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Dragons behind glass: views of China and Japan in three American museums

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**DRAGONS BEHIND GLASS: VIEWS OF CHINA AND
JAPAN IN THREE AMERICAN MUSEUMS**

A Thesis

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the
Louisiana State University and
Agricultural and Mechanical College
in the partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts

in

The Department of Geography and Anthropology

By
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B.A., University of South Alabama, 2005
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ABSTRACT

This thesis will focus on three museums: the American Museum of Natural History in New York, New York, the Mobile Museum of Art in Mobile, Alabama and the Morikami Museum in Del Ray Beach, Florida. Overall the museums took surprisingly different approaches to designing their exhibits. The American Museum of Natural History gave a general overview of Japan and China. The Mobile Museum of Art focused only on pottery and the Morikami Museum focused on the Japanese immigrants that settled in Del Ray Beach. Differences and similarities of these museums and what these exhibits tell the viewer about the two cultures will be addressed in this thesis. It will present a view on what these museums could have done differently to better explain the uniqueness of Japan and China. The American Museum of Natural History and the Mobile Museum of Art presented Japan and China as static and unchanging cultures; this is far from the truth. On the other hand, the Morikami Museum showed how the Japanese immigrant community is a rich community that has changed over time. The Morikami Museum created a unique exhibit that immersed the viewer into the Japanese culture and really showed what meaning the artifacts held in the culture, which is something the other museums failed to do.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Three Museums of Comparison

Museums are places where the public can go to view exhibits of foreign places and things made in humanity's past. They are designed to ignite people's imaginations and educate them to ideas of which they have little or no knowledge. Exhibits are developed based on the museum's goals, holdings, finances, benefactors as well as who their target audience is and this in turn creates different types of exhibits. The general population of the world was the target audience for the establishment of the American Museum of Natural History in New York. At the Mobile Museum of Art in Alabama the target audience was mostly schools in their area with some tourist visitors. In Florida at the Morikami Museum the audience was tourist and locals who wanted to learn more about the Japanese that settled there and those wanting to enjoy the traditional gardens.

1.2 Goals of the Three Museums

These are three extremely different museums with different ways of presenting information on Japan and China. Each one had an intended goal that is unique to that particular museum. The American Museum of Natural History's goal seemed to be to show the daily lives of both Japanese and Chinese citizens. For the most part the past was presented for both of these societies. However, occasionally they did focus on the more modern aspects of the cultures. The Mobile Museum of Art intended to show the art of China in the past few centuries. They were not trying to convey any cultural information about China. Instead they wanted to show the nature of the artistic production in recent Chinese history. This is understandable since it is an art museum.

The Morikami Museum wanted to show how the Japanese fishing immigrants in Del Ray Beach, Florida lived. They looked at the daily lives and the livelihood of these immigrants and the traditions they brought with them from Japan.

1.3 Goals of This Paper

This thesis is going to explore the different views and goals of the museum exhibits. It also will be comparing and contrasting the three museums and look at the differences in the way the exhibits were prepared. Commonalities and differences will be examined between the different exhibits. The paper will interpret how the choices made by the museum and the designer influenced the design of each exhibit, and how those choices affected the viewer. To do so it will consider anything that might have a bearing on the overall impact of the exhibit such as the type of display, the lighting style, the placement of the objects, type of information given about the display, how the exhibit is viewed and its affect on the viewer, as well as many others.

This thesis will also focus on how the three exhibits presented these two cultures: how each museum cast Japan and China as a country, how they present those cultures and whether the presentation took an insider or outsider's perspective in order to shed light on the hidden meanings of the exhibits. The insider's perspective involves the presentation of artifacts to the public in relation to cultural meanings for the people of that culture. The outsider's perspective in contrast is where the museum only informs the visitor of the basics of how the utilitarian object was used without including its significant meaning to the people who made it and used it. In the American Museum of Natural History the Japanese and Chinese exhibits were mixed together. For this reason, the thesis will be looking at both Chinese and Japanese exhibits.

When looking at the exhibits I took my prior knowledge about China, Japan and museums into account and of course my previous experience did affect how I looked at each exhibit. It is common knowledge that no two people view the same display the same way because of prejudices and prior knowledge. As an anthropologist, my work on the exhibits is a viable one that seeks to disclose the exhibit's meanings. It is an important venture for us as United States citizens to examine and carefully consider the way we view other cultures. This is because many United States citizens tend to take other cultures for granted or do not give enough prestige to other cultures, particularly ancient ones.

This Thesis will better help United States citizens see how they depict foreign cultures. Even though this paper only addresses Japan and China, it is relevant for any culture that United States museums choose to exhibit. While I was observing these museums, I noted how similar these exhibits were to exhibits on ancient cultures like Egyptians, Mayans and Aztecs. This research will shed light on what United States citizens need to be aware of in their museum system when it comes to displaying other cultures.

1.4 Types of Exhibits at the Three Museums

The American Museum of Natural History will be the first to be explored in this paper because it is the only one of the museums that had both Chinese and Japanese exhibits. It will then look at the Mobile Museum of Art and the Morikami Museum. The American Museum of Natural History in New York is a natural history museum that is funded by a large city that gives millions to build the exhibits. I was told by the curator that the museum was not allowed to give out information on how much each exhibit cost.

The American Museum of Natural History is a huge museum with a wide range of exhibits. The exhibits range from cultural exhibits, wildlife exhibits, extinct animals and many others. This large museum host visitors both from the United States and from abroad and has a large online gift shop. In a normal year they receive 4 million visitors to their museum.

The Mobile Museum of Art in Alabama is also a city/county funded Museum, but focuses exclusively on art works. It is funded at a much lower level than the one in New York and it depends heavily on donations. The first exhibit at this museum was actually a donation in and of itself, as is most of the permanent collection. It has a small gift shop that also brings in funds. Everything in the two exhibits were donated from the artifacts to the display cases that were used to hold them. The Mobile Museum of Art displays art works from around the world as well as local works of art. Mostly only school groups visit this museum, but there are outside visitors as well, especially during Mardi Gras and the summer time. In an average year they have 150,000 visitors.

The Morikami Museum in Florida is a privately owned museum dedicated exclusively to the lives of the Japanese fishing immigrants that lived in Del Ray Beach, Florida. This museum takes donations and they have a gift shop that brings in revenue; the shop is advertised on the museum website, but purchases can only be made at the museum. I was not able to get the information on the exhibit cost and the number of yearly visitors from this museum.

Differences in types and amount of funding separate the three museum's ability to offer the types of exhibits. The American Museum of Natural History has large exhibits with detailed mannequins in the Japanese section of the exhibit and thorough

explanations. In the Mobile Museum of Art, the exhibits are small and not particularly informative. At the Morikami museum, the exhibit is extensive but the emphasis on the displays and the explanations was less extensive than the American Museum of Natural History provided. Nevertheless the exhibit stood together as a whole and provided details about the displayed artifacts and their cultural associations. In contrast to the other two museums the main draw for the Morikami museum is its gardens, which displayed Japanese plants, the particular cultural significance of the distinctive Japanese gardens and which are made available to rent for cultural events and weddings.

1.5 Views of Japan: Past and Present

World events have influenced their views of Japan and China as United States citizens. Over the last two centuries United States has changed its view of China and Japan several times. They were always fascinated by the Japanese culture but they also had a commercial interest after Perry's expedition. However, World War II changed their view and they began to distrust anyone who was Japanese. After the war they took them under their wing to transform their culture so they were more like their own commercial country. In the present day, Japan is generating a large part of the United State's economy through electronics, cars, music, TV, movies and books (Smith 1998:p.1).

1.6 Views of China: Past and Present

Their view of China started as a purely commercial interest in the beginning. The Boxer rebellion led to a greater sense of sympathy for the Chinese. They began wanting to collect ancient Chinese arts and goods. However, after China became communist the United States began distancing ourselves from them, but now they are again valuing

China's past culture. Part of this changing attitude is due to the influence of museums and magazines and the way they represent what is going on in these countries (Goldstein 1991:p.282). These sources tend to influence the way the United States, public views other countries. Many People have heard of the Forbidden City and the tomb with the terra cotta figures. Artifacts coming out of China now have caught the public's interest. Despite the recent trend of increased interest in Japan and China, I was only able to find three museums on Japan and China that contained some part of their culture in the United States at the time of my research in 2006. At that time the Virtual Library of Museums in the USA only listed these three museums as currently having exhibits on China and Japan (other than strictly art).

1.7 Overview of the Thesis

This first chapter introduces the three museums under study in this thesis and the goals of this thesis. Chapter two reviews the literature dealing with the background information on museums and museum exhibits. The third chapter discusses the two exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History and the Morikami Museum dealing with Japan and a comparison of them. Chapter four discusses the three exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History and the Mobile Museum of Art dealing with the Chinese exhibits and a comparison of them. The fifth chapter compares the three Museum's approaches to their exhibits. Chapter six concludes this thesis.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review examines previous work on the layout and design of museum exhibits, and provides background information for the evaluation of the design of the exhibits and their contents.

2.1 What is a Museum

What is a museum? The American Association of Museums Code of Ethics for Museums notes that the common denominator for museums is making a "unique contribution to the public by collecting, preserving, and interpreting the things of this world." There are dozens of types of museums "their numbers include both governmental and private museums of anthropology, art history and natural history, aquariums, arboreta, art centers, botanical gardens, children's museums, historic sites, nature centers, planetariums, science and technology centers, and zoos" (American Association of Museums 2005:p.1).

The museum is a place where people can go to be educated and to be entertained. Families often go for an outing to the museum so they can learn new things about their own and other cultures and the natural world as well as being amused. Schools supervise field trips to museum exhibits to reinforce what the children are learning in the classroom. The wide range of types of visitors in combination with their simultaneous desire to learn and be entertained leads to a complication when designing the exhibits. Do curators cater to the young or the old; do they seek to entertain or to educate? Most museums try to find a balance. In order to achieve this, museum exhibits have to be not only "hands on" but also "minds on" (Hein 1998:p.2).

2.2 The Audience of a Museum

Most museum plaques and pamphlets are written in plain English that is easy to understand. The museum must be well organized to be effective. Museum exhibits often lead the visitor, by using recorded scenarios and paths, creating an environment where the visitor is reading a story rather than just throwing some artifacts into the same room. The most important thing for a museum is fitting the exhibit to the audience (Hein 1998:p.4). If the museums do not do this, then no one will come to see future exhibits. This requires the museum to decide who they want to visit their museum because it is difficult to fit the exhibits to all of the audiences that there might be because each audience has different needs. Some audiences demand certain types of language to be used with them. This could be age, sex, nationality, or even if they are urban or rural. Age and status are particularly important in the museum setting. Status means whether the audience is school age, college students, general public or professionals (Iseminger 1997:p.148). Also the museum would need to discuss the artifacts differently if their audience was all children as opposed to all adults or a mix of the two (Johnstone 2002:p.130). This makes a big difference in the way the museum can talk about the artifacts and their meanings (Johnstone 2002:p.130).

