

The Demise of A Critical Institution of Economic Geography in Japan

Fujio MIZUOKA
Graduate School of Economics, Hitotsubashi University, Tokyo 186-8601, Japan
E-mail: fmizuoka@econgeog.misc.hit-u.ac.jp



I. Japanese Critical Geography: The Heritage for Seven Decades

Surprising as it sounds to those who know little about the history of geographic thoughts in Japan, critical geography, with history of less than a generation in the English-speaking countries, has heritage that lasted for seven decades in Japan.

The crises in capitalism have often triggered critical approach in the academics. It was the Vietnam War in North America, and the Great Depression of 1929-30 in Japan. Amidst the wagging militarism and oppression on the academic freedom, Marxism attained its zenith in Japan in the 1930s, marked by the completion of the first full Japanese translation of *Capital*, and publication of *Nihon Shihonshugi Hattatsushi Koza* [A Seminar on Historical Development of Japanese Capitalism], which was a comprehensive Marxian analysis of the structure of pre-war Japanese economy that later became seminal. This gave impetus to the translation of a couple of geography books published in the Soviet Union and Germany. The Stalinist influence was obvious there, in its sweeping disavowal of geographical determinism, which was regarded by the communist regime then as one of the major ideological impediments to the 'remodelling of nature' and space. It nevertheless gave a decisive kick-off to the Japanese critical geographers.

Masakane Kawanishi was one of the leading figures. He translated Wittfogel's main work on *dialektische Wechselwirkungstheorie* (1929), which was adopted by the critical camp in Japan as the basic frame of reference to until it was criticised after the war by

Kawashima (1952). Yet, Kawanishi's conception in human-nature relationship was lopsided towards labour process, neglecting the other indispensable element: the process of value and valorisation. This weakness of Kawanishi was carried on into his new research agenda: critical appraisal of the location theories. Kawanishi's alternative treatment of location theory covered two aspects: the interpretation of industrial production as labour process, and examination of variegated locational dynamism at different stages of the capitalist development (Kawanishi, 1936). Here, Kawanishi again left out the valorisation process, and put lopsided emphasis on technological aspects.

As Japan got involved deeper into World War II, this conceptual weakness degenerated into his attempt to legitimise the Japanese militarist expansion 'academically', in drawing upon the notion of geopolitics (Kawanishi 1942), the Japanese military predominance over the Asia-Pacific, through propagation of the 'Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (*Dai Toa Kyoei Ken*)' conception. He thus became the first victim of once-critical economic geographer who yielded into support of the state apparatus. Indeed, 'the history of geography clearly reflects the evolution of empire' (Godlewska and Smith eds., 1994: p. 2), and the theoretically weak critical geography was of no exception.

II. Foundation of the Critical Institution of Economic Geography: the Japan Association of Economic Geographers (JAEG)

The position of the conventional geography immediately after the war was best manifested in the presidential address of the Association of Japanese Geographers (AJG), the national school of geography in Japan, in its annual meeting of 1948: 'the warfare has always enriched the geographical knowledge', yet the Japan's defeat in WWII shattered the dream, bringing the Japanese geographers back into the state land planning projects (Tsuji-mura, 1948). The *Geographical Review of Japan* (*Chirigaku Hyoron*, *GRJ* hereafter), the official journal of AJG, boasted, 'geography has gradually been recognised as a practical science among many walks in life, as manifested in its making inroad to the government sector' (*GRJ*, 21-4,5,6, 1948).

It was in this academic and social ambience the critically-oriented Japanese geographers poised for organising a group aiming at 'geography as a social science' or consolidation of geographers in the critical stream, in pursuit of the academic veracity instead of fawning upon the state apparatus; and of dedication towards social change

instead of flattering to the existing authority. This would perhaps be the first attempt to establish a 'counter geography institution', as the antithesis of the national school that ever took place on the globe. It initially took the forms of 'Geography Study Group' and the 'Association for the Geological Collaboration', both were organised as the divisions of the Association of Democratic Scientists, a movement that was then tacitly placed under influence of the Japan Communist Party, which have endorsed many of the critical economic geographers with the political orthodoxy. These critical geographers 'turned their back on the existing authority and order, and ... struggled to reform the AJG by means of the election campaign of its councillors; while they simultaneously poised themselves for foundation of the Japan Association of Economic Geographers' (Kazamaki, 1998: p. 72).

At the autumnal AJG meeting of 1951, these critical geographers hosted a roundtable titled 'human geography as a social science'. Isida (1952), who once put forward that geography should have 'nomothetic nature as one of the social sciences', chaired the session. He claimed that, in conducting the research of geography, 'theories of general social science have to be assumed', and took explicit position against exceptionalism, in stating, 'enumerating the facts from field surveys or descriptive regional geography does not in itself belong to the category of "research" in social sciences'. This torrent further strengthened into establishing the Economic Geography Forum, then the Economic Geography Study Group, and ultimately into the Japan Association of Economic Geographers (JAEG, *Keizai Chiri Gakkai*) in 1954. Here, the term 'economic geography' was adopted apparently as the surrogate for critical or Marxist geography, to make more 'palatable' to the general public.

Hiroshi Sato, the professor of economic geography at Hitotsubashi University and later assumed the first presidency of the JAEG, proclaimed its objective as follows:

We hereby establish the Japan Association of Economic Geographers, in a hope to create, develop and propagate economic geography as a social science, by means of elaborating the theory of economic geography as well as of conducting researches on real issues of economic geography, with scope expanded and research outcomes incorporated without regard of the pigeon-hole of the discipline, through collaboration organised by the members engaging in free and lively criticism (JAEG, 'General Index').

