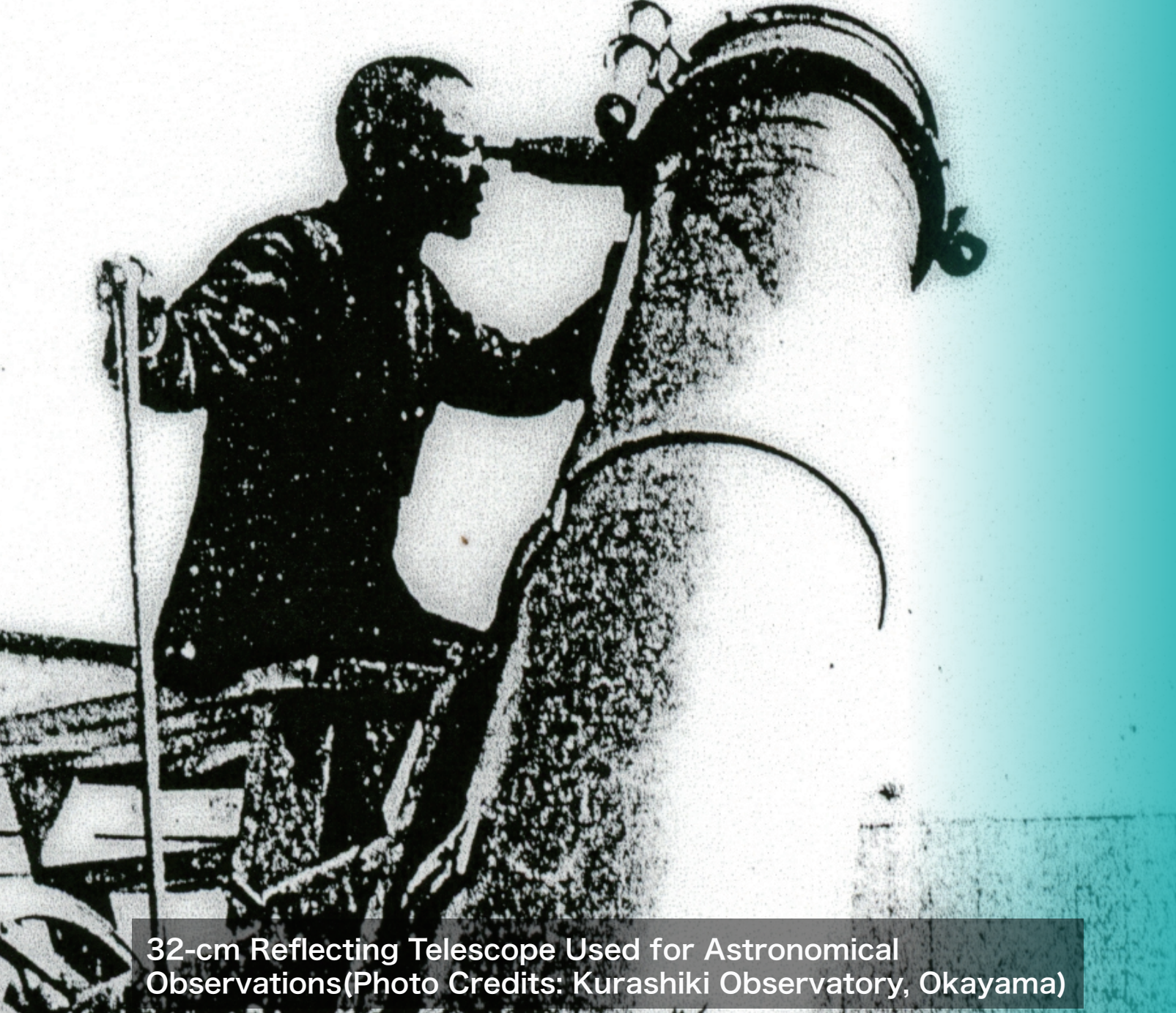


100 Years of Japanese Public Astronomical Observatories

Connecting People with the Universe Since 1926

32-cm Reflecting Telescope Used for Astronomical Observations(Photo Credits: Kurashiki Observatory, Okayama)

1926

Kurashiki Astronomical Observatory was established as the first public astronomical observatory (PAO) in Japan. Its mission was simple but pioneering: to provide opportunities for the general public to observe real celestial objects and experience astronomy directly.

1930s - 50s

Centered around the Kurashiki Observatory, public stargazing events and astronomy lectures began to be held. In addition, many amateur astronomers, led by Minoru Honda, became active, laying the foundation for astronomy outreach in Japan. Public observatories began to be recognized as hubs where citizens could become familiar with the universe.

1960s - 70s

As science centres and museums developed throughout Japan, new observatories were established across the country. PAOs increasingly contributed to astronomy education and lifelong learning in local communities.

1980s - early 90s

As science centres and museums developed throughout Japan, new observatories were established across the country. PAOs increasingly contributed to astronomy education and lifelong learning in local communities.

Data source: Public Observatory Directory 2024, Research Committee, Japan Public Observatory Society (JAPOS), 2024. Figure created by the authors based on the directory data.

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1926

The Beginning of Public Astronomical Observatories in Japan

1

1930s-50s

The Development of Amateur Astronomy and Public Outreach

1960s-70s

The Nationwide Expansion of PAOs

3

1980s-90s

The Land of Public Observatories & The Dawn of the Large-Telescope Era

31

206

late 90s

Collaboration among observatory professionals increased nationwide. Public observatories began to function not only as individual facilities but also as part of a growing public observatory network.

