

THE LINGUISTIC ATLAS OF ASIA AND THE LINGUISTIC ATLAS OF ASIA AND AFRICA

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1. INTRODUCTION

The *Linguistic Atlas of Asia* (LAA) and the *Linguistic Atlas of Asia and Africa* (LAAA) are linguistic atlases spanning more than one continent. I have been involved in the projects making for both of them. Here I introduce 1) the process in which Japanese scholars coordinated by Mitsuaki Endo cooperated to produce the atlases and 2) the characteristics of the two atlases.

2. BEGINNINGS OF THE PROJECT

Mitsuaki Endo and I met for the first time at the international conference on geolinguistics held at National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL) in the summer of 2007, where I took the role of the commentator for Day 1 (Fukushima, Heap 2008). Professor Endo from Aoyama Gakuin University (Tokyo), an expert in Chinese historical phonology and dialectology, had the idea that we should make a linguistic atlas of Eurasia. He seized the initiative and held the first conference on East-Eurasian geolinguistics the same year, on 23 December, at Aoyama Gakuin University. He also organized a geolinguistic research in Tokunoshima, Amami, in the summer of 2008. I prepared the questionnaire by revising the questionnaire of the research held by Linguistics Department, the University of Tokyo, thirty years before, and analyzed the data from the new research (Fukushima 2013).

Endo got the Kakenhi research fund entitled ‘Reconstruction of Macro and Micro Linguistic History Using Linguistic Maps across Countries and Language Families in Eastern Eurasia’ in 2011–2012 and held a conference on East-Eurasian geolinguistics project¹ on 11 March, 2012, at Aoyama Gakuin University. The same year, the first International Conference of Asian Geolinguistics

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¹ Asian Geolinguistics, <https://agsj.jimdofree.com/> (acc. April 1, 2024).

(ICAG-1) was held from 14 to 15 December at Aoyama Gakuin University. This conference has been held in various Asian cities every two years since then, and scholars from East Asia joined the conference: ICAG-2 at Chulalongkon University, Bangkok, Thailand, on 24 May, 2014; ICAG-3 at Royal University of Phnom Penh, Phnom Penh, Cambodia, from 23 to 24 May, 2016; ICAG-4 at Fakultas Ilmu Pengetahuan Budaya Universitas Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia, from 4 to 5 May, 2018; and after the coronavirus pandemic, ICAG-5 at the University of Social Sciences and Humanities, VNU, Ha Noi, Vietnam, from 4 to 5 May, 2023. Meanwhile, in 2019, the Geolinguistic Society of Japan² (GSJ) was established, and its first term committee members in charge of general affairs were Endo and myself.

3. THE LINGUISTIC ATLAS OF ASIA (LAA)

The *Linguistic Atlas of Asia* (LAA) was produced within a project which was coordinated by Mitsuaki Endo and conducted from April 2015 to March 2018. The name of the project was “ILCAA (Research Institute for Languages and Cultures of Asia and Africa) Joint Research project: Studies in Asian Geolinguistics”. Japanese experts of languages and language groups in Asia joined the project. They drew maps of a language or language group in charge and presented at each project meeting their results. The items investigated in the project were as follows: five lexical items (‘sun’, ‘rice plant’, ‘milk’, ‘wind’, ‘iron’), two grammatical items (numeric quantification and ‘it rains’), and one prosodic item (tone/accents). After the project was finished, several reports and monographs were published via e-publication³, and finally a book, *Linguistic Atlas of Asia*, was published in 2021 (LAA: Endo *et al.* 2021). The book contained monochrome maps and descriptions for each language or language group and also included colored synthesized maps covering the entire area of Asia for each item as attachments.

4. THE LINGUISTIC ATLAS OF ASIA AND AFRICA (LAAA)

The *Linguistic Atlas of Asia and Africa* (LAAA) was produced within a project which was also coordinated by Mitsuaki Endo and has been conducted from April 2020 to March 2023. Its name was “ILCAA Joint Research project: Studies in Asian and African Geolinguistics”. Japanese experts of languages and language groups in Asia and Africa joined the project. They drew maps of a language or language group in charge and presented the outcomes at each project meeting, as in the previous project. The items investigated in the project were: lexical items such as animal vocabulary (‘rat/mouse’, ‘chicken’, ‘horse’, ‘dog’, ‘wolf’, ‘bear’), crop terms (‘wheat’, ‘broomcorn millet’ [*Panicum miliaceum*], ‘foxtail millet’

² https://geolinguistics.sakura.ne.jp/index_en.html (acc. April 16, 2024).