The themes of first four meetings were, in chronological order, 'on Economic Geography', 'on Regions', 'the Fundamental Problems of Economic Geography' and 'Agriculture and Industry or the Urban - Rural Interregional Relationships'. The inaugural issue of the journal of JAEG, *The Annals of the Japan Association of Economic Geographers (Keizai Chirigaku Nempo, AAEG hereafter)* published in 1954 contained

following articles: 'Materialism and Geography', 'The Methodological Development of the Analysis of Industrial Area: as a Process to Recognise the Problematic from the Critical Economic Geography', 'Allocation of Agricultural Productive Force in the Soviet Union', 'Measuring Transport Orientation of Industrial Location based on Virtual Weight Calculation Method' and 'Location of Electro-chemical Industry'. The review therein was on a book published in the People's Republic of China about stock farming. The strong critical, theoretical inclination and interest in the socialist countries among the JAEG members at the early stage of JAEG was clear.

The second issue contained a paper of Kawashima that later became seminal. He set up a new agenda of economic geography to discover the nomothetic law on 'spatial distribution of economic phenomena and the localities' and their development and demise' (Kawashima, 1955: p. 9), while he turned down the neo-classical approach in explaining this in his favour of historical materialism, by claiming (pp. 11-12):

an attempt to explain the production of regional economic structure drawing upon the law of marginal productivity equilibration is as much empty and nonsense as the claim that 'it is nothing but competition based on liberalist principle that produces regional economic structure'. In explaining the production of regional economic structures, it is self-evident whether economic geography should pursue along the line of a sort of abstract principle as it were of management technique or more realistic law of social and economic theories.

In conclusion, he proclaimed (p. 17) in reminiscent even of the *Communist Manifesto*, 'both overcoming the localities and transcendence of the classes are the major targets that the humans must and can achieve. The most fundamental task of economic geography is to identify the relation between these two intertwined targets [= the localities and classes].'

The same issue contained another article that was more philosophically oriented (Okuda, 1955). It attempted an 'ontological discourse of the dialectical world as the object of science in general', and postulated several propositions, which he later synthesised these into a book conceptualising his critical geography (1969).

III. The Progress of Critical Geography in Japan in the 1950s and 60s

Having founded the JAEG, and the new agenda set, the critical geographers got a fresh institutional stage for propagating the critical line vigorously in *AAEG* and in *GRJ*.

The 1956 issue of *AAEG* published two articles (Akamine, 1956; and Sato, 1956)

reviewing the heritage of critical geographical thoughts in Japan. Ohara (1957) studied the development and demise of an old cotton town: Lowell, Massachusetts, with historical materialist perspective with environmental conception incorporated.

Reform of the national school and its journal, *GRJ* was another front of struggle for the criticals. Kamozaawa (1954) proclaimed in *GRJ*, 'upon the gradual transition from socialism to communism, the Soviet academic circle, in drawing upon the epoch-making paper of Stalin, achieved to publish the papers that promote economic geography further'; and asked the Japanese geographers to 'study the paper of Stalin thoroughly'. Another review by Watanabe praised the 'rapid development' of production and 'diversification' of productive forces in Estonia through the inroad of Russian-managed industrial plant (Watanabe, 1955), which, as we all aware by now, took place as a result of Estonia's forcible annexation to the USSR by Stalin under the infamous secret pact with Hitler. The practise of critical geography in Japan then was thus much infested by the dogmatic Stalinism, rather than the conceptions of ethnicity, minority or question of democracy in socialism, topics common among western critical geographers a generation after. In the Stalinist party principle, only one party legitimately claims itself to be the political orthodoxy, structured along the monolithic principle of 'democratic centralism', and the 'great leader' ultimately commands the affairs of all the social movements, and retains his (no 'her' so far) office until his death. The homology of this monolithic party principle had gradually been penetrated into the organisational structure of geographers practising critical geography then.

With these weaknesses remaining, attack upon the AJG from the critical camp continued. In *GRJ*, Kamozaawa (1955) condemned a paper on 'the population centre of gravity', as having abstracted social relations away and ignored unemployment in 'the population', thereby 'leaving out the historical and social natures' of it. Yet, this kind of criticism was as easy and superficial as exceptionalist practise of conventional geography. The hardest territory lay beyond: the creation of the theory of critical geography's own, which the Japanese critical geographers then rarely ventured into (Mizuoka, 1996).

With original critical theories of any sorts lacking, the practise of economic geographers then gradually canalised into exceptionalism, which was explicitly endorsed by some influential advocates of critical economic geography. Ohara (1950) emphasised the descriptive nature of geography, while denouncing location theory as a core of the discipline. Iizuka, another contemporary, also claimed, 'the function of geography lies by definition in the descriptive or regional aspect' (Iizuka, 1952: 117).

A case in point was the study on the disaster and natural resources. Disaster by nature having strong association with physical environment, and the capitalist

development of power sources and deforestation having often affected adversely to the livelihood of the poor as opposed to the rich, disaster study was an apt agenda for critical geographers in pursuit of social relevance. The critical geographers drew upon the common conception among contemporary critical civil engineers, who were under Maoist influence valuing the traditional wisdoms of the local peasants highly in disaster prevention as opposed to that of the Western technologies. Akamine (1960) and Ishii (1960), for example, praised the traditional flood prevention technology of Japan while condemning the modern river management technology to block flood with high dikes.

