Special Theme: Where Sign Language Studies Can Take Us

Introductory Essay:
Sign Languages are Languages!

Ritsuko Kikusawa
National Museum of Ethnology

On November 25, 2009, the Nagoya District Court in Japan sustained a claim by a Japanese Sign Language (JSL) user, acknowledging that sign languages are a means of communication that are equal to orally spoken languages. Kimie Oya, a Deaf signer, suffered from physical problems on her upper limbs as the result of injuries sustained in a traffic accident. This restricted her ability to express things in JSL. However, the insurance company did not admit that this should be compensated as a (partial) loss of linguistic ability, because ‘whether to use a sign language or not is up to one’s choice’. Although some thought that the degree of impairment admitted by the court (14% loss) was too low, the sentence was still welcome and was considered a big step forward toward the better recognition of JSL, the language of the biggest minority group in Japan.

A correct understanding of the nature of sign languages, and recognition that they are real languages is spreading slowly but steadily through society. Signing communities, meanwhile, have continued to broaden their worldview, reflecting globalization, and cooperation with linguists to acquire objective analyses and descriptions of their languages (see Mori article, this issue). I believe that the situation is more or less similar in many countries and societies — the communities of linguists being no exception. Linguistic research on sign languages is now becoming accepted by non-sign linguists (Supalla and Osugi articles), and sign linguistics has started to gain the academic status that it deserves. For example, the latest edition of Language Files (Ohio State University Press), an introductory textbook to linguistics widely used in the USA, has included information about sign languages in almost all its chapters, including those on phonology, morphology, and syntax.

 Phonology, morphology and syntax of sign languages? Yes, sign languages have their own grammars, just like English and Japanese do — the rules that tell us how to build up elements to be understood by other members of the same linguistic community using the language. The grammar of a sign language is not ‘artificial’, as some people believe. In any community with Deaf members, some kind of signing communication spontaneously develops, and can develop into a full

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The author is an associate professor at Minpaku. She played a major role in the renovation of the language exhibit in 2009, and was co-organizer of an international sign language workshop held at Minpaku in July 2011. Her current research concerns the history of Austronesian languages, in particular the comparison and reconstruction of grammatical structures. She also specializes in the prehistory of Oceania, and is involved in various interdisciplinary research projects. Her publications include: Proto Central Pacific Ergativity (Pacific Linguistics, 2002) and The movement of people and plants in the Pacific: Reconstructing culture-history based on linguistic data (2009 International Symposium on Austronesian Studies, 2010).

Sign Language Studies in Japan and Abroad

Soya Mori
Institute of Developing Economies–JETRO

In the history of Japanese Sign Language (JSL), we can discern four different periods after World War II. The first period lasted until the 1970s when very few people knew JSL in Japan and the best interpreters for the Deaf were teachers at schools for the Deaf. The second period was between the 1970s and 1980s. In this period, Sign Language Clubs were set up in many cities of Japan and more hearing people began to learn how to use signed language at these clubs. It was also the time when new information from the USA came into the Japanese Sign Linguists community. The third period lasted until the 1990s. In this period, the Japanese Deaf community began to look outside the country and there were even some articles by Japanese Sign Linguists written in English. The last period is the current one after 2000. In this period, some well-organized JSL interpreter training courses were established as well as a bilingual-bicultural school for the Deaf. The development of Sign Linguistics in Japan has had a strong effect on institutions in each of the four periods.
The Fist Period: Proto-Sign Linguistics

It is said that Japan is a very close linguistic community. Most Japanese people do not know languages other than Japanese at all well, and there are many difficulties in learning other languages through everyday life. The situation was very similar for Japanese deaf people. The only difference between deaf and hearing people is that the former need bilingual skills while the latter can survive with only monolingual skills. Deaf people need to have fluency in two languages, JSL and written Japanese. However, they are also close to the two languages and sometimes, unconsciously they code-switch between JSL and quasi signed-Japanese. A few deaf people went abroad and some entered Gallaudet University, the only liberal-arts university for deaf people in the world at that time, but most Japanese deaf people only knew their own sign language. For them, the usual languages were JSL and written Japanese. In this situation, they thought the reason for their poor skill at writing Japanese was probably their poor skill at speaking it. At this time, the oral method for education of deaf children was popular, so some innovative teachers tried to invent new methods to teach Japanese language to the Deaf, such as the Tochigi method. Unfortunately the quasi-oral manual language did not work well. However, the inventors of artificial manual languages must be appreciated as the first generation of researchers in Modern Sign Linguistics in Japan. They tried to investigate certain features of JSL with academic approaches that were common at that time. For example, they mentioned simultaneity and linearity in their articles as two features of JSL. Of course, these technical terms are now old-fashioned in Sign Linguistics, and we know now that both spoken and signed languages exhibit features of simultaneity and non-linearity. The introduction of fragmented academic knowledge from the USA and other developed countries into Sign Linguistics can be seen as characteristic of this period.

The Second Period: The Dawn of Modern Sign Linguistics in Japan

During the second period, the Japanese Association of Sign Linguistics was established in 1975 by teachers at schools for the Deaf and a few linguists. Some professional linguists entered into the world of Japanese Sign Linguistics, bringing to Japan some sophisticated knowledge about Sign Linguistics and mostly from the USA. Sociolinguistic considerations were very popular in this period, and the study of JSL was first differentiated into various codes. For example, ‘Traditional Sign Language’, ‘Simultaneous Method Sign Language’, and ‘Intermediate Sign Language’ were used by teachers at the Tochigi School for the Deaf. However, these all had the same modality: the same manual-visual communication channel. Researchers and society were not aware of the precise differences between codes. The diglossic phenomenon of deaf people, in their use of both JSL and Signed Japanese, might have been the reason for this fact. JSL has different grammar from Signed Japanese though both of them have the same modality. That’s why we refer to this situation as a diglossic phenomenon.