2.3 Museum Collections

In addition to entertaining and educating, the main purpose for a museum is to preserve the past. Museums are heavily involved with collection, preservation, documentation and research. Without all six roles of museums, cultures around the world would be forgotten and lost for future generations, even our own (Hein 1998:p.11).

While all museums have commonalities in how they get their objects for display, each museum obtains artifacts in different ways. Natural history museums obtain much of their collections come from funded research. The government or other institutions often fund these research expeditions. Natural history museums also acquire their collections through gifts (Schwartz 1967:p.194). Occasionally universities will donate their collections to museums with the agreement that their faculty and students have access to them and when funds are available the collections can be purchased. One other way the museums can acquire artifacts is that they can trade some of their collections with other museums (Schwartz 1967:p.195). Art museum's holdings generally come from gifts or are purchased with a gift of money (Schwartz 1967:p50). This is the case of the Mobile Museum of Art. Specialized history museums like the Morikami Museum often do not pay for their exhibits. Rather the exhibited artifacts are often donated (Schwartz 1967:p.132). These museums can also circulate "want list" of items they would like to acquire to display (Schwartz 1967:p.135).

In the context of museum exhibitions the authenticity and quality of the artifact displays is of extreme importance. A natural history museum collects items that display the wonders of the natural world such as minerals, animals and fossils. Natural history museums also collect items that deal with the identity of different cultures (Schwartz 1967:p.194). In an art museum the ability of the art to illustrate some aspects of art history is key in deciding what to buy (Schwartz 1967:p.70). If the art is purchased by the museum, the price is one of the main considerations of which pieces to purchase but the final decision of what to buy is in the hands of the board of trustees (Schwartz 1967:p.71). History museums collect items such as "letters, Diaries,

photographs...negatives, paintings, business records, tools, furniture and other equipment (Schwartz 1967:p.136).”

Neither the American Museum of Natural History nor the Morikami Museum held objects average people would normally call “treasures.” Both of these museums focused on the artifacts used in daily life. The porcelain at the Mobile Museum of Art could be considered more of the “treasure” sort of exhibit than the other two museums. That is not to say those objects are not treasures in and of themselves. However, when the first museums were created the desire to see “treasures” is what drew visitors to museums (Adams 1991:p332). By focusing on only what the Japanese and Chinese would consider treasures and useful items the museums are telling a different story from those told in the past.

2.4 The Value of the Artifacts

The objects museums display sometimes have little visual interest. Instead the value of the object lies elsewhere. An example of this lack of visual interest would be rocks or toys. Unless you understand what type of rock it is or why it is important, it is just another rock. A toy car might not be of much interest to people but when it is explained that it is a model of the original Ford Model T, it becomes important to the viewer (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:p.17).

When an object is displayed many lose their contextual meaning. They may be presented in isolation from the other objects that help create its’ identity. For instance if a decorative spoon was displayed the first thought of the viewer might be “why are they showing this?” However, if the spoon had been displayed along with the plate, cup and saucer, sugar and cream servers, the placemats and the plates with which it was associated

the reason for its inclusion in the exhibit would be clearer to the viewer (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:p.18). When an object is shown in a museum it tends to be displayed as a work of art, disassociated from its original context (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:p.20). This rupture can be mended by well-planned explanations, audio commentaries, docents giving tours, booklets, education programs, lectures and performances (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:p.21).

2.5 Collections of Human Remains

Some museums have collection of human remains. These are not always displayed but occasionally they are. Collection of human remains can be used for many purposes. One is that forensic anthropologists can study the skeletons. Another is that museums can display them to show the representations of ritual and symbolic meanings that the skeletons hold in different cultures. Usually human remains are a symbol of our mortality as humans. They can also hold meanings such as showing off the ability to capture or raid another culture or villages or can be used to remember the dead. There is no end to the variety of uses human remains can have in a society (Quigley 2001:p.3). In Egypt the dead were preserved so that the person might live again in the next world. Today Egyptian mummies are used in museums to showcase the Egyptian beliefs in the afterlife and even in some cases as an art form in the case of the sarcophagus. Also these remains can be displayed to explain or show the population that created the artifacts. Some museums are dedicated to showing only human remains and anatomical displays of the human body.

Death has often been a subject of display. Humans have exhibited the bones of dead humans in catacombs, cemeteries, homes, theaters and when people were tortured

and given the death penalty their bodies or heads were often displayed for the public (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:p.35). In the most recent couple of centuries the human remains of other cultures have been displayed in museums (Kirschenblatt-Gimblett 1998:p.36). These displays in museums have saved these remains for the use of archaeologists.

Archaeologists can use skeletal remains to better understand the nature of life at some point in time in a society or culture. For instance the collection at the National Museum of Health and Medicine has a large collection of Civil War skeletons. Archaeologists are using these remains to understand historical events such as the Battle of Little Bighorn (Quigley 2001:p.4).

Many museums are actively collecting human remains today (Quigley 2001:p.118). One of these is the American Museum of Natural History. The American Museum of Natural History has several human remains that are not commonly known about. In 1974 Mahmoud Y. El-Najjar did a survey that showed the American Museum of Natural History had hundreds of skeletal collections. The museum's "collection has some 277 African Black skulls, a morphology collection gathered from dissected cadavers and a large sample of ancient western and eastern Inuit's skeletons." Often these collections are lacking provenance because of the way they were brought to the museum from private collectors (Quigley 2001:p119). It could also be caused by the collections having been split up. In 1998 about seven hundred institutions in the United States had skeletal collections from an estimated 110,000 individuals (Quigley 2001:p120). However, today many of the museums in the United States are dismantling

their skeletal collections to comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. Many of these collections have been re-interred (Quigley 2001:p123).

In the Chinese section of the exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History there was one skeleton displayed. It was under the Great Wall of China picture. It had a caption that told about the Great Wall and its construction but it did not mention why the skeleton was shown. They were probably trying to show the fact that thousands of Chinese died making the wall. They could have at least mentioned why the skeleton was displayed there. As it was it simply seemed to be an afterthought to the exhibit.

2.6 Lighting in a Museum

One aspect of the museum display that is important is the lighting. The first and most important consideration about what kind of lighting to use is conservation. Organic objects are likely to deteriorate after being exposed to certain types of lights. This is not the case for inorganic materials (CIBS 1980:p.7). The second thing to consider is the type of light that should be used. This is decided by what is being displayed and how it is being displayed.

This thesis will only discuss the two types of lights used in the three exhibits that were visited. Fluorescent lights and track lights were the only two types of lights used. A fluorescent lamp's light is in the yellow-green region. Due to this it has more luminous efficiency. These are often used in display cases (CIBS 1980:p.32). The American Museum of Natural History and the Morikami Museum used fluorescent lights inside the cases.

Internal Lighting can be freestanding or built into the display cases. These usually have light boxes or light attics overhead to hold the light. There are two types of

light attic. First is a partial light attic, which cast the light in such way that it can be viewed from only one direction. Second is a full light attic, where the object can be seen from all sides. This requires a light attic the length of the case top (IES 1996:p.24). “Light chambers require ventilation to prevent heat build-up and should have air vents for convection cooling (IES 1996:p.25).” This is one possible reason the Morikami Museum left the top of the floor to ceiling displays open, for ventilation. The American Museum of Natural History had built in light attics. Most of the displays were partial light attics but a few were full light attic. The Morikami Museum had freestanding internal lighting that could be viewed from at least three sides.

Track lighting uses incandescent tungsten halogen tubular lights (IES 1996:p.44). These produce a bit of heat and are not all that efficient (IES 1996:p.38). When using track lighting for external lighting on display cases it should be above the front of the case and it should be focused straight down. This will avoid shadows (IES 1996:p.23). All three museums used track lighting for their freestanding displays. Only the Mobile Museum of Art used this type of lighting throughout the exhibit.

2.7 Preservation of the Artifacts

Preservation is the second major part of the museum display’s components. Organic materials, in particular, in museums are susceptible to all kinds of damage. Organic materials can be attacked by fungi, bacteria, insects, the effects of photo oxidation, air pollutants and humidity (Maekawa 1998:p.1). Oxygen levels in display cases holding organic material should be as close to zero as possible and the ideal temperature is one to fifteen degrees C. The ideal humidity level is thirty to fifty percent. Long wavelengths of light that do not cast any color are best (Maekawa 1998:p.3). The

American Museum of Natural History and the Morikami Museum both had organic materials in their exhibits. The American Museum of Natural History seemed to take more care in the preservation of these artifacts as well as the non-organic ones. The Morikami Museum had display cases with organic materials in them that were open to the air in the room.

2.8 The Language of a Museum

After the artifacts are protected and the exhibit is created, the information that goes along with the exhibit need to be written. The audience can read this information as well as see the way the actual displays are put together. One way to read the exhibit is by using discourse analysis. Discourse analysis “is a systematic, rigorous way of suggesting answers to research questions posed in and across disciplines throughout the humanities and social sciences and beyond (Johnstone 2002:p.XI).” It can be used for other things than just spoken or written discourse such as photography and architecture (Johnstone 2002:p.2). Museums use written words to get their meaning across. However, museums also use the architecture of the building and the design of the displays to set the tone of the exhibit. In the American Museum of Natural History the impressive exterior of the museum set the tone for what the visitor is expecting to see in the exhibits. At the Mobile Museum of Art the design of the building makes the visitor feel like they are entering a modern art exhibit. Meanwhile, the Morikami Museum used the tranquil feel of the exterior to set the tone of peacefulness of the exhibit.

Discourse analysis is a study of how people draw on their knowledge of language to communicate in certain situations (Johnstone 2002:p.3). What makes discourse analysis different from other studies of linguistics is how the researchers answers

questions by examining the aspects of the structure and function of language. Discourse analysis applied to the investigation of a museum to understand the way people read through the exhibit and what knowledge they get from it. The discourse of a museum exhibit it can be broken down into the title and contextual information to the actual description of the artifacts (Johnstone 2002:p.4). Display plaques at the American Museum of Natural History had a title, a subtitle and then the information about the artifacts. Those at the Mobile Museum of Art had a date, and place of origin followed by a list of what the artifacts were. The Morikami Museum used a combination of the other two museums. It had a title, date, place of origin and the information about the artifacts.

This thesis will focus on the plaques used in the exhibits. However, other items such as pamphlets, books and audio guides can also be helpful. The way information is presented in a museum exhibit affects the way the artifacts are seen and the overall view of the exhibit. The American Museum of Natural History presented information about the artifact in a way that was easy to understand but they provided a little more information than most people would read. The Mobile Museum of Art exhibits gave only factual information about the artifacts and this led to a feeling of detachment from the artifacts. Meanwhile, the Morikami Museum presented the information in an informative but entertaining way that led to a feeling of oneness with the exhibit. Also the visitor shapes discourse in the museum. Visitors bring with them preconceived notions about artifacts in general, museums and about the country, which the exhibit is on (Johnstone 2002:p.9).

