Title
The Disciplinary Dialectics That Has Played Eternal Pendulum Swings: Spatial Theories and Disconstructionism in the History of Alternative Social and Economic Geography in Japan

Author(s)
Mizuoka, Fujio

Citation

Issue Date
1996-06

Type
Journal Article

Text Version
publisher

URL
http://hdl.handle.net/10086/14578

『地理学評論(Geographical review of Japan)Ser. B』 Vol.69からの転載
The Disciplinary Dialectics That Has Played Eternal Pendulum Swings: Spatial Theories and Disconstructionism in the History of Alternative Social and Economic Geography in Japan

Fujio Mizuoka
Faculty of Economics, Hitotsubashi Univ., Kunitachi 186, Japan

Abstract: An alternative geographer, or a practitioner of social and economic geography who does not follow the conventional, has a curious habit of unconsciously performing pendulum-like swings: an alternative geographer grown within the institutional pigeon hole of geography first antagonises the conventional practice and seeks a more robust theoretical framework, drawing mainly upon Marxism, or more recently phenomenological philosophy. Eventually, however, he/she degenerates back into the exceptionalism and gives in to support the institution again or sometimes that at higher level. Japanese alternative geography has been particularly plagued with the repeated appearance of such pendulum-like swings since the pre-war period. This paper analyses the peculiar dialectics that gives rise to the curious swings through disciplinary discourse at meta-level; then it describes how this dialectic manifests itself in the developmental trajectory of Japanese alternative geography. The catch is that the practitioner of alternative him/herself is protected by the institution which supports the conventional. The struggle against the conventional is fought only among geographers' community within the institutional boundary, and serious and robust interdisciplinary intercourse with other disciplines of social science is scarce. Thus an alternative geographer has little opportunity to acquire level of comprehension of social and economic theories competent enough to stand alone in the competitive academic environment in general social science. This nature of alternative geography parasitic to the conventional eventually manifests itself in the conversion of an alternative geographer back to the support of the very conventional practices, into chanting for exceptionalism and seeking protection from the institution. On the other hand, the success of alternative geography which has been engaging in the society-and-space debate in the English-speaking countries lies in that they managed, via formulations of spatial theories that made geography a fully independent discipline of social science, to do away with the parasitism and to transcend this sort of eternal pendulum swings. They thus succeeded in discarding the paradoxical yearning for the institutional protection. It is now an urgent task for Japanese alternative geographers facing disciplinary crisis to learn more from this practice overseas, in order to establish higher esteem in the academic division of labour in general as well as that of geography in the international context.

Key words: alternative geography, the society-and-space debate, spatial theory, institutionalisation, exceptionalism, disconstructionism

"Hegel remarks somewhere that all facts and personages of great importance... occur, as it were, twice. He forgot to add: the first time as tragedy, the second as farce." (Karl Marx, The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte.)

Modern geography is a discipline which has been created out of institutionalisation of the academics in the form of modern university system in order to fulfil nationalistic needs. The research activity of geographers has been thus much symbiotic with the institutional framework; therefore no comprehensive account of the history of geographical thought could be complete without due consideration of its dialectical institutional framework. Exceptionalism is the most conspicuous feature of this institutionalised geography, as the main purpose of the geography departments had been to provide schools with teachers who teach chorographical descriptions of various parts of the world (Capel 1981).
Wherever a science is institutionalised, there is likely to be an alternative which attempts to challenge the institutionalised staple paradigm. In this paper, we shall call this practice which appears in the institution of geography “alternative geography”, in drawing upon its use in Werlen (1993). Here, the term is taken to mean practices of social and economic geographers who do not follow the staple paradigm of academic practices in the institution. Social and economic geography in the alternative stream plays a curious pendulum swing, with little consciousness of it to have taken place, that comes out of the dialectics between disciplinary practice and its institutional setting.

This paper deals with the common dialectics, or meta-geographical study of the logic of disciplinary dialectics, which is based on a previous paper of the author in Japanese (Mizuoka 1994), then the trajectory where this dialectical leit-motif has inflicted specifically itself upon Japanese alternative geography like a pendulum swing: the repeated appearance of exceptionalism and its concomitant deconstructionism in different guises within the persistent attempts to formulate the theoretical framework.

