purpose were absolutely guaranteed. The Ethnographic Institute and Museum took care of the scientific and methodological management while city and provincial museums and committees of the Fatherland Front were responsible for organizational work at local level.

The national retrospective was organized at three levels: district, province and the nation as a whole. The main events included exhibitions of original objects representing traditional folk culture, festivities, customs and ceremonies of days gone by, competitions for the best conservation and knowledge of ethnographic materials, original folklore performance, and so forth. The ethnographic exhibitions were central to these events: some 800,000 objects were

shown at 3,000 exhibitions organized throughout the country.

This is of particular importance in view of the fact that state and public ethnographic museums possess about 420,000 objects. More than 450,000 individuals participated in these events and the number of visitors was more than 4 million—half the country's total population.

The climax of the retrospective was the National Ethnographic Exhibition held at the Palace of Culture during November and December 1981. Occupying an area of about 4,500 m², it contained some 4,000 objects selected from the most valuable of those shown in the district and provincial museums. The exhibition provided an overall view of the traditional crafts, homes, daily life, festivities, customs, ceremonies and arts of the Bulgarian people. Appropriate musical accompaniment, authentic folk costumes and ceremonies and film shows all served to create a lively atmosphere in the exhibition hall. The exceptional facilities offered by the Palace of Culture were important to the success of the exhibition. In two weeks (the fact that it did not go on longer was the subject of justified complaint), the exhibition received 280,000 visitors, breaking all known records in this field. Not a single spectator was left unmoved, and spontaneous reactions and tears of emotion and joy bore eloquent testimony to the very complex spiritual life of modern man. The results of the retrospective, which surprised even the organizers, require thorough and comprehensive analysis. People of all ages and social groups from all over the country participated in this event and, in a very enterprising spirit, made a considerable contribution to the enrichment and variety of the programme. Indeed, public opinion has endorsed the idea of making the National Ethnographic Exhibition a regular event.

It should also be stressed that representatives of other ethnic groups, especially ethnic Turks, took an active part in the retrospective. They provided a large number of objects which highlighted above all those elements of the traditional culture that bear witness to age-old coexistence. The retrospective showed how many important objects are kept by Bulgarians in their homes. The scientific cataloguing and documenting of this heritage are important not only for ethnography but also for the other social sciences.

The museological and scientific activity as a whole of Bulgarian ethnographers reflects their profound conviction that the ethnographic heritage is not a static phenomenon and should not remain locked up in the display cases and storerooms of museums. A positive and creative attitude to ethnographic property and its total integration into contemporary culture plays an important role in public education since the wealth of this heritage is essential to present-day man.

The question of continuity, of the historical relations between the ethnographic heritage and the nation's culture, is not a simple matter. It is necessary to reconsider and to present this heritage in accordance with the requirements of our age, so that it becomes an integral part of our socialist culture. Its historical development and its future prospects are of great importance for the cultural development of present-day Bulgaria. This question is closely bound up with that of making modern man a harmonious and integrated creative personality, capable not only of consuming but also of creating.

It is the profound conviction of Bulgarian ethnographers that the ethnographic heritage, the collective handiwork of the entire people, can be effectively preserved, enriched and presented only when the people as a whole feel concern for it. It represents values that a people cannot live without, values that man constantly seeks and creates in order to preserve his humanity, now and forever.

[*Translated from Bulgarian*]

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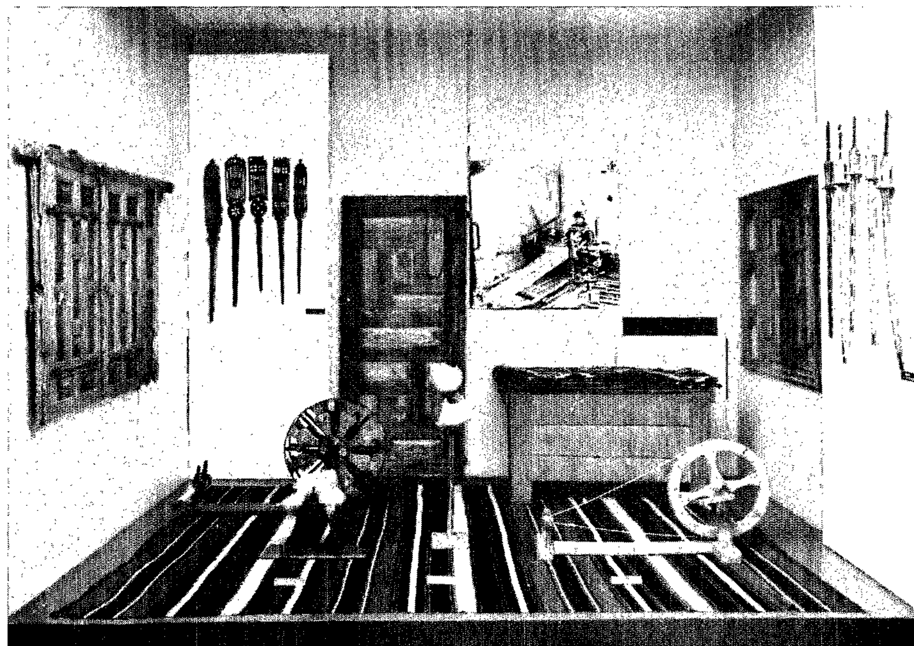


Home looms, interior, eighteenth–nineteenth century. [*Photo:* Nedialka Kraptcheva.]

The Greater Cleveland Ethnographic Museum: responsibilities towards ethnic constituents

Annette B. Fromm

Born in 1950 at Pittsburgh, Pa., United States. Ph. D. candidate at Indiana University's Folklore Institute. Currently conducting fieldwork in the Romaniote Jewish community of Ioannina, Greece, on the subject of traditional culture and ethnic identity. Co-ordinator of the Folk Arts Working Group, International Committee of Museums of Ethnography, ICOM. Worked at the Greater Cleveland Ethnographic Museum for three years, 1977–80.

In 1975 a highly motivated group of a hundred people came together in Cleveland, Ohio, to realize a long-cherished dream which they all shared. Most of the group were children of immigrants, who make up the backbone of this industrial American city. With the impetus of the American Revolution bicentennial celebration planned throughout the United States, this impassioned group recognized the influence of immigrants in Cleveland and wanted to see a representation of the heritage of which they felt a part included in the celebrations. With a grant from the City of Cleveland and assistance from the Western Reserve Historical Society, a four-month long exhibition was presented, portraying the contributions of immigrant cultures to Cleveland's multicultural population.

