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## **TOWARDS INTERLINGUAL DIALECTOLOGY.**

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### **Abstract**

In this paper, a Japanese dialectologist Takesi Sibata (1918-2007) is focused to describe what the transmission of Dutch-Flemish dialectology to Japan resulted in. Sibata is the founder and promoter of Japanese sociolinguistics. His encounter with a Belgian father and linguist Willem A. Grootaers led to the emergence and development of modern linguistic geography in Japan. Sibata was involved in many surveys including epoch-making surveys and established methods and theory of linguistic geography. His approach is not only scientific but also humanistic.

### **Keywords**

linguistic geography, sociolinguistics, language life, Takesi Sibata, Willem A. Grootaers

## **HACIA UNA DIALECTOLOGÍA INTERLINGÜE. TAKESI SIBATA**

### **Resumen**

Este artículo se centra en el dialectólogo japonés Takesi Sibata (1918-2007) para describir el resultado de la transmisión de la dialectología holandesa-flamenca a Japón. Sibata es el fundador y promotor de la sociolingüística japonesa. Su encuentro con el padre y lingüista belga Willem A. Grootaers condujo al nacimiento y desarrollo de la geografía lingüística moderna en Japón. Sibata participó en muchas encuestas, incluyendo encuestas, métodos y teoría de la geografía lingüística que hicieron época. Su enfoque no es solo científico sino también humanista.

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**Palabras clave**

geografía lingüística, sociolingüística, vida lingüística, Takesi Sibata, Willem A. Grootaers

**1. Sibata Takesi: “The father of Japanese Sociolinguistics”**

In this paper, Takesi Sibata (1918-2007), a Japanese dialectologist, is focused to describe what the transmission of Dutch-Flemish dialectology to Japan resulted in. His encounter with Willem A. Grootaers led to the emergence and development of modern linguistic geography in Japan, which was part of Japanese sociolinguistics that Sibata founded and promoted. Sibata was called as “the father of Japanese sociolinguistics” (Inoue & Long 1998: 16).

Sibata was born in Japan in 1918, graduated from Tokyo Imperial University in 1942, and became an assistant at the university in 1945. He took charge of the Literal Survey ordered by the GHQ in 1948, and in the following year became a researcher at the newly-established National Language Research Institute (NLRI), which is now National Institute for Japanese Language and Linguistics (NINJAL). Sibata started to conduct several sociolinguistic researches called the study of “language life”, which is Japanese-style sociolinguistics. He got acquainted with Grootaers maybe in 1951 (Sawaki 2011). Eventually in 1957, Sibata started two geolinguistic surveys with other researchers including Grootaers: one was a nation-wide linguistic survey for Linguistic Atlas of Japan (LAJ) and the other was a geolinguistic survey in Itoigawa. Both surveys were so influential that they led to the prosperity of linguistic geography in 1960s in Japan. Sibata wrote a book in 1969 and established the theory of linguistic geography. He was also a leader in the reviving field of sociolinguistics in the 1970s in Japan. Dialectology was part of sociolinguistics for him.

## **2. Sibata's sociolinguistic research: the study of "language life"**

Before Sibata got involved in linguistic geography, he had planned and conducted a 1949 sociolinguistic research in Shirakawa, Fukushima as a main researcher and published a research report on the survey two years later (NLRI 1951).

The research consisted of six different types of surveys:

- 1) Interviews of 500 men and women from different generation chosen by sampling on their language use
- 2) Interviews of 100 men and women on their language life
- 3) 24-hour recording of four persons' language use
- 4) Interviews of 500 children relocated from cities because of war
- 5) Structural survey of eight dialects and lexical survey of 42 dialects
- 6) Survey of history and society of the surveyed area

Other characteristics of the research included the following. First, its main concern was not a structural analysis of language but a study of "language life" to learn how language was used in a speech community. Second, it investigated many informants and used methods in statistical mathematics. Third, a preliminary survey was carried out using the observational method to grasp qualitative tendencies, and a main survey using planned method (= prepared questionnaire) to grasp quantitative tendencies. Finally, no linguistic map was produced although 42 localities in the area were surveyed.

## **3. Towards linguistic geography**

Sibata met Grootaers while he was involved in sociolinguistic surveys on standardization or honorifics of Japanese dialects. Admittedly Sibata learned a lot from Grootaers (Inoue 2011); two epoch-making and contrastive geolinguistic surveys started in 1957.