The studies on developing countries were another case in point. Many existing paradigms and preceding researches done by non-geographers had been readily available; and the application of existing framework, the dependency theory *inter alia*, was capable of producing research in more or less critical flavour, which normally put blame on the dominating imperialist power and gave support to the oppressed ethnic groups and the poor. The *AAEG* published articles by Kamozaawa (1957) on Turkey and Central America, Koga (1957) on India and Oiwakawa (1964) on Palestine.

Other approaches made by Japanese critical geographers at that time included the study of industrial geography with emphasis on the management and labour relations, and study of historical geography with the concepts of historical materialism and modes of production on their base.

While the papers with critical orientation became numerous, the conceptual gap between the abstract theories of social science and the idiosyncratic and exceptionalist research of geographers remained unfilled. *A Lecture Notebook of Economic Geography* (Kamozaawa, 1960), which later became seminal, manifested this nature of critical geography in Japan in the 1950s. The original plan of this book had been outlined in the *AAEG* (1955) five years before. In this book, Kamozaawa claimed (pp. 15-16) that critical economic geographers were to 'borrow' theories from other social sciences, then to apply them to the idiosyncratic field studies. He thus explicitly endorsed the 'passive consumption' of aspatial conceptions of social science in research practise of critical geographers. This book consolidated the exceptionalism even harder among the critical researches of geography in Japan.

Nevertheless, there emerged several remarkable attempts to break away from this exceptionalist trend in the second half of the 1960s. These critical geographers, if not many in number, strove for positive theoretical contributions that were unique to critical geography. Indeed, this brief period lasting for less than a decade could be regarded as the time when the critical economic geography in Japan enjoyed its heyday, and Japanese critical economic geographers took the lead (perhaps along with its French counterpart)

of all the geographers on the globe striving along the critical line.

A series of articles published by the more creative criticals appeared in the 1966 volume of *GRJ*. They attempted to establish contextual conceptions on the society-space or space-place interfaces, the agenda common among the critical geographers in the English speaking countries decades later. Ota (1966) demonstrated a general national – local interface in his analysis of a locality in Shizuoka Prefecture being subsumed into the national industrial space. Okuyama (1966) studied the effect of pre-capitalist legacy embedded in the local capitalism through the analysis of the reification of feudal lord domination over the common land in the process of transformation of the relations of production from serfdom to capitalist management at a larger spatial scale. In the presidential address of the AJG (1966), Isida demonstrated how variety of social relations had created variegated understanding of space and concomitant differences in geographical knowledge (chorography). Atsuhiko Takeuchi (1966) analysed the cause for stagnation of Northern Kyushu industrial area and attributed to the lack of subcontractors that failed to create a cluster of industries. Moritaki (1966) studied the class-cum-spatial conflict that arose as the capitalism subsumed river, a natural substance. Two years later, Fujita (1971) demonstrated the role that the grass-root independent farmers had played in preventing larger forest tracts from being expropriated by the state apparatus.

Nevertheless, some other articles that appeared in *GRJ* at this time still remained exceptionalist. Aono (1967), for example, published detailed field studies of textile industry in Osaka, with radical words as ‘monopoly capital’, ‘union-management co-operation under the social-democratic line’ thrown in, with little spatial import.

By this time, wane of the critical position in the JAEG camp at large had already been noticed among more conscious economic geographers taking clearer Marxist line. Moritaki (1966: 15) expressed his concern as follows:

... some ‘Marxist’ economic geographers assume that economic geography must be a branch of ‘theoretical’ social science, omitting all phases immediately concerned with the natural environment from the study content. They try to reduce the field of economic geography even by arbitrary ‘co-operation’ with various schools based on capitalistic economies. Such tendencies deserve criticism as involving an unscientific distortion of the nature of economic geography.

This criticism targeted, firstly, to some geographers in the JAEG camp who had been trying to make compromise between Marxism and the neo-classical location theories; and secondly to the position which attempted to throw away human-nature relationship from the agenda of critical geography in favour of the ‘concept of region’.

Noboru Ueno, the author of *the Milestone of Economic Geography* (1968), wrote *The Ultimate Origin of Chorography* (1972) and responded Moritaki with the ultimate of the acumen of critical economic geography in Japan perhaps since its inception. This book attempted to integrate Marxist and humanistic approaches into one theoretical frame of critical geography, to explain the notorious Minamata region, polluted heavily by Chisso Corporation with organic mercury. Ueno's point was to interpret the concept of 'socially-made environment' (*or* produced nature) analogously with the fetishism of commodities in Volume I of *Capital*. In drawing upon the interpretations of Heideggerian phenomenology by two Japanese philosophers, Watsuji and Hiromatsu (1969), Ueno attempted to explain something objective as intersubjective, in interpreting the produced nature. Ueno (p. 127) claimed, 'Marx himself interpreted environment as *in-der-Gesellschaft-sein* or reification of social relations'. Based on this conception, Ueno constructed his own logic of the 'socially-produced environment' as follows:

The environment is in itself of dual nature: the use-value, having utility for humans' daily life within which production and living are conducted; and simultaneously the value, in the sense that environment is the fruit of production or reification of socially necessary labour. It is the value aspect of environment that reifies the relations of production, which results in the most degraded environment relegated to the minimum of human existence.... This reality of contradiction forms the core of [Marxian] environmental theory, within which the contradictions of society come to manifest themselves (p. 129).