Discourse is usually thought about in the sense of what *is* said but what is *not* said is just as important (Johnstone 2002:p.11). The American Museum of Natural History

exhibit left out large parts of both the Japanese and Chinese societies. For instance they did not give any background on how old the societies were or what they stood for.

Instead they simply showed certain parts of their cultures that often had nothing to do with one another. The Mobile Museum of Art did not give any background on China or the long tradition of making the artifacts. Instead they gave only the information needed to know about where the artifacts came from, when it was made and what it was. The Morikami Museum gave background information on the Japanese settlement that the artifacts came from and also gave details about the cultural aspect to the artifacts.

Written discourse can have several meanings to it. First is the writer's intended meaning. Then what the text itself means. Thirdly there is the meaning to the audience. Finally there is the meaning of all of these combined. In a museum exhibit the designer of the exhibit has to be careful of how they word and present the information. This is a difficult thing to do because people will always get a slightly different meaning out of it than its intended one (Johnstone 2002:p.230).

When a museum does not use descriptive words from the original language and culture that the artifact is from, the artifact loses its context. By taking the artifact out of its context and giving it an English name the museum has incorporated it into our own culture (Johnstone 2002:p.13). By leaving out critical information such as place of origin or date, the artifact is also taken from its original context (Johnstone 2002:p.14).

2.9 The Language of the Three Museums

The American Museum of Natural History removed the "original titles" of the artifacts, the dates and the place of origin. Visitors were often left wondering what the artifacts were called, when it was used and where it came from. Therefore, the visitor

could not have a complete understanding of the artifacts in the way they were originally supposed to be seen.

The Mobile Museum of Art gave both place of origin and dates but left out the original names of the artifacts. This gave a better view of the artifacts. However, by not giving any other important details the visitor was still not getting a complete set of information about the artifacts. The Morikami Museum used dates, place of origin and the Japanese titles of the artifacts. Coupled with their detail about the cultural meaning of the artifacts the visitor was given nearly complete knowledge about the artifacts. None of the museums took the position of trying to direct the views and thoughts of the viewer. This is often not the case (Johnstone 2002:p.17). Instead all three museums presented the information in a coherent way to the visitor and let them decide the rest on their own.

The American Museum of Natural History had long explanations of the artifacts. This did allow for them to give a more complete look at the artifact and occasionally its role in the culture. The only problem they had was that they introduced terms like Samurai but did not explain that they were ancient warriors. They simply explained what the artifacts were and that the artifacts were used by the samurai. They did not tell the viewer that the samurai were the only ones allowed to carry a sword and that made these swords important to their wielders. If you did not have even a little background information on Japanese history this would be very confusing.

Also they mentioned woodblocks and how they were an important handcraft in Japan. They made it seem like they were created there but actually it was adapted from the Dutch. Also they had a Go board (an ancient board game that is similar to Chess and Othello) displayed and said it was a Japanese game. This is not correct; in fact Go was

created in China, although many of the terms in Go are Japanese words, which is not surprising seeing that both languages had common roots. This shows how sometimes the meanings and thoughts of the designer fail to reach the visitor through the written words (Johnstone 2002:p.14). One of the things that struck me the most was the introductory text to the hall of Asia. In it they discuss how primitive cultures can be very complex. They do not even mention the fact that China and Japan were two highly complex countries, even in the past. Instead they made it sound like all of Asia is primitive, even today.

The American Museum of Natural History had the most textual information on the plaques out of the three museums. Their explanations were the longest of the three but still had some flaws in that they sometimes left the explanations vague. Also the American Museum of Natural History had less cultural information than the Morikami Museum but it did have more than the Mobile Museum of Art.

The Mobile Museum of Art had a short descriptive explanation of the piece displayed. They mentioned where it came from, when it was made. Over all it was not very helpful information because it left you with many questions about the artifacts. This museum was probably the least informative out of the three I visited. There was no introductory text to this exhibit to explain what you would be seeing. This was very telling in its own way because it seems like they want you to make your own judgments about the exhibit.

The Mobile Museum of Art was the least textual and cultural out of the three museums. By only mentioning the basic facts about the artifacts they were able to have the viewer form their own conclusions. This is a typical practice in art museums. It was

assumed by the designers of the exhibit that the viewer had previous knowledge about the culture and the type of pottery in the display or that the education officer would accompany them and would explain the exhibit to them. The website was also unhelpful in that it only lists what exhibits are there and what is coming. It had little or no detail on the exhibits.

In contrast to the Mobile Museum of Art, the Morikami Museum explained when the object was made, what it was used for and its place in the culture. These were more detailed than the ones from the Mobile Museum of Art. Audiences were not left questioning the artifact after reading the panels. The museum's website gave even more details about the pieces in the exhibit. Overall the explanations in this museum were well written and easy to understand. The introductory text here explained a little about the Japanese settlement that the artifacts came from, which was helpful so the visitor can put the artifacts in a context.

The Morikami Museum had more cultural information than the other two museums. However, it did have less textual information than the American Museum of Natural History but more than the Mobile Museum of Art. The Morikami Museum was extremely detailed about why the artifacts were important to the Japanese and how the artifacts were used and for what purpose.

2.10 Photography in an Exhibit

Many museums use photographs sparingly because they are two-dimensional and are striving to show at least a three-dimensional display. There are some similarities and differences in photographs and museum displays. The main similarity is that both photographs and museum displays bracket or freeze the visual presentation of the exotic

other. Another similarity is that both photographs and museum displays can show more than what is in the photograph or display case. This is done through artistic means. Both attempt to make the viewer take a deeper look at what is going on in the culture to cause a greater understanding. The main difference is that photographs are two-dimensional and museum displays are three-dimensional. By not using the museum display to its full capacity the display becomes two-dimensional like a photograph. Outside of photography exhibits most museums use photography sparingly because the photographs are usually weighted (or composed a certain way for a particular reason) and not always the way the museum wants the direction to go. Also photographs are not seen the same by any two viewers which is the same thing that happens in museums (Lutz and Collins 1993:p.XIII).

There are several parallels between the National Geographic magazine and the American Museum of Natural history. They were both started as scientific endeavors in the last third of the 18th century. Their aims were similar, to collect natural artifacts from around the world and make them available to the public, just in different ways. Both were created to educate the public (Lutz and Collins 1993:p.95). National Geographic used photographs to portray the world the way they thought the people wanted to see it. The American Museum of Natural History tried to show the artifacts that were actually used in daily life, and not influence the way it was viewed.

The American Museum of Natural History as well as National Geographic rarely shows the ill or infirm. Everyone is in good health and young or middle aged. This is a misrepresentation but both institutions thought that it was necessary to show this, as this was what they thought their public wanted to see (Lutz and Collins 1993:p.95). They

assume people want to see photos of happy people interacting with “white” men or working at their jobs, while usually smiling at the camera (Lutz and Collins 1993:p.96).

The pictures are usually a single person smiling at the camera, or a small group with a “white” person (Lutz and Collins 1993:p.107). The viewer does not see violence or the aftermath of violence. This is true of both the magazine and the museum. They do not show poverty, or conversely, great wealth. The American Museum of Natural History mostly showed portraits of smiling middle-aged people or middle-aged people working in the fields. The Japanese in the photos at the museum are portrayed as industrious, strong, virile and unique (Lutz and Collins 1993:p.130). Because their skin color is close to “white” they are usually pictured as individuals, rather than as a group (Lutz and Collins 1993:p.164). However, the American Museum of Natural History did have a painting that was of a group of Japanese farmers.

The Mobile Museum of Art and the Morikami did not show any photographs. The Morikami Museum did have a video playing that showed a middle-aged Japanese fisherman. In the video he showed how to use birds to catch fish, as was done in Japan. In the video he was always working much like the photographs at the American Museum of Natural History.

2.11 The Layout of an Exhibit

While photographs can have an impact on the feel of the exhibit, the layout is also important. When visiting an exhibit, patrons tend to follow the path with the least steps in an exhibit (Bitgood 2006:p.469). People tend to avoid walking in zigzag patterns around a room or backtracking to see the other side of the exhibit (Bitgood 2006:p.470). Instead most people walk along only one of the walls. Usually it is the wall closest to

where they entered the room. People also tend to pass by displays that are separate from the main part of the room. Most visitors follow these rules unless there is a landmark that draws their attention (Bitgood 2006:p.471). Also short text is more likely to be read completely even among those with high interest levels (Bitgood 2006:p.472).

The American Museum of Natural History had a round room that housed the Japanese part of the exhibit with a partition in the middle of it giving it a flat surface and it had a semicircular room for the Chinese exhibits. Visitors were led throughout the exhibit for the most part, even though there was little cohesion between the displays. One part of the Japanese exhibit was freestanding and you had to cross the room to get to it. The Mobile Museum of Art was in a long hall with a circular room at the end for the traveling exhibit. It had exhibits on both sides of the room and in the hall and it had displays along the wall in the circular room as well as a few freestanding displays. In order to see the whole exhibit you had to go from side to side. The permanent exhibit was housed in a long narrow room with the exhibits arranged around and on the walls. The exhibits were lined down the center of the room. The Morikami Museum was a square room with walls in the middle of the room that made parts of it rectangular. Display cases were along the walls for the most part but some were in the middle of the room. For the most part the visitor was drawn along the walls from one display to the next.

2.12 The Physical Aspects of an Exhibit

After a visit to the exhibits when people are asked to recall their museum experience most people recall the physical context. This would be their memory of things they saw, did and how they felt about the experience (Falk and Dierking 2000:p.53). This is not surprising when one thinks about the fact that the ability to learn

comes from the ability to use the physical setting to frame prior experiences (Falk and Dierking 2000:p.54). At the American Museum of Natural History one of the things that people remembered was the elaborate bridal chair and the shrine to Buddha. The teahouse and the colorful kites were what people talked about at the Morikami Museum. At the Mobile Museum of Art, not one item was remembered. The detail of the animals and the delicacy of the pottery were commented on by those visitors. People act differently in different settings and the museum is a physical setting of learning much like a school (Falk and Dierking 2000:p.56). First time visitors are more likely to focus on orientation, way finding, behavior modeling and effort to cope with novelty. In comparison the frequent visitor to museums knows where they are going, how to behave and is able to focus more on the exhibition (Falk and Dierking 2000:p.55).

The physical context of a museum also includes the architecture and artifacts within it. Whether or not there is carpet or adequate seating as well as the objects on display can affect learning in the museum (Falk and Dierking 2000:p.57). Biologically humans are adapted to be able to remember smells, taste, sensations and sights. This helps when we are learning new things, such as in the museum context. People do this by relating past experiences with the present situation (Falk and Dierking 2000:p.61). Due to this there is a strong relationship between physical context and feelings (Falk and Dierking 2000:p.63).