The survey for *Linguistic Atlas of Japan* (LAJ) was conducted as an NLRI project with Sibata as a main researcher. It was a nation-wide survey mainly on vocabulary

with a few phonological and grammatical questions, and 2400 localities were surveyed with the help of local researchers using a questionnaire including 285 questions. Six volumes of the atlas including 300 maps were published by NLRI in 1966-1974 (Figure 1).

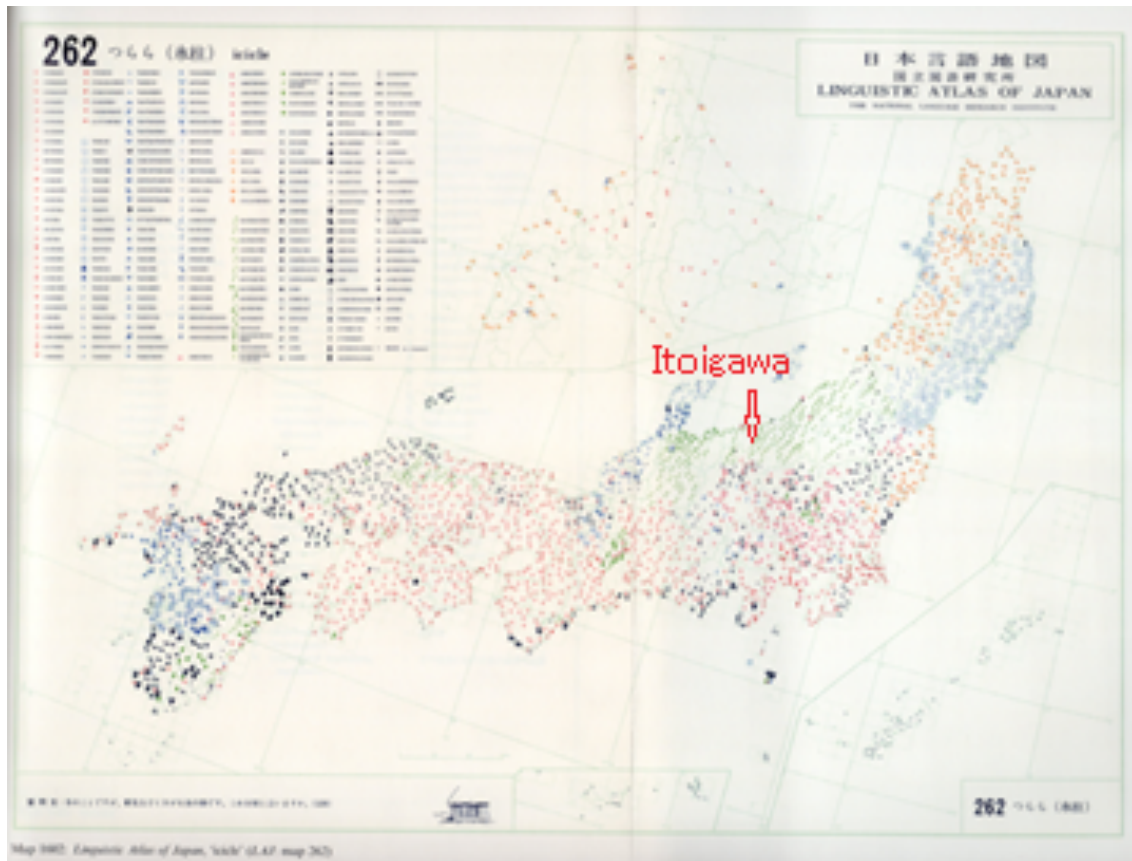


Figure 1. LAJ Map 262 *Tsurara* “Icicles”