**The Logic of Disciplinary Dialectics That Gives Rise to the Pendulum Swings: An Overview**

When an academic discipline has disciplinary and societal legitimacy, it must have internal logical consistencies that reflect the processes and structures of a specific segment of the entire objective world. This is the discipline-specific logic, which organises the discipline into the endogenous hierarchy and classification of different disciplines of sciences, "each of which analyses a single form of motion, or a series of forms of motion that belong together and pass into one another", and is classified "according to their inherent sequence..." (Engels 1954:249).

Schaefer's (1953) criticism of "exceptionalism", practised by Hartshornian geographers, who, under the influence of a German geographer Hettner, considered geography as "concerned more than most others with study of individual cases, of the innumerable places of the world and of the unique case of the world itself" (Hartshorne 1959:170), was the epitome for the practice of many geographers seeking an alternative path determined to disavow the Hartshornian conventional conception and started attempts to seek nomothetic laws that reflect the geography-specific "forms of motion".

This alternative direction towards nomothetic position should not be put equivalent to quantitative practice of geography. Humanistic geographers are not in exception to seek conceptual bodies of geography, though through a path different from those engaging in the quantitative, explicitly or implicitly, which is clearly demonstrated in those newly coined discipline-specific conceptions as "human territoriality", "placeness", "mental maps" and so forth, developed from various conceptions of phenomenological philosophy or psychology. Marxist geographers largely share criticism of the Hartshornian position with Schaefer, to postulate nomothetic theory in geography based on historical materialism or the economic theory of Capital. That is, the differences among these three alternatives are the types of social theory they draw upon: the quantitatives on the neo-classical, equilibrium conception of economy and society; the humanists on the phenomenology and the conception of intersubjectivity; and the Marxists mainly on historical materialism and economic theories of Capital. Based on these conceptions, all of three aims at more or less formal conceptualisations.

So, then, why the repeated pendulum swings between the theories and exceptionalism in Japan? The reason must be sought not only in the narrowly-defined disciplinary logic per se, but also in the unique institutional settings where Japanese geography has been placed.

In academics, the "pigeon-holed" community of academics protected with institutional boundaries between different university departments and faculties tends to determine the boundaries between de facto academic disciplines, regardless of their relevance or the forms of motion of the objects they study. When an academic community as a whole inter-subjectively takes these institutional boundaries
are likely to replace the endogenously created hierarchy and classification of science emerging from the "inherent sequence" of the objective world. Once this institution-based intersubjectivity takes root, academics no longer feel it necessary to bother considering the legitimacy of the discipline that they belong to.

Japan is no exception to the general process of institutionalisation of geography which Capel (1981) analysed: the institutional framework called geography came into existence in Japan from educational as well as nationalistic needs. Japanese national universities established in the Meiji period as imperial universities followed the structure of the German Lehrstuhl system. Each Lehrstuhl (koza in Japanese) normally consists of one professorship, one associate professorship and one assistantship. The reproduction of a discipline and academic thought of geography has been carried out within this institutional pigeon hole. Interference with other koza has always been something to be avoided with extreme caution, as this might eventually trigger a reverse action from the other onto the self. This mutual non-interventionism has made each koza community an almost totally secluded niche for a discipline, where legitimacy or relevance of geography existing in the niche is taken for granted and rarely questioned. This framework has allowed maximum independence to the professor who leads the koza, and disciples are supposed to follow the precious words of him (rarely her) regardless of its logical or societal legitimacy and relevance. The geography departments of major, dominating national universities have created "colonies" in various liberal arts colleges or teacher-training faculties of provincial universities, to which the graduates of those dominating geography departments have been sent as teaching staff, often to the exclusion of the graduates of other universities. This structure has been fairly stable, as geography is a compulsory school subject in junior high schools and was so until recently in senior high schools in Japan. This school syllabus, together with an increasing population, has created constant needs for geography school teachers. The stable job market for those graduates has meant stable opportunity for the graduate students of dominating geography departments to obtain teaching jobs at those "colonised" universities. Geography in Japan has developed within this relatively stable institutional framework.