The American Museum of Natural History did not have carpet in any of the exhibit halls. They only had benches in the hallways going between exhibits. It was like they wanted you to keep moving. The Mobile Museum of Art did not have carpet in the hall where the permanent collection was housed. However, there was carpet on the hall

where the traveling exhibit was held. They also had no seating, so the visitor had to exit the building to find a place to sit. The Morikami Museum also did not have carpet. In the room with the teahouse there was seating, but there was only one bench in the rest of the exhibit. It was where you could watch the video of the fisherman. Most of their seating was at the outside café or on the garden lawn.

2.13 Differences in Museum Exhibits

Each culture has a dynamic nature both within the culture and through others view of it. Because of this it is necessary to preserve their culture before it disappears. This is where anthropologists, archaeologists, linguists and physical anthropologists come in. Through their work of collecting and displaying, they assist the museum in helping people learn new and fascinating things about cultures around the world, both old and new (Hein 1998:p.11). No two museums give the exact same meaning to the same objects and two museums on the same subject may display different objects based on their primary goals (Hein 1998:p.21).

For instance, I recently visited two different museum exhibits on King Tut. One rebuilt his tomb just like when Howard Carter found it (Howard Carter was an Egyptologist in the early 20th century). The other showed artifacts from the tomb but also included other artifacts from Egypt that were from the same time period. Both of these are valid representations but come from two very different viewpoints. The first exhibit was at the Luxor hotel in Las Vegas, Nevada in May of 2005. Showing the tomb of King Tut was their primary goal, which they did perfectly. The second exhibit was in the Houston Museum of Natural History in Houston, Texas within the last year and a half.

Showing what Egyptian culture was about in the time of King Tut was their goal, which is a vastly different viewpoint from the Luxor Museum.

Another factor that might have created the differences in museum displays is the background of the curators. The American Museum of Natural History's curator is Laurel Kendall. Dr. Kendall's focus is on Korea but she recently took up the study of China, Japan and Vietnam as well. Paul Richelson designed the exhibition of Chinese Cloisonné at the Mobile Museum of Art. Dr. Richelson is the assistant director and chief curator at the Museum. The exhibit at the Morikami Museum was collaboration between Tom Gregersen the cultural director, Kumiko Randle the exhibit designer, and Veljko Dujin the assistant curator. Neither the staff at the Mobile Museum of Art or the Morikami Museum had any professional training in the field of Japan and China.

2.14 Credentials

As an undergraduate student at the University of South Alabama I majored in Anthropology and I minored in History. My emphasis in history was Asian studies. I took all but nine hours for my minor in Asian studies. Most of the classes were on China and Japan. After I took my first class in early Asian history I fell in love with studying Japan and China. In my anthropology studies I took some courses in museum studies and I had an internship at the Museum of Mobile in Mobile, Alabama. When I was looking at what to do my thesis on I decided to combine my two interests. Currently I am studying the Japanese language on my own and I had originally planned to do part of my thesis work in Japan. However, that part of my thesis fell through, so I decided to look at how American museums portray China and Japan to the public.

2.15 Proposed Interpretations of Japan and China

These museums have drastically different interpretation of China and Japan. The American Museum of Natural History took a look at the different objects used in China and Japan and their uses there. It seemed like they wanted to show the many facets from the cultures but took a very small perspective on it. The Mobile Museum of Art was simply a display of pottery with no in depth look at how the objects were used or what their meaning in the culture was. It was designed to be highly pleasing only. The Morikami Museum wanted to show how the Japanese immigrants in America lived. It took a different approach to showing their culture by just displaying various objects that they created and used. The American Museum of Natural history and the Mobile Museum of Art both took an outsiders perspective while the Morikami Museum took an insiders perspective. Difference in their perspectives is clearly visible and shows in the way they look at the objects and how they explain them.

2.16 The Archaeologists Role in the Museum

The public that visits the museums are usually from out of town or from nearby schools and the museum must take this into account as they plan their exhibits because different audiences have different needs. It is up to the archaeologists to explain why the past must be preserved so that it is not lost forever. Archaeologists must explain more than that the past has an intrinsic value. Instead they must say why the tangible evidence is so important. In the context of people's life this is the only way to stop looting and the careless or intentional destruction of sites (Stone 1997:p.27).

Archaeologists and others who control the information of the past must use every means available to them to reach the general public. This would include film, television,

radio, newspaper and popular publications. Media communications must be handled with care because the industry has their own business plans and will often distort or sensationalize the archaeological materials. Also publicity can increase the risk of looting of archaeological sites. Never the less the public needs to be informed of what is being found and what it means (Stone 1997:p.28).

The gap between the museum curators, the archaeologists and the educators is often very wide (Stone 1997:p.31). Each has their own agenda for what should be presented, and it is different from one another. The museum should act as a “bridge” to the past, while presenting the information without a bias. They do not want the public to only be aware of how the past acted on the present, but the exhibit should teach them to value the contributions made in the past and to understand them (Hoffman 1997:p.73). Unfortunately, most exhibits are passive instead of being interactive (South 1997:p.62). This presents a whole new set of problems for the curator who is designing the exhibit. Archaeologists want it to catch the excitement present when a new find is made. This is essential for the visitor to grasp the meaning of the exhibit. It is really difficult when it is a passive exhibit (Davis 1997:p.87).

The museum needs to tell where the exhibit starts and where it is going (Davis 1997:p.88). This framework is needed by the public in order to take away a new understanding. The exhibit should lead the public through the exhibit, telling what the objects were and what they were used for. It should not focus on how the past influenced today. Instead they should present the culture as it was at the time the exhibit focuses on. The curator’s job is to translate the archaeological jargon into an interesting, accurate exhibit that will appeal to a wide audience (Honerkamp and Zierden 1997:p.131).

While museums are a major source of our understanding of the Japanese and Chinese they can never give us a complete look at these two cultures because of the nature of museums and their exhibits. Despite the knowledge that anthropology has provided us with, museums still leave out critical information in the exhibits. The information that anthropology has given us has helped me get a critical eye to use when looking at Japan and China. Because of this information I can give a more informed evaluation of the three exhibits I visited.

3. Japanese Exhibits

The goals of this chapter are to discuss the two Japanese exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History and the Morikami Museum and how the lighting, dioramas, case construction, language and layout affect the visitor's perception of the exhibit. Lighting can influence the way the artifacts are seen and the details that can be distinguished on them. When lighting is used properly it can enhance features of the artifacts. However, when it is used ineffectively it can obscure features of the artifacts. Whether it is used properly or not can set the tone for the exhibits. The way in which the cases are positioned can also change the orientation of the displays or dioramas and the artifacts. Another thing that can change the orientation and tone of the exhibit is the exterior of the museum and its placement in the museum. All of these factor and several others can affect the way the exhibit is seen by the visitor.

3.1 Location of the Exhibits

The long path to the Asian exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History leaves the visitor drained by the time they reach the Hall of Asia. Upon coming to the entrance to the American Museum of Natural History the visitor is impressed with the massive amount of steps covering the front of the building. As the visitor enters the rotunda there is a Tyrannosaurus Rex, to the right is the information booth and the ticket kiosk. To actually get to the Hall of Asia the visitor has to go to the left and then the visitor has to wind through four or five other exhibits to get to it, even though the map says it was right off the entrance. Once the visitor goes through the other exhibits the visitor finally reach the Asian Hall. By the time the visitor gets to the exhibit they have seen so many things that their minds are on overdrive. Once there the visitor has to go

around corners and in a circle to see the entire exhibit. This was also tiring. A map was given at the information booth but it was relatively uninformative about how many exhibits you had to go through to get to any one exhibit, instead it simply told the different Halls (Figure 3.1).



Figure 3.1-Entrance to the American Museum of Natural History

The entrance to the Morikami Museum was impressive in a different way. Instead of being imposing like the American Museum of Natural History it was tranquil. As you walked up the short amount of steps, there was a stream with a pond and a waterfall to the right, straight ahead was this was the entrance to the museum (Figure 3.2). Once the visitor enters the museum the ticket kiosk is immediately on their left, by turning to the left of the ticket kiosk the visitor is led to the gift shop and inside the

zxhallway to the right of the gift shop is the replica of a teahouse (Figure 3.3). If the visitor went straight from the entrance of the hallway they would enter the main exhibit. The room was a large square with partitions in the middle. A map of the gardens was handed out but it did not give any details on the exhibit. The entrances were not always good indicators of the exhibit. From the exterior of the American Museum of Natural History, I expected a grand and extremely large exhibit but I was disappointed by how small it actually was. The Morikami Museum on the other hand lived up to it's exterior. The exhibit was easy to navigate, well explained and had a tranquil feel throughout it.



Figure 3.2-Entrance to the Morikami Museum



Figure 3.3-Morikami Museum's Tea House

3.2 Use of Dioramas

The Japanese section of the American Museum of Natural History used dioramas heavily but the exhibit had displays as well. A diorama is a recreation of a place or time in history to show the visitor what life was like at that time. In several dioramas they recreated the area that the objects on display were used in. While some dioramas in the Japanese section had mannequins giving an overall view of what the objects were for, how they were used and how they looked in the settings where they were used. This added to a deeper understanding of the exhibit. More flow would have been created if they had used this technique in every display, but the reason they did not do this was probably because they only had a few artifacts to put in some of the displays. There did

not seem to be a reason for not using this technique with some of the displays though. It might have had something to do with the cost of making the exhibits with mannequins.

In the Japanese section of the exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History there were examples of “Netsuke (Figure 3.4).” According to Okada (1980:p.2), Netsuke are little statues worn as a button on the sash. Netsuke originally flourished in the Edo period. Everyone of every class wore the Netsuke during this period (Okada 1980:p.2). This diorama was set up a little differently than some of the others because the Netsuke statues were placed on individual shelves around a picture of what they would have looked like when they were worn.



Figure 3.4-Netsuke Statues

One of the largest dioramas with mannequins held a shaman, priest, a woman that was most likely a geisha, Noh masks and a Go board (Figure 3.5). Littleton (2002:p.62) stated in his book that the Shamans of Japan were mainly mountain dwellers and studied

the relationship between man and nature while they practiced Shinto. Shinto is an ancient Japanese religion that started about 500 BCE (or earlier) and was originally "a mix of nature worship, fertility cults, divination techniques, hero worship, and shamanism." Its name was derived from the Chinese words "*shin tao*" ("*The Way of the Gods*") in the 8th Century CE. Meanwhile, the priests generally practiced Confucianism, which is a Chinese religion that was imported into Japan (Littleton 2002:p.62). Pilarcik explained that Go was also imported into Japan from China. Go was invented in China as early as 2000 B.C. It was mostly an upper and middle class game (they were the only ones with leisure time to play). Go entered Japanese culture through trade and other contact between cultures. Despite its origin many of the terms used today in Go are Japanese words. Go is played on a "Goban" or a large board on four short legs that is either 9x9 or 19x19. The stones (black and white respectively) are placed on the spots where the lines cross; the goal is to gain the most territory (Pilarcik 1986:p.9). The word geisha means "artists" in Japanese. Geishas were women who were trained in the arts of social graces. They learned to sing, play musical instruments, dance, flower arranging and the tea ceremony. "She is recognized by their distinctive kimonos, obi, platform sandals and exotically made up face (Shelley 1990:p.60)."