On the other hand, the linguistic survey in Itoigawa was a collaborative project by four researchers, namely Sibata, Grootaers, Munemasa Tokugawa and Yoshio Mase. It was a regional survey in Itoigawa on the prominent dialect border between Western and Eastern Japan dialects (Itoigawa indicated in Figure 1). 183 localities were surveyed in 1957, 1959, and 1961 using a questionnaire of 461 questions. The survey produced new methods of dialectology. For example, the survey was the first example of an all-locality survey in which an interview was conducted at every hamlet whose name is printed on an official local map published by Geographical Survey Institute (named in those days). Other new methods include an all-inhabitant survey to identify

age differences by interviewing all residents at an important locality, a glottogram (a graph which crosses age and geographical factors), and a survey of junior high school students to grasp the generational variation. These additional methods have a sociolinguistic viewpoint in common. Sibata, Grootaers, Tokugawa and Mase produced a lot of academic papers and books including analyses of the Itoigawa survey data (Sibata 1969, Grootaers 1976, Tokugawa 1993 and Mase 1992). In addition, Sibata published three volumes of *the Linguistic Atlas of Itoigawa* with the help of Grootaers as English translator in 1988, 1990, and 1995. The atlas included maps, explanations in Japanese and in English, data lists, and indexes. All 932 maps were computer-produced (Figure 2).

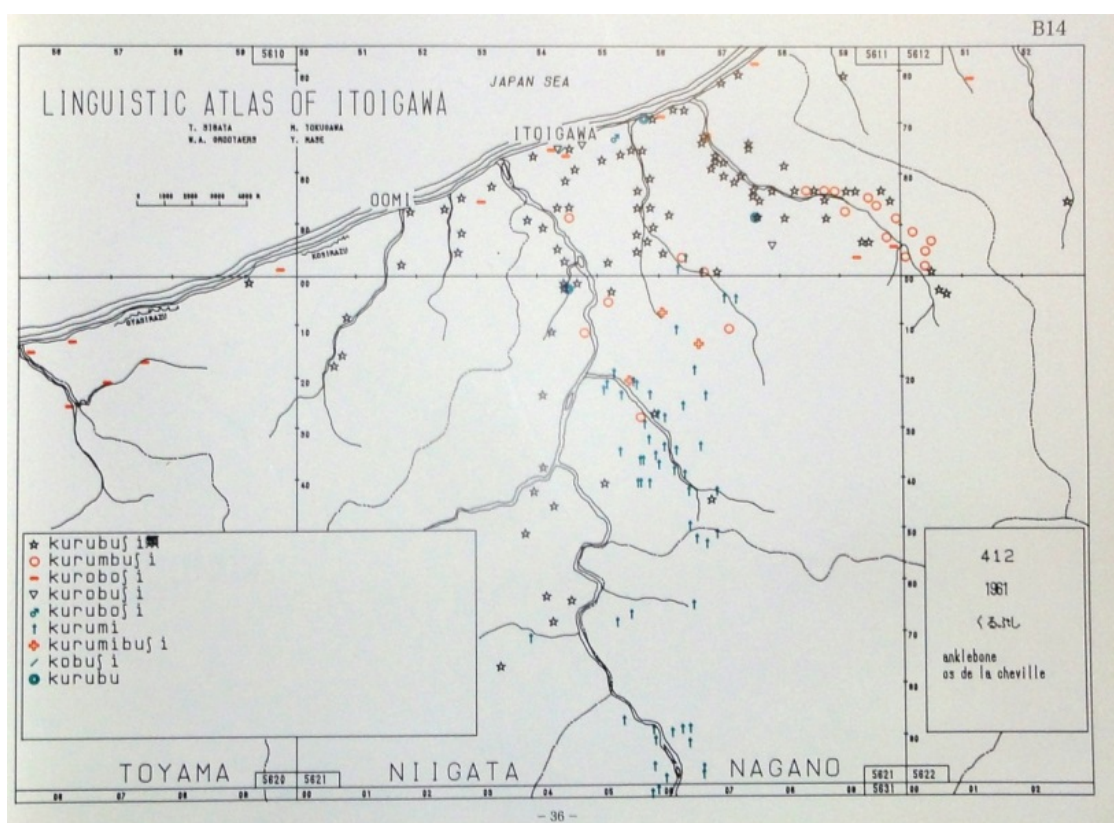


Figure 2. LAI Map 412 *Kurubushi* “Anklebones”

#### 4. Establishing methods and theory of linguistic geography

Sibata published a book solely dedicated for linguistic geography, *Methods in Linguistic Geography*, in 1969. His methods and theory were both “scientific” and “humanistic” (Fukushima 2012), as described below.

##### 4.1 Scientific approach to linguistic geography

Sibata proposed several keys to interpret linguistic maps and reconstruct the linguistic history in the surveyed area. The first key is geographical distributions of a linguistic map. There are two principles for interpreting geographical distributions (Sibata 1969): the Principle of Adjacent Distributions and that of Surrounding Distributions.

