

# Building a Sense of Belonging Through Architecture and Museum Exhibitions

## (Case Study : Regional Museum of Southeast Iran)

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Regional Museum of Southeast Iran

Regional museum of southeast Iran was opened in April 2011 as the largest museum of Southeast Iran in Zahedan county, the capital city of Sistan & Baluchistan province. The building of this museum supports the experiences of the past in the form of architecture and causes the residents of the region to achieve their identity.



Exhibition hall (Ethnography section)



Exhibition hall (Taxidermy section)



Seb castle

### Architecture (Physical Components)

The identity of the residents of a region is displayed in museums by using a variety of methods. In fact, museums are meaningful places to present and display cultural identity, and act symbolically.

The construction of the southeast regional museum is modelled on the basis of the historical castle of Seb. The Seb castle is one of the famous historical buildings in the southeastern Iran (Soran county, Seb village), which is the tallest adobe building in the region with a height of 25 meters. Seb Castle is more than a hundred years old and as one of the prominent buildings has been registered in the list of national heritage of Iran. Since local architecture has been used in the construction of the museum, the visitor experiences a sense of belonging while visiting museum and facing the familiar architecture and artefacts.

The phenomenological geographers interpret the sense of belonging as place-friendliness (Tuan, 1974), which is formed in architecture and design through the physical territory, by distinguishing it from the surrounding areas and spaces or physical separation (Carmona, 2006).

Heidegger, the phenomenological philosopher, believes that by creating a place, the architect gives the building an opportunity to be exposed to human interaction. If a place is given to a person and they feel a sense of belonging to it, then they can remember it and eventually seek closeness to it (Safian, 2011: 1-9).



Exhibition hall (Ethnography section)

### Exhibitions (Non-physical Components)

The permanent exhibitions of the southeast regional museum of Iran include archeology, ethnography and ecology sections. The archeology hall of the museum introduces the findings of the archaeological excavations of the region and presents its historical background. In the ethnography section that is one of the most popular sections of the museum for the local people, the typical handicrafts of the region, traditional clothing and daily life tools are displayed. In the ecology section, flora and fauna have been introduced in the form of pictures and animal taxidermy.

Any object that is in one place naturally needs a space. A mutual relationship and reaction between the three factors of human behavior, concepts and physical characteristics creates a place (Afshar Naderi, 2018:4). A sense of belonging is a factor that transforms a space into a place with special sensory and behavioral characteristics for certain people. Not only this sense makes people feel comfortable in an environment, but also helps people to achieve identity (Falahat, 2005). At the same time, the sense of belonging to a place is a complex concept of human feelings and attachment to the environment, which arises as a result of human adaptation and use of the place.

Visitors (especially local visitors) while visiting the museum and encountering the historical narratives of the region in the form of objects and in a context inspired by the forgotten memories (historical castles and local rulers) are eager to learn more about the history of their own region.



Exhibition hall (Archaeology section)

### Conclusion

According to the examination of the sense of belonging in different perspectives, the factors shaping this sense can be explained in three groups of perceptual-cognitive, social and physical factors. Perceptual-cognitive factors include motivations, competences, perception and knowledge that a person attains from a place. Social factors include cultural and social symbols. Physical factors include the shape and size of elements, relationships and arrangement, and texture and ornaments. Since excessive attention to function in the modern perspective has dimmed many perceptual aspects of architectural spaces in relation to the audience, this gap is increasingly showing off in today's societies. But in the architectural structure of this museum, the use of local architecture of the region, and specifically Seb castle, has bridged this gap to a large extent. There is a significant relationship between the type of architecture and the objects displayed in accordance to the level of people's interest in this place.

A part of the personality of every human being that makes his individual identity is the place with which they identify themselves. They consider themselves connected to that place and considers that place as part of them, and a deep relationship is created between them and the place. In the southeast regional museum, two categories of architecture and objects, which are considered as cultural and social institutions of the region, have created a deep connection between the visitors and the museum. This connection leads to the promotion of identity heritage, collective memories and social solidarity.

