

PREFACE

Traditional societies keep “symbiosis of nature and the human being”. Natural products are consumed but remain in a sustainable state and the environment stays relatively unaffected. However, modern societies have broken the balance between nature and mankind, which has induced environmental pollution and decreased biodiversity in the natural environment.

The South Pacific Islands are surrounded by sea; therefore, marine tourism is a very important industry for each country. For example, the Republic of Fiji Islands is one of the most famous sightseeing places. To make the marine tourism more attractive, many coastal sites were developed. This development may have decreased the biodiversity in the coastal area. However, despite the increased development, many villages on the coast retain a self-sufficient society and a common land sharing system in Fiji Islands. This means that they keep their traditional social systems. Therefore, the “symbiosis of nature and the human being” is retained. On the other hand, the South Pacific Island countries are characterized by their small size, close proximity, and remoteness. These characteristics have kept industrial capitals from investing in the region. Furthermore, frequent natural disasters such as cyclones lead to a relatively high transaction cost for the capitals. Hence, the region was not able to attract foreign capital fully which is opposite to the Southeast Asian countries whose economic structures were greatly influenced by direct foreign investment. The situation has left the local people the opportunity to control their own economic and environmental structure. We believe that one can study the coexistence of man and nature by examining the way of life in the region from an interdisciplinary approach.

To better understand how to achieve sustainable development, we should look at traditional society in the South Pacific Islands and its affects on the environment. In order to do so we held a symposium: “Symbiosis” of Human being and Nature in the South Pacific Islands, which was held on July 10th 2004. This is a report developed by the members of the symposium and also includes the papers by both editors. We acknowledged Professors SHIGA Y., NAGASHIMA S. and HIDAKA T. for their comments on the symposium. We are also grateful to the staff in the Exchange and Planning Committee of RCPI for their help in this symposium.

by Editors KAWAI K. & NISHIMURA S.