Artefacts loaned by individuals from sixteen ethnic communities were displayed in the first exhibition of the ethnographic museum. The gala opening, with folk costumes, folk song and dance and ethnic snacks, set the mood for the four months of lectures and cultural programmes which supplemented the exhibition. These programmes included presentations by the Ukrainian, Jewish, Byelorussian, Slovenian, Slovak, Greek, Italian and other communities.

Most of the objects on exhibition as well as the programmes, however, presented a unidimensional stereotype of Cleveland's ethnic groups. This was based on a concept of historical continuity in cultural traditions, or what we call memory culture. Objects displayed were those treasures transported ages ago by ancestors who left the Old Country. Other objects were similar reminders of the past purchased on visits home, which now serve as symbols of the proverbial good old way of life. Programmes included songs and dances performed in both authentic and reproduced costumes representing a culture of the past free of any American influence. The exhibition reflected the general view of ethnic communities held by American museums in the mid-1970s; that is, they were repositories of colourful customs and practices whose only relevance was an historical identification with a romantic past.

The goals of the individuals who organized the bicentennial exhibition at the ethnographic museum lay beyond this temporary display of memory culture. First was the desire to establish a permanent museum which represented the traditional culture of the ethnic communities of Cleveland, showing the contributions which they had made to the vital life and identity of the city. Second,

Paul Pargoliti, one of the individuals whose life history contributed to the story of *Passages to American Urban Life.* [*Photo:* Greater Cleveland Ethnographic Museum.]

The Burying of the Bass Fiddle (Bögö Temetes), carnival folk drama performed annually among the Hungarian community. [*Photo:* Greater Cleveland Ethnographic Museum.]

their intention was to expand the traditional past-oriented approach to ethnic culture. The ethnographic present, made alive through the responses of traditional culture to current influences in a highly urban, industrial and pluralistic setting, was the vast uncharted field which the ethnographic museum proposed to explore and present. From this point of view, neither history nor memory culture would be overlooked or devalued but placed in a proper perspective, according to the respective worth attributed to them by each community under consideration.

Getting organized

Late in 1977, after hiring a full-time staff and obtaining gallery, office and storage facilities, the Greater Cleveland Ethnographic Museum attacked its goals and started making inroads into the communities of Cleveland. Initially, contact was through the museum's board members, each active in his or her respective community. They took the staff to community activities, introducing them to other members and helping to impart an insight into the daily workings and values of each community.

The ethnographic museum gallery was located in Cleveland's Old Arcade. Built in the late nineteenth century, the arcade, an indoor corridor between the two major central thoroughfares, is a nationally known Cleveland landmark. The first two floors are filled with shops and restaurants while the upper four levels house offices. A glass skylight the length of the building floods the floors with light which reflects upon the brass fixtures. The museum's location on the first floor offered exposure to visitors coming specifically to see a current exhibition and to passers-by who had not yet heard of it.

The day-to-day business included the organization of temporary exhibitions in the store-front gallery. As a grass-roots museum, its exhibitions were built around objects loaned by community members. Looking at aspects of traditional culture from an historical perspective, the exhibitions ranged from displays of traditional costumes and musical instruments of Croatia to an exploration of St Sava's Day in the Serbian community of the city. The work of individual folk artists was also shown in the gallery. Jack Gbur is a Ukrainian-American folk artist whose sculptures and bas-reliefs reflect scenes from the Ukraine as well as the countryside where he grew up outside Cleveland. They also show characters who are representative of the Ukrainian-American experience. Other exhibitions focused on broader themes, such as the International Year of the Child exhibition, which displayed children's objects in the museum's collections along with posters painted by children from Cleveland's 'Little Italy'. A poster contest emphasizing Italian identity had been held in the community centre and the winning works formed part of the exhibition.

Another feature of the daily business of the ethnographic museum was the production of travelling exhibitions which went primarily to schools, community centres and nationality halls in the city's neighbourhoods. The aim of these small exhibitions was to draw attention to the diversity of cultures which exist side by side in Cleveland. One of the first projects of the staff in 1977, in fact, was to assemble a travelling photographic exhibition. The history of immigration to Cleveland as well as contemporary home, work and social life in ethnic communities formed the themes for this project. Classroom presentations of objects or slides usually supplemented those exhibits installed in the schools.

In the meantime, the staff of the museum embarked on several special research projects. The first of these, *The Immigrant Experience,* was an oral history project designed to investigate immigrant life in Cleveland around 1930. Approximately ninety immigrants from thirty cultural backgrounds who came to Cleveland before the 1930s were interviewed in depth by three field researchers. The interviews explored the whys and hows of immigration, what life in the Old World was like, and how each individual had or had not become a part of an ethnic community in Cleveland. Among those interviewed was one of the founders of the Lithuanian Catholic church in Cleveland, the wife of a late tamburitza maker, a leading physician in the Slovenian community, a Greek woman who in her youth was active in Greek dramatic organizations, as well as countless otherwise nameless workers and housewives whose daily experiences epitomize those of other immigrants. The tapes are invaluable sources of history, folklore and traditional wisdom. The ethnographic museum used the narratives to create *The Immigrant Experience—Heroes All Around Me: Passages to American Urban Life.*

Broad involvement

Passages to American Urban Life, presented in the spring of 1979, was our first major

Opening of the American Revolution bicentennial exhibition of the Greater Cleveland Ethnographic Museum (GCEM), at the Western Reserve Historical Society, July, 1977.
[*Photo:* Greater Cleveland Ethnographic Museum.]

exhibition. Based upon the oral history interviews and background research, it presented an interpretive history of Cleveland as experienced by those who saw and made the city a new home, leaving their homelands and arriving between 1900 and 1935. The themes of the exhibition followed those of the interviews. The focus was upon life in Cleveland and the dynamics of that life as individuals married, reared families and became active in community life, whether through the ethnic church or social, cultural, fraternal or political organizations. Objects, photographs and documents—from the museum's growing collection as well as borrowed from individuals and institutions—along with direct quotations from the interviews brought to life this period in the history of immigrant/ethnic Cleveland. The stories of the people who participated in the project were integrated to present a composite picture of the American experience.