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# From soil to glass case: Chinese prehistoric past in museums today

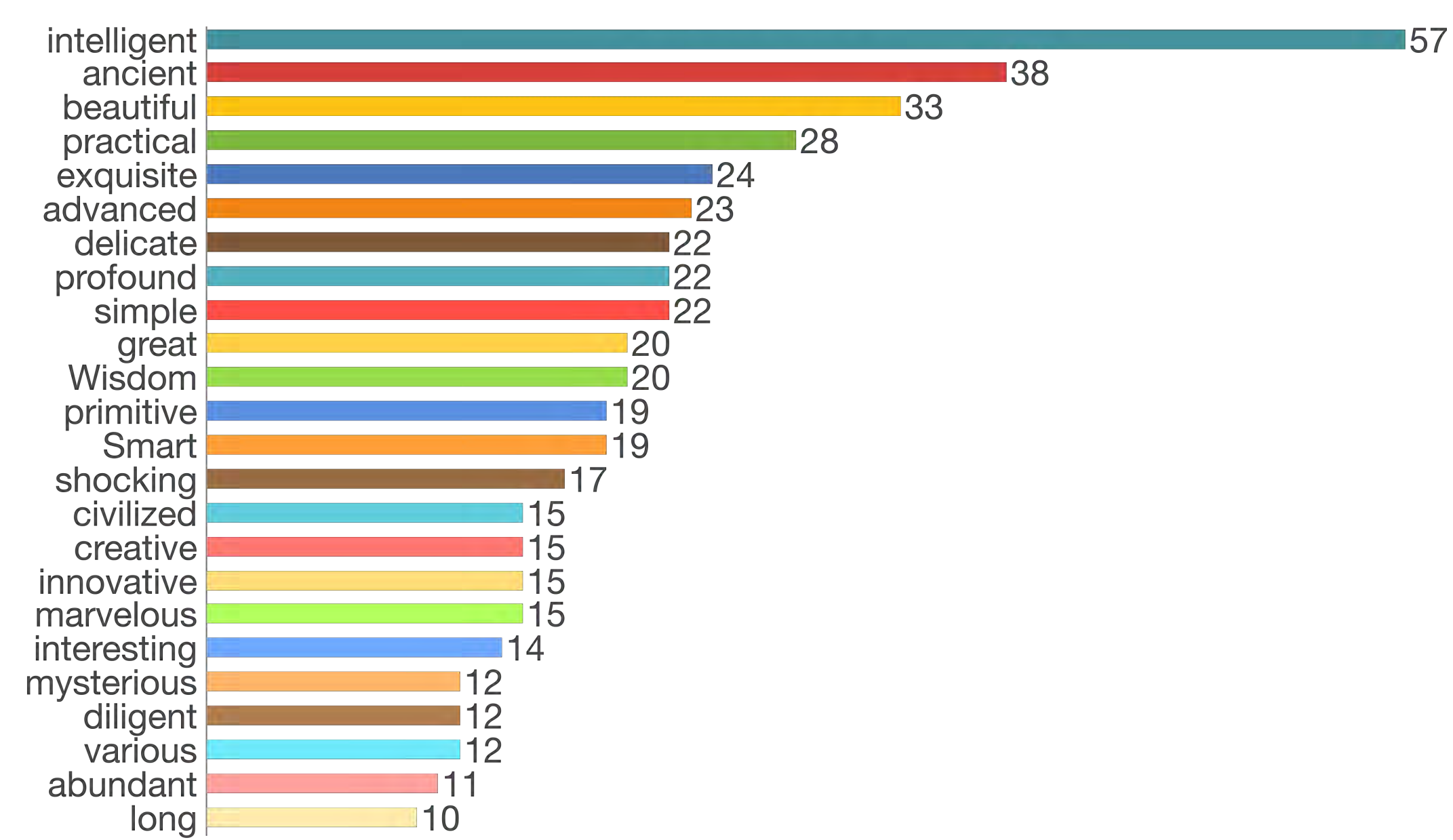
Sofia Bollo  
University of Zurich

*How can a vase of the past be relevant in the present?*

“Is a Neolithic vase dipped in paint [...] more valuable as a contemporary artwork than it was as an original?”