As suggested by the wave theory, language spreads as if it crawls on the ground (or the wave spreads when a stone is thrown into a pond). Thus, if word forms a, b, and c are used in this order at adjacent localities A, B, and C respectively, then the chronological order of these forms must be either  $a > b > c$  or  $c > b > a$ ; neither  $a > c > b$ ,  $b > a > c$ ,  $b > c > a$ , nor  $c > a > b$  (Figure 3). This is the Principle of Adjacent Distributions.

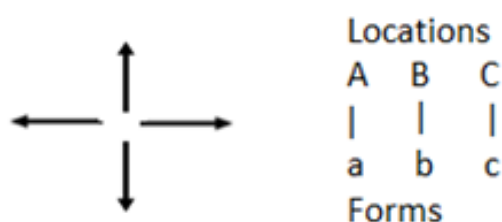


Figure 3. The Principles of Adjacent Distributions

Language tends to spread from the center of the area to the surrounding localities. Thus, if word forms a, b, and a are used in this order at adjacent localities A, B, and C respectively and B is the center of the area, then the chronological order of these forms at the center must be  $a > b$  (the form a is older than the form b) (Figure 4). This is the Principle of Surrounding Distributions.

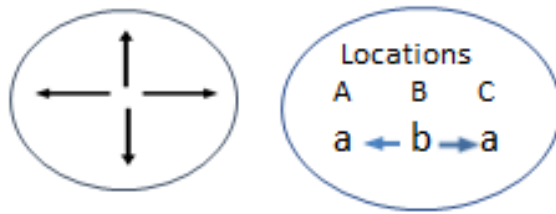


Figure 4. The Principle of Surrounding Distributions.

When these two principles are combined, it is possible for new words to jump from the center of a country to the center of a local area and spread to the surrounding area as flames leap to a distant house (Figure 5). In this case, language does not always spread like crawling on the ground.

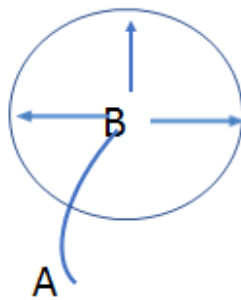


Figure 5. Combination of two principles

In addition, we need to examine whether independent changes are possible or not at distant localities where the same linguistic features are used.

Sibata proposed seven other keys to interpret linguistic maps (Sibata 1969: 27):

- 2) Geographical distributions of dialects of other generations
- 3) Geographical distributions of other linguistic maps
- 4) Geographical distributions of words that are known
- 5) Geographical distributions of things or affairs
- 6) Geographical distributions of informants' judges on words they reported
- 7) Generational distributions in the same speech community
- 8) Features of linguistic forms



Sibata believed that you need to draw linguistic maps to clearly reflect the researcher's interpretation. See the following maps as the examples (Figures 6, 7, 8) (Sibata 1969: Map 3.7-1, 2, 3).

According to Figure 6, the map of *Hitai* "Forehead", the form *putai* found in two separate areas must be the oldest. The form *putaiŋutʃi* and *putaŋutʃi* distributed in the downtown of Itoigawa and its suburbs is newer than *putai*. On the other hand, *çite(:)ŋutʃi* is distributed in the south of the area. The phonological variation between *pu-* and *çi-* is also clear. The *pu-* form is older and the *çi-* form is expanding from the south, Nagano Prefecture. The distribution area is shown by shading and arrows are selected as symbols to show the directions of expansion.