The Third Period: Internationalization of the Japanese Deaf Community

During the third period, the World Congress of the World Federation of the Deaf was held in Tokyo in 1991. At this conference, many Japanese Deaf discovered the uniqueness of their own Sign Language and its specific features, when compared to other Sign Languages. Some young deaf people began to learn the linguistics of their language at that time. Until then, most people were interested in sign words and their structure. Of course, different sign languages have different sign vocabulary. However, they also became aware of its structure, especially its syntactic structure. Accordingly, they were interested in codes for their language and found all the older differentiated JSL codes to be wrong. They realized that JSL’s Non Manual Markers (NMM), were the key for understanding the syntactic structure. Though signed Japanese has the same modality as JSL, its syntactic structure is different. This finding brought them to the new Deaf Awareness Movement, DPro. This new movement gave the existing Deaf communities a big shock. Reactions against it were expressed by the Japanese Federation of the Deaf, and a number of hard of hearing users of Signed Japanese.

The Fourth Period: Institutional Developments Based on Sign Linguistics

In the latest period, after the serious controversy around JSL and Signed Japanese, more research was conducted to understand the phonological, morphological and...
 syntactic structure of JSL. With the greater understanding, people around DPro established the first bilingual-bicultural School for the Deaf in Tokyo. At this school, the first official JSL course for elementary school children in Japan is now being offered. The Ministry of Education has officially certified the course and many newly invented educational materials based on a Sign Linguistic foundation are being used in the course. The findings of Sign Linguistics are also being used to improve courses for training JSL interpreters.

There are still many problems and barriers for the Deaf in Japan, including an official recognition of Sign Language. However, the development of Sign Linguistics has contributed to positive changes for deaf communities in Japan. The United Nation’s Convention on Rights of Persons with Disabilities entered into force in 2008. This convention mentions Signed Language in several of its articles. Academic recognition of Sign Language and its research development has led to several important changes in the world. Some Sign Linguists in Japan are now interested not just in JSL but also in Signed Japanese and its uses. We can expect further research on the languages being used, and on the linguistic situation in Japanese Deaf communities.

A Signers’ Village in Bali, Indonesia

Connie de Vos
University of Central Lancashire, UK

A very striking feature here is that a sign language has emerged that is used by both deaf and hearing members of the community. Deaf villages use signs to communicate with their hearing relatives, as well as many of their hearing friends and colleagues, and approximately two thirds of Bengkala’s hearing population can understand and use this indigenous sign language with varying degrees of proficiency. For the reasons stated above, the Balinese refer to Bengkala as Desa Kolok — which is Balinese for ‘deaf village’ — and its sign language as Kata Kolok ‘deaf talk’. Kata Kolok currently functions in all major aspects of village life including politics, gossip, Hindu ceremonies, as well as education.* The language has been acquired from birth by multiple generations of deaf, native signers. Kata Kolok is thus a fully-fledged sign language in every sense of the word. Notably, the language is grammatically distinct from and historically unrelated to the sign language varieties used in other parts of Bali, and Indonesia.

The socio-cultural construction of deafness in Bengkala

Deaf individuals and fluent hearing signers are found in all ten village clans. In daily life, therefore, the deaf individuals of Bengkala will not often face someone unwilling or unable to communicate with them in sign. Presumably because of the use of a shared sign language, deaf individuals are well-integrated into the wider hearing community. The integration of deaf villagers is mirrored by the fact that they have equal chances of getting married and have similar professional opportunities. Deaf villagers also occupy crucial offices within the village including water pipe maintenance and burial of the dead. In fact, the kolok men are often characterised as particularly strong yet sensitive, and dominate the village’s civil defense brigade for this reason. Interestingly, the community has also developed unique socio-cultural adaptations to

* The author is a post-doctoral research assistant at the International Institute for Sign Languages and Deaf Studies (iSLanDS) at the University of Central Lancashire, UK. As a project manager for the EuroBABEL project on Endangered Sign Languages in Village Communities, she is responsible for the creation of a digital archive including linguistic and anthropological data from multiple field sites. Her publications include ‘Kata Kolok color terms and the emergence of lexical signs in rural signing communities’ (The Senses and Society 6(1), 2011).
deafness including a shared belief in *Bhatara Kolok* — a deaf God. On special occasions, the deaf villagers are also known to perform the *Janger Kolok* — a deaf dance — which is cued exclusively by a visual beat.

**Endangerment of Kata Kolok**

In recent years, many deaf teenagers from Bengkala have entered the deaf boarding school in Jimbaran, in the south of Bali. These adolescents have become fully bilingual in Indonesian Sign Language and Kata Kolok, and such contact situations often result in linguistic change in favor of the majority language, which is associated with perceived educational and professional opportunities. Attendance at this deaf boarding school has also resulted in increased contact between the Kata Kolok community and the large Deaf Community of Bali, resulting in changing marital patterns. The intensification of contact between the Kata Kolok signers and Indonesian Sign Language signers has resulted in an increasing number of deaf individuals from Bengkala seeking out deaf spouses from surrounding villages and other parts of Bali. Because deaf individuals outside of Bengkala are not carriers of the identical recessive gene causing deafness, these couples are unlikely to have deaf offspring.