³ ILCAA Electronic Publications, <https://publication.aa-ken.jp/> (acc. April 16, 2024).

[*Setaria italica*], ‘barnyard millet’ [*Echinochloa* spp.], ‘taro’, ‘yam’), sibling term systems, and numeral systems; one grammatical item (grammatical relations or alignment); and one phonological item (stop series). Animal vocabulary and crop terms were chosen since some meetings were held as joint research meetings with “Yaponesia Genome” project⁴. In the second project, the result was published as three monographs with DOI (LAAA I, II, III: Suzuki *et al.* 2022, Suzuki *et al.* 2023, Fukushima *et al.* 2023), which contained colored maps with descriptions for each language or language groups.

5. CHARACTERISTICS OF LAA AND LAAA

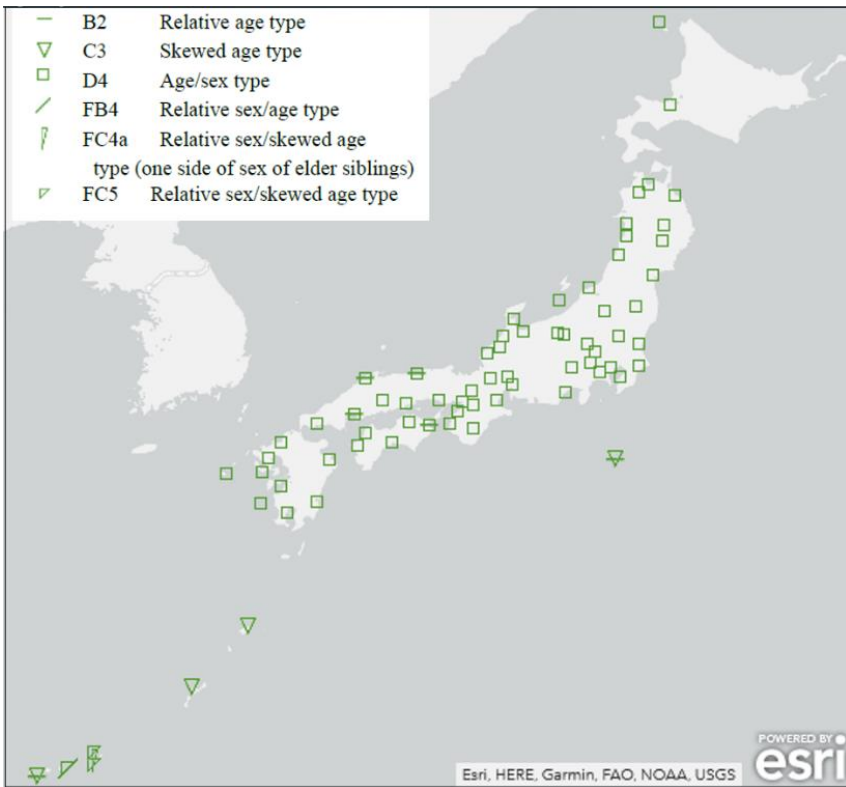


Figure 1. *Systems of sibling terms in Japonic.*

Original maps of each language or language group were drawn using ArcGIS online. One color, chosen among red, brown, green, orange, and blue, was assigned to each language or language family. See figure 1, which is a map of system of sibling terms in Japonic language family. The maps of each language or language group were superimposed on the screen using ArcGIS online.

⁴ Archives of the quarterly journal “Yaponesia”, <https://github.com/nosada17/Yaponesia/tree/main> (acc. April 16, 2024).