This exhibition drew in countless visitors from the city's ethnic communities because it represented the commonplace of their everyday lives. Usually only the exceptional or the recognized achiever from ethnic communities formed the subject of such exhibitions. The ethnographic museum opened the door to everyone. Community members took part in two workshops and discussions planned to encourage active participation. They helped to bring the exhibition to life through sharing their experiences of the events and organizations of the period illustrated by the exhibit. One workshop looked at life histories, one of the primary documentation sources for the exhibition. A discussion panel was composed of representatives instrumental or active in the founding of several of the fraternal benefit societies in Cleveland. Thus, individuals from all levels of community life were drawn into the functions of the ethnographic museum by both contributing to and actively participating in the exhibition.

As individuals on the museum staff became more involved in their own particular research into the ethnic communities of the city, the collections slowly grew. The ethnic press of Cleveland is a vital force in community life. Foreign-language newspapers are published and circulated in at least seven languages. All our publicity was sent to them as well as to the English press. This outlet assisted in digging more deeply into the grassroots of each community and served as a means to encourage donations to the museum. An announcement of our gallery exhibition of Hungarian and Hungarian-American folk art led us to an immigrant who was trained as an industrial weaver in Hungary before coming to the United States. Although his daily employment was with a local utility company, he continued to weave for recreation. While not folk textiles in the strictest sense, the materials made and donated by this individual employ traditional patterns and function in traditional ways. They represent an adaptation based on folk designs and use, which is the result of the ethnic-American experience and identification that the museum was trying to investigate, recognize and display.

Documentation of cultural life

While the task of any museum is to collect, preserve and interpret the tangibles of its given field, the ethnographic museum expanded its compass to include documentation of cultural activities in order to have the resources to interpret its collections more precisely. Our staff regularly photographed and took slides at ethnic events they attended. Every summer Cleveland turns into a city of festivals. These are organized on a city-wide level, groups representing many ethnic communities performing together. At the community level, festivals are put on for secular and sacred reasons. The four different Greek Orthodox churches annually hold festivals to raise funds for the Church. Many Catholic churches have festivals to celebrate the saints' feasts, as is the case in Europe. At both these types of celebration ethnic food is served, cultural displays are put on and dance groups perform. Ethnic festivals, such as the Italian St Joseph's Day or the Jewish Passover, are also observed in the private, family setting, in contrast to the city and community festivities. The museum's documentation of such festivals—not only the actual events, but also the time-consuming preparations which illustrate a strong multigenerational community solidarity—reflects a depth of involvement not visible from a surface viewing of the event.

A Step in Time, a film about ethnic dance in Cleveland, is another form of documentation carried out by the museum staff. Funded by the National Endowment for the Arts and the Ohio Arts Council, this film strives to break the simplistic view of folk-dance accentuated by the citywide, multi-ethnic festivals. Many communities do indeed support youth folk-dance groups. The dances are set for the stage, if not choreographed compositions based upon folk-dances. Costumes often tend to emphasize only one region of a country rather than realistically representing the wide mix of traditional dress. On the other hand, costumes worn by these groups may be very carefully researched and reproduced. The point is that with these arrangements the dance is removed from its natural context and placed in an unrelated setting, and this may be all that the non-ethnic public gets to see of ethnic dance.

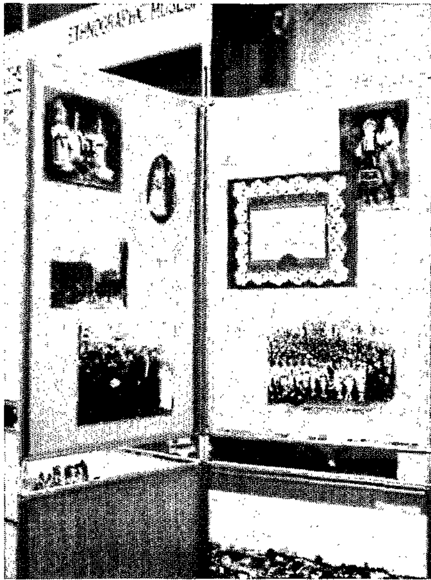
A Step in Time investigates dance as it exists on the community social level rather than the public performance level. The museum staff entered the Greek, Slovenian and Irish communities and recorded different kinds of dances taking place at different sorts of events and locations. The realization that we had achieved our goal of revealing the role of ethnic dance in the community came when a technician at a local television station recognized the polkas in a film as Slovenian. He then proceeded to explain the differences between the polka styles of various nationalities.

Through these documentation projects and the exhibitions, along with the collection policies of the ethnographic museum, the board and staff felt that they were responding to a need in the ethnic communities of Cleveland, a need which was not previously fulfilled by any other cultural institution. This is after all what brought the board together originally in 1975 with the intent of founding the museum.

Tradition and responsibility

Actually, Cleveland has a long history of ethnic displays. The Cleveland Museum of Art, in 1919, hosted the *Homelands Exhibit* with the co-operation of both the Cleveland public library and the Cleveland public schools. 'The plan was to have a series of local exhibits during the month of March in the schools and libraries from which the museum authorities would select the finest things for a larger exhibit at the museum.'[1] At the major exhibition twenty-four nationalities were represented, ranging from Armenians to Welsh. Like the ethnographic museum's bicentennial exhibition, this one was supplemented by lectures describing art and cultural traditions of the

1. *Americanization in Cleveland,* Cleveland, Cleveland Americanization Committee, n. d.



The Immigrant Experience, a travelling photographic exhibition of the GCEM. This was shown at community centres, public schools and libraries and old people's homes in the Cleveland area.
[*Photo:* Greater Cleveland Ethnographic Museum.]

Learning to dance. Obun Festival, Japanese Buddhist Temple, July 1981, Cleveland, Ohio.
[*Photo:* Greater Cleveland Ethnographic Museum.]

countries concerned as well as songs and dances in costume presented by nationality singing societies.

The second major ethnic exhibition in Cleveland's history was part of 'The New Cleveland Experiment.'[2] At the 1929 All Nations Exposition, sponsored by the City Department of Recreation with additional support from the three Cleveland newspapers, the emphasis was again upon traditional plastic and performing arts. Over seven days approximately 100,000 people viewed an elaborate series of exhibits of national folk arts and crafts. Cleveland's Public Hall was transformed into a foreign land as life-size replicas of cottages, homes, castles and villas in the homelands of the immigrant groups were erected and fully furnished. Included were a Swiss cottage, a Danish kitchen, a Lithuanian bake-oven and two American homes—the 1929 model and the much earlier Puritan model.

Other less elaborate displays of this type continued to be organized in Cleveland. There is, however, a vast difference between the intent of these exhibitions and the goals of the ethnographic museum. This can be seen just in the name of the museum, the subject of much debate at board meetings in the first years of the museum's existence. The staff felt a responsibility to the ethnic communities, as well as to the academic establishment of which they were a part, to represent the ethnography of Cleveland, not just the city's ethnic life. Ethnic museums were those epitomized by the early simplistic approach to the display of arts and crafts of immigrants. This approach was reflected also in the bicentennial exhibition which gave impetus to the ethnographic museum.

