

Toward Genuine South Pacific Islands Study: Trend and Challenge in Japan

NISHIMURA Satoru¹

Abstract

First, this paper overlooks the trend of South Pacific Island Studies in Japan briefly by introducing the associations or institutions which specialize in the area. It shows that the anthropology is more popular, and the interests in the area are less than those in other areas such as Southeast Asian Countries. It concludes that it is necessary to study the area from the view points of sustainable development, which is characterized by environmental preservation and coexistence of different identities.

Key Words: South Pacific Island Courtiers, sustainability, trend in Japan

Introduction

The purpose of this paper is to take a glance at the trend of South Pacific Island Countries (SPICs) study in Japan in order to clarify what is the center of the interests of the Japanese scholars especially in social science. South Pacific Island Countries cover the islands countries in Polynesia, Melanesia, and Micronesia². First, we show the outline of the South Pacific Study in Japan. Then we examine the characteristics of academic areas of Japanese scholars, whose fields are South Pacific Countries. We use the data of an academic association of Ocean courtiers, or “*The Japan Society of Oceanic Studies*”³ and the *Grand-in-Aid for Scientific Research*⁴ by *Japan Society for Promotion of Science*, an independent administrative institution. Then we take the series of studies initiated by the *Japan Center for Area Studies, National Museum of Ethnology*, or JCAS⁵, as an example of the contemporary South Pacific Studies from the view points of social science. Finally we seek for the approaches that the Japanese social scientists can contribute in the discussion of the cotemporary issues confronting the areas.

1 Faculty of Law, Economics, and the Humanities, Kagoshima University, Kagoshima, Japan.

2 About the definition and the problems of grouping the countries, refer the web page (in Japanese):
http://www.yashinomi.to/semi/yashidail_11.html.

3 The web page of the association is <http://wwwsoc.nii.ac.jp/jsos>.

4 See details at <http://www.jsps.go.jp/j-grantsinaid/index.html>.

5 See details at <http://www.minpaku.ac.jp/jcas/english/index.html>.

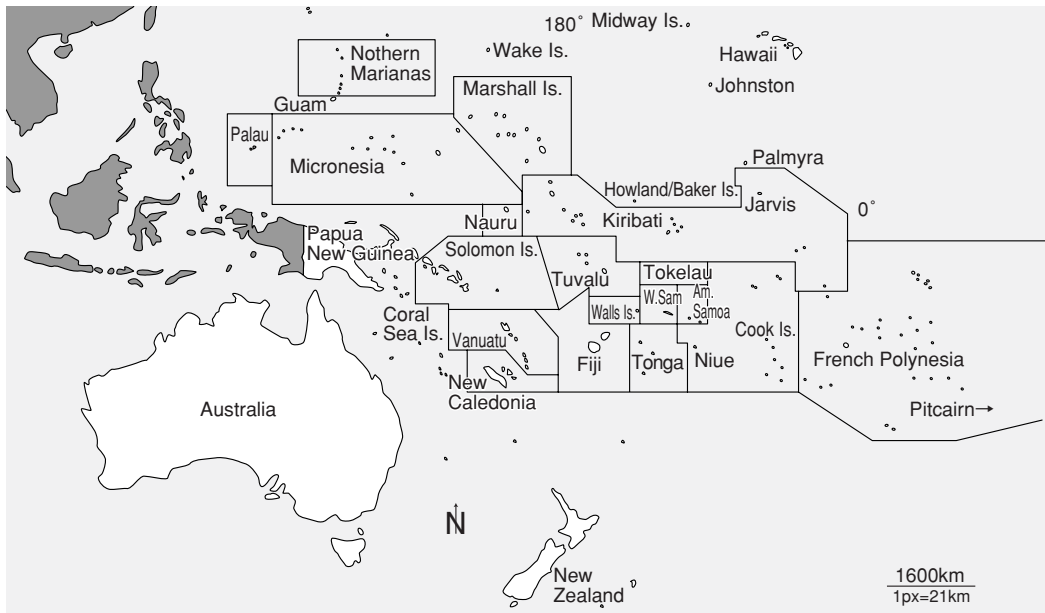


Fig. 1 Map of South Pacific Island Countries

The South Pacific Study in Japan

Outlook of Study

Here we introduce some academic associations or institutions in Japan, which lead and contribute to the development of the SPICs studies. We take a short survey of them relating to the aims and publications.