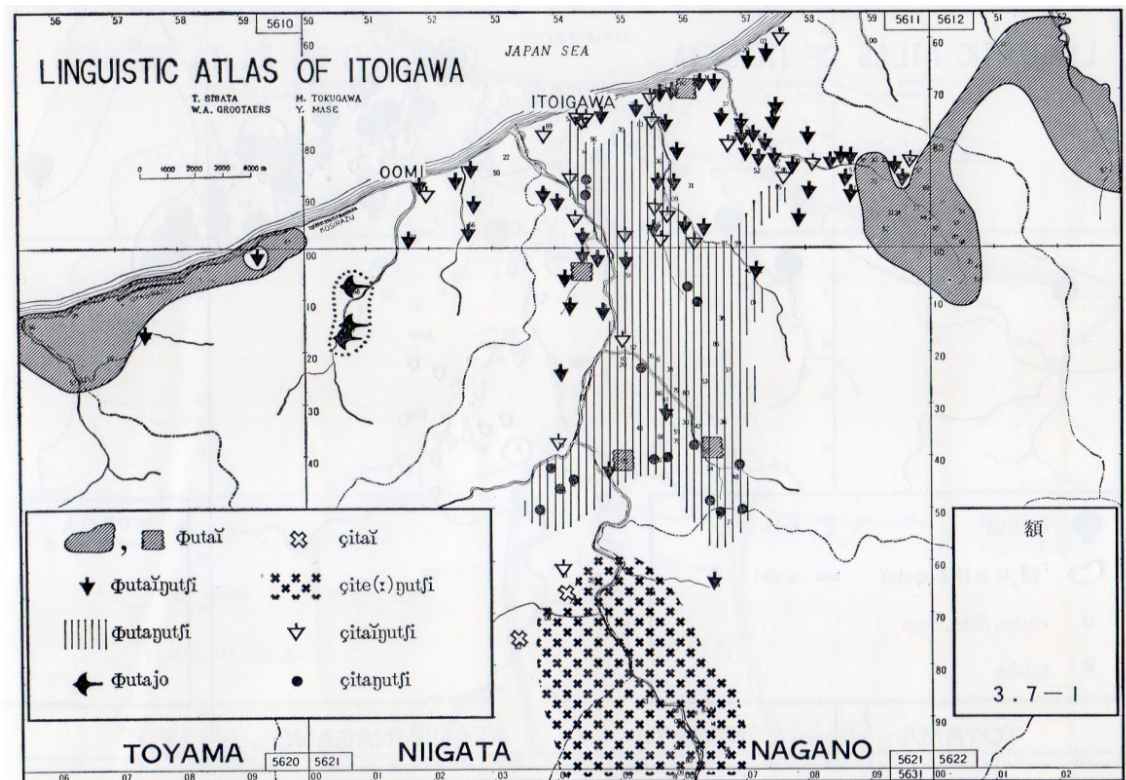


Figure 6. LAI *Hitai* "Forehead"

According to Figure 7, the map of *Odeko no hito* "a person with a high forehead", the compound form *debutai* which consists of *de-* "protrude" plus *putai* "forehead" shows a wider distribution than *putai* in Figure 6 maybe because old forms tend to be retained in a compound. The distribution area of *putai* in Figure 6 is shown by isoglosses in Figure 7.