This latter tendency, to marry outside the village, is also observed in hearing villagers from Bengkala, due to socio-economic change. These changing marital patterns dilute the frequency of the recessive gene in the population of Bengkala, and the incidence of deafness as a result. When the number of deaf individuals decreases significantly, the communicative need for the sign language is likely to disappear. Since 2005, no deaf children have been born to parents using Kata Kolok, and this makes the study of the acquisition of Kata Kolok especially pressing as opportunities to study the acquisition of this endangered sign language without the influence of Indonesian Sign Language may soon decline.

**The Kata Kolok corpus**

In response to these recent developments, the author has created a corpus — a digital archive — of Kata Kolok, which is maintained jointly by the Max Planck Institute for Psycholinguistics in Nijmegen and by the International institute for Sign Languages and Deaf Studies in Preston (UK). The Kata Kolok corpus currently comprises 100 hours of high-quality video data. Translations in Indonesian and English make sections of the corpus accessible to a national and international academic audience. During field trips accumulating to one year, the video recordings targeted core functional domains in which the language is used. A sub-corpus of spontaneous conversational data includes informal group conversations among deaf and hearing villagers as well as culturally entrenched monologues such as stories of a deaf ghost and Balinese cock fights. A special section of the Kata Kolok corpus charted the development of two deaf toddlers growing up in deaf families over the course of two years. In light of the language’s endangered status, further documentation efforts are specifically planned to continue with this latest generation of Kata Kolok signers.

*An inclusive deaf school, in which Kata Kolok is used as a language of instruction, was set-up at the initiative of the author in collaboration with local authorities in mid-2007.*
Building an Infrastructure to Support Historical Sign Language Research

Ted Supalla & Betsy Hicks McDonald
University of Rochester, USA

American Sign Language (ASL) is the community language of Deaf people in the USA and parts of Canada and Mexico. Deaf people and their deaf and hearing children are indigenous users of ASL. The categorization of deaf people as disabled rather than as members of an ongoing language community led to a devaluing of the language and neglect of historical research. As interest grows in the humanistic study of ASL, the claim is often made that historical resources for study of this unwritten language are sparse. Yet sustained efforts uncover early films, dictionaries and other historical texts and documents. Study of these resources reveals the beginnings of a literary canon and a tradition of metalinguistic awareness and discussion among Deaf Community leaders. These sources are valuable for developing research methods in historical linguistics, and are rich resources for ASL and the sign language humanities.

Sharing sign language resources for research and teaching requires that we build an infrastructure for documenting, archiving and sharing sign language. The Early ASL database, a project of the Sign Language Research Center, has been built with this in mind. This digitized database is the work of a research team headed by Ted Supalla at the University of Rochester. At present, the corpus includes the fourteen extant National Association of the Deaf films, from the early 1900s, and three contemporaneous early ASL dictionaries. A particularly valuable aspect of the database is that the language in the films has been made accessible on a number of levels. They are completely transcribed, using English glosses to provide a literal transcription and they are fully translated into English as well. Tokens of individual concepts can thus be cross-referenced both within and across the film and print dictionary corpora.

Historical research suggests that the use of ASL began in approximately 1817, when deaf children and adults in the USA were first brought into consistent contact with one another at the Hartford School for the Deaf in Connecticut. The period from 1910 to 1920 represents the halfway point in the development of modern ASL, providing us with a window onto the development of the grammatical structure and literary history of the language. The historical context for the era and research results from database investigations form the basis for the text: Sign Language Archeology: Understanding the History and Evolution of American Sign Language, by Ted Supalla and Patricia Clark, now in press.

The database contributes historically attested forms for the development of scientific etymologies of ASL concepts. Such historically accurate reconstructions benefit the field of historical linguistics, and add depth to the understanding of how a sign’s structure has been perceived and explained across ASL history. Moreover, variation in dialect or register provides us with data to reconstruct missing links in the construction of a scientific etymology. In the example below, the etymology for the concept ‘Sunday’ demonstrates the value of modern-day variation.

The standard form for ‘Sunday’ is seen in Figure 1(a). This form is often explained as evolving from a ‘praise gesture’. However, this explanation does not seem to fit variant signs for

![Sign Language Archeology: Understanding the History and Evolution of American Sign Language, by Ted Supalla and Patricia Clark, now in press.](image-url)
the concept that exist regionally. The variant shown in Figure 1(b) is used by elderly deaf graduates of St Mary’s School for the Deaf in the Buffalo area.

We can explain the etymology and relationship of the two variants by relating them to historical word phrases for expressing the related concept ‘church’.

Three variant word phrases for this concept can be seen below (Fig. 2, 3, 4).

In another contemporaneous example, we see the element POSE-AS-JESUS used in a word phrase for the concept ‘Sunday’ (Fig. 5).

In these illustrations of earlier word phrases for ‘church’ and ‘Sunday’, we can see the elements in the word phrases drawn on, reduced, and shifted semantically in the distinct modern versions of SUNDAY. The standard sign SUNDAY shown in Figure 1(a) has undergone reduction and re-analysis of the element POSE-AS-JESUS. The dialectal variant has undergone reversal (metathesis) of the original sequence POSE-AS-JESUS+ ‘C’+ESTABLISH for ‘church’ and shifted it semantically to mean ‘Sunday’. (Fig. 6)
Thus, research reveals that the modern explanation is a folk etymology, reflecting the re-analysis of earlier forms, created because the true history of the sign has been obscured.