It is in these pigeon-holed community where the conventional cults of geography which mostly originated in Germany has been practised and reproduced. The cults include chorographical description of spatial heterogeneity after Hettner's conception, the Landschaftskunde (landscape studies) of Schlüter, who demanded the "conquest of time" in geography (1906: 46), and geographical determinism, which was claimed to have been originated in Ratzel. Severe pressure to conduct empirical field studies with little consideration of past historical processes and with much for local physical-geographic condition has been inflicted upon their disciples.

These disciples have not considered such "communal cults" as something to have been forced on them or followed against their spontaneous will, however. The most important reward in the geographer's life, a teaching job in geography, has been guaranteed for those docile followers of the cults; students who had opted to study geography were in many cases fond of maps, trains, travelogues, descriptive school geography or anything of similar sorts, which were not necessarily in conflict with these conventional cults. Propensity in the mind of practitioners towards nomothetic scientific laws has thus remained minimal; and this propensity has been all the more enhanced by the mediating process where those who dared to put themselves against these "communal cults" were sanctioned and denied of rewards institutionalised in the geography departments. After all, there has been little social incentive to do away with the cults of conventional geography within the koza framework of Japanese geography, but rather much to maintain it.

There have been a few social and economic geographers, nevertheless, who endeavoured to take the alternative path even within such an institutional framework. As in the case of alternative geographers in the West, they have severely criticised the empirical, descriptive and
deterministic conventional geography which is devoid of a theoretical framework, and have shown interest in the evolutionary path of history and socially relevant problems.

Yet, few practitioners of alternative geography have been conscious of the hidden trap of an internal dialectics endemic in their endeavour. Conventional geography departments, where most of geographers (including those on the alternative path) have been educated and trained after the conventional cults, have not encouraged at all the study of social or economic theories. The fear of a supervising professor that the theory orientation might likely undermine the reproduction of the conventional "communal cults" has been sufficient reason for discouragement from doing this. Papers in the alternative path have often received such comments from their supervisors that what they did belonged to "antigeographicism", which implied something against the "cults" on which the institution called geography rests.

Paradox really begins here. In fact, this situation is not at all adverse to those alternative geographers. It protects those seeking the alternative path in geography, graduate students and faculty members alike, from the fierce competition with the real practitioners of social science. They thus do not need an elaborated study of the social and economic theories in order to claim him/herself to be an alternative in social and economic geography. It is relatively easy to start off on the trailhead towards alternative geography, as its counterpart, the conventional geography, is so weak in the knowledge of social and economic theories and so much lacked theoretical robustness, that reading a few introductory books of social and economic theories could suffice to claim something that sounds like the practice of alternative geography. As his/her supervising professor is under the mentality of sweeping disavowal of social or economic theories of any sorts, condemning them as being "antigeographic", the slightest mention of Marxist terms or theoretical conceptions, for example, can immediately trigger an "honourably radical" skirmish against his/her supervisor as to the proper direction of geography. The alternative geography was thus born and has grown in the bosom of institutionalised community of geographers.

Naturally, with the primitive understanding of social and economic theory, the alternative geographers have no way of claiming themselves to be professional social scientists. The initial part of the trail might seem relatively facile, but the harder section comes not much later: it demands his/her own capability of route-finding for a positive social or economic theory of geography which can let the discipline stand alone without the support of the institutional pigeon hole. Here, the rugged terrain requires those alternative practitioners to have the most elaborate and sophisticated comprehension of social and economic theories, in order to create original, unprecedented theories of spatial configuration of society.

Nevertheless, this ambushed difficulty is not a real problem in the short run, at least at the micro level of those practitioners themselves. As this entire processes are protected by the bounded institutionally pigeon-holed community called geography department, there are no real academic competitions that alternative geographers are forced to face in their neighbourhood. The real competitors inhabit somewhere beyond the boundary, in a never-never land where those alternative geographers have been prohibited, or not willing, to visit. The alternative geography thus remains parasitic to the institution and community that the conventional once created.