Rather than looking backward at only this single dimension of ethnic life in Cleveland, the ethnographic museum felt a responsibility to its constituents to present the living realities of ethnic life in the city. The governing board and staff were challenged to investigate the changes and continuities in the traditional culture of the ethnic communities, making these dynamics the basis of the museum's work. Taking advantage of historical knowledge, the museum strove to understand and to present the consequences and effects of the American experience upon the traditional cultures which make up the city's population. We accepted this as our goal whether interviewing individuals, collecting and documenting objects or producing exhibitions. In this way, the ethnographic museum felt that it fulfilled a need to represent the vitality of ethnic life in Cleveland, not only to the public at large but especially to the local communities themselves. The ethnographic museum was founded by members of the ethnic communities who wanted to see their history and culture recorded and displayed in this manner. In all of the work of the museum a strong responsibility was felt to the communities of which these individuals were a part. By working closely with each community, we felt that we were serving that responsibility.

2. Allen H. Eaton, *Immigrant Gifts to American Life*, New York, Russell Sage Foundation, 1932, p. 97.

CONSERVATION

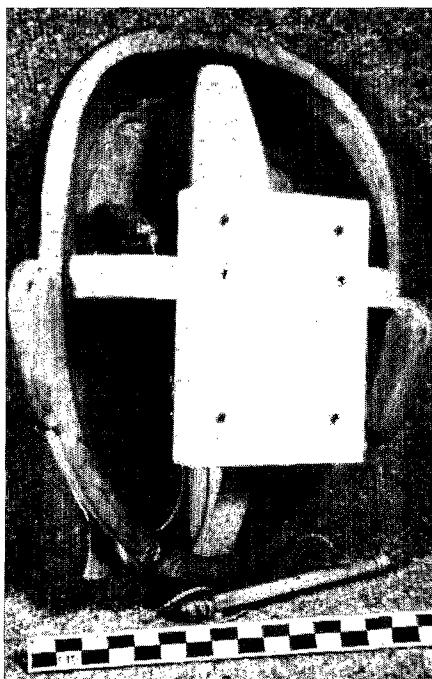
The conservation of ethnographic material

Richard B. Renshaw-Beauchamp

Was Chief Conservator of the Canadian National Historic Sites Service and then Acting Director of the Pacific Conservation Centre of the Canadian Conservation Institute, before becoming Head of the Conservation Division of the British Columbia Provincial Museum. His personal areas of interest are Ninstints Village on Anthony Island—a World Heritage Site—for the conservation of which he is responsible, the petroglyphs and pictographs throughout the province, and fumigation.

The implications of intervention, while working on study material which is the only concrete evidence of a culture's past, are so important and so complicated that an article in *Museum* can only lay out the bare bones of an approach. The curator who reads it must reappraise, if necessary, what he expects from conservation. The conservator, on the other hand, must re-evaluate his philosophy. Without an ethnographic collection there is no ethnographic museum. If there is no ethnographic museum then the research of the ethnologist is made extremely difficult, if not impossible, and the education of the public in, and the recording of, dead, dying and even flourishing cultures ceases or becomes haphazard and unreliable.

Ethnographic collections are evidence and must be treated as such. Just because, the curator or conservator considers that all the evidence available has been collected from the artefact does not mean that this is necessarily so. Tom Loy, an archaeologist with the British Columbia Provincial Museum, found that 3,000-year-old microblades still had sufficient blood on them to enable him to determine the species of mammal last cut up. He has also found that clay soils sequester large amounts of protein, something to be considered when cleaning artefacts from both wet and dry sites. If they had been run through the ultrasonic cleaner with a drop or two of Decon 75 there would have been no evidence left. This applies to every artefact that comes into the lab; not that everything gets ultrasonically cleaned.



Portrait mask (a) and universal mount (b). The mount is held on with box-wood pegs through existing harness holes. The mask can be removed for case cleaning, study, etc. while on exhibit with minimal handling.
[*Photo:* R. Renshaw-Beauchamp.]

Conservation: a chain of measures

Ethnographic conservation starts in the storage area. It is the job of the curator, helped and advised by the conservator, to implement and control this aspect. Is the storage area a flood zone? Do water pipes run through it? When the lights are off is it in the dark? Are all the windows blacked out? They should be! Everyone knows that the storage area should be kept dark unless in use. Can the temperature and relative humidity of the area be controlled? If not, storage should be on the north side or preferably in the interior of the building. If it is in the attic, is the roof well insulated? Is there good ventilation? Can the area be closed off for insect control? The ideal temperature of 68–70°F with a relative humidity of 50–65 per cent is usually unattainable, but is an effort being made to get temperature and relative humidity as near these conditions as possible, even just a little closer than they are at present? Have you given up trying? Please don't!

What is your shelving like? Are you making the best use of your space? Take

time and work it out on paper. Shelving made from scrap lumber with old doors for shelves is better than everything piled on the floor. Bricks and planks are a make-do until something better comes along. You must never stop trying to upgrade the storage area. Are your ethnographic textiles folded? Why not go down to your friendly local carpet shop and ask for a large tube? They are usually twelve feet long and four inches in diameter. These can be cut to length, covered in acid-free paper as a buffer and then the textiles rolled in them. The best of course is flat storage. This costs a lot of money but is worth it and indeed is very important if the artefacts are used frequently for study purposes. Flat storage obviates handling and thus lessens wear and tear and the eventual damage which distorts the evidence of the whole. [1]

You must remember you cannot cut down on your aisle space or the chance of damage becomes too high. That is the reason why you cannot have shelves too close together. Distance between shelves is a trade-off of depth against height. Always construct that which is safest.

Are the materials you use as inert as possible? Some woods, particularly oak and heart of mahogany, are so acidic that they can corrode metals badly, even—in the case of lead—reducing it to a pile of white powder. Should shelves and drawer bottoms be padded? There is one great disadvantage—instability. There are also great advantages—an inert lining or padding prevents abrasion, chipping, etc. Again this is a trade-off but the curator must think about the advantages and disadvantages before, not after, the inevitable accident which will occur if he makes the wrong choice.