The Early ASL database and historical linguistics methodology are important aspects of a much-needed infrastructure for sharing and linking ASL research and curricula.

Incorporating historical information in our language curricula leads to a richer picture of ASL and respect for variation in the language. Historical information on the (sometimes competing) variants for a modern concept provides a richer picture of ASL as a heritage language. When added to sociolinguistic research documenting variation across gender, region, age, and ethnic group use. Our goals in sharing the Sign Language Research Center Early ASL Database are to raise awareness of ASL as a language with a history, to contribute to curriculum development to enrich ASL language classrooms and to build infrastructure for sharing historical resources.

The Japanese Sign Language Corpus: A Work in Progress

Yutaka Osugi
National University Corporation Tsukuba University of Technology

Among Deaf Japanese communities throughout the country, it is well known that the development of Japanese Sign Language (JSL) began in 1857, the date of the founding of the first school for deaf children in Japan, which had adopted sign language as its teaching method. Despite 130 years of JSL use in Japan, however, no data resources are available to support historical linguistic research on JSL. To fill the void, this author is involved in pioneering work with colleagues from various universities and the Deaf Japanese community. To support reconstruction of the history of JSL, two prototype resources have been developed and are now available online for sign language research and education communities.

JSL language atlas project

In one project, we have created a prototypical language map for regional and generational variation in JSL (Osugi, 2010). This interactive map is based on data collected in 2009, with the help of 94 Deaf informants from all 47 prefectures of Japan. A geographic distribution reflecting lexical variation with 30 lexical items among JSL users is mapped across region and age. There were two informants for each prefecture, with one aged 70-79, and the other 30-39 years of age. In all cases, both informants attended the same school for the Deaf in the prefecture.

The 30 lexical items gathered were:

Dog, Cat, Monkey, Chicken, Egg, Sunday, Monday (Moon-Day), Tuesday (Fire-Day), Wednesday (Water-Day), Thursday (Tree-Day), Friday (Gold-Day), Saturday (Soil-Day), Dormitory (at school), Commute (to school), Physical Education (class), Kokugo (Japanese language class), Travel, Japan, France, Old-Man, Old-Woman, East, West, South, North, Brown (color), Pink (color), 100-Yen, 300-Yen, 1000-Yen.

Two results from the language atlas research are that 1) some lexical items show extensive variation across regions, while others do not, and 2) most lexical items showing extensive variation appear in data from the 70 year-olds, and there is little variation in data from the 30 year-olds.

As an example, for Old-Man, 15 different forms are observed for the 70 year-olds, and only 4 different forms for informants in their 30s. Although the standard form of Old-Man (see sign on left, in Fig. 1) is shared by 28 informants in their 70s, this number increases to 41 for informants in their 30s. The standard form is often explained in folk etymology as evolving from ‘male bent with age’ or ‘male with a stick’. A prominent form in the other variants is illustrated at right in Fig. 1, and can be explained from observation of the different forms among informants in their 70s as evolving from a simultaneous combination of ‘wrinkle on forehead’ and ‘male gesture’.
Early JSL database project

Another project involves the development of a historical JSL database which lists lexical entries from five sign language vocabulary texts published in Japan before 1969 (see Table below). This date is used as a dividing line for early texts because it is when the Japanese Federation of the Deaf began standardization efforts for JSL by publishing approved standard JSL sign vocabulary books nationwide.

With the cooperation of Kazuyuki Kanda, Shinichi Iwamura, Ryoichi Inoue, Junko Numa, Shigeo Onishi, Tsutomu Shiraishi, and Tetsuo Ichiyoshi, all the lexical items have been re-enacted and documented as video data. To attest these re-enactments, judgment and confirmation will be elicited from older Deaf signers from different geographic areas. It is hoped that this historical database will shed light on the nature of word formation processes in JSL.

For the sign: Old-Man, the same example used above, we can see several different forms in the different vocabulary books as shown in Fig. 2.

From preliminary comparison of the re-enactments and judgments thus far, we can suggest that several independent word phrases (sign sequences) originated in different regions of the country, to express a particular concept. These phrases provided raw material for eventual competition, reduction and lexicalization for wider usage. The result of these processes can be seen in the current status of variant forms seen in the JSL language map (Fig. 1).

Even at this early stage of research, we can see how synchronic and diachronic approaches in collecting and analyzing data have the power to reveal the roots of contemporary word formation. Upgrading and expansion of both resources will be crucial for future research into the history of JSL.


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<td>Photos, text</td>
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Table. JSL vocabulary books published in Japan before 1969

Fig. 1. ‘Old-Man’ in the JSL language map

Fig. 2. ‘Old-Man’ and ‘Old-Person’ in vocabulary books (illustrated by Natsumi Kanno)
Sign languages offer unique insights into the nature of human language because they use manual-visual expression. Such insights can be found at all levels of structure — phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon — yet many sign languages remain undocumented. This article describes four efforts (all funded by The Nippon Foundation, Tokyo, Japan) to use Sign Linguistics and Deaf Cultural Studies to empower Deaf people with higher educational opportunities and with the skills to document and preserve their own languages and cultures for themselves and for the disciplines of Linguistics and Anthropology.

