

Current Trends in Japanese Community Currencies Viewed in a Map










Rui, IZUMI

September 14, 2002

1. Distribution Map of Community Currencies (As of April, 2002)

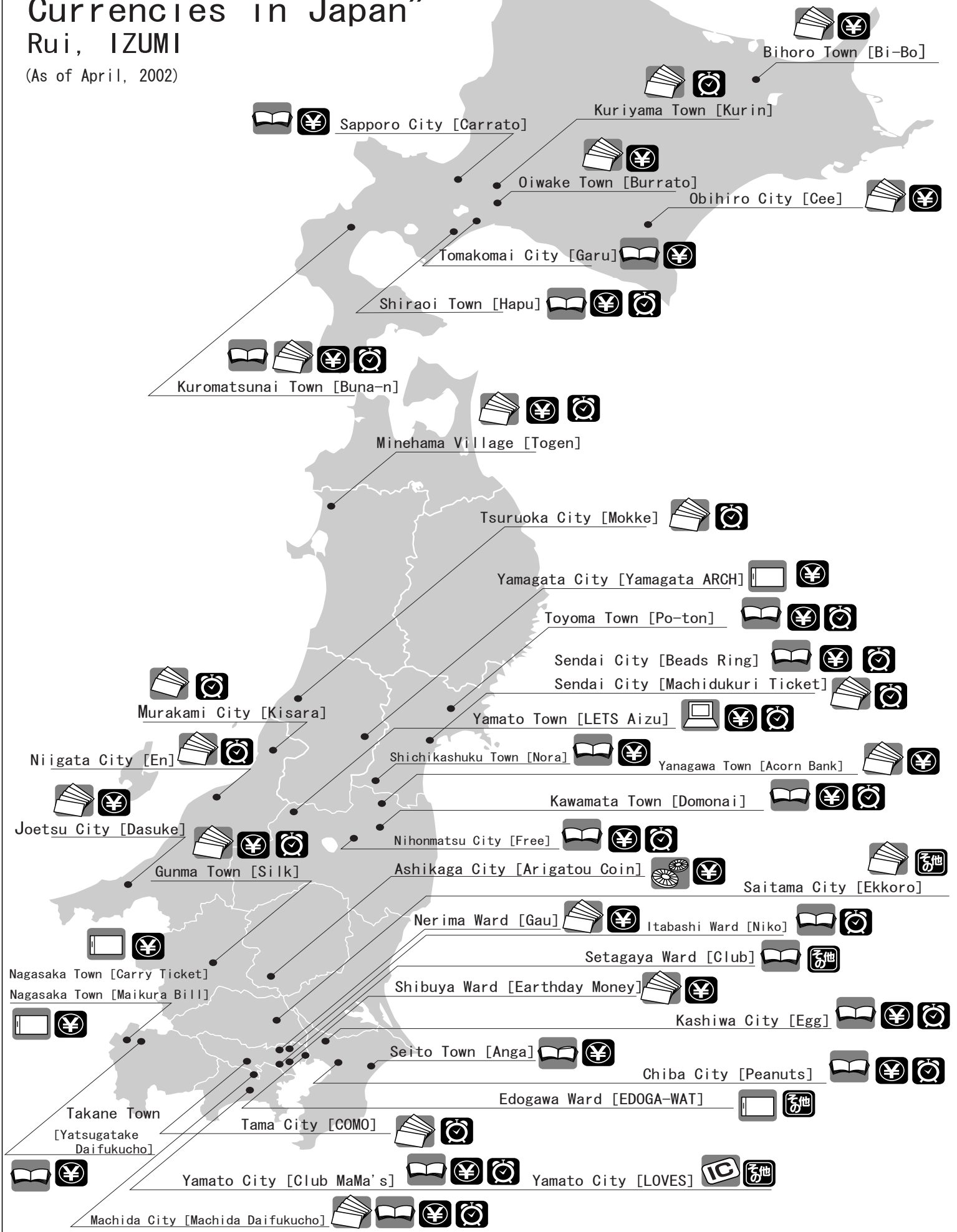
Source: Rui Izumi, "Trends in Community Currencies in Japan", *Self-Government Research Monthly*, Vol.44, No.511 (2002): 47-56.