Everyone well-enough educated to be in any position of authority in a museum knows all this. It is simply basic common sense allied to the most elementary knowledge of chemistry and physics. But the majority of people do not use their common sense and bury their basic education under so much specialized knowledge that they no longer think practically. Is a curator acting with responsibility if while carrying two masks, one in each hand, and a club under the left arm he puts one mask between his knees in order to open the door?, or puts a silver object in a pocket with keys, coins, etc.?

Again and again and again it must be repeated that preventive conservation is common sense. It is the conservator's job to see that all members of the staff use their intelligence quotient in this respect.

No matter how new, old, efficient, inefficient, conservation-conscious or otherwise, every museum has a backlog of conservation work which requires that the object enter the laboratory.

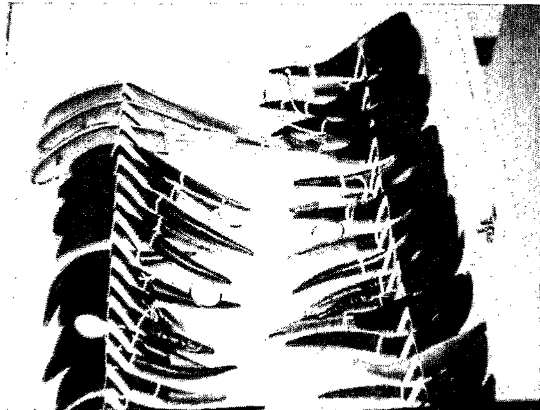
A joint process

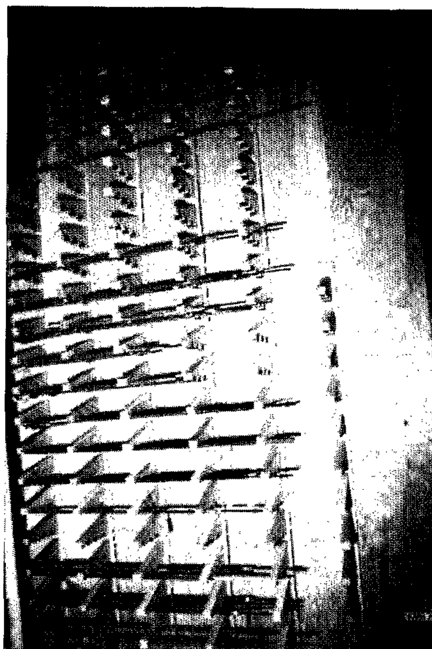
Until such time as the curator gets to know and trust the conservators every object should be the subject of a discussion between them. The conservator should ask for information about traditional materials, traditional manufacturing methods and techniques, traditional use, the history and provenance of an object, and previous photographic records, including archival photographs, of a particular or similar artefact. There should be a discussion on cleaning and how far the cleaning should go, having regard to keeping all evidence of use, or as much as it is possible to keep. Previous repairs should be discussed, to determine whether they are evidence of use and/or modification, and whether they should remain apparent or not. When all this has been decided, and only then, can the conservator plan the appropriate intervention. First, the composition of the object must be scientifically determined (at the moment I venture to say that every museum catalogue is founded on opinion, not fact). Then the opinion of a conservation analyst must be sought as to the compatability of the materials in the object with the proposed conservation materials. Next, bearing in mind the principle of minimal intervention, the conservator should ask the first set of basic questions: 'What is the minimal amount of cleaning I should do?', 'Does the object need to be cleaned at all?', and 'Why does the object need cleaning?'. Unless the dirt threatens the integrity of the object or is aesthetically unacceptable the object should not be cleaned. Then comes another question: 'Is the object complete?' If incomplete, the curator and conservator should decide whether the loss is so aesthetically displeasing that its replacement is necessary or that without it the whole might be misinterpreted. Only these two criteria should determine whether or not a part is to be replaced. Another question should ask: 'Is the object structurally sound?' and, if the artefact is unsound, 'What is the minimal amount of consolidation necessary to en-

1. A good theoretical book on this subject is *In Support of Difficult Shapes* by P. R. Ward, available from the British Columbia Provincial Museum at C$1.00 per copy.

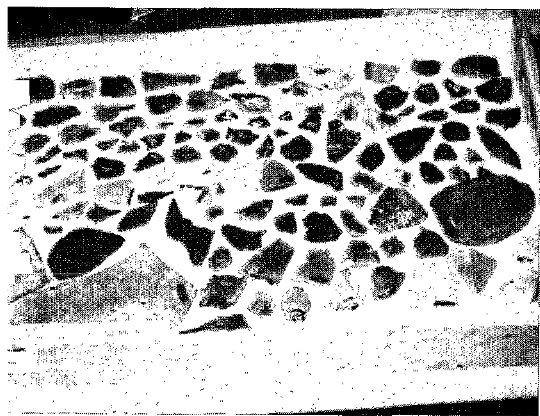
Small and delicate objects get their own storage boxes (no lids).
[*Photo:* R. Renshaw-Beauchamp.]

Horn spoons in their polyethylene-foam-lined drawer and held in place with their card dividers. [*Photo:* R. Renshaw-Beauchamp.]





Part of the arrow collection at the British Columbia Provincial Museum. The closely grouped supports obviate distortion. [*Photo:* R. Renshaw-Beauchamp.]



Small stone artefact storage. Polyethylene foam cut out to receive individual shapes makes for safe drawer storage and saves space. [*Photo:* R. Renshaw-Beauchamp.]

sure the structural stability of the whole?'

When these questions have been answered a mount must be made for the object, to support it in the lab and when it goes back to storage or on exhibition. If no mount is necessary as the object is sufficiently robust to support itself then a box or platform is in order to protect it from other artefacts and to obviate its being handled while under scrutiny.

Cleaning

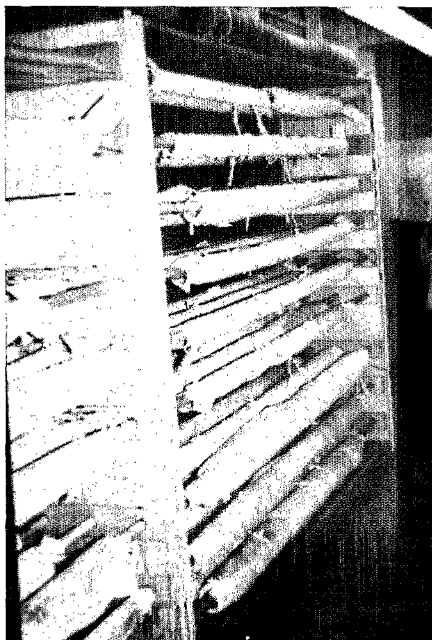
As Rhuemann says in his book *The Cleaning of Paintings,* it is better to know really well a limited repertoire of solvents than to use indiscriminately many formulae. The British Columbia Provincial Museum, for example, uses distilled water, various proportions of distilled water and ethanol absolute, and 0.5–1 per cent neutral detergent in water. Objects are cleaned first by brushing into a chromatography zone collector and only if necessary wet-cleaned, using minimal cleaning fluid and rinsing well if a detergent is used.

