

# **Advisory Opinion**

## **Future Direction of the Museum System in Response to the 2022 Amendment to the Museum Law**



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**Science Council of Japan**

**Committee on Historical Studies  
Subcommittee on the Organizational Management of  
Museums and Art Galleries**

This Advisory Opinion is largely the outcome of the deliberations of the Committee on Historical Studies, the Subcommittee on the Organizational Management of Museums and Art Galleries, Science Council of Japan.

**Science Council of Japan**  
**Committee on Historical Studies**  
**Subcommittee on the Organizational Management of Museums and Art Galleries**

Chair	HAGA Mitsuru	(Section I Council Member)	Professor, Tohoku University
Vice-chair	KIMATA Motokazu	(Associate Member)	Professor Emeritus, Nagoya University
Secretary	SEYA Ai	(Associate Member)	Senior Manager / Curator Registration / Loans and Special Viewings, Collections Management Division, Curatorial Research Department, Tokyo National Museum
Secretary	MATSUDA Akira	(Associate Member)	Associate Professor, the University of Tokyo
	AKIYAMA Akira	(Associate Member)	Professor, The University of Tokyo
	IKEGAMI Hiroko	(Associate Member)	Professor, Kobe University
	OSANO Shigetoshi	(Associate Member)	Professor Emeritus, The University of Tokyo
	OZU Chikako	(Associate Member)	Professor, Kyushu University
	KIKUCHI Yoshio	(Associate Member)	Professor, Fukushima University
	SATO Hiroyuki	(Associate Member)	Professor Emeritus, The University of Tokyo
	RAITA Kyoko	(Associate Member)	Professor, Chuo University
	WATANABE Shinsuke	(Associate Member)	Chief Curator, The National Museum of Western Art
	HASHIMOTO Yoshinobu	(Designated Associate Member)	Senior Researcher, Museum of Human and Nature

**The following members have contributed to this Advisory Opinion.**

KURIHARA Yuji

Deputy Director, The Kyoto National Museum

SASAKI Hidehiko	Director of the Planning Division, Secretariat, Tokyo Metropolitan Foundation for History and Culture
Inoue Yuka	Associate Professor, Meiji University
KURITA Hidenori	Professor, Nagoya University
KANEYAMA Yoshiaki	Professor, Hosei University
SAKUMA Daisuke	Chief Curator, Osaka Museum of Natural History
INAHATA Kohei	Assistant Director, Planning and Coordination Division, Agency for Cultural Affairs
KAWAGUCHI Masako	Director, Information and Documentation Section, Curatorial Division, The National Museum of Western Art

(The individuals above are listed in chronological order. Titles correspond to the positions held at the time of participation in the subcommittee meetings or the public symposium.)

#### **Staff members responsible for preparation of Advisory Report.**

Secretariat	MASUKO Noriyoshi	Director, Division for Scientific Affairs I (until April 2023)
	NEGORO Kyoko	Director, Division for Scientific Affairs I (from May 2023)
	YAMADA Hiroshi	Deputy Director, Division for Scientific Affairs I (until March 2023)
	WAKAO Kimiaki	Deputy Director, Division for Scientific Affairs I (from April 2023)
	SAKUMA Misato	Unit Chief, Division for Scientific Affairs I

This English version is a translation of the original written in Japanese.

## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

### **I Background: The Evolution of the Museum System in Our Country: Background for Formulating Perspectives**

The Museum Law was enacted in December 1951, establishing a registration system for museums deserving protection and support, as well as specifying qualifications etc. for curators. In July 1955, the Museum Law underwent amendments, having introduced provisions for facilities equivalent to museums. Additionally, in 1950, the Cultural Properties Protection Law was enacted. The National Museums (currently part of the Independent Administrative Institution National Institutes for Cultural Heritage) is established based on this law. In other words, the National Museums, representing and leading museums in Japan, does not fall under the definition of a "museum" as stipulated by the Museum Law. This serious shortcoming in our country's museum system has been frequently pointed out. However, even with the 2008 amendment to the Museum Law, fundamental improvements addressing structural deficiencies related to the registration of museums and qualifications for curators were not achieved.

### **II Current Status and Issues: Regarding the 2022 Amendment to the Museum Law: Current Status and Issues**

In 2022, the Museum Law underwent another revision, with the addition of aligning the law's purpose with the spirit of the Basic Law for Culture and the Arts. Additionally, the registration requirements were reexamined, leading to the removal of requirements for museum founders and enabling registration regardless of legal entity type. Upon the registration examination, it was stipulated that the evaluation criteria were based on the establishment's capacity to collect, preserve, exhibit, and conduct research on museum materials and that the specifics of these criteria were delegated to be determined by prefectural and municipal boards of education. Furthermore, the procedures for the registration examination were revised, having stipulated that when conducting registrations, prefectural and municipal boards of education must seek the opinions of individuals with expertise and experience. Despite these legislative changes, structural deficiencies in the registered museum system and challenges related to curator qualification remain uncorrected since the law's enactment in 1951.

### **III Main Points of the Advisory Opinion: The Future Direction of the Museum System**

#### **(1) Unified Museum Registration System**

Since the amendment to the Museum Law in 1955, the designation of "National Museum" has consistently been classified as a "facility equivalent to a museum." However, it is advisable to ensure uniformity this under a new registration system as a "Registered Museum".

## (2) Registration Criteria

While accommodating diverse entities establishing museums, there must be nationwide consistent standards ensuring a uniform level and quality over time. There should be common criteria applicable to all museums, as well as specific criteria for each type of museum. It is necessary to develop such assessment criteria, to verify their fairness, and to establish a third-party organization to provide advice to museums.

## (3) Revision of Curator System for Enhancing Museum Quality

Emphasizing specialization, practical experience, and aiming at team collaboration, a distinction between "Specialized Curator" and "Comprehensive Curator" should be introduced and all curators should be recognized as researchers. It is essential to have a configuration of various professional roles.