The Morikami Museum did not use mannequins in their displays. When they displayed clothing they simply had it supported in the case or hanging on the wall of the case. They also did not use dioramas in any sense; instead they grouped objects together that they considered to have some special associations with each other. Even though they used this technique they were still able to get their point across well.



Figure 3.5-Display of a Priest, Shaman, Noh Masks, Geisha and a Go Board

Some of these cases had only one or two objects but some of them had up to eight objects in them. Display cases, in this sense, were more for the safety of the objects than for a unique way to display the objects. However, some of the floors to ceiling cases were open to the air in the room. This was probably due to the fact that this was a private museum that probably does not have the same amount of funding as the American Museum of Natural History.

By showing like objects together you could compare them to each other to see the type of variations that were used. However, in a few displays they just put objects together and their commonality didn't really stand out so it was harder to understand why these objects were chosen to be in the same case. An example of this would be how they grouped bedding, a kimono and some other household items together. The museum was probably trying to show how these items were all important in the home but they did not

get the exact meaning across well. Dioramas did add to the exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History and although the Morikami Museum did not use dioramas it did adequately explain the way the artifacts were used and their context.

3.3 Types of Display Cases and Plaques

At the American Museum of Natural History there were three types of display cases. Wall mounts could only be viewed from one direction and were completely in the wall with no part that was detached from the wall. The second type of display case was one that jutted out from the wall and could be viewed from multiple directions. A pedestal case was only used once in this exhibit. The first two display case types went from the floor to the ceiling. In all of the display cases there was a raised floor that they put the mannequins and artifacts on. In effect this brought them up so the eye would be drawn more to the artifacts. All the exhibits were behind glass and none were open to the air in the room.

An example of a case that was built into the wall would be a second display of Noh masks (Figure 3.6). Hoaas (1982:p.83) told in his book that the Noh Theater is an important part of the Japanese culture that were “Teaching” plays, usually with a moral, presented on special days. The American Museum of Natural History had several representation of the masks used in the Noh plays. Only men were allowed to be in the plays and they acted both the male and the female parts in these plays (Hoaas 1982:p.83). Since life seemed to reflect the ideals of Buddhism to the Japanese, so did the Noh plays. Noh plays said the basis that life is suffering and true life begins after death (Hamanaka 1999:p.36). Noh masks generally portray gods, demons, ghosts, and even animals. There

are only a few actors in the Noh play and the main character, called Shite, wanders the stage asking questions (Hamanaka 1999:p.37).



Figure 3.6-Noh Masks Display

The diorama of the Shaman, Priest, geisha and the Go board represents a good example of the floor to ceiling case that juts outs from the wall and can be viewed from several directions at the American Museum of Natural History. Also, the only example of the pedestal case is the miniature replica of a Japanese house, while standing at about four feet tall it has a glass box around the replica house (See Figure 3.7)



Figure 3.7-Japanese House Model

All of the large plaques in the Japanese section of the exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History were mounted on the wall and the plaques that were a little bit smaller were inside the case next to the object. The plaques were placed at such a height that a small child or someone in a wheelchair could not read the top. I believe this might have been due to the size of the plaques but still makes little sense considering a lot of their visitors are children. Using a rough estimate I would say most of the wall plaques used in the American Museum of Natural History were 25in wide by 33in tall. The smaller plaques were around 20in wide by 25in tall.

There were two types of cases at the Morikami Museum. First was the floor to ceiling cases and the second was the pedestal cases. Paintings, banners and some artifacts were hung either on the walls or were hanging from the ceiling. Like the American Museum of Natural History the bottom was raised in the floor to ceiling cases with most of the displays having flat painted backdrops at the Morikami Museum. A few had pictures displayed behind it to create a scene. The pedestal cases were about four to five feet high with a glass box on top to hold the artifacts.

An example of a floor to ceiling case was the futon covers. These are often made from a Haori, which is part of a man's kimono jacket lining. Shelley (1990:p.58) gave details on the fact that futons usually depict the special event it was created for such as a large catch, a naming day celebration or a wedding (Shelley 1990:p.58). An example of a pedestal case would be a collection of baskets. Baskets were used to catch fish both in Japan and in Del Ray Beach. There was also a film of how the cormorants were used to fish. Cormorant birds were prized in Japan for the help they provided in fishing and were often depicted on kimonos, bedding, banners and in works of art (Harvey 1999:p.21).

The Morikami had a collection of paintings hung on the wall as you entered the main part of the exhibit. Galvin (1996:p.54) explained that most paintings have a religious motif and all of these were water or sea related. It is more common to see woodblock prints than actual paintings in Japan (Galvin 1996:p.54). The Japanese actually consider calligraphy to be a higher art form than painting. Most of Japanese art is influenced by religion (Sansom 1931:p.246-250).

Plaques in the Morikami museum were both inside the glass cases and on the wall. The plaques on the wall were 8 ½ in by 11in tall. The ones inside the cases were 8

½ in wide by 6in tall. All of the signs were thick and white with black lettering. Plaques in the display cases were put at various heights ranging from the floor of the case to the top of the case. Signs on the wall were placed at about five feet high. Because the artifacts were from the floor up it worked well for anyone to be able to see the artifact. This entire exhibit was well designed to accommodate children and the handicapped.

Pedestal cases at the Morikami Museum had track lighting above with spotlights on the display. These were also at a perfect height for children and the handicapped. The types of display cases and the plaques used to explain the exhibit did affect the way the visitor saw the exhibit. At the American Museum of Natural History the way through the exhibit was not all that straightforward. Instead there was no flow between the cases to give a direct path to follow in the circular room. The visitor could go from one case to the next but there was no cohesion between the displays in the cases. There were another two cases in the middle of the room. Often they were very high up, or the lighting in the case (those that used the partial light attic especially) made it hard to read the plaques. The Morikami was more of a rectangular exhibit through the use of partitions usually with one area or case leading to the next and therefore it was not as awkward. The plaques were all placed where they were easy to see and the lighting was good enough that you did not have to strain your eyes to read the text.

3.4 The Lighting in the Exhibits

The lighting in both museums was adequate for the types of display cases. In the Japanese portion of the exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History long rectangular florescent lights were used within the display cases. Lights were placed in the ceiling above the dioramas using a partial or full light attic. They probably used this

type of light because the dioramas were so large. The pedestal case holding the replica of a Japanese house had a spotlight on it but it was the only case to use spotlights in this exhibit.

An example of partial light attics in the display cases at the American Museum of Natural History is the display of samurai swords (Figure 3.8). Partial attic lighting was perfectly chosen for this case because you only needed to see one part of the case because it was built into the wall. This case displayed several examples of samurai swords and a picture of a samurai holding a sword. According to Sato (1995:p.15) Samurai, or bushi, made up the warrior class of Japan. They lived by an ethical code and were extremely loyal to their warlord and went to fight whenever he called them. After a defeat, some samurai chose to commit ritual suicide (seppuku) by cutting their abdomen rather than being captured or dying a dishonorable death. When Toyotomi Hideyoshi reunited Japan and became the shogun that controlled the emperor, he started to introduce a rigid social caste system, which was later completed by his successors. Hideyoshi forced all of the samurai to decide between a life on the farm and a warrior life in castle towns. Furthermore, he forbade anyone but the samurai to arm themselves with a sword. The Samurai swords then became a symbol of status and power in Japan. In 1868, after the Meiji revolution put the emperor back in power, Japan's feudal caste became extinct and the samurai class was abolished (Sato 1995:p.15).

An example of a full light attic use at the American Museum of Natural History is the woodblock print display (Figure 3.9). This display shows the different steps involved in the process of making a woodblock print. A full attic light in this case is an excellent

idea because it completely highlighted each of the prints, which would have been harder to see with a partial light attic.



Figure 3.8-Samurai Display

Tschichold (1971:p.78) said that each woodblock print required the collaboration of four experts: the designer, the engraver, the printer, and the publisher. A print was usually conceived and issued as a commercial venture by the publisher, who was often also a bookseller. It was he who chose the theme and determined the quality of the work. Designers were dependent on the skill and cooperation of their engravers and of the printers charged with executing their ideas in finished form. Woodblock relief printing offered an effective way to meet the demand for illustrated texts, including ballads, serial stories, anecdotes about famous actors and courtesans, and itineraries along major routes of travel (Tschichold 1971:p.78).



Figure 3.9-Woodblock Prints Display

Floor to ceiling cases at the Morikami Museum used florescent lighting on the ceiling above the cases and the light filtered down through the latticework on the top of the cases. This was unusual because objects in a museum are generally sealed off from the air of the room, but these did not appear to be sealed. The Morikami Museum also used spotlights on a movable track that hung from the ceiling. Track spotlights were probably used because they had several individual pieces in one case and wanted each to be seen well. Spotlights helped show each piece in the displays.

Lighting in the Morikami Museum was used to help set the mood of the display. For example, in the teahouse, ambient lighting was used to produce a more solemn feeling, one of reverence and mystery (Refer to Figure 3.3). Sadler (1962:p.xvii) stated that the tea ceremony, called Cha-no-yu, might be described as a household sacrament. It

has been performed the same way for the past four hundred years. The tea ceremony has had a widespread influence on forming the tastes and habits of the people of Japan and there have been books, plays and paintings that were done to honor the tea ceremony. It has survived despite wars and devastation and is practiced still to this day the same way it has always been and it has become uniquely Japanese (Sadler 1962:p.xvii). In other places, like the kite display, the lights were bright spotlights that showed off the colorful kites. They had an example of a Hata fighting kite. These were unique in that they were made of pre-colored paper, cut and pasted together to form the image, in this case a Giant Carp leaping up the Waterfall. Also they had an Ondako kite, which is a so-called 'demon' kite because they usually depicted a demon. They were made from bamboo & rice paper with ink to color the image (Morikami Museum 2007:p1). These kites were used often for celebrations.

3.5 The Design and the Language of the Exhibits

To view most of the dioramas in the American Museum of Natural History the visitor only needed to be in the front of the diorama. This was because of the way the dioramas were designed into the walls. However, a few of the exhibits could be looked at from the sides as well as from the front of the display. Almost all of the dioramas were from the floor to the ceiling in height. All of the exhibits that had artifacts and not pictures in them had depth to them.

The exhibit plaques were written using relatively uncomplicated wording. However, the sentences were often long. This was mostly because of the school groups that come through the exhibits and the foreign visitors. Exhibit text was used to explain the use of the objects and to describe the objects. For the most part the way that the text

was worded was informative and made you want to learn more about the subject because they left some questions unanswered. They took the time and space to adequately explain most of the objects and their uses. While some of the information was incorrect to a degree most of it was well researched. The long textual explanation allowed them to give a more comprehensive look at the artifact and occasionally its' role in the culture. They did take a deeper look at the parent culture than the Morikami Museum.

