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exhibitions at BOJ Money Museum*

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THE EXPERIENCE OF HOLDING SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS AT BOJ CURRENCY MUSEUM

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Currency Museum., Bank of Japan

Introduction

The Bank of Japan Currency Museum opened in 1985 to commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Bank. The number of items in our collection is around two hundred thousand. Besides Japanese notes and coins from ancient to modern times, our collection includes foreign currencies, especially those from East Asia, and old documents and tools related to money.

The main aim of our museum is to illustrate the history of money in Japan. By exhibiting our collection, especially by showing actual notes and coins, we, as a currency museum within the central bank, want to provide people with an opportunity to think about the functions and roles of money and about its historical background.

Based on this concept, we have been holding special exhibitions once a year since 1998 in order to introduce more of our research output and our collection. Through arranging and carrying out these special exhibitions, we have accumulated much know-how and learned various lessons, especially in the field of museum management.

Outline of past Special Exhibitions

1st Special Exhibition, 1998:

Money and Culture: Treasures of the Sempeikan Collection

As this was our first special exhibition, we chose a theme that was deeply related to our museum's origin. The *Sempeikan* was a private museum owned by Mr. Keibun Tanaka, a distinguished numismatist and money collector in pre-war Japan. In 1944, a year before the end of the Second World War, he donated all of his collection to Bank of Japan in order to protect it from the worsening wartime situation.

The *Sempeikan* collection is not merely a comprehensive Japanese currency collection. It includes old currencies from China and other East Asian countries, which bear a deep relationship to the history of money in Japan.

Mr. Tanaka also collected various kinds of things related to money, such as safe boxes, tools used for minting coins, old documents such as IOUs, woodblock prints illustrating the use of money in everyday life, and research papers on numismatics.

In the exhibition, we introduced various rare items from the *Sempeikan* collection along with our research output. Thus, we explained cultural history from the aspect of money.

2nd Special Exhibition, 1999:

Kinza Gold Mint: Birthplace of Koban Gold Coins

We chose a theme that is deeply related to our local identity, because the *Kinza* Gold Mint is the place where the Bank of Japan now stands. The *Kinza* minted *Koban* gold coins during the *Edo* period. Besides minting gold coins, they were in charge of issuing high denomination currencies, *Koban*, so its role resembled that of today's central bank.

In addition to the various kinds of old gold coins, we displayed picture scrolls depicting the process of making gold coins, the instruments or tools used for minting, and old documents relating to the *Kinza*. Furthermore, based on our research output, we explained the re-coinage of gold coins during the *Edo* period. By displaying these items, we intended to explain what the economy was like in the *Edo* period and also to explain the use of money in people's everyday life, along with the functions of the *Kinza* Gold Mint.

3rd Special Exhibiton, 2000:

The Numeral Two in Currency: A Special Exhibition of Notes and Coins of denomination starting with the numeral Two

A 2,000 yen note was newly issued in July 2000. Taking this opportunity, we chose a topical theme for the third special exhibition: *The Numeral Two in Currency*. Issuance of the 2,000 yen note was a big event for us at the Bank of Japan, because it was the first new denomination note since 1958, and in terms of a denomination using the numeral two, it was the first since 1945. The introduction of the 2,000 yen note attracted widespread interest, as its denomination was new to the Japanese people and it was issued in the middle of the Kyushu-Okinawa Summit Meeting.

In the exhibition, we illustrated designs and anti-counterfeiting measures for the 2,000 yen note by using graphs and images, along with displays of past Japanese currencies using the numeral two in their denomination. Also, we exhibited hundreds of colorful and uniquely designed overseas notes and coins of the same kind, thus we highlighted the usefulness and popularity of currencies using the numeral two in the world as a whole.

4th Special Exhibition, 2001:

Euro: A symbol for European integration

We are now preparing for the fourth special exhibition, which is to be held in November 2001. The theme is the euro. Introducing euro banknotes and coins to replace the existing national currencies is a major historical

event. For ordinary Japanese people, it is hard to understand why European citizens have decided to abandon their national currencies, as most Japanese people believe that our own currency, the yen, will last forever.

In the exhibition, we will illustrate the designs of the euro banknotes and coins as symbols of European integration. Thus, we will provide Japanese citizens with an opportunity to consider the significance of the introduction of the euro and its historical background.

As our collection contains some old coins which are widely circulated in Europe, we will utilize these items to illustrate the history of money in Europe, including the development of the EU. Also, we will display current national currencies.