Ueno further stated that the above general process took on various manifestations depending on the historical contingency, ethnic characteristics or physical conditions of the localities, of which variations could be explained in part with Marxian rent theory. This local diversity would then develop into heterogeneously localised groups with own identities. The heterogeneous 'localised human groups' assumed their own 'intersubjective behavioural patterns' (p. 154). The task of the 'Marxian chorography' as defined by Ueno was to study the relationship between these 'localised human groups' and the 'socially-produced environment'; and how a 'localised groups in turn embed unique localities' that are manifested in regionalized groups. The Shiranui Bay of Minamata, for example, once intimate environment of the local fishers, tightly entangled in them even to a part of their body, had suddenly transformed itself into hostile space contaminated with waste containing organic mercury emitted from Chisso Corporation. Faced with this situation, the local fishing people looked upon Shiranui Bay intersubjectively as alienating, which eventually triggered their struggle against the polluter.

Recall that the above excerpt were taken neither from a recent issue of *Society and Space* nor of *Antipode*. They are from a book written by a Japanese critical geographer in

1972 -- a year before the appearance of Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* (1973), totally independent of the discourses of the critical geographers in the West.

While the English-speaking countries had just started off its trajectory of developing critical geography with publication of the inaugural issue of *Antipode* in 1969, its counterpart in Japan at that time had demonstrated creativity that paralleled critical geography of the west decades later. Aoki (1961), who served the fourth presidency of JAEF, had claimed that economic geography in Japan 'has attained the highest standard among Marxist geographies in the world'. Considering these attainment, Japanese critical geographers until 1972 indeed deserved this laurel.

IV. The Divide: the Year 1973 and After

The year 1973 marked the turning point of critical geography, both in English-speaking countries and Japan, in ways very contrasting to one another. The Japanese counterpart of Harvey's *Social Justice and the City* was Toshifumi Yada's paper titled 'On Economic Geography' (1973).

Yada had originally been a critically-oriented economic geographer specialising in coal-mining studies. He denounced the government policy attempting to rationalise a coal-mining region after inroad of petroleum by the multinationals into Japan, claiming that it was 'to the support to the large enterprises and the omission of small companies' (1967: p.19), and condemned the 'monopoly capital exploiting and abusing domestic resources on the pretext of "regional development" and "urbanisation"'.

In his paper of 1973, later incorporated into *The Regional Structure of Post-war Japanese Capitalism* (Moritaki and Nohara eds., 1975) as its theoretical introduction, Yada condemned past leading critical economic geographers, including Iizuka, Kamozaawa, Kawashima and Ueno, claiming them to be affiliated to 'economic chorography school', which, in Yada's claim, had meddled with describing idiosyncratic localities.

Dominant as the exceptionalism had been among the Japanese critical economic geographers, and some of them (Iizuka and Kamozaawa) had indeed belonged to this category, it was quite doubtful if all of those listed had had consensus in following the same line of practise. Ueno's notable theoretical achievement mentioned above suggested quite contrary. In fact, there had been no such 'school' in terms of real social action among those economic geographers; it was instead merely a straw man that Yada conjured up in order to undermine their influence over those economic geographers of

younger generation. Yada's claim should therefore be taken not as that of serious academic attempt comparable to that of Shaefer's, but as more of a political manoeuvre to establish his own 'school' in the economic geographers' circle in Japan.

The alternative that Yada proposed was what he called 'regional structure theory (*chiiki kozo ron*)', which aimed at identifying relatively autonomous economic regions within the territory of Japan taken as a whole. To work on this agenda, he adopted conceptions similar to the central-place theory and shift-share analysis, tenets that came in better terms with the neo-classical economic geography than with the critical. The Marxist concept of social relation was thus tacitly substituted with spatial relation of nodal region and equilibrium. The defect of the existing social sciences to look solely at aspatial social relations and making light of space, was replaced with another defect, to look solely at spatial relations and making light of the capitalist mode of production itself. It was therefore not possible for this *chiiki kozo ron* to reach research agenda of searching for a dialectical interface of the space and the society, or to claim a legitimate successor of the heritage of critical economic geography that was active until early 1970s.

Claiming this conception to be the leading-edge of economic geography, Yada put a considerable number of economic geographers together, into a research group called '*Chiiki Kozo Kenkyukai*' (The Group for Regional Structure Research), with Kitamura, a conventional industrial geographer, as the figurehead. A score of economic and social geographers of younger generation were lured to the Group, partly due to the 'false consciousness' that emanated out of Yada's political orthodoxy, wherein its 'critical nature' was taken for granted without scrutiny. Nevertheless, with the 'small is beautiful but big is necessary' type of strategy as many conventional geographers as the criticals amassed in the Group, making the *Chiiki Kozo* group more compromising to the conventional practises, which even included exceptionalism. The pursuit for a robust body of critical theories and conceptions of economic geography was thus neglected. It eventually became a faction more of political than of academic among Japanese geographers.

What was unfortunate for the development of saner critical geography was that the 'school' included younger economic geographers who had had interest in practising along more genuine critical line. When critical geography in North America emerged from the stage of empiricism, and moved towards attempt 'to construct a new, philosophical base for human geography' (Peet 1977: p. 20), the Japanese counterpart in fact strayed into a conceptual cul-de-sac. In course of time, Yada himself tacitly converted his political position away from the critical. He began to associate with the conservative government, by actively serving the number of government committees promoting national land development and urbanisation policies. The younger, once critical geographers have

nonetheless stayed loyal to him, largely because of nepotism and collusion involved in the operation of the Group. University positions were offered to the followers, and eventually the faction came to dominate the executive board of the once critical JAEG.

V. The Crisis of Economic Geography in Japan and the Demise of the JAEG

During the two decades of the domination of Yada's school, Japanese economic geography suffered a severe setback. This was manifested by several situations that have taken place lately among the geographers closely associated with the JAEG.