Indeed, there have been a conscious few who devoted themselves to acquire sufficient comprehension of social and economic theories to attain the level at par with the practitioners of other social sciences. Yet, there is another paradox. If one qualifies him/herself as a professional social scientist, why on earth do they need to remain affiliated with the institutional pigeon hole of geography? This temptation to cross the interdisciplinary boundary away from geography is all the more strong when the implicit hierarchy of academics in different disciplines is taken into account: geography is often overshadowed by the more robust and illuminating other fields of social science. No wonder, some of them have quietly left geography and joined the community of practitioners in another lands as full members.
Thus, most of those who remained in the institutionalised pigeon hole were those who needed it: the niche for their parasitic existence, which always guarantees their survival as "pseudo social scientists" in friendly manner. Their practices have then been fed with passive consumption of various watered-down theories of aspatial sociology and economics, as well as occasional confessions of "sccepisis" to conventional geography.

As the alternative geographers maintain comparatively stronger connection to other fields of social science compared to their conventional counterparts, nevertheless, they are in a position to realise readily that the field study is no monopoly of geographers at all, but there are also social scientists in other fields, namely professional historians, sociologists, urban planners, economists etc. conducting field studies. Within this context, alternative geographers are driven to the bay, as they are without properly elaborated comprehension of social and economic theories, nor can they make contribution with theoretical conceptualisations that are unique to geography.

Willing or not, or consciously or unconsciously, alternative geographers are canalised into turning back to the practice of the conventional: exceptionalist research drawing upon passive consumption of social sciences of practitioners inhabiting somewhere else, and occasional subjective and makeshift interpretation of facts with some flavours of social relevance and advocacy. Some alternative geographers are even driven to internalise this paradox into their own behaviour, in that, while denying their own identity as a geographer and claiming themselves conducting "area study or social science" within geographers' community, they preach crude conventional tenets of geography as environmental determinism or possibilism to the academics outside geographers' community, in claiming themselves practising "geography" (Takeuchi 1993:28). In this chameleon-like behaviour, alternative geographers display that their last resort is nothing but the conventional, and all niches that they think to have discovered were indeed mirages.

The blue bird is indeed at home! Deprived of any legitimate claim as an independent field of research within social sciences, alternative geographers are further tempted to give in to the institution of their own pigeon hole. Sometimes they even seek refuge in the fundamental institutional superstructure of the capitalist society: the state apparatus itself. This is indeed the "alternative" way of retaining his/her identity as a pigeon-holed geographer within the interdisciplinary context.

The pendulum now completes the full swing. The initial interest in theory and criticism of exceptionalism evaporates away, and the vacuum thus created is quickly filled with the conventional practice, expressed in a reverse of their former faith: deconstructionism or the sweeping disavowal of theorisation in social and economic geography.

One might ask, if there are any real salvation from this unfortunate dialectics. In recent times, geographers in English-speaking countries have discovered the way to transcend it. They have committed elaborated study of social and economic theories and philosophy, in drawing upon their recent developments in Western Europe. In the works of the theory of spatial configuration by Harvey (1982, 1985) and Scott (1988), for example, they displayed us a level of comprehension of economic and social theories necessary to qualify themselves as real practitioners of alternative in geography. Only with the practice at this level of comprehension, coupled with the positive attempts to formulate an alternative theoretical body where space or nature is subsumed as the indispensable element of the theoretical structure, alternative geographers can gain their own position within the academic division of labour as a whole, independent of the empirical paradigm of conventional geography or of the parasitism to the institutional protection.

**The Advent of Alternative Geography in Japan: The Conditions in the Pre-war Period**

Short of a practice comparable to that of English-speaking countries mentioned above, Japanese alternative geographers have been confined to this unfortunate dialectic and rendered themselves to the infliction of futile, eter-
nal disciplinary pendulum swings. In the following chapters, we describe the parallel, yet interrelated streams of theory orientation and disconstructionism in alternative geography in Japan.