Characteristics of past Special Exhibitions

To sum up the above stories, fig. 1 shows the characteristics of our past special exhibitions. As the themes of the first and second special exhibitions were somewhat academic and specific, we invited some outside scholars to help check the accuracy of the explanations written on the panels and captions. In order for ordinary people, in addition to researchers and collectors, to understand the content of the exhibition, we stuck to showing actual objects with simple and easy explanations (our "Seeing is believing" policy).

In the second special exhibition, we borrowed some gold fine arts, which have a deep connection with the minting of gold coins, from outside the museum. By showing these things, we illustrated the relationship between the technological level of the craftsmen and coin minting. We also issued a catalogue which included three related research papers written by our staff.

For the third special exhibition, we put more emphasis on promotion of the 2,000 yen note. In this context, we kept our explanations simple and easily understood by young visitors like junior-high school students.

Performance

Promotional Campaigns

With regard to prior promotion activities, we mail posters and pamphlets to various kinds of organizations such as the mass media (newspaper companies, publishing companies, and TV stations), other museums, travel agencies, and educational institutions. We also put information regarding special exhibitions on our web site.

In the case of the third special exhibition, we started prior promotional activities earlier than in previous exhibitions - from one month to three months before the opening - and increased the number of posters and pamphlets distributed. Furthermore, a day before the formal opening day, we arranged a pre-exhibition for the press.

With regard to the media appearances, only local newspapers and community magazines covered the first and second special exhibitions, as the themes of those exhibitions were somewhat academic and specific. Therefore, the promotional effects were limited. In the case of the third special exhibition, five nationwide TV stations broadcast in their news shows, as its theme, the introduction of the 2,000 yen note, which is of prime interest to the Japanese people. These TV appearances greatly contributed not only to the promotion of the special exhibition but also to the recognition of the museum itself.

Visitors

Thanks to the successful promotional campaign through the media, especially on TV, the number of visitors for the third special exhibition was outstanding (fig.2). In August 2000, we accepted more than 5,000 visitors, which was a record high since the opening of the museum in 1985. As far as the second special exhibition was concerned, although we conducted comprehensive research work on the *Kinza*, the number of visitors was small compared to the other special exhibitions (fig.2).

With regard to the type of visitors, families and groups that mainly consist of students and ordinary people recorded the highest share (fig.3). As the second and third special exhibitions covered the summer holiday season, families and groups accounted for over seventy percent of the total number of visitors.

Webpage Accesses and Inquiries

Noticing that the Internet is getting increasingly popular both in schools and homes in Japan, we put our website address on posters and pamphlets advertising special exhibitions. The number of accesses to our website has been increasing year by year. The website has now become our main, and indispensable, campaign tool.

In proportion to the increase in the number of webpage accesses, inquiries submitted to our museum regarding money are swelling due to the expansion of email inquiries (fig.4). The number of inquiries in 2000 was around 1,400: this was four times as much as we had in 1995.

Qualities of the special exhibitions

The quality of the first and second special exhibitions was highly appreciated by scholars and numismatists. One well-known scholar stated that some items were so interesting that they should be included in our permanent exhibition. Another scholar pointed out approvingly that displaying money-related items such as wallets and lottery tickets in addition to displaying old coins was quite unique. Many researchers also indicated that the *Kinza* theme was very significant for the museum within the Bank of Japan, because the *Kinza* theme is deeply related to our bank's local identity, and some of the *Kinza's* functions correspond to those of today's central bank.

As far as the third special exhibition was concerned, the contents were not based on research outputs. Visitors simply enjoyed various kinds of colorful and uniquely designed notes and coins.

Future Challenges

Visitors vs. Qualities

Our museum belongs to the Institute for Monetary and Economic Studies (IMES) of the Bank. IMES conducts a wide range of basic studies with the aim of establishing an appropriate background not only for monetary policy but also for central banking activities in general. We are the museum within IMES based on academic activities. Accordingly, we are expected to hold high quality special exhibition introducing the museum's collections along with notable research findings. Through the exhibition, we try to provide visitors with an opportunity to think about the significance of money.

However, this kind of special exhibition, one based on research output, tends to be academic and specific. Therefore, it is not so easy to attract a large number of visitors. Actually, in the case of the second special exhibition, although our research work consumed a considerable amount of time, and the output was highly appreciated by scholars, the number of visitors was small.

On the other hand, the third special exhibition, with its topical and familiar theme, attracted a large number of visitors from all over Japan. We exhibited our collection in an attractive and fascinating way, but the contents did not include any academic findings except for the introductory explanations of "the theory of optimal denominations for currency," which was studied in IMES.

Whatever type of special exhibition we hold, we always have to consume precious resources, such as budget and workforce. For this reason, we must make every effort to attract as many visitors as possible. In order to

attain both high quality and large number of visitors, we must strive to explore the theme that appeals widely to the public, and upgrade our skills such as attractive displaying technique and effective promotional campaigns.