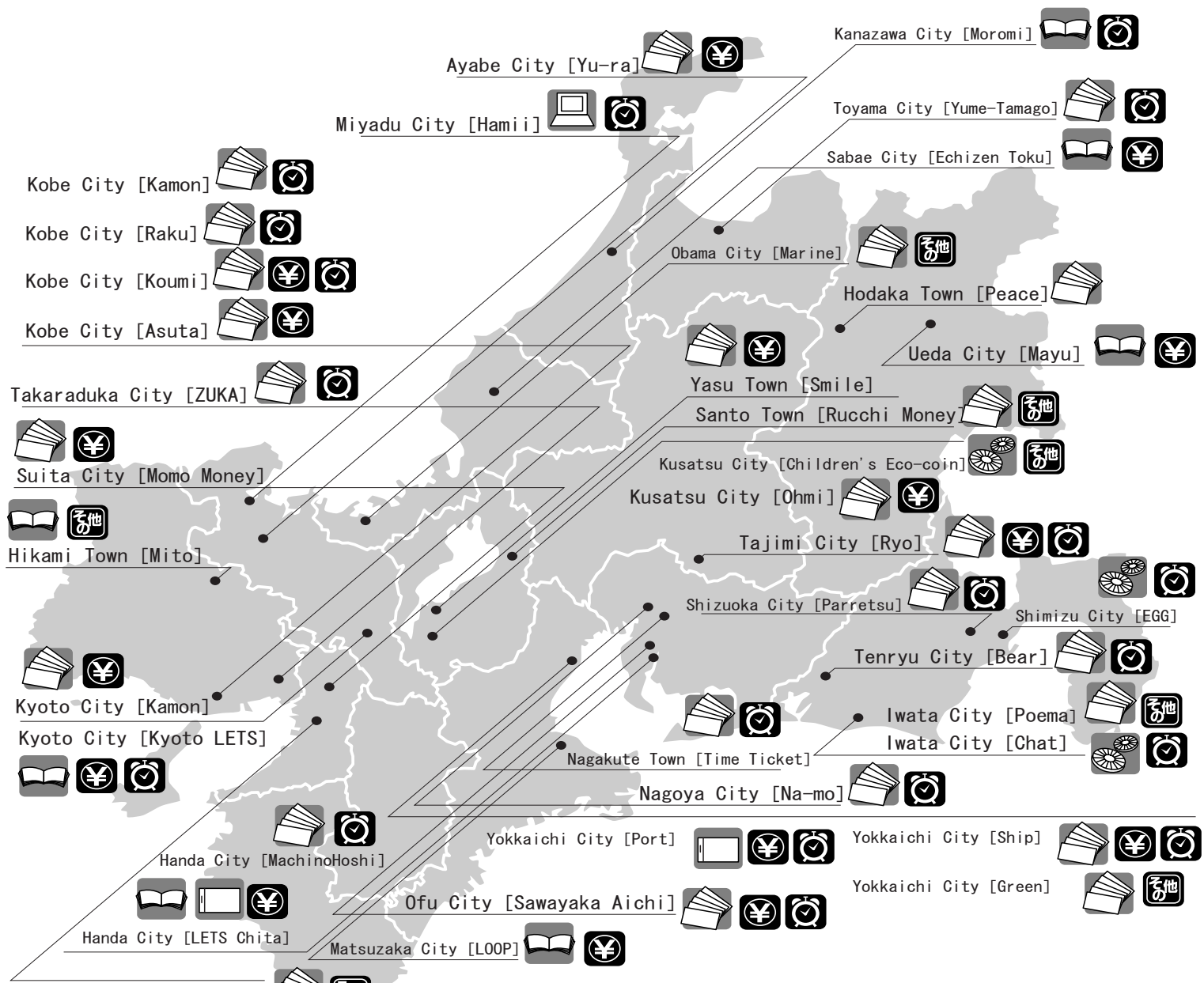
Description of Symbols Used in the Map


- Coupon system : This system uses coupons to make payments for things like donations or voluntary work. The issuers are the operating offices.
- Book system : This system uses books to make transactions with plus or minus points recorded on both sides. The issuers are individuals.
- Due Bill system : This system uses due bills to make payments by issuing them with the issuer's name signed on them, or endorsing already-issued bills. Just like drafts, blank due bills have no value. The issuers are individuals.
- Chip system : Though quite similar to the Coupon system, this system differs in that it uses chips of metal, wood, ceramic, etc. instead of coupons. The issuers are the operating offices.
- Online system : This system uses computers linked by the Internet to make transactions with plus or minus points recorded on both sides. The issuers are individuals or operating offices.