*Ai Weiwei*

## Adjectives used by museum visitors to describe Neolithic Pottery from China



Survey data was collected in museums in China during the author's doctoral research fieldwork, 2015



**Fig.1:** Ai Weiwei, Coloured Vases (2006) – Neolithic vases and industrial paint. Source: <http://www.phaidon.com/resource/p4889-1014.jpg>



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The case of displays of **Neolithic Pottery** from China shows how one single object category can carry **different narratives**, revealing the various ways to make the past relevant in the present for **international audiences** within the **global museum space**.

## References

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Pictures of museum displays were taken during the author's doctoral research fieldwork, 2015



**Fig.2:** Gansu Provincial Museum, Lanzhou, China



**Fig.3** Museum of Far Eastern Antiquities, Stockholm, Sweden



**Fig.4:** Museum Rietberg, Zurich, Switzerland



**Fig.5:** Shanghai Museum, Shanghai, China



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Along with the existing knowledge of ancient Greek history, new innovative digital technologies contribute to the re-examination of the archaeological material in detail, as well as the promotion and preservation of the country's cultural wealth. The multidisciplinary research project APOIKIA (*apoikia*: colony in Greek) aims to implement state-of-the-art tools and methodologies, such as ancient DNA and stable isotope analyses, in order to reveal the ancient colonization procedures, migratory movements of populations, and the nature of interactions and relations between mother-cities and colonies.

During the project, the archaeological sites of Ancient Amvrakia (today's city of Arta) in Western Greece and Ancient Tenea from the region of Corinth, which have abundant archaeological, anthropological and environmental findings, are investigated.

An Open Lab experience will be developed at the Archaeological Museum of Arta including all the methodologies, results and conclusions of the aforementioned investigation. The main objective of the Museum's Open Lab is to generate an interactive experience that enhances the main museum collection with supplementary standalone digital applications or combined digital applications to archaeological exhibits that will contain multimedia material, such as audiovisual productions, creative graphics and 3D environments. In total, five digital interactive applications will be designed.

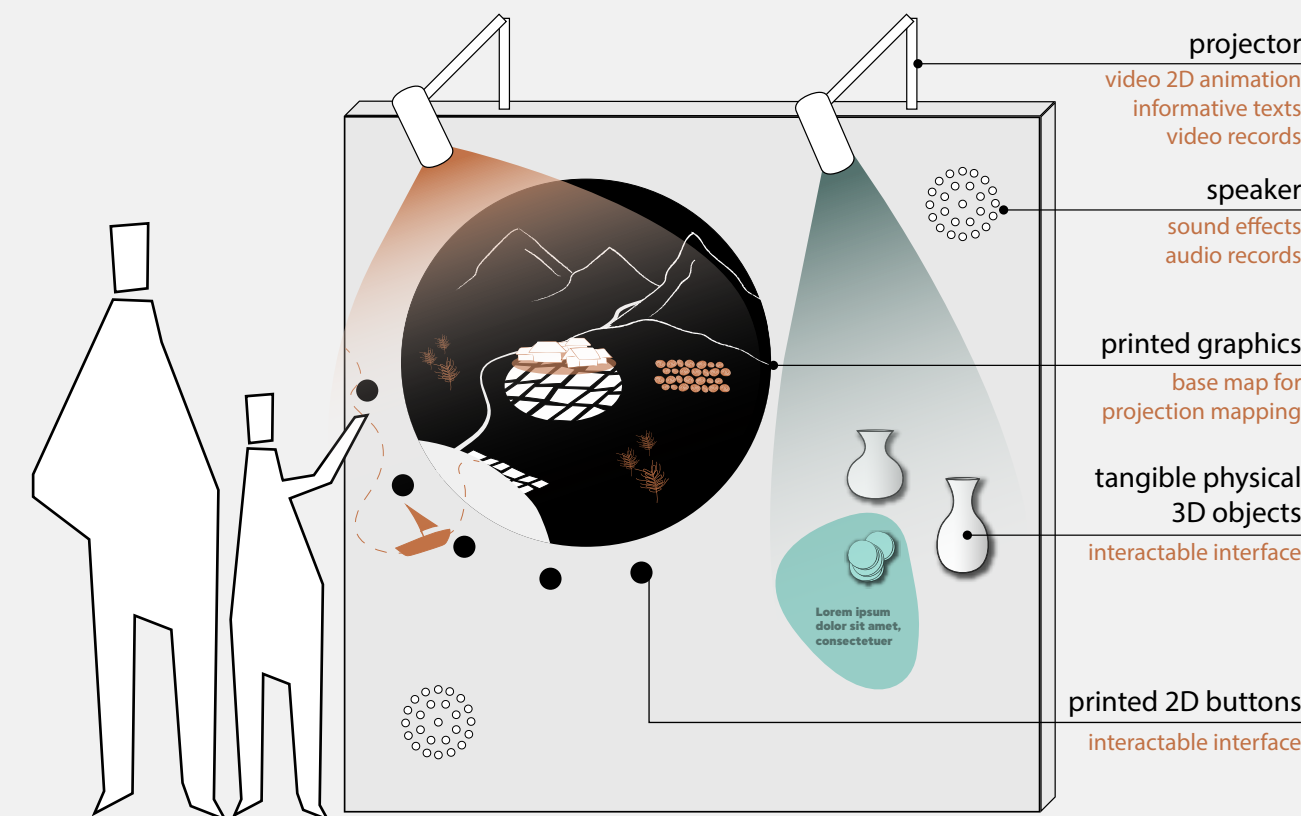
The main goals of the innovative museographic experience are the:

- **extroversion of multidisciplinary methodologies through participative and interactive experiences**
- **creation of experiential museum events for the visitors**
- **presentation of scientific knowledge in an understandable, comprehensive and creative way**

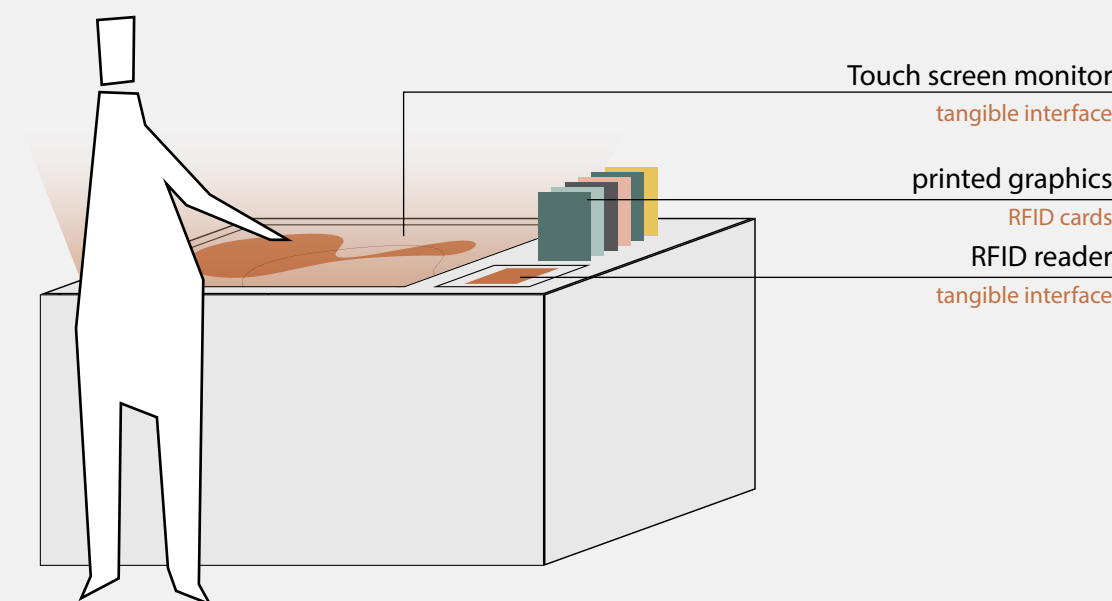
The digital applications are organized in two thematic sessions. In the first session, the concept of the ancient Colonies is presented, utilizing written sources of ancient historians, archaeological findings and the results of the bioarchaeological and archaeogenetics research. The second session includes the interdisciplinary approaches and practices of the research process.