Evaluation System

Our main assignment is to establish an evaluation system. Numeral performance such as the number of visitors and the number of webpage accesses, together with a voluntary-response questionnaire - where the percentage of responses is at most eight percent - are the only means at our disposal. We do not have any standards by which to assess the quality of special exhibitions and the related research output. Also, we do not have any methods of reviewing other invisible performance indicators, including educational effects such as an increase in visitors' interest in money, and in the acquisition of skills by our staff.

Human resources

To hold a special exhibition, we need considerable time for preparation, and staff with expert knowledge of numismatics. Unfortunately, as some experienced staff who arranged the first and second special exhibitions are now retired, we are currently facing a severe human resources constraint. To cope with this situation, we hired a young curator in April, but it will take some time for her to obtain the various fundamental skills. Meanwhile, we are now trying to establish a network of outside researchers and numismatists in order to upgrade the content of the exhibitions.

We appreciate the ICOMON member's advice and suggestions regarding our museum especially in the field of evaluation.

	1 st (Sempeikan Collection) and 2 nd (Kinza Gold Mint)	3 rd (The Numeral Two)
Purpose	- Displaying museum's collection with research outputs	- Promoting newly issued 2000 yen note - Showing variety of foreign notes and coins owned by the museum
Contents	- Specific - Academic	- Topical - Familiar
Target Visitors	- Researchers - Collectors - Ordinary people, mainly those who have some interests in Japanese history	- Students - Ordinary people

Figure 1. Characteristics of Past Special Exhibitions.

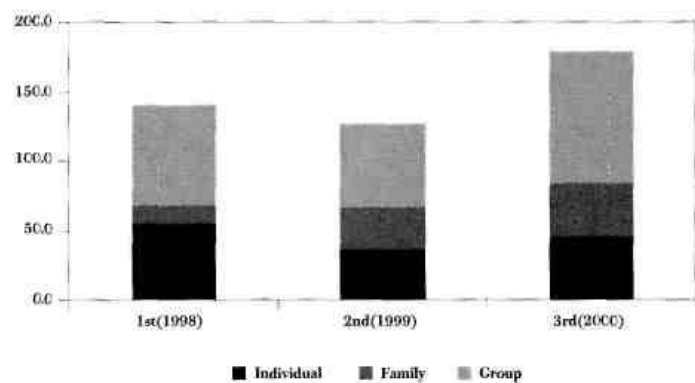


Figure 2. Number of Visitors.

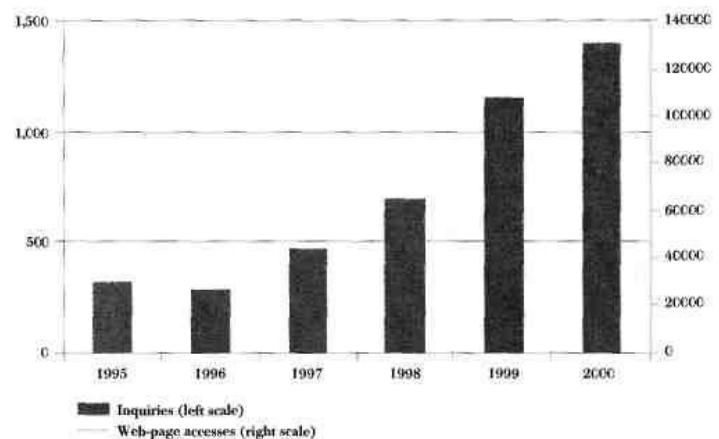


Figure 3. Number of Visitors by Type.

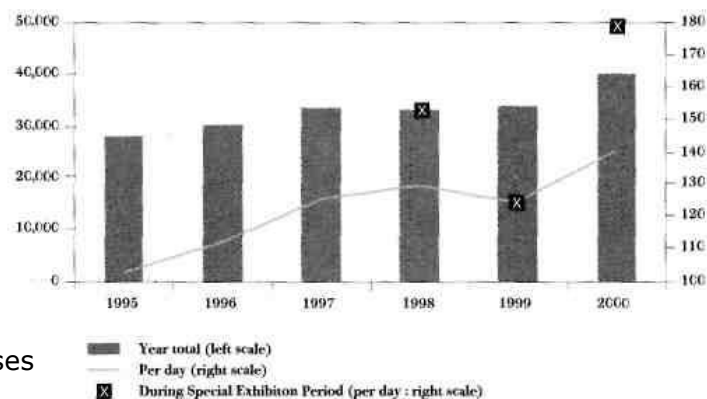


Figure 4. Number of Web-page Accesses and Inquiries.