When it has been decided to replace a missing piece the operation is carried out using a material different from that of the original, which is recognizable as such under close inspection but which harmonizes to the extent that to the casual observer the artefact appears whole. For small bridges and repairs we use Pliacre or Ren-Weld carvable adhesive. For larger pieces we use wood of a different species from the original, and in the case of fur replacement we use fur from the same species as employed initially but leave the original skin and fur traces and affix the new fur over the old by means of invisible thread. (This kind of treatment is only necessary when the artefact is needed to illustrate a point in an exhibition.) Any restoration of this sort should be noted not only in the object's conservation record but also in the catalogue.

The stabilization and consolidation of basketry is an area where much has been written and which would be better off had nothing been written. Too much unnecessary intervention is advised and practised, even in museums. Never 'feed' your baskets as so many 'cute' articles advise. Do not wash them. Clean with a soft brush and low vacuum. If it is obvious the dirt is museum dirt, and not evidence of its past use, a damp swab can be used. If the object is misshapen put it into a humidity chamber until flexible and then shape, and pad until dry again. To repair, use starch paste and Japanese tissue; to patch, the same; to join, the same. What I am getting at is that not only is minimum intervention most desirable, it is most efficient.

Metals comprise another area where unnecessary and damaging treatment is often carried out. First, the metal in question must be identified. With access to a SEM (XRD) analysis is simple. In the case of plated metals experience is necessary, however: knowing what you are dealing with is imperative. Next, think and observe: is the alteration to the metal's surface unstable and detrimental to the preservation of the artefact? A stable oxidized surface may be the best protection possible. Why should the surface be cleaned, burnished or polished?

Rolled storage. The bars are isolated by tubes which in turn are covered with acid-free tissue. The textiles are covered with acid-free tissue and polyethylene film. [*Photo:* R. Renshaw-Beauchamp.]



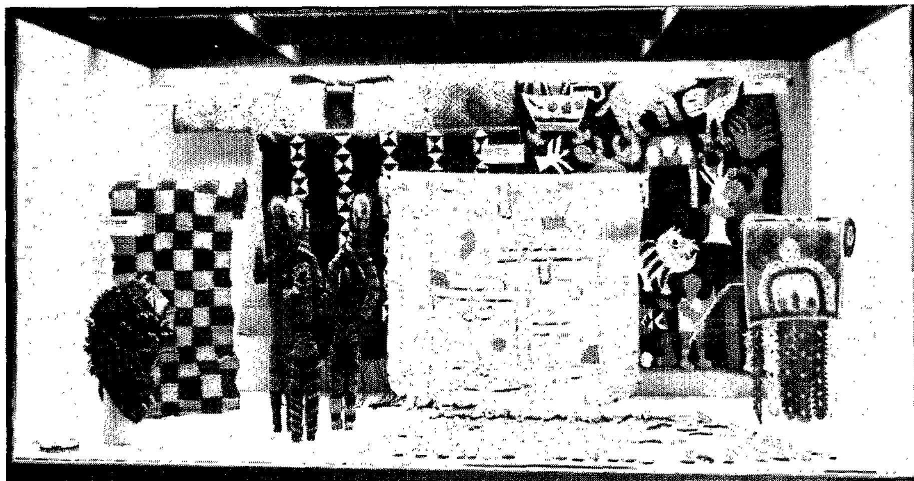
A view of the artefacts laboratory in the British Columbia Provincial Museum. Note elephant's trunk extractor at work station, wood and poly-humidity chamber. Rain hat on its mount.
[*Photo:* R. Renshaw-Beauchamp.]

When the object was in use was it kept polished? If so it should be carefully cleaned, causing the minimum of abrasion, and then lacquered using Frigelene or Incralac and, if returned to storage, put in a polyethylene bag. Personally, I used to like to wrap silver in acid-free tissue before bagging and then to put the catalogue number and a brief description inside the bag. In this way cleaning, and thus abrasion and loss of detail, is kept to a minimum while enabling the object to be identified without unwrapping. This is not unnecessary, trifling behaviour. If objects are properly cleaned and de-greased, warmed with IR (if possible dipped rather than sprayed), drained and very carefully handled the coating will be continuous and complete protection afforded.

Aesthetically the finishes are quite acceptable, and if a silver object can be on display for years and not need to be touched except for a careful dusting now and then, how much better than having to clean it every few months. Pollution control in a building's air treatment plant does not mean that the air in an exhibit case is free from pollutants. We go to great expense to install scrubbers, etc., and then use rubber underlay and carpets, latex and alkyd paints whose solvents are corrosive, and synthetic fabrics and PVC wall-coverings.

The conservation of ethnographic textiles is a field I am going to touch on only very briefly. Once again analysis is of the utmost importance. Washing and/or dry cleaning should be resorted to only when the dirt really threatens the integrity of the object. I feel a flush of shame even now when I think back to two textiles which were washed some years ago in my laboratory. If I had thought through the treatments philosophy then, as I would now, so much information which they contained would not have been lost. They look superb! But at what cost to the future, scholar? In the handling of textiles you need a conservator trained in textile conservation, who knows materials and methods of manufacture, and who has outstanding manual dexterity allied to outstanding sewing skills. No wonder the species is a rare one! Good conservation—conservation in depth—is not expensive from an equipment standpoint. It is certainly labour intensive, but, to use my laboratory as an example, although it is desirable to have a range of sophisticated equipment it does not get used every day. Basic requirements include space (space is safety, for both the artefact and the conservator), station fume-extractors, water, vacuum (on tap if possible), a home-made humidity chamber, a low-powered binocular microscope, a camera, a lux-meter, a UV meter, a psychrometer, a few personal tools, applicator sticks, 100 per cent cotton, surgical cotton-wool and a few chemicals. With just these a museum conservator can be in business. Use of a SEM (XRD) is always available through a university or government department. Many other expensive pieces of equipment can be shared or borrowed. Of course, it is better to have your own, but no museum should delay having a conservator on its staff because it cannot afford the capital cost of equipment. If a museum can afford a collection it cannot afford to neglect conservation.