The World Deaf Leadership Thailand Project (begun in 1997)

This program, the first to train Thai Deaf people to become sign language teachers and to promote their own sign language, was a collaborative effort by Gallaudet University, Ratchasuda College, and the National Association of the Deaf in Thailand. The program offered training by sign language linguists and Deaf professional sign language teachers, with nine courses in Sign Linguistics and Sign Language Teaching, for Thai Deaf adults who were fluent in Modern Thai Sign Language.

The program helped open university education to Deaf people in Thailand and many of the courses are now incorporated into a BA program at Ratchasuda College. This program may have influenced the Thai Government’s decision to recognize Thai Sign Language as a national language.

The Dong Nai Project (begun in 2000)

This program, the first to train Vietnamese Deaf people to become sign language teachers and to promote their own sign languages, has been a collaborative effort among some of the people involved in the World Deaf Leadership Thailand Project (WDL) as well as faculty in Viet Nam. The program has offered training by sign language linguists and Deaf professional sign language teachers, with eleven courses in Sign Linguistics, Sign Language Teaching, and Deaf histories and cultures, for Vietnamese Deaf adults who are fluent in Ho Chi Minh City Sign Language.

The program made it possible to begin bilingual junior and senior high school as well as university education in Ho Chi Minh City Sign Language and written Vietnamese. This has resulted in the first Deaf graduates from junior high school, the first and only Deaf graduates from senior high school and the first and only Deaf graduates from university in Viet Nam. The Deaf adults have also developed and published three teaching handbooks for Ho Chi Minh City Sign Language, and three companion dictionaries to the handbooks.

Two Vietnamese Deaf researchers analyze the formational structure of signs to determine the sign alphabetical order in a dictionary of Ho Chi Minh City Sign Language at the Deaf Cultural Studies Program, Dong Nai University, Bien Hoa City, Dong Nai Province (Nguyen Thi Hoa, 2006)
The Ha Noi Deaf Education Project (begun in 2009)

This is a new program established in Ha Noi at the National College of Education. Some of the faculty from Dong Nai University as well as faculty in the National College of Education are involved in this effort. It is basically a replication of the project at Dong Nai University, using Ha Noi Sign Language instead of Ho Chi Minh City Sign Language. It is expected that this program will generate handbooks and companion dictionaries for Ha Noi Sign Language as well as provide full high school and university education for Deaf people in Ha Noi Sign Language and written Vietnamese.

The Asia Pacific Sign Linguistics Research and Training Program (begun in 2003)

The Asia Pacific Sign Linguistics Research and Training Program (APSL) is the most linguistically ambitious of the programs to train Deaf people in Sign Linguistics. It is housed at the Centre for Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies, established by linguists at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2003.

The first phase of the APSL program began in 2003 and was entitled ‘Practical Dictionaries of Asian Pacific Sign Languages’. In Phase 1, research and training activities were conducted individually in four countries: Viet Nam, Hong Kong, the Philippines and Cambodia. Phase 1 focused on providing training in Sign Linguistics and Sign Language Teaching to Deaf researchers in order to help them produce high-quality sign language dictionaries and sign language teaching materials for their own country. The training was conducted in local sign language and consisted of six courses. The trained Deaf researchers from each country worked with professional sign language linguists to produce several volumes of teaching materials and companion dictionaries for student learners.

Realizing that there were too few sign linguists in Asia to send out to individual countries, the organizers of APSL decided to begin Phase 2, where Deaf students from other countries would be brought to Hong Kong for up to five years of training and supervision. Phase 2 of APSL is currently training fluent Deaf users of Hong Kong Sign Language, Yogyakarta Sign Language, Jakarta Sign Language, Sri Lankan Sign Language, Fijian Sign Language and Japanese Sign Language in the following programs related to Sign Linguistics, Sign Language Teaching, and Deaf History and Culture: 1) Diploma Programme in Basic Sign Language Lexicography for the Deaf (five courses), 2) Diploma in Sign Linguistics and Deaf Studies (five courses), 3) Diploma in General Adult Deaf Education for Deaf Studies (four courses), and 5) Higher Diploma in Sign Linguistics and Sign Language Teaching (18 courses). Upon completion of the higher diploma the deaf researchers are qualified for university education.

Deaf trainees are working on sign language teaching materials development and dictionary production, and are entering their signs into an electronic database which allows searching and comparison with phonological parameters, grammatical categories, and translations into English, Chinese, and the majority spoken language(s) in the countries where the sign languages are used.

While the programs mentioned in this article are important steps, there is still much room for development of additional programs. I hope that this article will generate interest among linguists, anthropologists, Deaf people, and organizations like Minpaku, so that other projects can be started to document and preserve highly endangered sign languages like Original Chiangmai Sign Language and Original Bangkok Sign Language, whose users are all over 60 years of age. The need for further investigation of these and other sign languages is urgent and critical. Sign languages offer valuable information and insights for linguistic theory, and for the study of Deaf histories and Deaf cultures. Unless others step forward soon, time will literally run out for these languages and their users, and information about variation in our own humanity will be lost forever.
**Exhibition**

**Devotion to the Arts of Living: Daily Life among the Aynu of the Kurile, Sakhalin and Hokkaido Islands — Objects from the Late 19th – Early 20th Century Collections of Ethnological Museums in Germany and Japan**

**Special Exhibition**

**October 6 – December 6, 2011**

This special exhibition concerns the Aynu culture of the Kurile, Sakhalin and Hokkaido Islands. Europeans initially believed that the Aynu people in Japan were one of the proto-Caucasian stocks. They were very interested in them, and ethnological museums in Europe enthusiastically collected Aynu material from the end of 19th century to the early 20th century. On the other hand, the study of the Aynu culture was a primary driving force in the development of anthropology in Japan in the 1880s to the early 1900s, a period which is regarded as the dawn of Japanese anthropology.