A Japanese translation of the 3rd edition of *Location in Space: Theoretical Perspectives in Economic Geography* appeared in 1997 (Ito *et. al.*). The original book written by Lloyd and Dicken had become a standard textbook of economic geography and location theories for undergraduate students, thanks to its logical coherence and readability. Its third edition, published in 1990, was unique in drawing heavily upon the critical conceptions of space developed in the English-speaking countries. Unfortunately, these Japanese did not translate some of their fundamental terms and phrases of social and spatial conceptions correctly: 'mode of production', a basic theoretical building block of historical materialism, dropped out and '*hetero*geneous space', an essential assumption of Weberian location theory, was wrongly rendered as '*homo*geneous space'. These mistranslations suggested that the translators, many of whom had been in association with the *chiiki kozo* Group in some way, were incapable of understanding neither the spatial logic nor social theories contained therein. Moreover, the 'Further Readings', which included such works of economic geography with critical orientation as Harvey's *Limits to Capital* and Scott and Storper's *Production, Work, Territory: A Geographical Anatomy of Industrial Capitalism*, were deleted altogether without any reasons given.

The case of Masanori Naito's paper (1997) on a perspective on multicultural and multiethnic society appeared in *GRJ* was perhaps the milestone that marked the shift of relative academic positions of the *GRJ* and the JAEG camps. Once been a JAEG executive board member but left the JAEG a couple of years before, Naito published his paper criticising Yamamoto, the successor of Yada in his former position of economic geography at Hosei University and the former head of the executive board of the JAEG, in *GRJ*, once the target of criticism of the geographers affiliating to the JAEG camp. Naito claimed:

Yamamoto emphasised that institutional discrimination against foreign residents has a lower profile in the present migrant issues [in Germany]. However, this is wrong. Even though many German local governments exhibit tolerant attitudes, the Turks are still reluctant to seek to improve their legal rights which are restrictively regulated by the federal government. Most of the Turks in Germany have become aware that their difficulties in achieving equal rights as German citizens are the result of institutionalised alienation whose ideological basis is the concept of German nation (Naito, 1997: p. 766).

Recently, the annual and local divisional meetings of the JAEG have been increasingly geared to the neo-liberalist corporate culture of the local states, flattering to the national and local policy makers working hard to market their regions to the global capitalism. The JAEG has hosted a series of meetings dealing with the national and local development policies, with Yada playing significant role in all of them. In 1998 annual meeting, for example, with the theme 'Deregulation and Regional Economy', Yada (1998) uncritically presented the synopsis of the most recent national land development project 'from the viewpoint of those who participated in formulating and deciding on the plans'. Yada (1998: pp. 102-103) commented:

We should no longer use the conception of the balanced growth to legitimise mere redistribution of public investment and income.... I believe that the philosophy that takes infrastructure provision as fundamental leverage to promote equal opportunity in geographical terms is based on the conception to provide the environment that facilitates access to modern services and enjoyment of nature with short trips in terms of time and cost, regardless of the places of birth and living. There is no need to provide every single local state with uniform set of services. Transportation and network having been well equipped, those who value proximity to a city and enjoyment of urban service should opt to live in the city; whilst those who prefer the proximity to nature and want to indulge in it with occasional trips to the city might opt for living in the 'multi-natural living zone'. Once these functions are well equipped, the residents are then left for their own choices. This new land development policy means the shift to the concept where burden of promoting the region falls on the shoulder of the residents.

The neo-liberalist tone with a concept akin to 'voting by foot' of Tiebout model is clear.

Then came the 'constitutional reform' of the JAEG. Kenji Yamamoto, having assumed the directorship of the executive board of the JAEG in 1997, set off aggressively for abolishing the system of free and direct election of the members of the decision-making body of the JAEG. The intention behind it manifested itself in the draft proposed by Hiroshi Matsubara, one of the loyal disciples of Yada: the past executive board members, majority of whom were to be appointed rather than elected,

should nominate exactly the same number of candidates as that of seats for the next term of executive board; and the list of nominee thus prepared were to be presented to the members at large, who virtually could do nothing but rubber-stamping it. In this system similar to that of fascist or Stalinist countries, the *chiiki kozo* Group could manage to eternalise its current domination over the JAEG.

The former President of the JAEG, Keiichi Takeuchi (1999), however, interpreted this ‘constitutional reform’ differently:

I think that the current debate within the Association pertains to a search for feasibility and efficiency in the administration of the Association. For the organization with its membership of more than 700, under certain circumstances, indirect election of the executive body may be inevitable and I don’t jump to the conclusion that it is undemocratic just because of this.

The fact spoke for itself, however. The general assembly of the JAEG held in May 1999 railroaded the constitution reform bill of a little milder version than that proposed by Matsubara. In pursuance to the new constitution, the election was held in the autumn of 1999 for the president and other executive offices of the JAEG. The outcome was ‘certainly very disappointing news although by now expected’ (Smith, 2000). Yada, an incumbent member of the principal council of the National Land Agency, a government body, won out by a wide margin other nominees for president. Most of the economic geographers of older generations active in 1960s and 70s along the lines free from the *chiiki kozo* Group and having served as councillors lost their seats almost across the board. Also defeated were critical geographers of younger generation, who were working in close collaboration with the international move for critical economic geography and have been trying hard to establish a solid foundation of global critical economic geography in Japan.

Clique of Chiiki Kozo Group allies, who were handpicked at the meeting of the elected councillors, but no longer subject to approval by the general assembly, now forms the JAEG executive board. This procedure, stipulated in the reformed JAEG constitution, casts the legitimacy of their representation into doubt.