Ceremonial head-dress, impossible to store without damage to some part of it without a mount. This mount is made of white blotting paper.
[*Photo:* R. Renshaw-Beauchamp.]



MUSEUM OF MANKIND, London. A closed case in the *African Textiles* exhibition including hair-hygrometer and lighting filter grid.
[*Photo:* Museum of Mankind. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.]

Textiles in the Museum of Mankind

M. D. McLeod

Born in 1941. University of Oxford (B.A. 1965, B.Litt. 1967, M.A. 1970.) Lecturer, Department of Sociology, University of Ghana, 1967–69. Assistant Curator, University Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Cambridge, 1967–74. Fellow, Magdalene College, Cambridge, 1972. Fieldwork among the Asante of Ghana, 1966–69, 1972. Keeper of the Museum of Mankind since 1974. Various publications, including: 'Aspects of Asante Images', in M. Greenhalgh and V. Megaw (eds.), *Art in Society*, London, 1978; 'Music and Gold-Weights in Asante', *The British Museum Yearbook*, 4th ed., London, T. C. Mitchell, 1980; *The Asante*, London, 1981.

An old photograph of a faded silk shroud from Madagascar in the Museum of Mankind, London, was used to illustrate Sarah Staniforth's article 'Unsuitable lighting' in Museum, *Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, 1982, pp. 53–54. We received from that museum's keeper not just an indignant protest; better still, he was inspired to write this article on the conservation of textile collections.*

The use of an old photograph in *Museum*, Vol. XXXIV, No. 1, 1982, may give the impression that the Museum of Mankind does not care properly for its textiles: this is completely incorrect. The Museum of Mankind (the Ethnography Department of the British Museum) has one of the largest and most varied collections of ethnographic textiles in Britain. Some of these date from the eighteenth century (e.g. raffia cloth from Africa), while others, such as the pre-Columbian textiles from South America, are even older. The collection has expanded steadily since the creation of the British Museum in 1753: the voyages of Captain Cook, for example, produced considerable quantities of Pacific bark-cloth and basketry; nineteenth-century explorers, traders and missionaries provided quantities of African and Oceanic textiles; and, in recent years, there has been a determined attempt to obtain thoroughly documented textile collections from all the areas covered by the department. Most notable of all, perhaps, are the superb collections of South and Central American textiles recently acquired, and the Palestinian and Yemeni textiles collected by staff in the field.

The museum holds a vast variety of textiles. In dimension the specimens range form a full-size Turkman *yurt* of felt, through quilted cotton horse-armour from northern Nigeria, to small decorative braidings from North America. The techniques used are equally diverse, items being both woven and non-woven: for example, *ikat* weavings from Borneo and Africa, vegetable fibre rain-capes from the Ainu of Japan, New Zealand twined flax cloaks, bark-cloths from both Africa and the Pacific, and carpets from the Yemen. The actual forms of our textiles also vary greatly, extending from tailored garments to uncut yardage. The problems of safe storage and display are immeasurably increased by the fact that many specimens incorporate other organic substances and metals with textile elements. Some of the more recent acquisitions also combine traditional natural materials with man-made fibres and even complete plastic objects, such as the doll incorporated into a Bulgarian mask.

The conservation process

The museum has a large conservation programme dedicated to cleaning these textiles, making them safe for the future and improving their storage. The process begins the moment the textiles arrive in the museum: before they are placed in storage they are fumigated, as are all acquisitions, with ethylene oxide to destroy any insect or fungal infestation. The basic

Using silk crepeline coated with thermoplastic adhesive, bonded by the use of a temperature-controlled tacking iron. Tibetan saddle after repair.
[*Photo:* Museum of Mankind. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.]

A sliding glazed drawer for the storage of Peruvian textiles. The glass cover is subsequently firmly closed with screws.
[*Photo:* Museum of Mankind. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.]

storage system has been evolved over several years, following consultations between the British Museum Conservation Division and the Museum of Mankind. In all cases attempts are made to tailor the storage to the requirements of the individual object. A few examples will show the range of fittings. The feather cloaks and capes from Hawaii, made of thousands of tiny, brightly coloured feathers fixed into a vegetable fibre net, are stored individually in shallow trays in a specially constructed room with strictly controlled atmospheric conditions. Smaller unshaped textiles are rolled and protected with acid-free tissue paper, and the rolls then mounted on racking so that each is safely fixed but instantly available. In many cases special, one-off fittings have to be tailored; for example, a Tibetan armour of steel plates knotted together with leather thongs, considered as much a textile as any other class of object, has had created for it a fully shaped stand for use on display, which will later be used for its permanent storage.Similarly an Ethiopiaqn food cover (formerly mislabelled as a basketry hat) has had made for it a padded conical mount and permanent wooden storage box. Work on the textile collection is becoming limited by the area available for storage, and the museum plans to open, in a year or so, another storage building with a large area specifically for textiles.

Certain sections of the collection receive more attention than others from scholars and members of the general public, and therefore need to be both readily available and fully protected against damage from constant viewing or handling. In the case of Peruvian textiles, mostly of pre-Columbian origin, this problem has been met by making a selection of typical examples. These have been treated by the conservation division and are permanently mounted on cloth-covered boards in glazed drawers in a specially built, lightproof cabinet kept in the museum's students room. In recent years the museum has also built up handling collections of duplicate specimens, which are made available for detailed study by schools and visually handicapped people. Textile items are made safe by being supported in the appropriate way and all are regularly checked.

Study and display

It is the museum's function to make all stored material available for serious study. It is also its policy to devote exhibitions specifically to textiles from time to time, as well as to incorporate them in more general displays and to make loans to museums and other institutions in Britain and around the world. The largest exhibition of textiles so far has been *African Textiles*, organized by John Mack and John Picton, shortly to be transferred to the American Museum of Natural History, New York. It incorporates both main types of display, open and in-case, in accordance with the recommendations of our conservators. Items on open display are changed every six months to minimize the danger of atmospheric con-