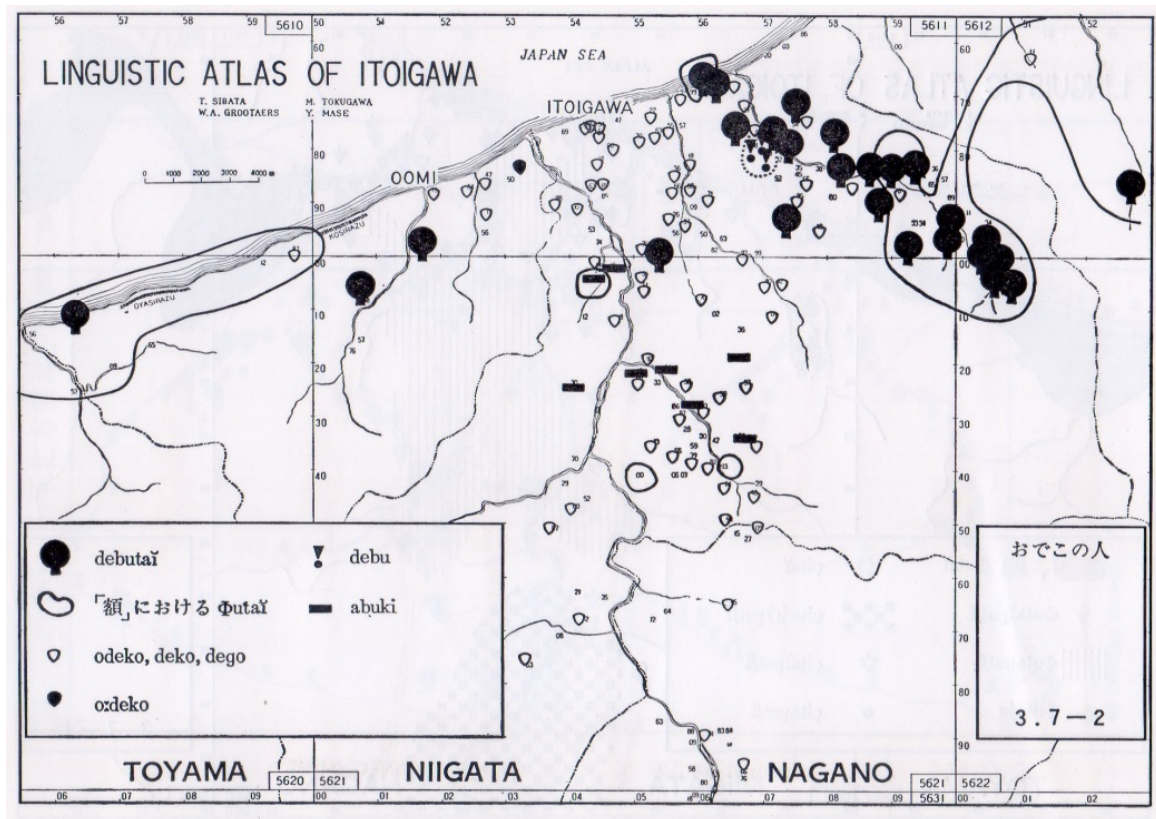


Figure 7. LAI *Odeko no hito* "a person with a high forehead"

Figure 8 shows the area where  $\phi u-$  is not found in three linguistics maps using isoglosses. The area is located not only in the south but also in downtown Itoigawa. In the first case, the words from Nagano Prefecture are spreading, but in the latter case, standardized forms are spreading.