The Morikami Museum was designed in such a way that the visitor could view some of the exhibits from the front only, some from only 3 sides and others from all 4 sides. If the visitors look at most of them, the front was the best view. Some cases came to eye level while others were floor to ceiling cases. Generally the ones that could be viewed from only one or three sides were the ones that reached the ceiling. The ones that could be viewed from all four sides were the pedestal cases that came to eye level of about five feet.

The Morikami Museum mainly explained the artifacts but they also told the time period of each artifact and why and how it was used. The texts were descriptive, straightforward while elaborating visually descriptive aspects of the objects, what the object was used for, when it was made and its cultural meaning. Texts at the Morikami Museum were less informative than the American Museum of Natural History but had more meaningful content in relation to the culture. The audience was not left questioning the artifact after reading the panels. Overall the explanations were well written and easy to understand. Introductory text at the Morikami Museum explained a little about the Japanese settlement that the artifacts came from. This was helpful so the visitor can put the objects in a useful context. The language used was different because their visitors

were diverse from the ones that would have visited the American Museum of Natural History. More details were given on the museum's website.

3.6 The Museum Websites

The American Museum of Natural History website merely stated that there was an Asian exhibit and showed where it's location in the museum. However, they did have a teacher's guide to the exhibit. Despite it's importance their website was rather uninformative and unhelpful when trying to get more information on the exhibits. The main page deals with all their offerings. Trying to find the information on the Asian exhibit requires a sleuthing ability. To get to the section on the culture halls you just have to guess if you are going in the right direction. Finally found them by going through the permanent exhibit tab, then to the halls page, from there to the culture halls and then to the Asian exhibit. It is not an easy navigation.

The Morikami Museum's website had detailed information on the exhibit with pictures of the artifacts. It gave information on the founder of the museum and the Japanese fishing community that was founded in Del Ray Beach. This website had a teacher's resource that gave games for children to play as well as some more background information. The website was easy to navigate and even easier to figure out where you wanted to explore next.

The museums did show some similarities. For example, both museums used raised floor to ceiling cases and made light use of pedestal cases. Another similarity was that both museums used florescent lighting. The differences were mainly due to the funding differences. Some of these differences were things like the heavy use of

spotlights, the use of dioramas and the text level of the museums. Some kind of recorded guide would have been helpful, especially in the American Museum of Natural History.

4. Chinese Exhibits

This chapter will explore the differences and similarities of the three exhibits featuring China at the American Museum of Natural History and the Mobile Museum of Art. Location, display cases, plaques, lighting, layout and the websites will be discussed.

4.1 Location of the Exhibits

The American Museum of Natural History's front entrance is impressive (Refer to Figure 3.1). Once the visitor enters the museum they must turn left and take the same path that was explained for the Japanese exhibit. The visitor had to pass through several other exhibits to reach the Asiatic Hall. The Chinese exhibit was attached to the Japanese exhibit.

Entering the Mobile Museum of Art is like getting on a boat or a spaceship. It has a circular or rounded front entrance (Figure 4.1). The ticket desk is on the left as the visitor enters. The traveling exhibit is at the top of a sweeping staircase and it continues down a short hallway to a circular room. The permanent exhibit is down a short hallway behind the ticket desk and to the left. It is a square room, made more circular by curved dividing walls for the various sections of the collections.

4.2 Types of Display Cases and Plaques

The display cases in the American Museum of Natural History and the Mobile Museum of Art had little in common. In the Chinese portion of the American Museum of Natural History exhibit all of the cases were mounted into the wall.



Figure 4.1-Entrance to the Mobile Museum of Art

They had raised floors with small pedestals used to give the artifacts varied height. This was helpful because many of the artifacts were small. Many of the plaques in the Chinese exhibit were inside the cases and were dimly lit. This made them hard to read even though the height of the text was well placed. The plaques in the Chinese portion of the exhibit were roughly the same as in the Japanese portion. I would estimate they were 25in wide by 33in tall. The other plaques used in the cases were 17in wide and 22in tall.

One of the cases that were built into the wall had a dragon costume in it (Figure 4.2). To celebrate national and religious holidays costumes were used. The dancers would don a dragon or lion costume to celebrate holidays like the New Year. Dragons were considered wise and lucky by the Chinese and in turn by the Japanese. By using a

dragon to bring in the New Year they were ensuring the next year would be lucky. Dragon costumes are also worn during the Dragon Boat Festival. This tradition is a tribute to the river god (Behnke 2003:p.54).



Figure 4.2-Dragon Costume

The Mobile Museum of Art used wooden display cases to hold the pottery and vases. They put glass on top of the painted wooden display cases to put the artifacts in. The cases had what looked like velvet or felt in them. They put small boxes on top and put the artifacts on the boxes. The information labels were also inside the glass. The plaques at the Mobile Museum of Art were thick and white with black lettering. The plaques were 8 ½ in width by 6in tall. This seemed a decent size because of the space left in the cases. Because the plaques were inside the cases and were small, the lettering was also small and hard to read, someone with bad eyesight or children would have

trouble reading the information. Also the lighting was very low and indirect which made reading difficult. This was surprising since most of their visitors are school groups.

All of the display cases in the temporary exhibit at the Mobile Museum of Art were pieces of porcelain. Porcelain was invented in China in the Yuan period (1279-1368 A.D.). To make porcelain powdered petuntse was mixed with fine white clay called kaolin (Field 2000:p.94). This was made into the pots, vases and figurines and fired at a temperature of 2550 degrees Fahrenheit. Marco Polo coined the term porcelain; it came from the Italian word porcellana meaning cowrie shell. He called it this because the Chinese porcelain reminded him of the shell of the cowrie. The porcelain began to be called China in Europe after the Germans successfully made their own form of porcelain (Field 2000:p.95).

4.3 The Lighting in the Exhibits

There were several similarities and differences between the Chinese exhibits in the American Museum of Natural History and the Mobile Museum of Art. In the Chinese portion of the exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History, long florescent lights were placed in the ceiling of the displays. They used a partial light attic because only one part of the dioramas needed to be lit. This type of light was efficient in lighting the entire diorama.

One of the cases with a partial light attic held a statue of Buddha (Figure 4.3). Buddha figures were used as idols of worship in China. Adopted between 300 A.D. and 500 A.D. from India, Buddhism is the belief in universal love and love of god by men. Other religions, like Taoism and Confucianism, are often mixed with Buddhism (Behnke 2003:p.53).

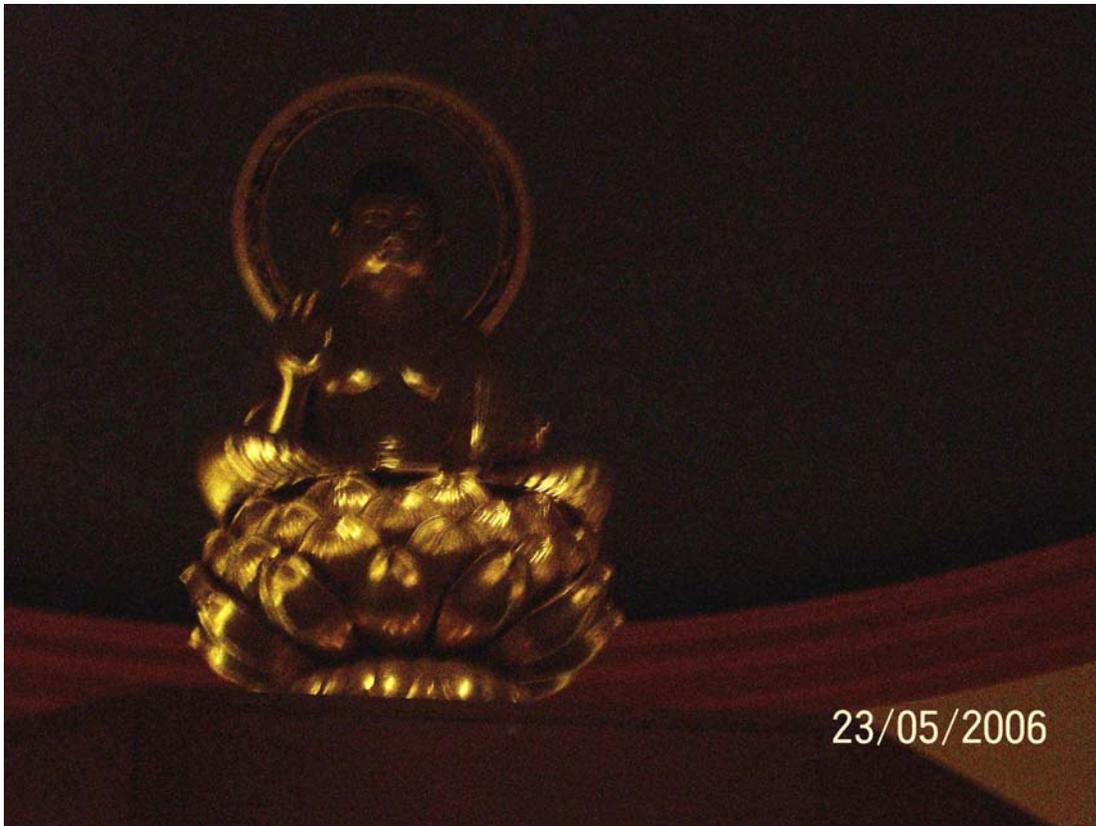


Figure 4.3-Buddha Statue

Meanwhile at the Mobile Museum of Art recessed lighting was used in the ceiling and spotlights were placed on the display cases. This might have been the case because this was part of the traveling exhibit area. Due to this the recessed lighting worked the best for any exhibit that might come in because all they would have to do is add spotlights like they did for this exhibit. They also used this type of lighting because of the small size of the exhibit and the odd shape of the room (circular). They had to have individual lights on each case and in the ceiling so you could see the room. This worked out well for the room it was in.

One of the spotlights was on a statue of a T'ang horse. In the T'ang dynasty glazed ceramic horse statues were used as a popular funerary model. The glaze on the horse was meant to imitate the hide of a horse. The horse was used because it was during

the T'ang dynasty that China had contact with the central Asiatic horses. These horses quickly became objects of admiration by the Chinese (Abbate 1972:p.84).

4.4 Views of the Exhibits

The displays in this portion of the exhibit at the American Museum of Natural History were only viewable from the front. This gave a limited view of some of the artifacts. Again this was due to the way the displays were placed in the wall. Several of the displays had a larger depth to them, while others had shallow depths. All of the displays were from the floor to the ceiling in height.

The cases could often be viewed from three sides but once or twice they could be viewed from all four sides. Often if you only viewed them from the front you missed some of the designs. The cases were about five feet tall. The artifacts were at a height of about five feet. This is an estimate based on the fact that the cases came up to my eye level. You could view the cases from three sides although the front view was the best. The cases were not the right height for a child or someone in a wheelchair.

4.5 The Language of the Exhibits

The way the plaques were worded in the American Museum of Natural History made you want to learn more about China and its culture because you were left with many questions about the culture. The plaques in this portion of the exhibit were less explanatory about the artifacts. They told about the subject that related all of the objects, such as shrines to the ancestors. However, they did not give many details on the individual artifacts.