253

2000s

JAPOS promoted collaboration among public observatories through national conferences, research presentations, and training sessions. As the sharing of expertise in facility management, astronomy education, and public observing events progressed, a community of public observatories in Japan began to take shape.

295

2010s

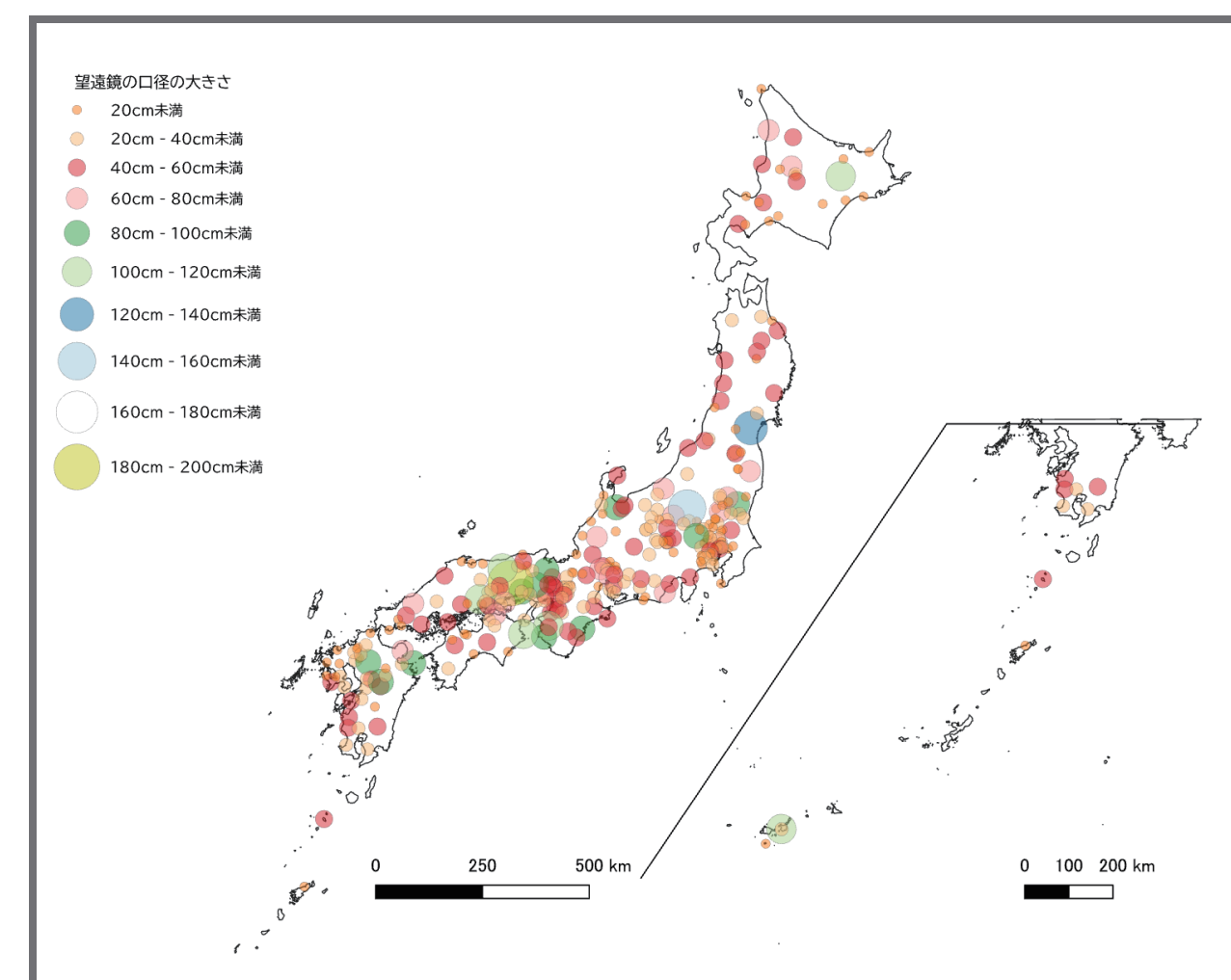
Work proceeded on compiling the "White Paper on Public Observatories" based on a nationwide survey. Foundational data was compiled to assess the current status and challenges of public observatories and to explore their future direction. In addition, nationwide training sessions and workshops on public outreach techniques were held on an ongoing basis, marking the full-scale launch of human resource development activities.

2020s

The environment surrounding public observatories is undergoing significant changes, including population decline and shifts in the fiscal landscape. At the same time, public observatories are taking on new roles as hubs for science education, lifelong learning, tourism promotion, and community building within local societies. JAPOS is advancing activities aimed at the next 100 years by publishing the White Paper on Public Observatories, conducting human resource development programs, systematizing interpretation techniques, and fostering international exchanges through the International Collaboration Promotion Committee.

312

Cumulative Number of Public Observatories



▲ Telescopes used for public observing programs across Japan. Circle size indicates telescope aperture. Adapted from the White Papers on Public Astronomical Observatories (2006, 2018) and Public Observatory Surveys (2024, 2025).

A larger version of this map is displayed elsewhere in the exhibition.

late 1990s

Building a National Network

2000s

Expansion of Activities by Japan Astronomical Public Observatory Society (JAPOS)

2010s

Enhancing Research and Human Resource Development

2026

100th Anniversary of Public Observatories in JAPAN