- IC Card system : This system uses terminals at public facilities or shops to make transactions. IC cards, owned by individuals, record transaction data as plus or minus points and update it through the terminals. The issuers are usually individuals.
- Time-based system : This system uses time as the unit to measure the values of transactions; for example, an hour can be counted as one point.
- Yen-based system : This system uses yen as the unit to measure the values of transactions; for example, one GREEN is worth about 100 yen.
- Other systems : There are systems using energy, goods, or the number of transactions to measure the values, such as WAT (a unit used by a citizen-owned power plant group, worth 1 kw/h of generated electricity), CHARCOAL (a unit worth 1 gram of charcoal), and EKKORO (a unit worth one transaction).


"Trends in Community Currencies in Japan"


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(As of April, 2002)








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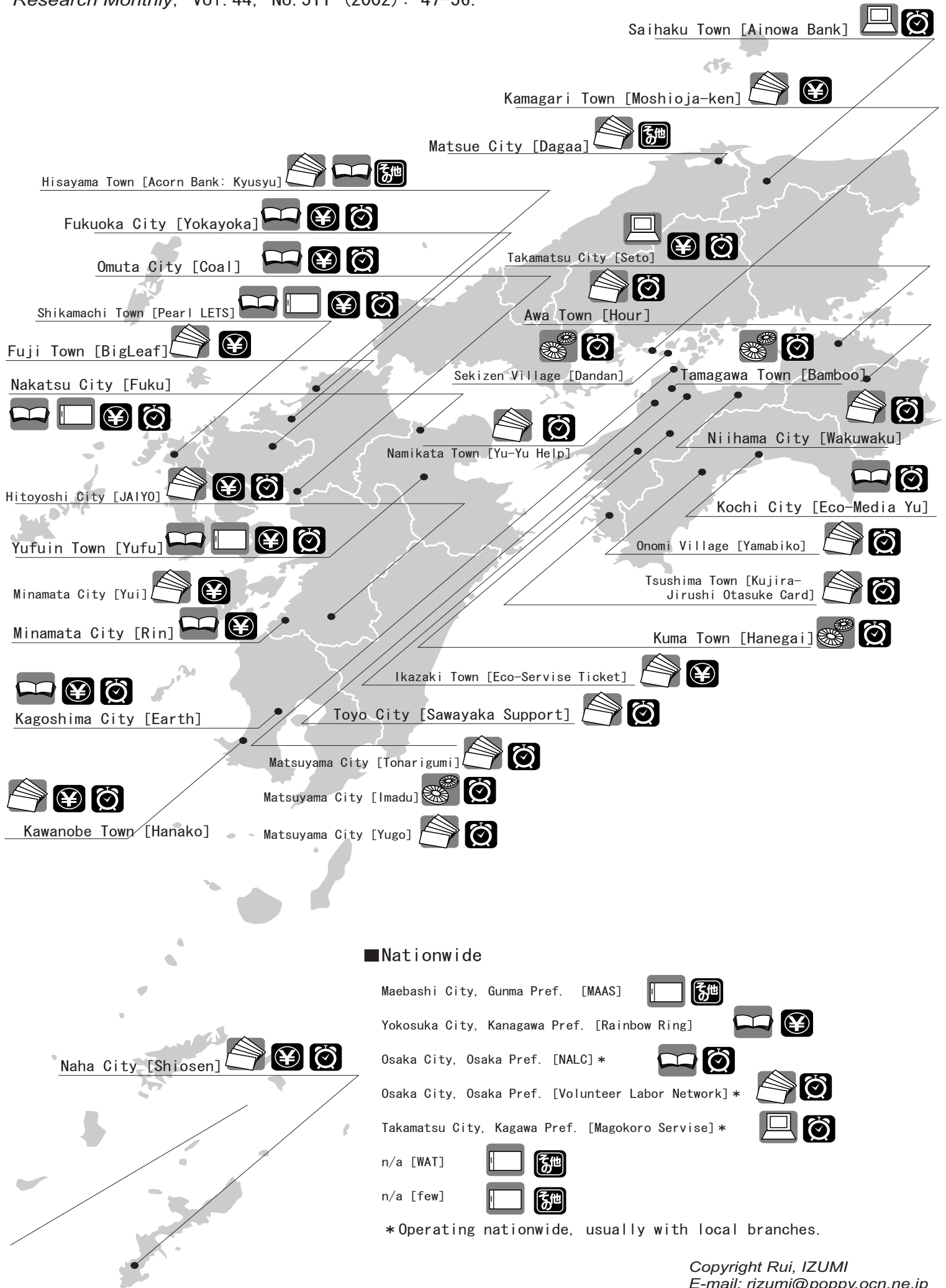
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■ Nationwide