This exhibit’s goals are to show the Aynu’s daily life a hundred years ago, with objects from the GRASSI Museum for Ethnology in Leipzig and the Dresden Ethnographical Museum. These materials are displayed in five sections: ‘gathering, hunting, fishing’, ‘eating’, ‘living’, ‘wearing’, and ‘praying’ and originate from the Kurile, Sakhalin and Hokkaido Islands. These materials are displayed in five sections: “gathering, hunting, fishing”, “eating”, “living”, “wearing”, and “praying” and originate from the Kurile, Sakhalin and Hokkaido Islands. The displays indicate the regional variation in Aynu culture. Several artifacts are worthy of special mention. One is the salmon skin clothing from the Dresden Ethnographical Museum, which is rarely found in such good condition. Another is a Kurile Aynu house model that Ryuzo Torii collected in 1899. An altar (nutsasan) model for the bear sending ceremony is also displayed. This item, collected before 1939, was reconstructed at our museum in September 2010 by five young Aynu persons under the supervision of Jirotaro Kitahara, an associate professor of Hokkaido University. The reconstructed model is also displayed.

A major concern in early Japanese anthropology was the identity of the inhabitants of northern and central Japan during the Stone Age: were they Aynu people, or korpokkur (dwarfs appearing as aboriginal residents before the Aynu, in Aynu mythology)? To answer this question, Shogoro Tsuboi, Yoshikiyo Koganei, Ryuzu Torii, Shuzo Ishida and others carried out field research in one or more of the Hokkaido, Kurile, and Sakhalin Islands in the late 19th to early 20th century. This debate, referred to as the ‘korpokkur controversy’, played a significant role in the development of anthropology in Japan. The second part of our exhibition centers on research activities relating to the Aynu people and culture by Koganei, Tsuboi, Torii and Ishida, during the early period of Japanese anthropology. This part also introduces the collecting of Aynu materials by a number of Europeans and Americans, during the same period.

The third part introduces a documentary film on the day of several Aynu participants during a ceremony held in Shiraoi, Hokkaido in 2010. Visitors can also read several recently published picture and other books concerning Aynu people and culture. This part shows some of the activities of contemporary Aynu.

Finally it should be noted that this exhibition is a project related to the 150th anniversary of friendship between Japan and Germany, and has been carried out in cooperation with the Foundation for Research and Promotion of Ainu Culture, and the Historical Museum of Hokkaido, in order to disseminate information on Aynu culture in Japan.
Conferences

The 20th International Conference on Historical Linguistics (ICHLXX)

International Conference
July 25 – 30, 2011

Minpaku hosted the 20th meeting of the International Conference on Historical Linguistics, which is held biennially under the auspices of the International Society of Historical Linguistics. The conference had 20 workshops (solicited from members of the Society and screened by the local Scientific Committee) and a considerable number of general sessions. A total of 309 papers were presented on the genetic relationships among languages, language change, and related topics. Analyses focused upon theoretical aspects of the comparative/historical method, typological considerations, computational models, and investigated the historical development of many of the aspects of languages such as phonetics, phonology, morphology and syntax.

Being the first meeting in Asia, the participation of specialists in non-Indo-European languages was encouraged, as well as those who work in related subfields, such as historical sociolinguists. This principle was reflected, for example, in the selection of plenary presentations, which showed a variety of areas and fields. (For the titles of the plenary presentations and abstracts, see the conference website: http://www.ichl2011.com/program.html#Plenary_Speakers)

Parts of the program were open to the interested general public (with simultaneous interpretation between Japanese and English) and attracted some 200 Japanese participants. These were the workshop on historical sign linguistics and Japanese and American sign languages (co-organized by Yutaka Osugi and Ritsuko Kikusawa), and a symposium on the historical position of Japanese (co-organized by Kikusawa, John Whitman, and Martine Robbeets). Details of the latter appear elsewhere in this newsletter.

The total number of conference participants was 319, with some 239 coming from about 40 foreign countries. The number of cancellations by people who decided not to attend because of the events at Fukushima Nuclear plant was relatively small. Other details of the conference appear on the conference website.

Ritsuko Kikusawa
Director, ICHLXX
National Museum of Ethnology

Historical Sign Language Database Architecture and Historical Linguistics Methodology

International Workshop
July 28, 2011

Sign languages spoken all over the world vary and each sign language often consists of dialects, just like spoken languages do. One of the basic characteristics of language is that it is never static; it continues to change as long as people use it. This applies regardless of whether the language is orally spoken or signed and provides us with keys to identify the historical development of languages. In this workshop, the way research is done to investigate the historical development of sign languages was examined, and the kind of database that would be useful to support such research was discussed. Not only Japanese and American sign languages, but also those in Southeast and East Asia were discussed.

The titles of the papers presented and profiles of the speakers appear at: http://www.minpaku.ac.jp/english/research/pr/110728.html.

The workshop was experimental in at least two important ways. First, it was carried out using four different languages (with the help of interpreters), namely, American Sign Language (ASL), English, Japanese Sign Language (JSL), and Japanese. Second, in order to include the sign language keynote presentation by Ted Supalla, who could not physically come to Osaka, an internet connection was established between the workshop venue and New York. This also enabled Supalla to watch all the presentations, and to join in the discussion by sign language.