Towards the end of the 1920s, various tenets directly or indirectly related to alternative geography developed overseas started to flow into Japan. In the process of Japanese modernisation, academics had a general propensity of importing new theoretical conceptions from Western countries, remaking them or applying them to the situation in Japan. Geography was of no exception to this: the concepts of Hettner and Schlüter penetrated into the geography departments of major Japanese universities. This practice also functioned as a stable path for importing Western Marxist thoughts and those related to alternative geography at their earlier stage of development into Japan, and provided Japanese geography then with valuable opportunities to incorporate variegated alternative ideas into geography. Those thoughts came from pre-Nazi Germany where the Communist Party maintained strong influence not only in political but also intellectual spheres, from the Soviet Union where Stalinism dominated and geographers were mobilised to legitimise the central economic planning of spatially uneven industrial allocation with little regard for environmental protection, and the United Kingdom where the conception of welfare society had deeply taken root. Marxism in Japan attained its highest pre-war level in this period, when the first complete translation of Capital into Japanese by M. Takabatake was published.

The main interest of alternative geographers at the time evolved around the conceptions of human-nature relationships. Kawanishi was perhaps the leading figure among alternative geographers in this respect. Having studied religion at a Japanese university, he went to Germany and the UK in the 1920s to study industrial and managerial economics. There, he had ample opportunities to get acquainted with the Marxist theory of environment then prevalent there. His mentor was K. A. Wittfogel, an active member of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). He drew upon the main conception of dialectical human-nature interactive theory of Wittfogel, whose main work (1929) he translated into Japanese. The arguments against the conventional environmental determinism from the alternative camp in Japan until the early postwar period essentially drew upon the points put forward by Wittfogel.

In considering dialectical relationships between human and nature, Kawanishi followed the concept of his mentor and confined attention solely to the labour process, neglecting the other indispensable element in the production process: value and valorisation. His interpretation of Marxism lacked in this sense the value concept, based upon the crucial notion of fetishism created out of the process of commodity exchanges. This drawback of Kawanishi's understanding of Marxist social theory manifested itself as he gradually drifted away from the issue of human-nature relation to the theory of capitalist space. In formulating his alternative theory of location, he placed lopsided emphasis on technological aspects. This was a logical consequence of his conception of society based on the labour process; and it indeed created fatal flaws in understanding the capitalist spatial processes, which are always configured according to the principle of value. Kawanishi, nevertheless, was very much explicit at this point in his argument on locational dynamics in that, in studying locational dynamism, one "should not put emphasis on the circulation process of value or price. . . . We insist on reformulating location theory based on the labour process. Therefore, the point is to follow the structural transformation of industrial production from the aspect of technological changes" (Kawanishi 1936: 4).

As Japan got deeper and deeper involved in World War II, his weakness in the interpretation of Marxist social and economic theories degenerated into his conversion to a position of support for the institution of Japanese militarism. He legitimised the Japanese military predominance in the Asia-Pacific, through propagation of the "Greater Asia Co-prosperity Sphere (Dai Toa Kyoei Ken)" conception as well as the notion of geopolitics in his book (Kawanishi 1942).

Isida, a contemporary of Kawanishi, was also vocal in countering the environmental deter-
minism. In a paper (Isida 1935) which attracted much negative attention from the conventionals, he “explained the fallacy in identifying the theory of geography with the determinism”, and claimed that geography were to have “nomothetic nature as one of the social sciences” (italics added). In his demand for more robust scientific law in geography, however, he did not go beyond aspatial general theories of society.

Two books published in the USSR with strong anti-exceptionalist and anti-determinist position were also of importance in proliferating the idea for alternative theorisation at this time. They were originally published in the early 1930s, and translated into Japanese by Hashimoto immediately after the appearance of the originals (Hashimoto 1934, 1936). These books took explicit anti-Hettner positions and made attempts to reform geography into the Marxist-Leninist line. The books had a clear task of creating a conception of economic geography capable of supporting a framework of industrial allocation of five-year plans in the Soviet Union. They well demonstrated the ideological struggles of Soviet geographers against the conventional conceptions of geography, which were to be conquered as they were contrary to the centrally planned ideal of industrial allocation. The influence of these books is demonstrated in a common parlance among Japanese alternative geographers until now to use the term seisan hachi (allocation of production) as a Marxist surrogate for bourgeois concept of location.