The JAEG thus shook off its past heritage of critical economic geography and poising themselves for the role of ‘regional service class’ (Lovering, 1999: 390) for neo-liberalist local states and conservative national government with vested interests in the National Land development projects. There has, at the other end, been a constant trickle of geographers who once practised along critical line resigning from the JAEG, including Toshio Nohara, who was the co-editor of *The Regional Structure of Post-war Japanese Capitalism* together with Moritaki.

The final blow was to remove JAEG secretariat from Hitotsubashi campus where the JAEG had been able to occupy a room for its office function almost exclusively for

more than two decades, to a more conservative teachers' college. To facilitate this move, Yamamoto proposed to discard most of the back issues of *AAEG* that overflowed out of the new secretariat where JAEG came to share a small office space with a professor. The JAEG library holding the books and journals donated to the JAEG in the past, having been available to the public at Hitotsubashi, was shut down and all the books and periodicals were shipped to another teachers' college near Nagoya. Former President Takeuchi and Matsubara, incumbent chief editor of *AAEG*, did not hesitate to claim that behind this move lay motive of distancing the JAEG secretariat from the centre criticising the current neo-liberalist and undemocratic turns of the JAEG (a decision quite geographic indeed!).

The current research orientation of the JAEG is best manifested in a paper presented on the occasion of the annual symposium held in conjunction with the general assembly in May 1999 by an incumbent member of the JAEG executive board under the new regime. Oda (1999: 91) praised in his review such economists pursuing the 'law of marginal productivity equilibration' or 'management technique', once rejected by Kawashima 44 years ago as those who contributed to formulate research agenda of industrial clustering : Krugman and Michael Porter, together with Piore and Sabel and some Japanese scholars but one geographer. His methodology is same as that of Kamozaawa: to 'borrow' tenets from other disciplines, yet not along the critical line this time, but now from the neo-classicals and neo-liberalists. Short of enough knowledge of economics, however, Oda failed to discuss the implication in the fundamental condition on which Krugman's logic for industrial agglomeration hinged upon: increasing returns, let alone tackling Krugman's mathematical logic of 'new economic geography'. He instead turned vulgarly to quote from a recent Japanese government measures for the clustered industries enacted in 1997, with no regard of its macroeconomic context, most important of which was Asian economic crisis that broke out in Bangkok in the same year. In the discussion of the annual symposium, he expressed his provoked feeling of the works of economic geography being neglected in the works on industrial clustering written by scholars in business administration.

VI. Concluding Remarks – Towards Resurrection of the Critical Heritage

Indeed, not many scholars in the field of business and economics would find

academic merit in economic geography with such exceptionalist rehash. The JAEG would be in envy of the New Regionalism where ‘the policy tail is wagging the analytical dog and wagging it so hard indeed that much of the theory is shaken out’ (Lovering, 1999: 390), for the body of the JAEG dog is almost empty in theory of its own from the beginning. Thus the direction of the body is totally at the dictate of the ‘policy tail’: the vulgarity best suited to provide policy-making institution with some sort of ‘academic glitter’. The attempts have been made lately to associate further the JAEG with the local policy makers, by inviting them to present papers at JAEG divisional meetings. Nevertheless, the JAEG has not found much ‘clientele’; rather, most of the paper published in *AAEG* have relegated into exceptionalist conventional economic geography, a conventional that comes to better terms with geography education in schools.

The JAEG, once the camp of critical geographers first on the globe, has increasingly been confining itself into ‘self-imposed isolation’ from the global community of economic geography, and entered into a smaller pigeonhole of the nation and local states to support their neo-liberalist state apparatus. The global academia of economic geography ‘has been the scene of a constantly changing parade of theoretical and empirical pursuits combined with virtually ever-present debate and controversy’ (Scott, 2000: 33); while with the JAEG the lively academic debate were choked off and its research agenda narrowly confined to those ‘authorised’ by the clique dominating the JAEG, who remain in its power through an organisational structure homological to the monolithic ‘democratic centralist’ or Stalinist politburo system. This international seclusion, coming hand in hand with the domestic move of the former *chiiki kozo* Group members to formally seize a self-perpetuating domination over the JAEG, is well manifested in the fact that NO SINGLE members of the executive board or councillors’ committee, let alone the President Yada, came to Singapore participate in this Global Conference on Economic Geogrpahy.

There have been attempts, if sporadic, to gear Japanese critical geography with that of the West as early as in the 1970s. Aono, a defeated candidate for the JAEG president election in 1999, once organised a reading circle of Peet’s *Radical Geography*. Some works of Harvey and Scott have been translated into Japanese, including *Explanation of Geography* and *Social Justice and the City, the Urbanization of Capital, Metropolis* and ‘Monument and Myth’ (translation by Sato and Ota, 1981). The author published a book presenting a comprehensive dialectics between society and space (Mizuoka, 1992).

Furthermore, new cores of critical geographers have been emerging over the ash from Japanese geographers free from the strangling regression of JAEG. One of these is a study commission of AJG, ‘Critical Geography: Society, Economy and Space’. The

commission began in 1994 as the commission 'The Theories and Tasks of Social Geography' with Yoshiaki Takatsu as the head, and has been instrumental in inviting Lay, Harvey and Scott on the occasion of either JAEG or AJG annual conferences, and now works in close alliance with ICGG and EARCAG (the East Asian Regional Conference in Alternative Geography, a regional affiliate of the ICGG) to propagate critical geography now practised globally among Japanese geographers and other social scientists.