The Japan Society of Oceanic Studies is one of the few academic communities, which specializes in the area. It aims to understand the people, society, and culture of Oceanic countries in order for Japan to establish deeper and more appropriate relationship with Oceanic countries in the 21st century. It publishes *People and Culture in Oceania* annually.

The Pacific Society publishes *Journal of the Pacific Society* twice a year. It was founded in 1978, aiming to make efforts in research and preservation of the culture in the Pacific region in order to contribute to establish deeper friendships and develop the region by exchanging the knowledge and information⁶.

Japan Institute for Pacific Studies (JAIPAS) publishes *Pacific Way* twice a year⁷. The articles are not necessarily for the experts but for the ordinary readers. However, the articles discuss the political and economic problems of the region in rather simple terms and contribute to the

6 <http://www.osaka-gu.ac.jp/society/taihei/index.html> (in Japanese)

7 <http://www.jaipas.or.jp/> (in Japanese)

deeper understanding of the region. The institute was established as a corporate juridical person, named *Japan Micronesia Association* in 1974 under the Ministry Foreign Affairs of Japan. The business community and those who used to live there initiated to establish the institute for deeper friendship with Micronesia, which was used to be mandated by Japan. After the areas of interest and activity related to it expanded to the South Pacific Islands, it changed the name to *Japan Institute for Pacific Studies*.

An non profit foundation, *The Sasakawa Peace Foundation* (SPF) is also making an effort to develop the region⁸. It established *Sasakawa Pacific Nations Fund* (SPINF) recognizing the need for development in the region in 1988. It bases the programs on a respect for the native cultures and traditional social systems of the island nations. It publishes a news letter, or *SPINF Report* annually. SPF also has a project of *Coconuts University*, which aims to promote the understanding of the region by way of internet and public lectures⁹.

Kagoshima university, Research Center for Pacific is one of the few university research institutes which specializes the South Pacific Islands. It is an interdisciplinary research center, which set five major topics or Interrelationship between Man and Nature, Natural Geography, Transfiguration of Society/Culture/Nature, Socio-medical Environment, and the Role of Islands Nations in International Community. It issues *South Pacific Study* twice a year¹⁰. The purely academic journal has contributions of both social science and natural science from Japan and abroad.

There are not so much books, which deal with the socio-economical topics of the region as a whole. Among the few, Kobayashi (1994) elaborated a book discussing those issues as international relations, economic structure and aid¹¹. Hata (1993) edited a book, which focused on the topic and law and society¹². *University of Tokyo Press* published *Series Oceania*, namely *Adapting to an Ocean Environment* (1993)¹³, *Surviving in Intact Cultures* (1993)¹⁴ and *Struggling with Modernity* (1993)¹⁵.

The Areas of Interests

Here we see the details of the academic areas of interests of the Japanese scholars. *The Japan Society of Oceanic Studies* is taken up here in order to understand the trend of interest of the scholars who specialize in the area study.

8 <http://www.spf.org/spinf/index.html>

9 <http://www.yashinomi.to/aisatsu/aisatsu.html>

10 <http://cpi.kagoshima-u.ac.jp/index.html>

11 Kobayashi, I, 1994. *Studies for Pacific Island Countries* (in Japanese).Toshindo, Tokyo.

12 Hata, H. (ed.) 1992. *Law and Society of South Pacific Island States* (in Japanese). Yushindo-Kobunsha, Tokyo.

13 Ishikawa, E. (ed.) 1993. *Adapting to an Ocean Environmet* (Series Oceania) (in Japanese). University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo.

14 Ishikawa, E. (ed.) 1993. *Surviving in Intact Cultures* (Series Oceania) (in Japanese). University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo.

15 Ishikawa, E. (ed.) 1993. *Struggling with Modernity* (Series Oceania) (in Japanese). University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo.