While Kawanishi sought theoretical conceptualisation for the question of human-nature and spatial relationships, Ohara, originally a researcher of US economic history with a Marxist perspective, attempted the same question from a different line, bringing in the aspatial explanatory framework of Marxist economic history into exceptionalist geography. He wrote extensively on the development of the early American economy as well as the imperialist behaviour of US multinational corporations, and later became the translator of Baran and Sweezy's *Monopoly Capital* into Japanese. His commitment to economic geography mainly came from institutional reasons, namely his appointment to a lectureship of economic geography at the Yokohama City University.

Influenced through the works of a British historical geographer, Gordon W. East (1938), Ohara became “alternative” in his disavowal of Schütterian *Landschaftskunde*, where history was something to be conquered, and environmental determinism, which were to be replaced by historical materialism. In this respect, his position was obviously an extension of Isida’s postulate. In using such terms as “imperialistic” or “contradictions”, he expressly demonstrated his association with an alternative geography; but these terms were essentially aspatial. Besides his advocacy for materialistic historical conceptions into geography, however, his interpretation of geographical science remained essentially within that of the exceptionalists. He explicitly stated later as geography being an “empirical and historical science, which is different in nature from normative science in not dealing with generalisations” (Ohara 1950:285, italics added). Geography was supposed to study “empirically how physical-geographic phenomena are distributed and revealed within the world economic system with its imperialistic divisions and contradictions” (Ohara 1950:225).

Thus, the position of Ohara was expressly different from that of Kawanishi, who had been in pursuit of a more robust theories of human-nature relationships and of locational dynamics. To geographers who practised in the conventional pigeon hole, Ohara’s explicit denial of generalisation and virtual endorsement of exceptionalism were more assimilating than the position of Kawanishi. This has brought Ohara’s position, together with the tenet of Isida, to the leading position of an epoch in Japanese alternative geography, where empirical and idiosyncratic field researches of specific regions were conducted based on the nomothetic conception of aspatial historical materialism. In this sense, his position was equivocal: it succeeded to a certain extent in bringing history and social theory into geography, but only at cost of losing the research agenda for nomothetic theorisation unique to geography.
Early Postwar Development: Historical Materialism or Geographical Materialism?

The equivocal position of Ohara and Isida was developed further in the early postwar era as Iizuka, an economic historian by undergraduate training, entered into the academic circle of geographers. Iizuka, having studied in France in the 1930s, exerted influence over geographers' circle even stronger than Ohara or Isida.

His mentors were various French geographers of his age, including Demangeon, Gallois and Martonne. After his return from France he became a translator of *Principes de Géographie Humaine* by Vidal de la Blache (1922). His extensive study of geographical thoughts, which emphasised mainly the French school, and geopolitics and historical perspective on geographical research attracted the interest of many alternative geographers of the period.

The strong interest in "possibilism" among alternative geographers in Japan came in one sense from their willingness to seek an alternative to the conventional determinism. The possibilism, claimed to have been originated in Vidal de la Blache, was widely interpreted as an intellectual weapon to counter the determinism. As displayed in Nakajima (1954), the criticism of environmental determinism also came from the authority of Stalin who emphasised, through fierce attack to the "geographical materialism", the anti-deterministic notion and capability of conquering nature by human action, in order to legitimise the drastic build-up of the production capacity of the Soviet Union according to the stipulation of the five-year plans, with little regard of effects on environment.

As possibilism is by nature in want of causal relationships, however, it bears a danger of degeneration into psychological relativism, or some causal principle must be transplanted into geographical explanation in order to restore causality. The clue for the alternative in Iizuka's conception was similar to that of Isida and Ohara: to incorporate historical materialism into geographical possibilism in order to restore the causality in explanation. A conventional transport geographer depicts the aca-
caying into a second-rate economic and social history of a micro region, or at best an auxiliary science of Marxist social and economic history.