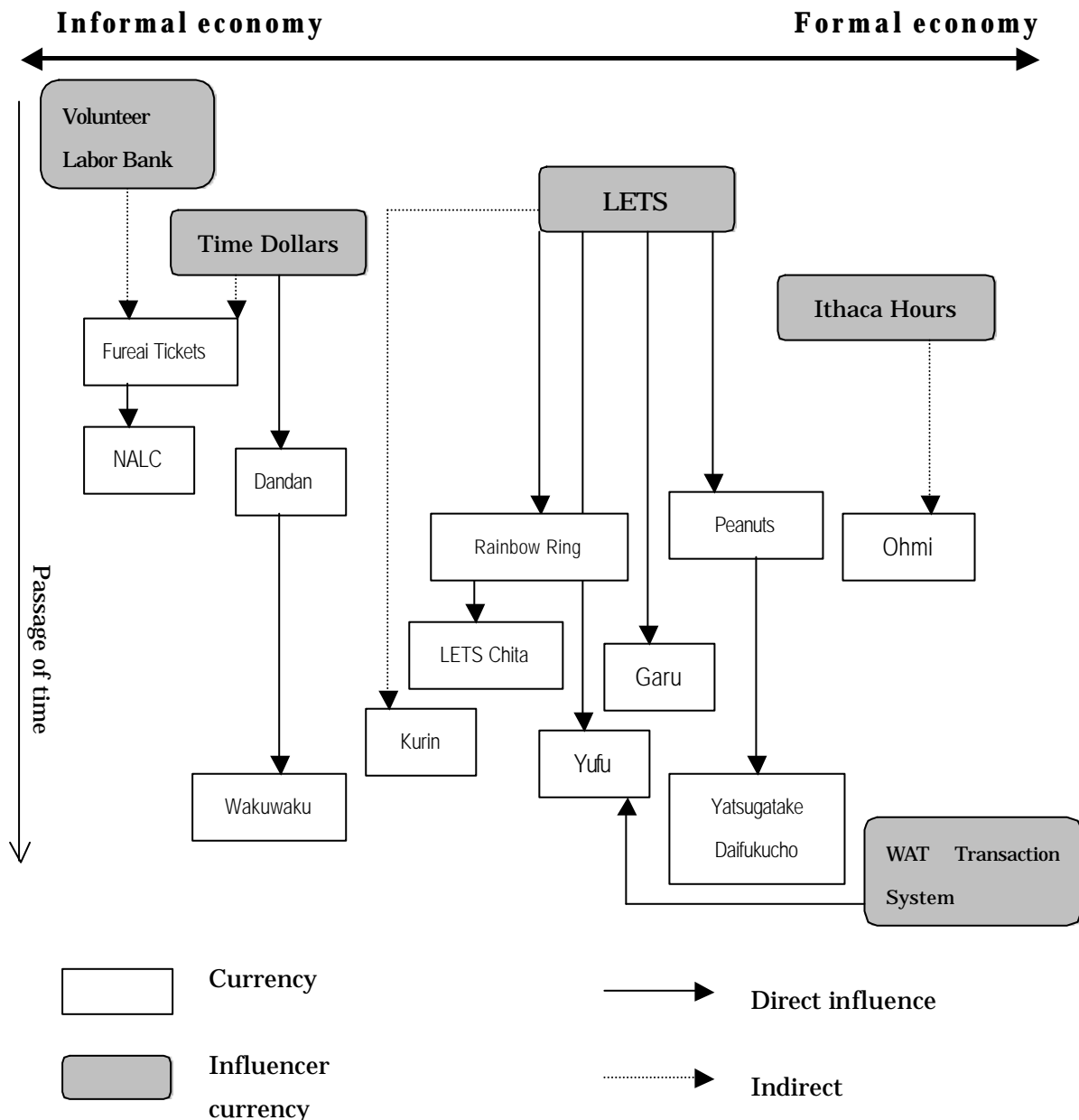
- Maebashi City, Gunma Pref. [MAAS]
- Yokosuka City, Kanagawa Pref. [Rainbow Ring]
- Osaka City, Osaka Pref. [NALC] *
- Osaka City, Osaka Pref. [Volunteer Labor Network] *
- Takamatsu City, Kagawa Pref. [Magokoro Servise] *
- n/a [WAT]
- n/a [few]