This workshop was held as one of the National Institutes for Humanities (NIHU) collaborative projects, and was hosted by Minpaku, the Japan Institute for Sign Language Studies, and the National Institute for Japanese Languages and Linguistics (NINJAL). In addition to participants from the 20th International Conference on Historical Linguistics that was being held in conjunction with the workshop, about 120 participants from the general public attended, including a large number of JSL speakers, sign languages interpreters, students and researchers in linguistics.

Ritsuko Kikusawa
Co-organizer
National Museum of Ethnology
Historical Linguistics in the Asia-Pacific Region and the Position of Japanese

International Symposium
July 30, 2011

This symposium focused on the latest developments in research on Japanese historical linguistics, particularly those that involve the relationship between Japanese and other languages in the area surrounding Japan. Presenters discussed the methodology used in reconstructing older forms of Japanese and other languages and understanding the position of Japanese in relation to them.

Debate regarding the position of the Japanese languages was particularly active in the 1980s. However, interest in the topic gradually subsided in Japan, while foreign scholars were still actively pursuing the topic and presenting their research results outside of Japan. One of the main purposes of this symposium therefore was to re-introduce the topic to both linguists and the interested general public in Japan, and to update them on current research results related to the historical position of Japanese vis-à-vis other languages.


Though most of the audience consisted of linguists participating in the 20th International Conference on Historical Linguistics, the symposium was made open to the interested general public. The audience included about 150 linguists and 120 members of the general public.

Indigenous Traditions and Mission Cultures on the Frontiers of Colonial South America: Toward a Comparative Perspective

International Symposium
August 16 – 17, 2011, Buenos Aires

One of the primary goals of the European Conquest of America was Christianization of the native population. The Catholic religious orders were its driving force. Throughout the 16th century, they were active in areas with a dense sedentary population and complex social organization, especially, in Mexico and Peru. From the 17th century, Christianity expanded into frontiers such as the Amazon, the Chaco, the Río de la Plata, etc. It is in those areas where an interesting social institution emerged: the mission. The mission was a network of towns where the native new Christians lived under the surveillance of the missionaries. Since there were no government officials in the frontiers, the missionaries wielded both temporal and spiritual authority. This monopoly gave the mission its unique characteristics.

A difficult problem we are faced with in our study of the missions is how to go beyond the stereotyped image created and publicized by the missionaries. According to this image, the missions were a perfectly regulated society where benign Fathers paternalistically guided docile Indians in all aspects of their lives. The Christian conversion was unilateral, and the missions were strictly segregated from the ‘barbarous’ outside world. Uniformity was a hallmark of the missions. All the mission towns were architecturally uniform, and the mode of life implemented in them was also the same. The chronicles, official reports and private letters of the missionaries — our standard sources — are saturated with this image. Therefore, one of our concerns in this symposium was to explore unfamiliar sources or make new readings of familiar ones.

Our symposium focused on several aspects of the missions that do not accord with their stereotyped image. Native agency was one aspect examined. Many papers convincingly showed that natives did not lose hold of their destiny and that they successfully protected and promoted their interests.

Another focus was the heterogeneity of missions. The missions were far from homogeneous: different ethnic groups lived side by side in a town, and rivalry and conflicts...
among them were not rare. Emphasis was also given on the communication between inside and outside the missions. The native converts maintained contact with their ‘heathen’ relatives, and there were constant exchanges of people, objects and practices between them. Overall, our symposium was a successful attempt to dismantle the stereotyped image of the missions which still keeps a firm grip on our imagination about this historically significant social engineering project. The symposium was organized with the Instituto de Altos Estudios Sociales, Universidad Nacional de San Martin (IDAES-UNSAM), Argentine Republic.

Akira Saito
Organizer
National Museum of Ethnology

New Reproductive Technology and Social Relationships in Asia: Birth, Kinship, and Gender

International Symposium September 8, 2011

This symposium was held to publicize part of the results of ‘Anthropology of Caring and Education for Life’, a core research project of Minpaku in the domain of ‘Anthropological Studies of Inclusion and Autonomy in the Human World’ (in fiscal 2011). Organizers were Minpaku and the Centre Population et Développement (CEPED), France.

Raising the next generation is a theme that relates not only to changing social relationships, but also the way in which society as a whole is structured. Developments in medical technology have expanded the range of choices related to childbirth. How these choices affect the thinking and realities that surround the next generation has become a topic of vigorous debate.

To deepen discussion of the topic of ‘New Reproductive Technology and Social Relationships in Asia’, we focused on the attitudes of people regarding the gender of their children, and invited Christophe Z. Guilmoto, professor at Paris Descartes University and senior research fellow at CEPED, together with other anthropologists who study new reproductive technology in Asia. By comparing the concerns and behaviors affecting childbirth choices, in different regions, we aim to shed light on how new reproductive technology is driving changes in family, kinship and gender relations.

After welcome remarks by Ken’ichi Sudo (Director-General) and introductory remarks by Nanami Suzuki, C. Z. Guilmoto gave a Keynote Lecture, ‘The Anthropological Aspects of Gender Discrimination and Sex Selection in Vietnam’. Guilmoto has studied sex ratios at birth in Viet Nam, using recent census data, and discussed the implications of the cultural dimensions of current sex imbalances at birth, and the future evolution of the sex ratios at birth. The presentations that followed were: ‘Politics of Reproductive Technology in Taiwan’ (Chang Chiungfeng, University of Tokyo); ‘Reproductive Technologies in South Korea’ (Hong Hyunsoo, University of Tokyo); ‘Daughter Preference and Social Transition in Japan and South Korea’ (Kumiko Yamaji, Kwansei Gakuin University); ‘Kinship and Gender in Action: Multiple Child-Parent Relationships in the Age of New Reproductive Technologies’ (Tomiyuki Uesugi, Seijo University). Comments were made by Yoko Taniguchi, Senshu University and Mikako Sawaya, Okayama University, and were followed by a general discussion.