The text was straightforward and did not tell you what the object was used for or why it was made the way it was at the Mobile Museum of Art. It had a short descriptive

explanation of the piece displayed. They mentioned where it came from, when it was made. Over all it was not very helpful information because it left you with many questions about the artifacts. This museum was probably the least informative out of the three I visited. There was no introductory text to this exhibit to explain what you would be seeing. The lack of this was very telling in its own way because it seems like they want you to make your own judgments about the exhibit. This make sense when you think about the fact that this was an art museum where you are suppose to make your own judgments.

The Mobile Museum of Art was the least textual and cultural out of these two museums because it simply told where and when the objects were made and a short description of the pieces. By only mentioning the basic facts about the artifacts they were able to have the view form their own conclusions. This is a typical practice in art museums. It was assumed by the designers of the exhibit that the viewer had previous knowledge about the culture and the type of pottery in the display.

4.6 The Museums Websites

The Chinese portion of the website at the American Museum of Natural History was on the same page as the Japanese sections. There was a teacher's guide for the Chinese portion just like there was for the Japanese section. See further comments in the Japanese section. The Mobile Museum of Art's website simply stated that they had a Chinese porcelain exhibit and the dates it was available for viewing. It does have graphics that look like they should be interactive, but are not. It lists only what is there now. There is an adobe form that can be downloaded with future events listed. It does

not have information on past events listed. It does not have a map. It does have the operation times and an address and phone number.

Chapter 5: Overall Views

This chapter will have a comparison of the three museums. It will cover all of the aspects previously mentioned as well as new aspects. Instead of just looking at two of the museums at a time this chapter will look at all three to see the overall similarities and differences between them to see the overall patterns of the museums views on Japan and China.

5.1 Audio and Video Use in the Exhibits

All three museums were silent exhibits they did not have background music or headphones to explain the exhibits in more details. The lack of background music neither detracted from nor added to the exhibits. In the American Museum of Natural History headphones explaining the exhibit would have been helpful for the large exhibit. However, the Mobile Museum of Art was too small to need headphones. In the Morikami museum there was a television that explained the use of some of the objects and showed how the fishermen dressed and what objects they used and why they used them. This exhibit could have had headphones but it was not necessary for this exhibit.

5.2 Type of Information in the Exhibits

The American Museum of Natural History had the most textual information out of the three museums. Their explanations were the longest of the three but still had some flaws in that they sometimes left the explanations vague. Also the American Museum of Natural History had less cultural information than the Morikami Museum but it did have more than the Mobile Museum of Art.

5.3 Comparison of the Display Cases

The exhibits at the American Museum of Natural History, the Mobile Museum of Art and the Morikami Museum had varying things in common in their exhibits. The cases used in the American Museum of Natural History were floor to ceiling cases imbedded into the wall with raised floors and often several items in one case. The Mobile Museum of Art had freestanding raised cases with only a few artifacts in each case. Meanwhile the Morikami Museum had a mixture of both. The American Museum of Natural History had a varied exhibit with a wide range of subject matter. In contrast, the Mobile Museum of Art had limited exhibits with only one subject presented. The Morikami Museum also had a wide range of subject matters but it had the overall theme of the Japanese fishing immigrants. The theme seemed to be important moments and items in the average Chinese citizen's life at the American Museum of Natural History. Meanwhile the theme at the Mobile Museum of Art was the cloisonné collection.

5.4 Types of Artifacts Displayed

The American Museum of Natural History heavily leaned to exhibiting the daily objects of Japan and China. Mostly showing kitchen and household items, tools and clothing but also including woodblock paintings that showed community life and nature as well as statues representing the religious aspect. While giving a feeling that the exhibit tried to cover too wide a base, it lost some of the context the designer had been trying for because they gave no reason behind the choices they made of which items to display. At least the Mobile Museum of Art and Morikami Museum said the items were donated and that explained why they were shown.

The Mobile Museum of Art only showed the cloisonné in the traveling exhibit but the museum had other artifacts as well in the permanent collection. The exhibit made no mention of daily life and most of the cloisonné that they had, would have been from the upper class if not from royalty. No things from the peasants were shown, probably because there is little artistic endeavor on that level. Even in the permanent collection the items they exhibited were all things that the upper class would have used or at least had access to. While they did show funerary artifacts, the museum did not explain why they were important enough to be in this exhibit. No background on the culture was included and that gave the visitor a skewed impression of China.

The Morikami Museum displayed artifacts that were used in the daily life of the Japanese fishing immigrants in Del Ray Beach, Florida. It had the most cultural explanations in the display. Even though it was only a display of the culture of the fishing families that settled in Del Ray Beach, Florida they at least attempted to transmit a feeling for what their ancestors believed when they settled there. While the American Museum of Natural History had lots of cultural items but their presentation was disjointed at best. Therefore, the visitor could not get a full view of the overall cultures of Japan and China.

5.5 A Comparison of the Plaque Placement

The American Museum of Natural History and the Mobile Museum of Art had plaques that were difficult for a person using a wheelchair, or a child to see the explanations of the objects. Unlike the Morikami Museum where the artifacts were all easily viewed. The plaques were similar in all three museums in that they were black on

white. The difference was that the American Museum of Natural History had wall plaques in the Japanese section and plaques inside the cases in the Chinese section.

The Mobile Museum of Art only had plaques inside the cases and the Morikami Museum had both types of plaques in its exhibit, moreover the placement of the plaques was also different. In the American Museum of Natural History the plaques inside the cases were placed where children (who made up a significant part of their visitors) or people in wheelchairs could easily read them. Height played an important role particularly in how it impacted children and the handicapped. The wall plaques were too high for the top part to be read easily by them. The Mobile Museum of Art's plaques were all inside the cases and since the cases were a little high, they were often hard to read for children (which make up most of their visitors) and the handicapped. The Morikami Museum on the other hand had plaques that were generally easy to read for everyone.

5.6 A Comparison of the Lighting Use

Florescent lighting was mostly used in the American Museum of Natural History; however, the museum did utilize spotlights to a small degree. Lighting at the Mobile Museum of Art was all spotlights, which were used to highlight the display. Meanwhile, the Morikami Museum had both florescent lights in the cases that went to the ceiling and spotlighting on the items on the wall and on the freestanding cases.

5.7 The Grouping of the Objects

The American Museum of Natural History the cases were plain white cases mainly with no backgrounds. This was probably done to keep you focused on the artifacts. Artifacts were placed about knee high on a white base using smaller bases of

varied heights to better show off the artifacts. Also lots of the pictures, paintings and wall hangings were hung on the wall inside the cases. They grouped objects by what significance they held in the life of the owner. For instance they put artifacts together that were used for ritual or for a marriage ceremony, or those that would be used in a funeral.

Meanwhile the Mobile Museum of Art's displays were all put together the same, with black painted bases and glass cases on top. Displayed on small pedestals on black velvet was pottery. Three to four objects were displayed in each case. The cases could be viewed from any side, but the best view was placed right in front of the object and reading the sign. All the exhibits were grouped by design. Birds and animals were grouped together, the flowers were the next group, then the scenes and there was one case that held ritual objects. It seemed their goal was to keep the viewer focused on the artifacts. In the permanent collection the boxes to hold the displays were painted the reverse in white. The placement of the objects seemed to be more random in this room, which had light colors both on the walls and the floor.

At the Morikami Museum the display boxes were mostly floor to ceiling cases with raised floors that the artifacts were in. Boxes that held small items were painted red. Some cases had tops while others were open. A long table was against a wall where the food and cake molds and cutouts were displayed. The items were placed together by function for the most part. Clothing, bedding was in one case, the kites were in a case to themselves. Displayed on the walls at the entrance to the exhibit were paintings. The fishing floats and some of the baskets used in fishing were hanging from the ceiling.

5.8 Design of the Rooms

Both the American Museum of Natural History and the Mobile Museum of Art had their exhibits in a semicircular room. However, the Morikami Museum was a square room with a partition in the middle of it. At the Mobile Museum of Art the visitor was made to go back and forth from one display case to the other. There was no connection between them other than the fact that they were all Chinese artifacts. At the American Museum of Natural History and the Morikami Museum the visitor's eye led them from one colorful case to the next but again sometimes there was no connection between the display cases other than the fact that they were all Japanese artifacts.

5.9 Emphasis of the Exhibits

The American Museum of Natural History put a small emphasis on ancestor worship, in both China and Japan, as well as other meaningful rites in contrast to the Morikami Museum (Figures 5.1 and 5.2). At the American Museum of Natural History, no kites were represented, except for one that was used in a theatrical display and the only garments displayed were those associated with grandeur (like kimonos) or warrior types (Figures 5.3 and 5.4). Instead they put their emphasis on day-to-day artifacts. The women represented were shown in traditional Japanese Kimonos doing traditional middle or upper class activities. They were shown working in the field in a traditional outfit (Figure 5.5).

In this exhibit there was no focus on the real cultural differences of Japan. They did mention things like go, the tea ceremony and a minuscule amount about samurai. But they did not utilize this to the fullest capacity. Instead they chose the safe approach that only focused on the physical differences and not the spiritual ones.



Figure 5.1-Japanese Shrine



Figure 5.2-Chinese Shrine



Figure 5.3-Japanese Formal Outfit



Figure 5.4-Chinese Warrior Costume



Figure 5.5-Painting of Japanese Farmers and Farming Tools

This in effect negates a large part of Japanese culture. When one usually thinks of Japan one thinks of the moral and spiritual parts of their culture. For instance, their common use of polite speech, Shinto-ism and the unyielding nature of the Samurai. While they did mention the samurai they merely told about their weapons and not their sense of honor and loyalty, which is in effect the whole basis behind the Samurai.

The Mobile Museum of Art's emphasis seemed to be on the beauty of the cloisonné pieces. It had no cultural information and other than a dry description of the artifact, no background information on the individual pieces was provided. While they did have plaques saying the piece was donated and named the person, they did not say where the artifact had been found. They left many questions unanswered in these exhibits.

The Morikami Museum's emphasis is on the way that the ancestors of those living today in Del Ray Beach lived. It contained a detailed explanation about the day-to-day aspects of the lives, their tools and traditions they brought with them from Japan. The Morikami Museum put an emphasis on both ancestor worship and similar rites. They had examples of many types of house shrines displayed. Kites and special meals were set out to honor relatives on many occasions throughout the year in front of these shrines. Japanese rituals surrounding children were meant to draw protection from their ancestors to preserve the child for the first years of its life. Two of these rituals were girl's day and boy's day. They created food utensils and plates to be used only for these special ceremonies. Special garments were sewn to bring luck and protection to the child. This was true throughout their lives. Kites, special garments and food were made to commemorate special moments such as weddings, birthdays, achievements and large

catches on fishing boats. Different depictions of birds and fish, and other objects the Japanese considered lucky are seen over and over. It was seen in the kimono's, kites, games, woodblock prints and even in the food prepared for special occasions. These birds and fish were important to them and they got the point across strongly.