16 A separate volume of Newsletter, no. 76, 2003, tThe Japan Society of Oceanic Studies.

According to the list of the membership as of July, 2003, there are 245 members¹⁶. Each member specifies the academic fields and the geographic area of his study. The geographic areas in the list are eleven, or Melanesia, Polynesia, Micronesia, Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Taiwan, Oceania in General, and Others. The academic fields are categorized into 13 groups, or anthropology, ecology, medicine, music, geography, sociology, archeology, history, linguistics, international relations, economics and others.

Table 1 Geographic Areas of Study for the Members of the Japanese Society for Oceanic Study

Geographic Areas of Study	No. of Members	Geographic Areas of Study	No. of Members
Oceanic Countries in general	63	General	55
		Gen/Mic	4
		Gen/Pol	2
		Gen/Oth	2
Melanesia	67	Melanesia	36
		Mel/Pol	7
		Mel/Ind	5
		Mel/Aus	2
		Mel/Mic/Ind	2
		Mel/Pol/Mal	2
		Mel/Twn	1
		Mel/Ind/Mal	1
		Mel/Ind/Phi	1
		Mel/Mal/Aus	1
		Mel/Mal/Pol	1
		Mel/Mic	1
		Mel/Mic/Aus	1
		Mel/Oth	1
		Mel/Pol/Aus	1
		Mel/Pol/Ind	1
Mel/Pol/Mal/Ind	1		
Mel/Pol/NZD	1		
Mel/Pol/Mic	1		
Polynesia	38	Polynesia	26
		Pol/NZD	3
		Pol/Mic	2
		Pol/Aus/Mic	1
		Pol/Twn	1
		Pol/Gen	1
		Pol/Ind	1
		Pol/Mel/twn	1
		Pol/Mic/Mel/NZD	1
		Pol/Oth	1
Micronesia	18	Micronesia	16
		Mic/Ind/Mal	1
		Mic/Phil	1
Indonesia	27	Indonesia	16
		Ind/Mal	4
		Ind/Mal/Phi	3
		Ind/Gen/Oth	1
		Ind/Phi	1
		Ind/Mic	1
Ind/Oth	1		
Philippines	11	Philippines	8
		Phi/Twn/Gen	2
		Phi/Mal	1
Australia	9	Australia	6
		Aus/Ind	2
		Aus/Oth	1
Taiwan	4	Taiwan	1
		Taiwan/Oth	2
		Taiwan/Gen	1
New Zealand	3	New Zealand	3
Malaysia	1	Malaysia	1
Others	4	Oth	4
Total	245		245

Source: The Japan Society of Oceanic Studies, 2003 July.

As table 1 shows, about one fourth of the members study on Oceanic courtiers in general. By deducting the number of the members specializing in advanced countries such as Australia (9) and New Zealand (3), and the Southeast Asian Countries such as Indonesia (27) and the Philippines (11), the number of the scholars of the developing SPICs, or Melanesia (67), Polynesia (38), and Micronesia remain. Among the developing areas of SPIC, Melanesia is more paid attention, and Micronesia the least.

Table 2 shows the academic field of the 191 members, who listed developing SPICs as their first, second or third specialty. Among them, ethnology ranks the top as 95 members,

Table 2 Academic Fields of the Members of the Japan Society of Oceanic Studies

Academic Fields	No. of Members	Academic Fields	No. of Members
Ethnology	95	Ethnology	81
		Ethnology/Archiology	5
		Ethnology/Geography	3
		Others	6
Archology	16	Archology	16
Ecology	12	Ecology	12
Linguistics	12	Linguistics	11
		Linguistics/Others	1
International Relatic	6	Int'l Relations	2
		Int'l Relations/Economics	2
Sociology	5	Sociology	2
		Sociology/History/Others	1
Music	4	Music	4
Medicine	3	Medicine	3
Economics	2	Economics	2
History	2	History	2
Others	12	Other	11
		Other/Music	1
Total	191		191

Source: The Japan Society of Oceanic Studies, 2003 July.