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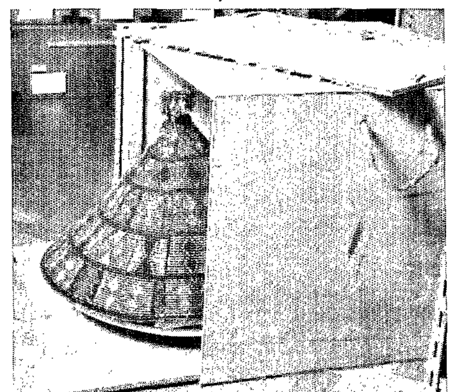
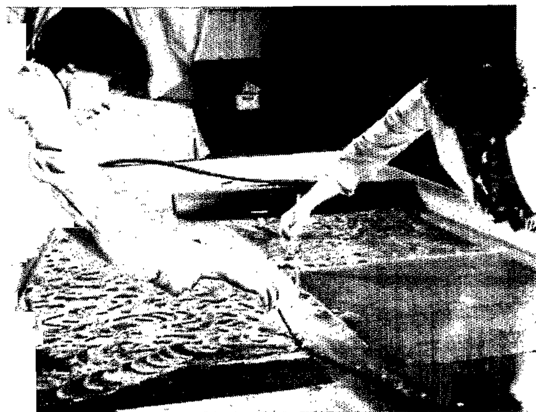
Born in 1944. National Diploma in Design, 1966. University of London, Courtauld Institute, Certificate in the Conservation of Textiles, 1975. Museums Association Certificate in Ethnographical Conservation, 1981. Lecturer and Head of Art Department, Rupert Stanley College of Further Education, Northern Ireland, 1967–72. Joined British Museum, Department of Scientific Research and Conservation, in 1976. Specializes in the conservation of textiles from all departments of the British Museum. Has lectured for University of London, Institute of Archaeology, Centre International d'Étude des Textiles Anciens, and conservation groups in the United Kingdom. Senior Conservation Officer, The British Museum Department of Scientific Research and Conservation, since 1979.

Ethiopian food cover on storage mount in specially constructed box, which has a separate internal base for sliding safely in and out.
[*Photo:* Museum of Mankind. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.]



Nozzle of a dental aspirator being used to remove light detergent foam from part of an African masquerade doll.
[*Photo:* Museum of Mankind. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.]



Cleaning two pieces of bark-cloth using foam of non-ionic detergent in a stainless steel washing table.
[*Photo:* Museum of Mankind. Reproduced by courtesy of the Trustees of the British Museum.]

tamination. The exhibition, like all other long-term exhibitions at the Museum of Mankind, is periodically cleaned by conservation staff and objects checked. Light levels are restricted to 50 to 100 lux and virtually all ultraviolet light is eliminated by the use of filter systems. The relative humidity is maintained at between 55–60 per cent and the temperature at 20°C. Immediately an exhibition is conceived by the ethnography department a member of the conservation division is designated liaison officer with responsibility for the safekeeping of the items to be displayed and their preparation for exhibition. In the case of *African Textiles* this entailed very early consultation on the suitability for display of the more delicate and fragile objects and recommendations on design techniques to the designers involved.

Treatment

The conservation work for this exhibition gives a good idea of the range of treatment applied to textiles when all treatment is chosen to suit the requirements of the individual item. In such a case textiles may be cleaned mechanically by brush or vacuum without the use of liquids, by solvent cleaning using the most appropriate fluid (e.g. methylated spirits, white spirit or chlorinated hydrocarbons), or by wet cleaning using deionized water with or without a non-ionic detergent. Intricate items are sometimes cleaned with a dental aspirator and a light detergent foam. Once cleaned the object may require no further treatment other than the addition of fittings for display, such as the attachment of Velcro. Some objects may, inevitably, require repair or support but it must be emphasized that it is not conservation policy to replace or reweave. Damage can be limited by the judicious use of stitching or support backing. The fibres used in conservation are mainly natural, cotton and silk predominating, although man-made fibres will probably find a place in conservation use as they appear in the collections themselves. Occasionally cosmetic work is undertaken, where the integrity of a textile design requires it, with suitably dyed material inserted between a backing cloth and the damaged area of the object. All conservation textile is dyed in the laboratory as occasion requires it. In certain instances a costume may need an adhesive lining. At present the conservation section's preference is for a combination of silk crepeline and the thermoplastic PVA adhesive currently known as DMC2.

The involvement of conservators continues with the setting-up of an exhibition, as they give advice on and assistance in mounting and arranging the displays. They also monitor the environmental conditions of an exhibition throughout its duration and, once the objects come off display and have been fumigated, they inspect and repair items as necessary before they are returned to storage.

The vast and various textile holdings of the Museum of Mankind present continuous monitoring and storage problems. As staff and visiting scholars work through parts of the collections items are regularly referred to the conservation section for scrutiny and, if necessary, for conservation. There is thus a continuous programme of conservation and a never ending effort to improve the condition and storage of our textiles.

Show-cases

Another conservation-focused issue of *Museum* is being planned in co-operation with ICCROM.

This issue (intended to appear as No. 144, in the last quarter of 1984) will look at the way show-cases have been and should be designed so as to provide real protection for the objects they contain. Factors such as relative humidity, temperature, atmospheric pollution and dust, access to objects, stability, lighting and maintenance will be discussed.

A section of the issue will deal with old show-cases which have been modified so as to improve their characteristics and a separate article will be devoted to cases made especially for the transport of collections.

Readers, conservators! *Museum* requests your active participation in the preparation of this issue: suggestions regarding contents, pertinent case-studies and, most of all, articles.

If you think you have a useful article to contribute please send a summary proposal to: Mr Gael de Guichen, ICCROM, Via di San Michele, 13, 00153 Rome, Italy.

Music in Madagascan traditions: musical instruments

Sana, a Madagascan zither player whose presence is vital to different ceremonies and rituals. She is paid at least one bullock per day for her auspicious participation. [*Photo:* J. P. Domenichini, 1978.]

This exhibition of Madagascan musical instruments was presented at Unesco Headquarters, Paris, in June 1983. Mounted with the financial support of Unesco's International Fund for the Promotion of Culture the exhibition was prepared by the Ambario Association, the Museum of the University of Madagascar, the Museum of the National Research Centre at Tsimbazaza, and the Centre for Art and Archaeology, Antananarivo. It brought together musical instruments from all over the island, collected under a programme to safeguard Madagascar's cultural heritage. All categories of instrument were shown: membranophones (drums), cordophones (strings), aerophones (wind instruments) and idiophones. They included the *valiha*, or tubular zither, symbol of Malagasy cultural unity, and the *jejo*, or stick zither. The exhibition enabled visitors to see the evolution of these various traditional instruments. After being shown elsewhere in France the exhibition will travel to Mauritius, Canada and other countries before finally returning to Madagascar. The exhibition was conceived by Michel Domenichini-Ramiaramanana, who can provide further details upon request. He can be contacted: c/o Ambario, Académie Malgache, Antananarivo, Madagascar.