Furthermore, the five digital applications are categorized in two types according to spatial and interactive characteristics. The first type is about portable applications for smart devices such as an augmented reality application and an audio guide that interact with exhibits in both museum and archaeological sites, enhancing them with digital multimedia. The second type is about interactive applications and installation that are organized spatially in significant spots in the museum and allow a multi user and participating experience. The multimedia digital applications are designed to create appealing, innovative and informative museum experiences through new media and technologies and learn about the history and the relations between mother-cities and colonies.

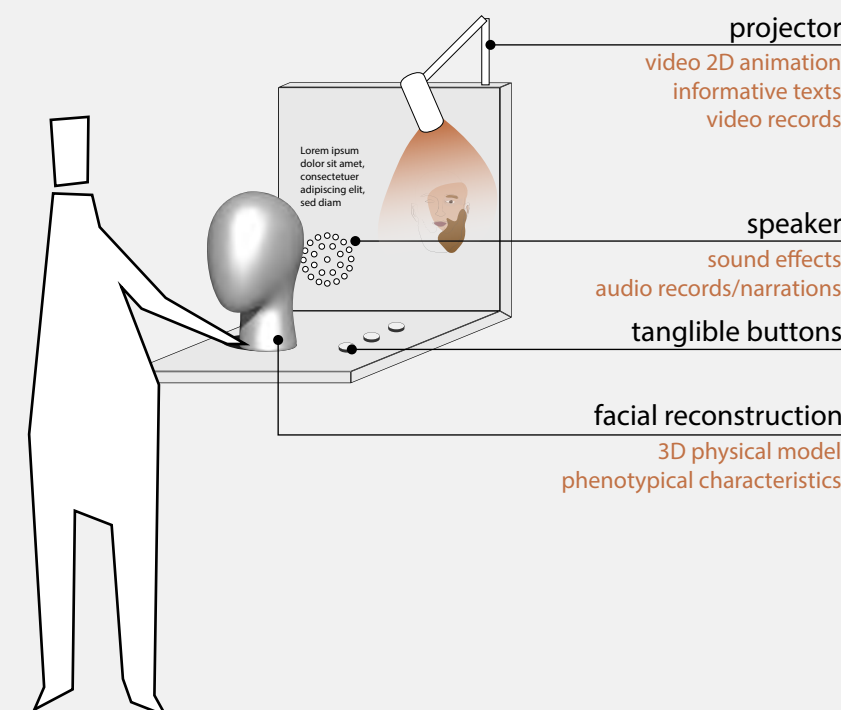
A map focused on the case study area, to induce the visitor to the concept of Greek colonies. Multiple users interact with tangible interfaces to activate video animation, informative material, video, sound and audio records that compose an interactive digital narration with historical and scientific data.



Different cards activate content that presents the process of excavation, analysis, and re-composition of data of the archaeological and biological findings. Users have the opportunity to immerse themselves in environments and processes that are not accessible to them otherwise. Through video records, quiz, graphics, video animations etc. users can better comprehend the data that scientists collect from all these processes.



A facial reconstruction that utilizes the benefits of DNA analysis technologies to provide accuracy on phenotypic characteristics. The model will be part of a complex exhibit with tangible activation points that will present an interactive narrative of the individual's biography.





# Representing Forgotten Difficult History and Voices of Indigenous People in the Museum

## A Case Study in Taiwan

### **Why do we need to represent Indigenous difficult history?**

In the 1980s, as Indigenous peoples' rights, community consciousness, and identity began to gain attention on a global scale, museums started to consider how they were historically representing Indigenous peoples. They also started to emphasize the Indigenous difficult history and contemporary issues, and a shifting, complex narrative perspective to avoid freezing Indigenous peoples in the past.

In Taiwan, museums place an emphasis on collaboration with Indigenous communities, but the difficult histories of Indigenous peoples are still underrepresented. There has been a trend in recent years for indigenous people to curate their own exhibitions and present contemporary issues, gradually presenting a multifaceted view of history and culture. Hualien County's Soufeng Indigenous Cultural Museum "Taluma'-110th Anniversary of the Cikasuan Incident" was curated by descendants of Cikasuan, who traced and reconstructed their memories of the Cikasuan incident while also connecting to contemporary issues such as population decline to invoke their memories and identity.