While both the American Museum of Natural History and the Morikami had displays of ancestor worship, neither of them adequately explained what it was and what it meant to the daily lives of both the Japanese and Chinese people. A deeper understanding of the Japanese and Chinese religions was needed to explain the difference between them and "westerners," whom they viewed in a different light. If this had been explained it would have helped Americans better understand these cultures to which honor was paramount. The emphasis on honor completely dominated the Japanese lives. They lived so as not to bring dishonor on the ancestors or their families. Things causing dishonor were the only reason they needed to end their lives. This concept is foreign to Americans, who think much less of honor. Also our culture does not look favorably on suicide. While in Japan it is not considered to be bad. These are differences that the museums had the opportunity to present. None of the museums I looked at took that opportunity. They all stayed on the "safe" side and just showed mundane stuff that anyone could put forward.

While the three exhibits had vastly different emphasis they were portraying the same cultures. However, if someone visited the American Museum of Natural History they might come away feeling that the Japanese and Chinese were stoic cultures with little feeling in them. They would get a totally different idea of Japan if they went to the Morikami Museum. Instead they might come away feeling that there was a deepness and

richness to Japan and that they are a unique culture. However, they would get a similar feeling about China as the American Museum of Natural History, if they went to the Mobile Museum of art.

5.10 Use of Color

All three museums were mostly colorless except for the artifacts. Groupings in the display cases brought out the rich displays of color in the artifacts so they would take the forefront of the displays. The American Museum of Natural History was a very subdued exhibit with minimum focus on color. The photographs were mostly black and white. This was similar to the Mobile Museum of Art. While in great contrast with the Morikami Museum exhibit.

The Mobile Museum of Art had stark white walls. Also the pedestals for the artifacts were painted white in the permanent collection and in the traveling exhibit the pedestals were black. No backdrops were used for any of the displays. Therefore the only color came from the artifacts in the cases.

The Morikami Museum used the rich displays of colors in the artifacts to show a different side of Japan. It showed how the use of color was an integral part of their culture. This was a different approach from the American Museum of Natural History where the artifacts were not used to show this side of Japan. Artifacts showing the use of the colors as a way of ensuring their luck or safety were displayed. According to Kennedy (2001:p.86), red was used on items to ensure safety, luck, activity and energy. White means cleanliness, purity, luck and death.

5.11 The General Feeling of the Exhibit

The museums expressed completely different feelings. The American Museum of Natural History and Mobile Museum of Art were stiff exhibits that seemed to convey feelings of separation from the culture. This did add to the feeling of mystery of the cultures but it also made the visitor feel as if the cultures were ones that could not be reached by them. Which is untrue since both the Japanese and the Chinese cultures are still thriving today. Meanwhile the Morikami Museum gave off warmth and a sense of being a part of the culture. The Morikami Museum had a feeling of openness even though most of the artifacts were behind glass. It also had a relaxed feel to it. The American Museum of Natural History had a floor plan that seemed disjointed and there were no connections between the various displays. The Mobile Museum of Art had a layout that caused the viewer to either criss-cross or they had to backtrack to see everything. Meanwhile, the Morikami Museum flowed overall, even though sometimes there was no connection between the displays. Even in these instances there was still a feeling of unity to them.

5.12 What Could Have Been Done Differently

None of the three museums in question took a look at Japan or China's more recent past. By this I mean the American Museum of Natural History did not mention anything about World War I or II or even the Meiji revolution. Both of these events had profound effects on the Japanese culture as well as the rest of the world. The Meiji revolution pushed Japan to become industrialized like the west and World War II lead Japan down the path to become one of the most wealthy and powerful nations in the world. The Mobile Museum of Art did not talk about the communist revolution China

underwent or the artifacts lost during those years, this made the items of the collection more valuable since they survived. This too changed the course of the country a great deal. Finally, the Morikami Museum did not look at the persecution that the members of this community went through or even the other hardships they had to face. The visitor could guess what they had to go through but it was never explicitly stated in the exhibit. However, the museum website did give some details on this subject. By not looking at these issues the museums left out a huge portion of these societies histories. It is also telling because it shows that they wanted to show the parts of these two countries that were peaceful rather than turbulent.

6. Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

6.1 Summary

As the visitor left the American Museum of Natural History, they may have been a little confused. While they saw a great many artifacts, there was no cultural context to them. It was just a series of objects presented for viewing. Overall the exhibit left the viewer with more questions than answers. Which was true throughout the exhibit. They were able to show a narrow view of these two cultures but it was just that, narrow. No explanations as to why the objects went together or how they were integrated into the lives of the cultures were given. The designers could have created a more unified exhibit if they had wanted to. All of the objects they showed held special meaning and usefulness in the cultures daily lives and this could have been better developed.

At the Mobile Museum of Art, they presented exactly what they said they would, an exhibit of Chinese cloisonné. It was exactly as advertised. There was no cultural information, just the dates when it was made and what the object was. Even their permanent collection made no cultural overtures. If the visitors were going to this exhibit for the art value then they got what they paid for but if the viewer was looking for cultural information on China then they did not find it here. This is acceptable when it is taken into consideration that this was an art museum where cultural information is usually irrelevant. The pieces in an art museum, unlike a history or natural history museum, are supposed to speak for themselves and the viewer is to decide their overall meaning.

While all three museums did represent some aspect of the Japanese and Chinese cultures, the Morikami museum did the best job of presenting the Japanese culture as a

whole. The American Museum of Natural History and the Mobile Museum of Art on presented a narrow view of both Japan and China. The American Museum of Natural History's exhibit on Japan and China had a stoic and static feel to it. The way the exhibit was designed caused the viewer to feel separated from the cultures and that the cultures were unreachable. It felt static because they only showed one view of the cultures and they only had objects from what I assume to be much earlier dates since they did not give dates. All of the themes they portrayed were from the past and none of the innovations they have made in the last one hundred and fifty years were included. This made the viewer feel that the culture had not changed from the past to today, which is most certainly not true.

The Mobile Museum of Art created a similar feeling about China through its exhibits. By only having works of art from over two hundred years ago the viewer was left wondering if China is still known for it's works of art in pottery. This lack of more recent artifacts might be due to the fact that the donor was only interested in one period of time from the seventeenth century to the eighteenth century.

The Morikami Museum made the viewer feel like a part of the culture. They did this through the feeling of serenity that the exhibit held and by giving the cultural meanings to the artifacts. While most of the artifacts were more recent in origin they held a feeling of long standing traditions in them. This exhibit gave the impression that Japanese culture is changing over time while still holding true to its core values and traditions. When you left their museum, the visitor had an impression of some of the hardships the community endured when they first settled in Del Ray Beach. They were strangers and the previous inhabitants of the area spoke a language very different from

their own. The “white “ people that they dealt with thought strangely and they had trouble interpreting correctly what was said to them. A tight knit community was formed due to this and they were able to cling to the old ways they brought with them. The tea ceremony represents this desire to cling to the old ways of their mother country. Banners were still made to celebrate good catches and the naming days of the children. It seemed that they tried to bring what was familiar to them to life here in the United States.

6.2 Conclusions

From looking at these three museums it becomes apparent that there is little cohesion between museums and that each museum has its own take on the culture it is presenting. By using these three museum exhibits as an example of the type and styles of museum exhibits one realizes quickly that no two museums portray the same information, the same way. This is understandable because of the different types of museums that they were and their locations might even have had something to do with it.

It is acceptable that an art museum would portray Chinese wares in the manner that they did but if a history or natural history museum portrayed a culture in such a way it would not be widely acceptable. The shear difference between the American Museum of Natural History and the Morikami Museum is surprising. The American Museum of Natural History is a large and city funded museum where the exhibits cannot be coddled as much as at a small privately owned museum. Due to its size and the number of exhibits housed in the museum it seems to me that less time can be spent on each exhibit. The difference between them lay in the way the museum is funded and the size of the museum. The one difference that stood out was the attention to the cases and how they were used. In the American Museum of Natural History the cases were all uniform, with

one exception of a pedestal case, and were closed off to the outside environment.

However, at the Morikami Museum many of the cases were open to the air in the room and they had several styles of cases and ways of displaying the artifacts.

Because the Morikami Museum is a small privately funded museum they had more opportunities to create an intimate exhibit like the one visited in this thesis. On the other hand though, one of the functions of a museum is to educate the public. I do not think that the American Museum of Natural History was very successful in this. Yes, they showed a large amount of artifacts, and they did a good job of preserving and protecting those same artifacts. But the information could have been better presented.

Overall these three museums had extremely varying presentations of China and Japan. The American Museum of Natural History tried to cover so much ground that the intended meaning was lost to the viewer. The Mobile Museum of Art on the other hand did just what it set out to do. It wanted to show off the art of China and they did a wonderful job of this. Their intention was not to give information on the artifacts but to show off their beauty. Meanwhile, the Morikami Museum wanted to show how the Japanese Immigrants adapted to living in the United State and how they strived to uphold their country's ideals and culture. The only real thing the three museums had in common was that they all failed to create a complete flow from one case to the next. It is surprising because the three museums were different in the other parts of the displays that someone would expect to be similar between them. If the viewer were to compare two of the museums they would see more commonalities, but when all three are compared this is not the case. For instance when two of the museums are compared their display cases

and lighting often coincide to some extent. However, if all three museums are compared this is not the case.

6.3 Recommendations

The American Museum of Natural History failed to show the richness of the cultures of Japan and China. If they had given more cultural information instead of just textual information the exhibit would have been more explanatory of the culture's history. This museum did not explain why the objects they showed were important to the Japanese and Chinese or to the viewers. This left questions in the minds of the viewers as to why they were shown these objects. Also the fact that there was little cohesion between the displays made the viewer feel that they were just being shown random artifacts. If they had done these few things the exhibit would have been better able to portray Japan and China as the unique cultures that they are.

The Mobile Museum of Art, being an art museum, did not show the reasons behind the artifacts creation, the process of making the artifacts or their importance to the Chinese. The fact that there was not even any background information when you entered the exhibits caused the viewer to question the exhibit. The information they did give only left the visitor asking more questions about the artifacts. By simply giving an introductory text or a pamphlet they could have avoided creating these questions about the exhibit in the temporary exhibit. The pamphlet given out for the permanent exhibit did give a little extra information about the context of the artifacts but it still fell short on the explanations of the reasons the artifacts were created.

The Morikami Museum went into great detail about the artifacts and their importance in the society. Viewers were not left wondering many things by the end of

the exhibit. Instead they came away feeling the connection between themselves and this community. None of the other exhibits that made the viewer feel this way. The designers of the exhibit really captured the feelings that the community had for these artifacts. A more cohesive exhibit would have been created if they had found a way to create a flow from one case to the next. If any of the Museums had looked at the role of women in the society, the importance of extended family, the differences in the classes, the importance of house shrines or the practice of ancestor worship they would have had a more complete look at the cultures of Japan and China.

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