The line of lizuka experienced the process of ossification further into the conventional exceptionalist practice in a seminal book of Kamoza (1960). Unlike Ohara and Izuka, Kamoza was a geographer by training from the very beginning. Based on his criticisms of the pre-war alternative geography having engrossed too much in environmental possibilism and fell into negligence of causality, he openly declared the need to establish an economic geography “that cannot neglect the class relations underlying capitalist society” (Kamoza 1960: 73). In this sense, he was more explicit in pressing the Marxist line than his mentor, Izuka, as the surrogate for the determinism. In order to accomplish this task, Kamoza demanded Marxist economic geography to “apply the laws borrowed from [Marxist] economics to particular regions” (Kamoza 1960: 15, italics added). He devoted a considerable number of pages in his book to “economic chorography”, where class relations and dependent development in Turkish economy and society were empirically described, in drawing upon passive consumption of existing Marxist tenets.

Okuda (1969), who once studied astronomy and later entered the circle of alternative geography, attempted to give more sophisticated philosophical legitimisation to the exceptionalist practice. He classified science into three categories à la Hettner or the neo-Kantians: descriptive, theoretical and praxis-oriented. Supported with complicated diagrams and discussions, he classified geography in the descriptive category.

The paradigm of alternative geography originated in Kawanishi and Isida with strong demand for theory thus ultimately degenerated into the emphasis on exceptionalism backed with an aspatial, non-geographical frameworks of social science.

Some alternative geographers were, nevertheless, conscious of the position of lizuka containing a considerable flaw, which could give a losing edge over the bourgeois economic geography based on a location theory with more robust, causal explanatory frameworks. Some measures were to be found, therefore, to develop the method of alternative geography that could reconcile the historical materialist position in line with that of more causal, nomothetic explanatory frameworks of spatial configuration.

Kawashima was a leading figure who strove on this line. Unlike Ohara and Izuka, Kawashima was not a historian but a Marxian economist by training, who once published a paper on absolute rent of Capital (Kawashima 1949). His research strategy was to remain in the concept of historical materialism as advocated by Ohara and Izuka, but to develop their aspatial conception into the theoretical framework capable of explaining the heterogeneity of spatial configuration of a country as a whole.

In this research agenda, a more generalised account for uneven spatial development of a capitalist country emerging from backwardness was attempted. According to Kawashima (1963), Japanese capitalism, considered to be a representative case of backward capitalism having experienced rapid catching-up to an imperialist power, where transplantation of foreign technologies into Japan, using only limited amounts of domestic resources and targeted at foreign demand, played a pivotal role, displayed a peculiar spatial form: strong clustering of industries at a few maritime regions in negligence of distribution of domestic resources and general distribution of population, on the one hand, and a hierarchical spatial division of labour organised according to the scattered stages of vertically disintegrated production processes all over Japan, on the other. He claimed that this spatial form of Japanese capitalism had created vertically-organised interregional economic relations displaying domination and dependence. This was one of the extensions of his tenets expressed in his previous seminal paper (Kawashima 1955): economic regions were to be classified according to different relations of production. There, in criticising various earlier conventional attempts to define a region in relation to environment and Landschaft, he stressed the agenda of studying the hierarchical interrelationships of the regions thus classified, which were organised according to the pattern of dominance and dependence.
Through this attempt to seek an alternative explanatory framework of industrial location without drawing upon the bourgeois location theories but upon historical materialism to which space was somehow subsumed, Kawashima virtually drew up an answer to the research agenda set by Kawanishi a generation ago. In this manner, he reconfirmed the socio-spatial relations as an indispensable element of socio-economic geography.

The influence of Kawashima's conception was not to be neglected. For example, a senior high school textbook, written by a group of alternative geographers and school teachers, was organised according to the classification of regions by three different modes of production: the regions of capitalist, socialist and Third World economies.