# The Incident of Cikasuan (1908)

"The Incident of Cikasuan " happened during the Japanese colonial period (December 1908) when the Japanese government erected the “Ai-yong“ Line (defense lines of frontier guards) and recruited the Amis people against the Truku peoples. A few Cikasuan members who were employed by the Japanese government fled the village and clashed with Japanese police due to improper work distribution and salaries. The Japanese government thought that the community of Cikasuan had anti-Japanese intentions and sent a large number of policemen to besiege it.

In 1914, the clan of Cikasuan was forced to leave its homes after the community had been exterminated by the colonial government. And the land of the Cikasuan was transformed into a Japanese immigrant village. In the process of escaping repression, many village residents are suppressed, and their traditional skills are lost. Over the last few years, because of the curatorial project, Cikasuan's descendants have started to actively reconstructed and maintained their history through the exhibition "Taluma' "



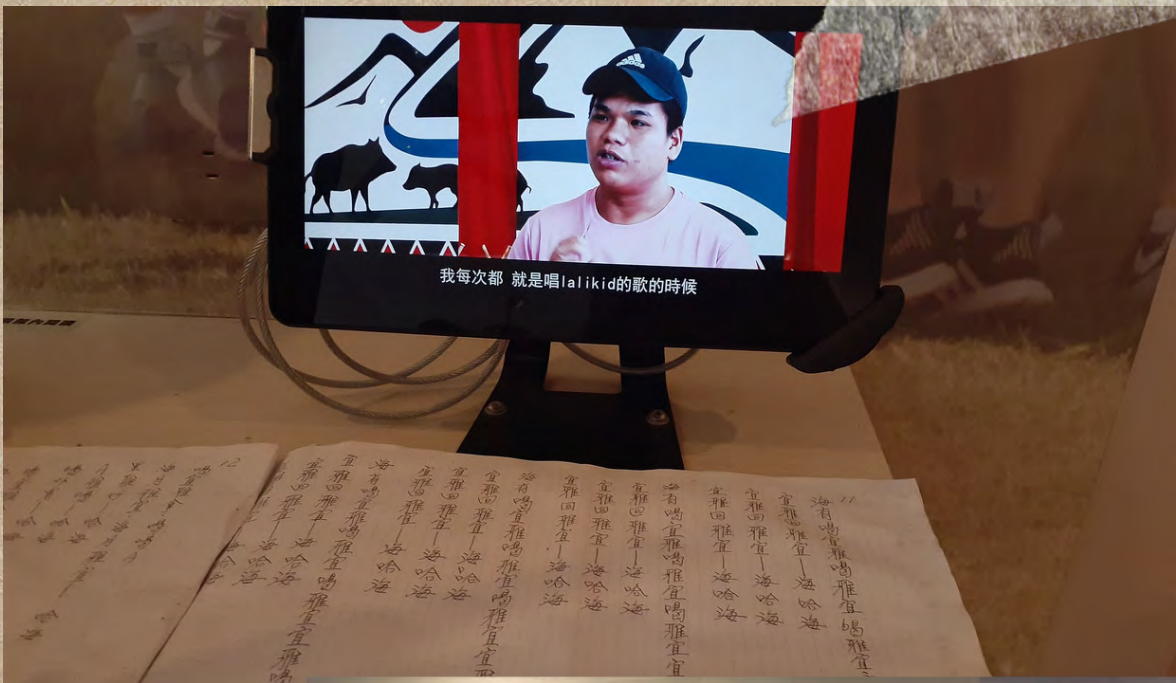
Hualien County's Soufeng Indigenous Cultural Museum