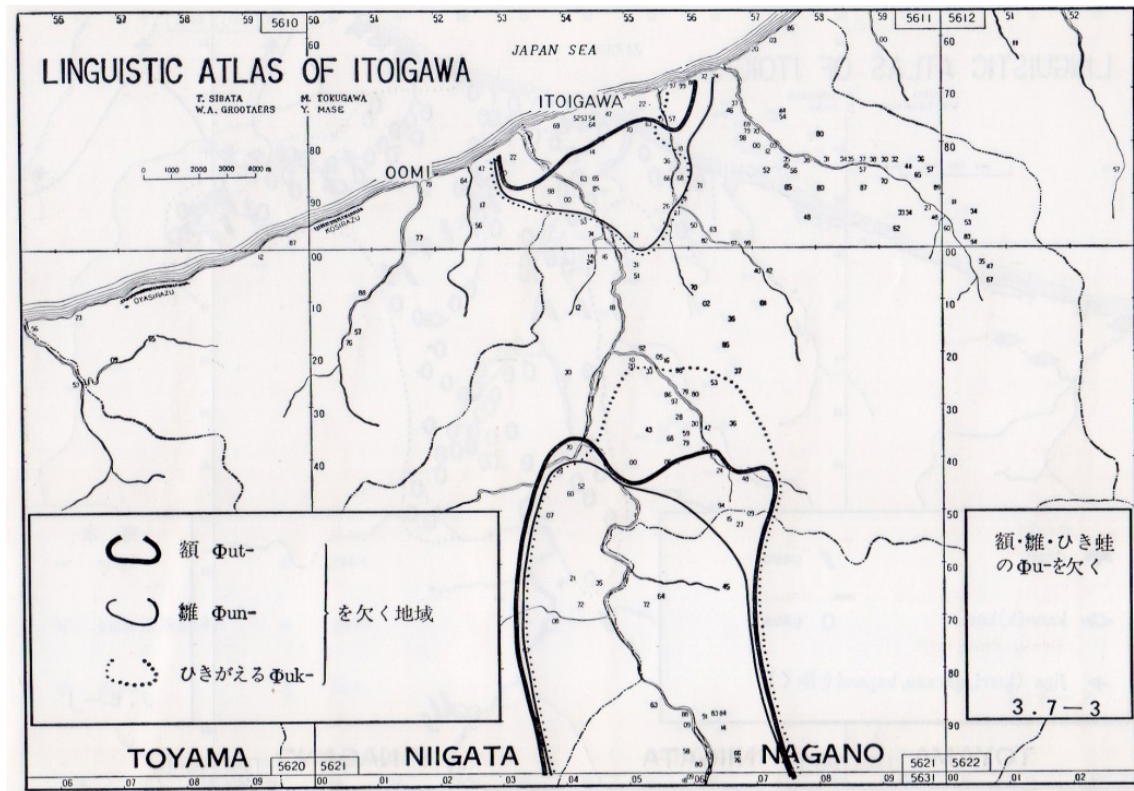


Figure 8. LAI the area where  $\phi u$ - is not found

Sibata also argued that linguistic maps must be verifiable, so his life work, *Linguistic Atlas of Itoigawa*, included not only linguistic maps and interpretations but also the original data list so that anyone can reanalyze the data for verification. In addition, Sibata adopted a statistical method or dialectometry to grasp the network of localities as early as 1987 (Sibata & Kumagai 1987). These are the factors that prove Sibata's methods are "scientific."

#### 4.2 Humanistic approach to linguistic geography

Let me describe why Sibata's methods are "humanistic". First, the questionnaire included "Face Sheet (FS)" questions about informants' personal history or background. They were used to interpret any deviations in the map. One informant's language develops based on the input from people around: that means parents' birthplace or the informant's schooling and job might affect the language. The divergence of input is reflected in the output.

Also, social factors might work. Thus the questionnaire included questions about where to do special shopping for wedding or everyday shopping, where brides come from, etc. When we surveyed forty years ago, this method worked, but it seems the method is not working nowadays because spouses might not come from nearby villages and people drive cars to distant supermarkets for shopping. However, information on local history, traffic routes, etc. is still useful.

Sibata often used informants' comments on words to interpret linguistic maps. One type of comments is that specific words are new, old, good, standard, etc. Such information is useful for interpretation because they show informants' attitude to the word. The other type is about the etymology of the word. People often guess the meaning of a non-transparent word and remake the word. This is called "folk etymology" and it is valuable as a driving force for innovation.

## **5. Dialectology and sociolinguistics in Japan**

Dialectology (especially linguistic geography) in Japan thrived in 1970s and hundreds of surveys with different sizes were conducted throughout Japan. Approximately 30,000 linguistics maps and 1,000 academic papers were produced (Onishi 2017: 8). At the time innovative methods were applied. For example, maps were produced using personal computers, statistical approach was applied, and perceptual dialectology started. Recently, geolinguistic database is open to the public, which means the study is verifiable by anyone. Also, the software which makes use of GIS (Geographical Information System) is now available.

Two more nation-wide linguistic atlases were added after LAJ: one is *Grammar Atlas of Japanese Dialects* (GAJ) (published in 1987-2006) and *New Linguistic Atlas of Japan* (NLJ) (Onishi, ed. 2016), which was based on the FPJD survey (FPJD: Field Research Project of Japanese Dialects).

Sociolinguistics started to revive in 1980s in Japan while the study of "language life" had started in 1940s. Sibata published an anthology of his sociolinguistic works

from 1940s to 1970s in Japanese (Sibata 1978), and the anthology translated in English was published later (Sibata 1998).

## 5. Conclusion

Sibata's Philosophy in sociolinguistics and dialectology are described as follows. He focused on *la parole* as well as *la langue* since he believed language differs from person to person. He studied dialects as an object of linguistics as a science to examine human nature through the study of dialects. He often attended international conferences and addressed the outcomes to international scholars.

His concern on language is not limited to Japanese and his methods and theory is universal. Thus he paved the way towards interlingual dialectology. Sibata's disciples and followers have been involved in geolinguistics not only in Japanese but also in various languages, applying his method. For example, Fumio Inoue and Chitsuko Fukushima were involved in the analysis of English dialects and the results were published as part of appendices to *The Computer Developed Linguistic Atlas of England (CLAE) 2* (Fukushima 1997, Inoue & Fukushima 1997). Yumi Nakajima has been involved in the geolinguistic research of Southeast Slavic languages, Rei Iwata in Chinese dialects, and Rei Fukui in Korean dialects. Mitsuaki Endo has been leading a project making the *Linguistic Atlas of Asia* with a group of Japanese scholars who specialize Uralic, Tungusic, Mongolic, Turkic, Nivh, Ainu, Japanese, Korean, Chinese, Hmong-Mien, Tai-Kadai, Austroasiatic, Tibeto-Burman, Austronesian, Arabic etc.

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