* Operating nationwide, usually with local branches.

2. Major Developments in Japanese Community Currencies

Source: Rui Izumi. "The Role of Community Currencies and the Development in Japan", *The Nonprofit Review*, Vol.1, No.2 (2001): 151-162.

Fig.1: Major Developments in Japanese Community Currencies



Influenced by overseas activities in 1980s, movements to introduce community currencies have been gaining in popularity in Japan since around 1999. The systems' designs are based on the foreign counterparts.

Figure 1 shows the developments of community currencies in Japan. The horizontal axis shows the economic areas where community currencies work, and the vertical axis shows the

points of time. Table 1 gives details of major Japanese community currencies including foundation dates.

Table 1: Major Japanese Community Currencies

Name	Location	Active Area	Foundation Date	System Type	Membership Fee	Unit of Account	Number of Members
Garu	Tomakomai City	Tomakomai and its surrounding area	March 2000	Account (Book)	Yes	1 garu=About 10 yen	70 individuals
Kurin (Third Experiment)	Kuriyama Town, Hokkaido	Kuriyama Town	Sept. 2001	Coupon (3 types)	No	1,000 kurin =60 minutes, 500 kurin = 30 minutes, 100 kurin = any value	570 individuals
Peanuts	Chiba City	Chiba Prefecture (Including non-Chiba residents)	Feb. 1999	Account (Book)	No	1 pea = 1 yen, 1 hour's work = 1,000 pea	560 individuals, 23 shops, 13 farms, 2 welfare facilities
COMO	Tama City	Tama Newtown and its surrounding area	June 2000	Coupon (3 types)	Yes	About 1,000 COMO for 1 hour's work	99 individuals
Yatsugatake Daifukucho	Takane Town, Yamanashi Prefecture	Southern foot of Yatsugatake Mountain	May 2000	Account (Book)	Yes	1 fuku = 1 yen	90 families, 12 shops
LETS Chita	Handa City, Aichi Prefecture	Chita Peninsula	April 2000	Account and due bill	Yes	1 C = 1 yen	70 individuals
Ohmi	Kusatsu City, Shiga Prefecture	Kusatsu City	May 1999	Coupon (2 types)	No	1 ohmi = about 100 yen, about 90 minutes' work = 10 ohmi	About 200 individuals, 1 shop, 1 company
Wakuwaku	Niihama City, Ehime Prefecture	Ohshima, Niihama City	May 2000	Coupon	Yes	1 point (wakuwaku) = 1 hour's work	70 individuals
Dandan	Sekizen Village, Ehime Prefecture	Sekizen Village	July 1995	Coupon	Yes	1 point (dandan) = 30 minutes' work	70 individuals
Yufu	Yufuin Town, Ohita Prefecture	Yufuin Town	April 2000	Account and due bill	Yes	1 yufu = about 10 minutes' work= about 100 yen	80 individuals, 17 shops
WAT Transaction System	n/a	Nationwide	Aug. 2000	Due bill	No	1 WAT = 1 kw/h of Citizen-owned powerplant = about 100 yen	Unmeasurable due to system structure
Rainbow Ring	Yokosuka City	Nationwide	Oct 1999	Account (Book)	Yes	1 R = about 1 yen	200 individuals, 14 shops

(As of August, 2002)