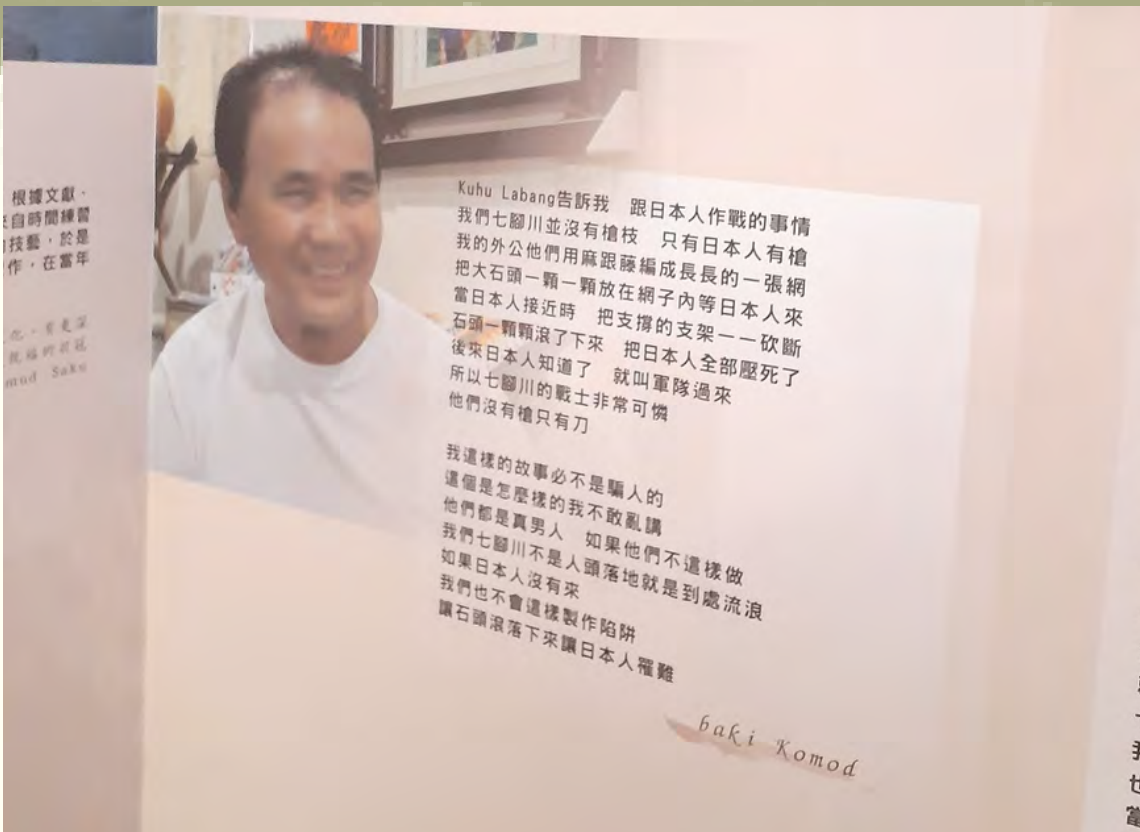
# How to evoke the forgotten Indigenous difficult history?