Table 3 No. of Final Reports of *Grand-in-Aid for Scientific Research*, 1994-2003

Country	No. of Reports
Papua New Guinea	5
Vanuatu	2
Micronesia	1
Indonesia	45
Vietnam	27
Philippines	26
Australia	21
New Zealand	8

Source: Internet Search Result of National Diet Library.

archeology, ecology, and linguistics come next. Interestingly, economics is not so popular among the members. International Relations is also less popular area of study. One can conclude that this academic society is dominated by ethnologist, not by encomiast or political scientists. SPICs seem to be are still the object of cultural study.

Table 3 shows the numbers of the final reports of the studies, which were funded the *Grand-in Aid for Scientific Research by Japan Society for Promotion of Science (JSPS)* from 1994 to 2003. Because JSPS, established by way of a national law for the purpose of contributing to the advancement of science in all fields of the natural and social sciences and the humanities support the scholars in nation wide more than any other institutions. By examining the grant distributed to the scholars, one can understand the academic trend somehow. The data was acquired through the internet search engine of *National Diet Library Online Public Access Catalog* or *NDL-OPAC*¹⁷. When searched by the key words by courtiers in the SPICs, the results show that only very few reports were presented. The reports, which include Papua New Guinea in the titles, are only five, which is the biggest number in the region. Two for Vanuatu and one for Micronesia. The numbers are far fewer than those of Southeast Asian courtiers such as Indonesia (45), Vietnam (27) and the Philippines (26). The other oceanic countries such as Australia (21) and New Zealand (8) are even more.

The Research Trend in Social Science: An Inter-institutional Research Project of JCAS

JCAS has series of inter-institutional research projects about area studies by establishing networks with other academic institutions of area studies. The projects enable the scholars specializing in the areas which are less popular in Japan to exchange information and broaden their perspectives. The results of their research are published by JCAS as *JCAS Area Studies Research Reports*. The publications of JCAS help us to understand the themes of the Japanese scholars in the specific areas of study.

About the researches on SPICs, there are such projects as *National Integration and National Culture in Micro States of Oceania*¹⁸, and *National Integration and Localism in Oceania*¹⁹. We introduce some of the studies from the two reports. By examining their topics and approaches, one can comprehend some aspects of the interests of the Japanese scholars specializing in the area.

JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2 is divided into four parts; Democratic Policy and Traditional Policy for Part 1, Sustainable Management of the Resources and Economic Development for Part 2, Creating Their Own Culture and Representation of Tradition for Part 3, and Modernization of Disease Pattern for Part 4. By just viewing the titles of each part, one can refer that some key words seem to be tradition, modernization and sustainability. One can guess

17 The web site is http://opac.ndl.go.jp/index_e.html.

18 *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity, 2000 (in Japanese).

19 *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 6*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity, 2003 (in Japanese).

that the writers have the image that the people in the areas as those who are in the transient process from tradition to modernity, and they are facing the problems of sustainability. Relating democracy, the main theme is the conflict of political system between tribal chief dominant one and democracy integrated into national wide. Eedo emphasizes that the so-called traditional power is linked with modern systems²⁰. Hashimoto describes the political situation in Fiji, where there are two major ethnic groups or Fijians and Indo-Fijian²¹. He points out the trend of the participation of Fijians in the political party shows the degree of national unity. As for sustainable development, Sekine takes up the concept of eco-tourism in the Solomon Islands, which he says is opposite to developing forests products such as timbers and logs²². He concludes that eco-tourism can foster participation of the local people in the process of development and lead to environmental sustainability. Takahashi compares the SPICs with Caribbean Island Countries. He stresses that the SPICc can not rely on tourism industry too much, for their neighbor courtiers such as Australia and New Zealand are relatively small in population unlike U.S.A. and Canada, where the majority of tourists to Caribbean Island Countries come from²³.