A national research grant with Toshio Mizuuchi as the head of the project has been another core for the development of critical geography in Japan. With this grant he edits two journals, titled *Space, Society and Geographical Thought* and *Japanese Contributions to the History of Geographical Thought*. The former, published in Japanese, contains original articles by Japanese geographers and translations of critical works published in European languages, many of which are of critical persuasion; whereas the latter publishes original articles in English written by the Japanese geographers to introduce the geographers overseas the thoughts of the Japanese geographers. As the titles suggest, the grant originally oriented towards the IGU Commission of 'History of Geographical Thought'; yet the researches carried out under the project of this research grant, which include the sub-projects initiated by geographers in younger generation with critical orientation, have shifted the nature of the grant into that more instrumental in providing more solid foundation with critical geography in Japan.

Amidst the concurrent of contentious vectors towards the neo-liberal and the critical in geography, these geographers in Japan is now striving hard in promoting critical economic geography at various academic frontiers in Japan in honest and serious ways. The future historians of geographical thoughts might want to place what has happened in this tortured history of Japanese economic geography under their close scrutiny, based on these hard facts.

Further Reading on History of Critical Geography in Japan:

Mizuoka, Fujio. 'The Disciplinary Dialectics That Has Played Eternal Pendulum Swings: Spatial Theories and Disconstructionism in the History of Alternative Social and Economic Geography in Japan' *Geographical Review of Japan* (Ser. B) 69(1), 1996.

Available from <http://econgeog.misc.hit-u.ac.jp/mizue/altergeog.html>

References

(All the literatures by the Japanese authors quoted here are in Japanese, unless otherwise noted)

- Akamine, Michisuke. 'Formation of Environmentalism in Japan', *Annals of the Association of Economic Geographers (AAEG)* 3, 1956.
- . 'The Social and Economical Characteristics of Flood Damage in the Kanogawa Basin', *Geographical Review of Japan (GRJ)*, 33(3), 1960.
- Aoki, Toshio. 'New trends in economic geography', *AAEG* 7, 1961.
- Aono, Toshihiko. 'The Development of Towel Industry in Sennan Area Mainly at Izumisano, Osaka', *GRJ*, 40(7), 1967.
- Fujita, Yoshihisa. 'The Formation of Forest-Land Ownership in the Upper Basin of River Naka, Tokushima Prefecture', *GRJ* 44(7), 1971.
- Godlewska, Anne and Neil Smith *eds.*, *Geography and Empire*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1994.
- Harvey, David. 1973. *Social justice and the city*. London: Edward Arnold. Translated into Japanese by K. Takeuchi and M. Matsumoto. Tokyo: Nippon Buritanika, 1980.
- Hiromatsu, Wataru. *Marukusu Shugi No Chihei (The Fundamental Horizon of Marxism)*. Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 1969.
- Iizuka. Koji. *Jimbun Chirigaku. (Human Geography)*, Tokyo: Yuhikaku, 1952.
- Ishii, Motosuke. 'The Structure of the Rural Settlements Damages by the Kanogawa Typhoon', *GRJ* 33(3), 1960.
- Isida, R. 1933. 'The nomothetic nature of geography'. *Chiri Kyoiku* 17(4): 19-24; 17(5): 24-30.
- [Isida, Ryujiro]. [Geography as a Social Science] in 'Papers read before the Annals Meeting, November 24-26, 1951' *GRJ* 25(3), 1952.
- Isida, Ryujiro. 'Chorographical Studies in Japan: Tradition and its Background of Thoughts', *GRJ*, 39(6) 1966.
- Ito, Yoshihei *et. al.* translators. *Ritchi to Kukan - Keizaichirigaku no Kisoriron*. [Original: *Location in Space: Theoretical Perspective in Economic Geography*, 3rd ed. New York: HarperCollins.], *Vols. 1 and 2*, Tokyo: Kokon Shoin, 1997.
- Japan Association of Economic Geographers. 'General Index, Vols. 1 - 10' p. 2 (year of publication not given).
- Kamozawa, Iwao. 'Znachenije Trula I. V. Stalina "Ekonomicheskie Problemi Sochializma v SSSR" Dlya Ekonomicheskoi Geografii (O. A. Konstantinov)', *GRJ* 27(6),

- 1954.
- 'Center of Population in Kyūshū: A Discussion', *GRJ* 28(11), 1955.
- 'Some Problems of the Developments of the Underdeveloped Countries in the Capitalistic World: Turkey and Central America', *AAEG* 5, 1958.
- *Keizai Chirigaku Noto (A Lecture Notebook of Economic geography)*. Tokyo: Hosei Daigaku Shuppankyoku, 1960.
- Kawanishi, Masakane. *Kogyo Ritchi Hendoron (The Locational Dynamism of Industries)* Tokyo: Chukokan, 1936.
- *Toa Chiseigaku No Koso. (Conceptualising East-Asian Geopolitics)* Tokyo: Jitsugyo No Nihonsha, 1942
- Kawashima, Tetsuro. 'On Physical Forces of Production: To a Critique of Wittfogel', *Keizalgaku Nempo* (Osaka City University) 2, 1952.
- 'On the Economic Region' *AAEG* 2, 1955.
- Kazamaki, Yoshitaka. 'Prehistory of the Japan Association of Economic Geographers and Our Meetings', *AAEG*, 44(1), 1998.
- Koga, Masanori. 'Some Problems on the Regional Development of the Economy in India', *AAEG* 5, 1958.
- Lovering, John. 'Theory led by policy: The inadequacies of the "New Regionalism"', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 23(2), 1999.
- Mizuoka, Fujio. 'The Japanese alternative geography and the theory of spatial configuration: A disciplinary reflection with the perspective into the future', *AAEG* 40(1), 1994.
- 'The Disciplinary Dialectics That Has Played Eternal Pendulum Swings: Spatial Theories and Disconstructionism in the History of Alternative Social and Economic Geography in Japan', *GRJ* (Ser. B) 69(1), 95-112, 1996 (in English).
- 'A Case of Marxist Geography Institutionalised and Reified: The "Regional Structure" School and the "Demise" of the Japan Association of Economic Geographers', *Space, Society and Geographical Thought* 3, 1998.
- Moritaki, Ken-ichiro. 'An Appraisal of Socio-Economic Studies of the Water Resources Problem in the Field of Geography', *AAEG* 12(1), 1966.
- 'Social Relations on the Use of River Water', *GRJ* 39(12), 1966.
- and Toshio Nohara, eds. *Sengo Nippon shihonshugi no chiiki kozo (The regional structure of the post-war Japanese capitalism)*, Tokyo: Chobunsha, 1975.
- Naito, Masanori. 'A Perspective on Multicultural and Multiethnic Society: Critique of Kenji Yamamoto's Critical Essay on the Author's *The West of Allah*', *GRJ*

