

Wednesday, July 7, 2010

## Renowned ethnologist dies at 90

OSAKA (Kyodo) Tadao Umesao, the founding head of the National Museum of Ethnology and renowned for unique dissertations and books on civilizations based on fieldwork, died of natural causes at his home in Osaka Prefecture on Saturday, his family said Tuesday. He was 90.

One of his best known books, "An Ecological View of History: Japanese Civilization in the World Context," from 1957, explains how the civilizations of Eurasia evolved with deep links to ecological systems. In his theory, he divided the continent into Western Europe, Japan and the region in between.

Born in the city of Kyoto, Umesao showed a deep interest in animals and plants from childhood and majored in zoology at Kyoto University's Faculty of Science.

He took part in a series of academic expeditions organized by zoologist Kinji Imanishi during World War II, including an ecological survey of the Micronesian island of Ponape, scaling the northern part of the Greater Khingan Range in northeastern China, and a study of cattle breeding in Mongolia.

During stints at Kyoto University and Osaka City University he continued to actively engage in fieldwork in Afghanistan and countries in Southeast Asia and East Africa to develop theories on civilizations crossing the boundaries of zoology and ethnology.

In 1969, his book "Chitekiseisan no Gijutsu" ("Techniques on Intellectual Production"), was a best-seller.

He assisted with the Japan World Exposition in 1970 and was instrumental in opening the museum of ethnology, in 1974, at the site for the six-month exposition in Suita, Osaka Prefecture.

Umesao nearly lost his eyesight to a viral infection in 1986, but he continued to write books through dictation.

In 1994, he was presented with the Order of Culture. A collection of his 22 books, including those on his expeditions in Afghanistan and his observations on the Japanese in the age of globalization, has been published in volume form.



Tadao Umesao