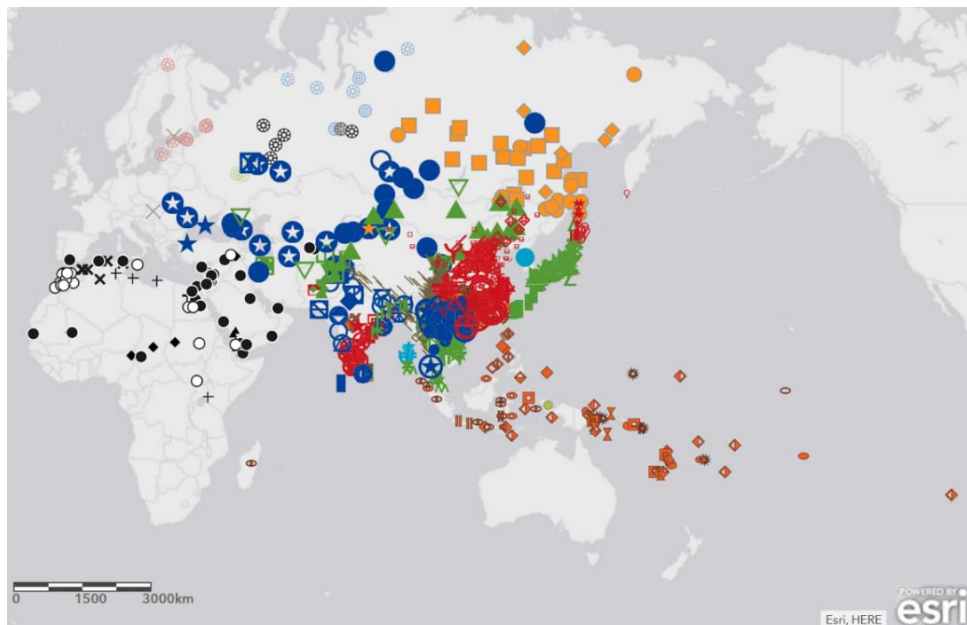


Figure 2. Superimposed map of 'the sun' on screen in LAA.

On the other hand, figure 2 is an example of synthesized map of LAA online *The Sun*. By zooming a part of the map on the screen, one can see the detailed variation of the concerned area. The data of each language or language group is analyzed by experts, which means that the information is reliable. When basic symbols are decided by the coordinator before mapping data, as in the case of grammatical relations, sibling term systems, and numeral systems, we can see the distribution of certain types ranging over languages and language groups. One example of the analysis is shown in Fukushima 2023, where he analyzed geographic typological variation of systems of sibling terms in Asia and Africa. Regarding the lexical items, we have found cases of borrowing, calques or loan translations, etc. (Fukushima 2021). Borrowings could be within or beyond a language or a language family, and, on the other hand, there are new and old borrowings. Sinitic, Indo-European, Arabic, Russian etc. are often the center of diffusion especially in the case of new borrowings. The direction of old borrowings, often treated as *Wanderwort*, is, however, difficult to be determined.

6. SUMMARY

LAA and LAAA are useful tools in order to examine the geographical variation – of the vast main area and also of the border area. They also allow studying the lexical, grammatical, and phonological/prosodic variations, some of which are typological variations. Finally, these atlases are valuable resources for the investigation of numerous cases of lexical borrowing.

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The members of the 2015–2018 project involved in the investigations for LAA are the following linguists: SHIRAIISHI Hidetoshi (Nivkh), FUKAZAWA Mika (Ainu), KISHIE Shunsuke (Japanese), FUKUI Rei (Korean), IWATA Rei, UETA Takashi, YAGI Kenji, SUZUKI Fumiki (Sinitic), TAGUCHI Yoshihisa (Hmong-Mien), ENDO Mitsuaki (Kra-Dai), SHIRAI Satoko, IWASA Kazue, SUZUKI Hiroyuki, EBIHARA Shiho, KURABE Keita (Tibeto-Burman), MINEGISHI Makoto, SHIMIZU Masaaki, KONDO Mika (Austroasiatic), UTSUMI Atsuko (Austronesian), MATSUMOTO Ryo (Tungusic and Uralic), SAITÔ Yoshio (Mongolic and Turkic), YOSHIOKA Noboru (South Asia), NAGATO Youichi (Semitic), NAKAO Shuichiro (Nilo-Saharan), FUKUSHIMA Chitsuko (Cartography). Also, KUREBITO Tokusu, MATSUSE Ikuko, TEERAROJANARAT Sirivilai, SHIOKAWA Nanami, SHIMIZU Yukichi, SAKOGUCHI Yukako, KUMAGAI Yasuo, ONISHI Takuichiro helped the project.

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ABSTRACT

The *Linguistic Atlas of Asia* (LAA) and the *Linguistic Atlas of Asia and Africa* (LAAA) are linguistic atlases spanning more than one continent. This paper describes: 1) the process during which Japanese scholars coordinated by Mitsuaki Endo produced the atlases, and 2) the characteristics of the two atlases. These atlases are useful for understanding geographical variation of the vast main areas under study, and also of the border areas. The maps are drawn and synthesized online, allowing for the enlargement of the concerned area. When symbols are assigned before mapping typological items, we can see the geographical variation of certain types in the synthesized map. Various cases of lexical borrowing can be also found using the maps drawn within our research projects. The center of diffusion in the case of borrowings is often Sinitic, Indo-European, Arabic, Russian etc. although the direction of old borrowings is difficult to determine.

Keywords: *linguistic atlas, Asian languages, African languages, typology, borrowing.*