- 70(11), 1997.
- Oda, Hironobu. 'The Spatial Agglomeration System of Industrial Activities in Japan: A Brief Review of Recent Studies'. *AAEG* 45(4), 1999.
- Ohara, Keiji. *Shakai Chirigaku No Kiso Riron. (Fundamental Theories of Social Geography)* Tokyo: Kokon Shoin, 1950.
- '. 'An Old Cotton Town: the Case of Lowell'. *AAEG* 4, 1957.
- Oiwakawa, Kazumasa. 'A Study on the Origine of Kibbutz: Introduction to the Study on the Jewish Colonisation in Palestine', *AAEG* 9, 1964.
- Okuda, Yoshio. 'On the Objects of Geographical and Historical Studies: Area and Era', *AAEG* 2, 1955.
- '. *Shakai Keizai Chirigaku Ronko. (Studies of Socio-Econornic Geography)* Tokyo: Taimeido, 1969. anufacture-féodalité: Un Prototype de l'industrie capitallistique', *GRJ*, Vol.39(5) 1966.
- Ôta, Isamu. 'Industrialization of the Gakunan Pulp and Paper Industry District', *GRJ* 39(1), 1966.
- Peet, Richard. 'The Development of Radical Geography in the United States'. In *Radical Geography*, pp. 6-30. edited by R. Peet, London: Methuen, 1977.
- Sato [Dozono], Itsumi and Masako Ota. 'Monyumento to Shinwa' (a translation of 'Monument and Myth' by David Harvey). In Minoru Senda eds., *Chizu no Kanatani: Keikan no Shiso (Geography Beyond Map)*. Kyoto: Chijin Shobo, 1981.
- Sato, Motoshige. 'The Development of Economic Geography in Japan', *AAEG*, 3, 1956.
- Schaefer, Fred K. 'Exceptionalism in Geography: A Methodological Examination'. *AAAG* 43, 1953.
- Scott, Allen J. 'Economic Geography: The Great Half Century'. In Gordon L. Clark *et al* eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Economic Geography*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000, pp. 18-44.
- Smith, Neil. [A message as to the election result of the JAEG]. Quoted in *Keizai Chiri Gakkai – A Counter Website*. <http://econgeog.misc.hit-u.ac.jp/gakkai/>
- Takeuchi, Atsuhiko. 'The Decline of Industrial Production in Kita Kyushu Area', *GRJ* 39(10), 1966.
- Takeuchi, Keiichi. An E-mail sent to Neil Smith, with cc to the author, in January, 1999.
- Tsujimura, Taro. [Presidential Address] in 'Abstracts of Papers Read before the Annual Meeting, April 18-19th', *GRJ* 21(9, 10, 11), 1948.
- Ueno, Noboru. *Keizai chirigaku no dohyo (The Milestone of Economic Geography)*. Tokyo: Taimeido, 1968.

- . *Chishigaku no genten (The ultimate origin of chorography)*. Tokyo: Taimeido, 1972.
- Watanabe, Kazuo. 'Noviye Cherti Geografii Promishlennosti i Seliskogo Khozyaistva Estonskoi SSR' [M. M. Rostovtsuyev I B. Yu. Tarmisto] *GRJ* 28(12), 1955.
- Watsuji, Tetsuro. *Fudo: Ningengakuteki kosatsu (Climate: A philosophical study)*. Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 1933. Translated into English by Geoffrey Bownas. Tokyo: Printing Bureau, Japanese Government, 1961.
- Wittfogel, K. A. Geopolitik, geographischer Materialismus und Marxismus. *Unter dem Banner des Marxismus* 3(1, 4 and 5)., 1929; translated into Japanese by Kawanishi as *Chirigaku Hihan (A critical appraisal of geography)*. Tokyo: Yukosha, 1933. also translated into English by G. L. Ulmen, *Antipode* 17(1), 1985.
- Yada, Toshifumi. 'The Abandonment of Poor Coal Seams Caused by the Rationalization of the Coal-Mining Industry in the Joban Coal Field', *AAEG* 13(1), 1967.
- . 'On Economic-Geography', *Keizai-Shirin (The Hosei University Economic Review)* 41(3,4), 1973 .
- . 'Land Management for the 21st Century', *AAEG*, 44(4), 1998.
- *et. al.* 'Symposium: Land Development in the 21st Century and Fukushima', *AAEG*, 44(4), 1998.
- [On the Resource Committee of the Economic Stabilization Board, Land Planning and Institute of Construction, Development Plan and Geography] in 'Geographical News', *GRJ* 21(4,5,6), 1948.