JCAS Area Studies Research Reports 6 is divided into five parts; Ethnicity and National Integration for Part 1, Indigenous Peoples and National Integration for Part 2, National Integration after the Coup for Part 3, Conflict/Disaster and National Integration for Part 4, and Nationalism, Localism and Regionalism for Part 5. The main theme of this report is how the SPICs with diversity in ethnicity and culture are challenging in order to realize national unity. The key words are identity, localism and regionalism, which are the important factors for national integration. As for identity, Edo points out that the notion of identity emerged after the people encountered with modern concepts of ethnicity and nation²⁴. Regarding regionalism, Ogashiwa explains that the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF), a kind of regionalism has good grounds for existence²⁵. She disputes that the nature of the forum remains the defensive system against the ‘external’ pressure, or global trade liberalization more precisely, despite the frequent ‘internal’ conflicts among the nations such as Fiji and Solomon Islands.

20 Endo, Hisashi, 2000, “The End of the Politics of Negotiation and Consensus: From the Diachronical Study of Power in Palau From 1947 to 1994” IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).

21 Hashimoto, Kazuya, 2000, “Consitution of Republic of the Fiji Islands and Way to the National Unity” IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).

22 Sekine, Hisao, 2000, “Pacific Islands and the Participatory Development: Case of Eco-tourism in the Solomon Islands” IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).

23 Takahashi, Yasuaki, 2000, “Comparative Studies for Self-reliance of Small Island Countries: the Pacific Island Countries and Caribbean Island Countries” IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).

24 Edo, Junko, 2003, “New Caledonia: Kanak Identity Seen through the Narrative of Community” IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).

25 Ogashiwa, 2003, “Yoko Region, Srate and Ethnicity: Responses of the Pacific Islands Forum to Regional Conflicts Community” IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).

Toward Genuine South Pacific Islands Study

Here we discuss the way to understand the SPICs and make some suggestions for genuine development, which is characterized by sustainability of environment and coexistence of different identical/ethnic groups. The points can be summarized to the following:

1. The study has to focus more on local people, for the people in the area are various in identities such as ethnicity, which leads to difficulty in national unity. Without national unity, the government can not provide services and chances so that the people can enjoy more welfare.
2. The factors which determine the welfare of the people have to be specified in both socio-economic and scientific terms.