## Retracing Forgotten Memories

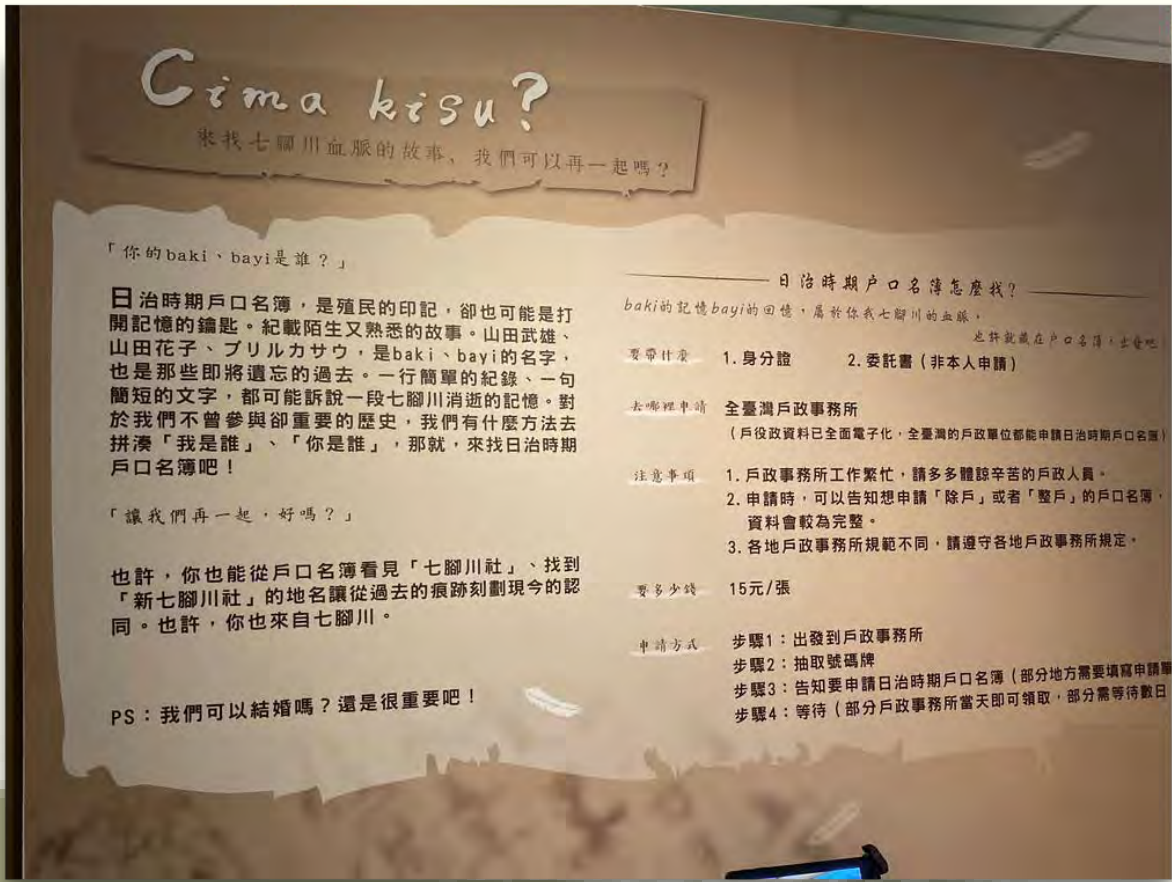
Indigenous histories are constructed through oral history, which is an indispensable tool. Due to fading memories and the disappearance of the posterity of Cikasuan, many difficult historical events are difficult to obtain. It uses a census approach to address the loss of tribal memory caused by the colonial conflict. This is a way for the posterity of Cikasuan to recover their family's lost historical memories through the cadastral data left behind by the Japanese colonial period.



Tracing family memories lost in the colonial conflict through cadastral searches.



Interviews with elders and presentation of Amis language content.



## Voices of the Cikasuan

The exhibition is presented in an emotive manner, emphasizing the views of the tribesmen. Through interviews with the elders, the memories and emotions of the tribesmen about the incident of Cikasuan are presented, emphasizing the persecution of the tribesmen, the process of migration and separation, and appealing to the tribal youths' understanding of tribal history. The exhibition also presents the words of the elders in the Amis language, as teaching and legacy from the tribal elders to the youth.



## Linking Contemporary Issues for Indigenous

The exhibition not only reconstructs the impact of colonial rule on the Cikasuan from a tribal perspective, but also focuses on contemporary issues facing the tribe. Using the personal story of an athlete of the posterity of Cikasuan running marathon initiative returning to his tribal, the exhibition hopes to raise awareness through this story about the working right of Indigenous and the problem of out-migration of Indigenous youth.



Kolus, the posterity Cikasuan speaks out for Indigenous youth through Marathon.

## Research Findings

- Curatorial Model: Building relationships with tribes or curating empowermentnet  
→ **Emphasizing on Indigenous perspectives and experiences.**
- Purpose of the Exhibition: Reviving of Traditional Culture and Techniques  
→ **Discovering and documenting forgotten or faded history.**

## Conclusion

By representing difficult historical and contemporary issues to demonstrate Indigenous multidirectionality, we have been able to reflect on the relationship between history, museums, exhibitions, and Indigenous from a broader perspective. It is crucial to build dialogue and deepen relationships with audiences through the presentation of Indigenous history based on understanding. "Understanding" must not be limited to the internal reconstruction of Indigenous, but also transcend contradictions and barriers related to ethnicity, culture, and history, so that Indigenous peoples become more self-aware, and non-Indigenous peoples gain empathy and experience, so that intercultural relationships can be rebuilt or restored. This will help rebuild or restore intercultural bonds and increase opportunities for interethnic reconciliation and tolerance.