The symposium was attended by 20 people, including the speakers, researchers, and other members of the public who were interested in the future of family and kinship. A wealth of new information was brought together. This will help us develop dialogues across many fields and may help us extend our notions on the new multilayered relationships that are emerging around children and the family in society.

Nanami Suzuki
Convener
National Museum of Ethnology

Light and Shadow in East Asia: Health, Wealth and “Hungry Ghosts”

International Symposium September 8 –11, 2011

The theme of the symposium was chosen to reveal the bright (light) and shady (shadow) sides of East Asia, a region that is one of the major driving forces in the world economy. The concept of ‘hungry ghost’ is common in East Asia and participants tried to relate their papers to this mutually understandable phrase.

Eight sessions were held on September 9-10: 1) Light and Shadow of the Other World (ökul), 2) Light and Shadow of Tradition and Modernity, 3) Ritual, Good Life and the Other in China: Ethno-ontological Approaches to Chinese Ritual, 4) Multi-cultural Practices in Contemporary Korea, 5) The Public Anthropology of Disaster: The East Japan Disaster, 6) New Trends in Taiwan Anthropology, 7) Shanghai World Exposition, and 8) Migration and Dreams in East Asia. Sessions 1, 3, 5, and 7 were supported by simultaneous translation of Japanese, Chinese and Korean. Sessions 2, 4, 6, and 8 were conducted in English. Among the participants, panel organizers, paper presenters and invited discussants numbered 47 (14 from Japan, 10 from China, 10 from Korea, 9 from Taiwan, and 4 from Hong Kong), and 13 observers attended.

One of the goals of previous meetings on East Asian Anthropology in Beijing, Taipei and Seongnam (near Seoul) was maintained at the Minpaku meeting: to establish an association dedicated to the anthropological study of East Asia by those who reside in this area. This was discussed during the advance meeting on
September 8, and during the plenary session on September 10. We decided that there would be a meeting at the Chinese University of Hong Kong in 2012, and a committee would work toward establishing an association based on bylaws. Representatives were also chosen: Wang Mingning (Peking University), Gordon Matthews (The Chinese University of Hong Kong), Okpyo Moon (The Academy of Korean Studies), Hirochika Nakamaki (Minpaku), and Huang Shu-min (Academia Sinica, Taiwan).

Hirochika Nakamaki Chair of the Organizing Committee
National Museum of Ethnology

Awards

Tetsuo Nishio (Center for Research Development) has recently received The 28th TANABE Hisao Award from The Society for Research in Asiatic Music for his publication, Sound Cultures in the Arab World: Invitation to Global Communication (co-edited with M. Horiiuchi and N. Mizuno, in Japanese, Tokyo: Stylenote, 2010). This publication was an outcome of an Inter-University Research Project: The Structure of Sound Cultures in the Arab World, at Minpaku. The prize was established in 1953 by the Society for Research in Asiatic Music, and is awarded annually to a member of the Society in recognition for excellent contributions in Asiatic music studies (October 8, 2011).

Sayaka Ogawa (Research Fellow, Center for Research Development) has received the 33rd Suntory Prize for Social Sciences and Humanities [Life and Society] for her recent publication: Ethnography of Small Merchants in Tanzania (in Japanese, Kyoto: Sekaishisosha, 2011) (December 12, 2011).

New Staff

Hatsuki Aishima
Research Fellow, Center for Research Development

Aishima is a social anthropologist specializing in Islam and public culture in the Middle East. She received MA from Kyoto University (Area Studies, 2002) and PhD from St Antony’s College, Oxford (Oriental Studies, 2010). Before joining Minpaku in July 2011, she worked for the Centre for Modern Oriental Studies, Zentrum Moderner Orient (ZMO), Germany and taught at the Berlin Graduate School of Communication. Her doctoral thesis, ‘Abd al-Halim Mahmoud (1910-78) and his audiences: Mass media and the transformation of Islamic learning in contemporary Egypt’, explored the roles of mass media and modern education in shaping the public knowledge, scholarly culture, and the literary tradition of Islam. She is currently working on an urban ethnography of Egyptian karate practitioners.

Publications

From July to December 2011, we published the following issues and articles:

Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology 36


Errata

In our previous issue (Vol. 32, p.10), two names were misspelled; here they are corrected: Keizo Shibusawa, Masayoshi Ohira.

MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter

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The Newsletter is available online at: www.minpaku.ac.jp/publication/newsletter

General Editor: Ken’ichi Sudo
Editor: Michiko Intoh
Editorial Panel: Kyosuke Hirai, Ritsuko Kikusawa, Peter Matthews, Chihiro Shirakawa
Production: Yumi Edamitsu

Address for correspondence:
The Editor
MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter
National Museum of Ethnology
Senri Expo Park, Suita, Osaka 565-8511, Japan
Tel: +81-6-6876-2151
Fax: +81-6-6878-7503
E-mail: nletter@idc.minpaku.ac.jp

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