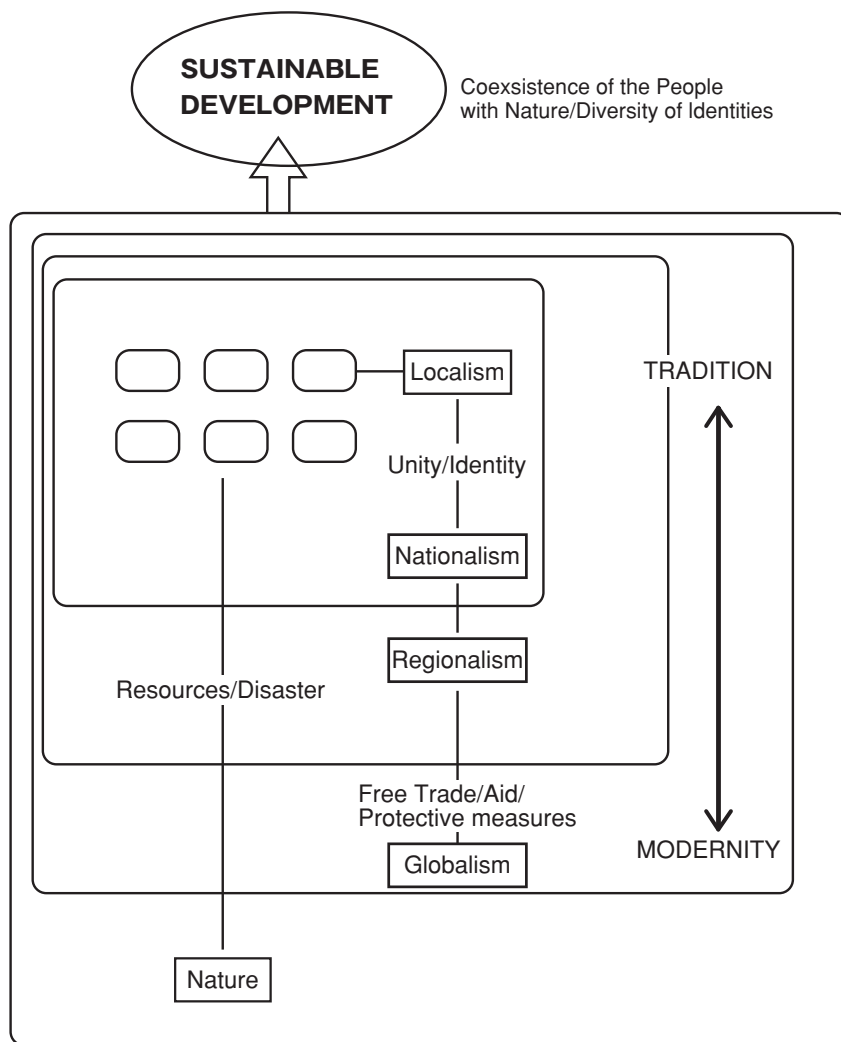


Fig. 2 Sustainable Development in SPICs

3. Series of interdisciplinary fields researches have been conducted on various groups of people and in different ecological places. Only accumulations of the data gathered from the viewpoints of social and natural science can outline the characteristics of the multi-ethnic courtiers.
4. National and global level factors need to be put in consideration in order to understand the socio-economic and environmental structure of the locality. The government law and democratic system could both benefit and harm the people in general or specific identical groups. Regionalism, represented by South Pacific Forum in the area is an important factor to facilitate the member courtiers to enjoy the benefit from the global factors. It also plays a role as a buffer for the courtiers to protect the courtiers from some negative impacts of global factors such as environmental destruction and too much dependence on external economy, which makes the domestic economy more unstable.
5. If some indicators are created so that the socio-economic and environmental factors could be measured and analyzed in the same context, they could help greatly the area study. The figure 2 shows the concept illustrating the discussion above.

References

- Edo, J. 2003. "New Caledonia: Kanak Identity Seen through the Narrative of Community" IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).
- Endo, H. 2000. "The End of the Politics of Negotiation and Consensus: From the Diachronical Study of Power in Palau From 1947 to 1994" IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).
- Hashimoto, K. 2000. "Constitution of Republic of the Fiji Islands and Way to the National Unity" IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).
- Hata, H. (ed.) 1992. *Law and Society of South Pacific Island States* (in Japanese). Yushindo-Kobunsha, Tokyo.
- Ishikawa, E. (ed.) 1993. *Adapting to an Ocean Environment* (Series Oceania) (in Japanese). University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo.
- Ishikawa, E. (ed.) 1993. *Struggling with Modernity* (Series Oceania) (in Japanese). University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo.
- Ishikawa, E. (ed.) 1993. *Surviving in Intact Cultures* (Series Oceania) (in Japanese). University of Tokyo Press, Tokyo.
- Kobayashi, I. 1994. *Studies for Pacific Island Countries* (in Japanese). Toshindo, Tokyo.
- Ogashiwa, Y. 2003. "Region, State and Ethnicity: Responses of the Pacific Islands Forum to Regional Conflicts Community" IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).
- Sekine, H. 2000. "Pacific Islands and the Participatory Development: Case of Eco-tourism in the Solomon Islands" IN *JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2*, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).

Takahashi, Y. 2000. "Comparative Studies for Self-reliance of Small Island Countries: the Pacific Island Countries and Caribbean Island Countries" IN JCAS Area Studies Research Report 2, JCAS, National Museum of Ethnicity (in Japanese).

<http://cpi.kagoshima-u.ac.jp/index.html>

http://opac.ndl.go.jp/index_e.html

<http://www.jaipas.or.jp/> (in Japanese)

<http://www.jsps.go.jp/j-grantsinaid/index.html>

<http://www.minpaku.ac.jp/jcas/english/index.html>

<http://www.osaka-gu.ac.jp/society/taihei/index.html> (in Japanese)

<http://www.spf.org/spinf/index.html>

<http://www.yashinomi.to/aisatsu/aisatsu.html>

http://www.yashinomi.to/semi/yashidai1_11.html

<http://wwwsoc.nii.ac.jp/jsos>