3. Overview of Japanese Community Currencies

Source: Rui Izumi, "Objectives and Systems of Community Currencies", *The Quarterly Journal of Future Management*, vol.7 (2002): 34-41.

As of August 2002, there are already 134 community currencies in Japan. Table 2 and 3 give a summary of a survey done by the author, including system type, unit of account and size. The survey was conducted through interviews, and e-mail inquiries. According to this survey, 52 % of community currencies use coupons, 24 % record transactions in books, and a few others use the Internet, chips, or due bills. Compared with Britain, Australia, and New Zealand, where most of their community currencies are based on LETS, Japan has a wide variety of currency types as shown in the tables. The fact that various currency types were introduced and spread nationwide almost simultaneously is one of the main characteristics of Japanese community currency activities.

Table 2: System Types and Units of Account of Community Currencies

System Type Unit of Account	Account System			Coupon System		Due-bill System	Multiple System	Total
	Book	Internet (Online)	IC card	Coupon	Chip	Due Bill	Multiple Systems Used**	
Time-based	8	3	0	24	6	0	0	41
Yen-based	9	0	0	26	1	5	3	44
Time- and Yen-based	13	2	0	12	0	2	5	34
Transaction-based*	1	0	0	3	0	1	0	5
Others	1	0	1	5	1	2	0	10
Total	32	5	1	70	8	10	8	134

* For example, one coupon is supposed to be issued for one transaction of goods or service.

** Most of the systems use both of books and due bills.

More than half of the community currencies are small, with less than 100 individual members. Of the five organizations with 1,000 members and over, three are operating nationwide, usually with local branches consisting of tens or hundreds of members each. Between the size and the business members' participation, a positive correlation can be seen constantly for currencies with 100 members and over. Most of the currencies that have less than 100

members and have no business members are categorized into the “book and time-based” or the “coupon and time-based” type in Table 2; this suggests that their organizations seek to maintain and enhance the cohesion and solidarity in their communities.

Table 3: Size and Business Members' Participation

	Less than 100 Members	100-999 Members	1,000 Members and More	N/a.	Unmeasurable*	Total
Business Members Participated	35	21	3	12	9	80
No Business Members	35	8	2	9	0	54
Total	70	29	5	21	9	134

*Community currencies using coupons or due bills unofficially allow non-members to use them, making it difficult to measure the actual number of participants especially if the system has a large number of business members, or it offers easy access to the currencies.

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