Ueno, another economic historian by training, took different lines from Kawashima in conceptualisation of alternative geography, again to put heavier emphasis on the human-nature relationships. Through his commitment to various movements of local residents against environmental degradation in Kyushu Island, which includes stigmatic Minamata, an area heavily polluted with organic mercury, and his appointment to a geography professorship at a university in southern Kyushu, Ueno gradually developed his interest in socio-economic geography and joined its alternative stream.

Ueno's attempt was to substantiate Vidalian possibilism introduced by Iizuka by means of transplanting the concept of "fetishism" postulated in Volume I of Capital into the framework of phenomenological interpretation of "fudo (climate)" put forward by Watsuji (1935). He attempted to decipher the humanly created environment as a "reification of social relations" (Ueno 1972: 127). According to him, the dual attributes of use value and value of the environment that has been produced by the capitalist mode of production creates "environment created through human action", or reified nature. This alienates the local residents from their inherited, pristine nature of the locality, to give rise to variegated "intersubjective behavioural patterns" (Ueno 1972: 154). This leads to the research agenda for "Marxist chorography", which is, according to Ueno's definition, to study the processes whereby "regionalised human groups" are formed through the nature thus reified. Applying this conception, Ueno studied Minamata, and claimed that this was indeed the case where local residents had been alienated from the once intimate local environment; and that it was this polluted environment, the reified form of the capitalist mode of production, which the residents inter-subjectively perceived as hostile, thus triggering their collective action against the polluter, Chisso Corporation.

Ueno's theoretical attempt was intriguing as it was virtually a forerunner of humanistic geography in the English-speaking countries, as well as offering a possible path to integrate phenomenological approach with that of political economy in the post-quantitative streams of geography. It is interesting in our context, nevertheless, that Ueno put forward this unique conceptualisation within the framework of investigating the "ultimate origin" of chorography, as the title of his book explicitly stated. The ultimate object of chorography was, according to him, to critically investigate the processes whereby "the climatic environment was reified by the private property system, transformed into the illusory object, and then alienated the localised human group" (Ueno 1972: 204, italics added). In this statement, the influence of Iizuka is clear. In other words, his conception of created nature served more as an intermediate step to interpret localities than to establish a theoretical foundation of socio-economic geography. Any potentially valuable contributions to geographical theory is bound to experience processes of melting into exceptionalism, as the case of Ueno demonstrated.

These active engagements of those alternative geographers explained in this chapter were closely associated to its institutionalisation: a learned society called the Japan Association of Economic Geographers (Keizai Chiri Gakkai, JAEG) founded in 1954. Headed initially by Hiroshi Sato, the professor of economic geography at Hitotsubashi University, the Association essentially functioned as a forum of alternative geographers unsatisfied with the practice of conventional social and economic geography, then represented by the Association of Japa-
nese Geographers (Nippon Chiri Gakkai, AJG) as well as the geography departments of major universities in Japan. The pendulum of Japa-
nese alternative geography that swung be-
tween theory and exceptionalist chorography has maintained its centre within the institution-
al confine of JAEG.

The Demise of an Alternative: The Re-

gional Structure School

This stroke of pendulum could not but trig-
ger some disciplinary discourse at a more gen-
eral, meta-level. An attempt was made by Yada (1975, 1976), where past contributions of alter-
native geography in Japan were classified into two categories: “the economic chorography school” and that looking toward spatial theory. According to Yada, most of alternative geogra-
phers in the past, namely Iizuka, Kawashima, Kamozawa and Ueno (he gave no mention to Kawanishi or Isida) belonged to the former cat-
egory, as they had in some sense common in emphasising the microscopic empirical descrip-
tion of localities or “localised social groups” based upon the conceptions of historical materi-
alism. His claim was to position himself in the latter, to formulate “Marxian spatial econom-
ics” (Yada 1976:2).

Yada, a geographer by training from the un-
dergraduate, originally studied economic geog-
raphy of coal mining in Japan, drawing upon Marxist land rent theory. His “spatial econom-
ics” or comprehensive framework of Marxist economic geography was to consist of four areas of research: allocation of industries to regions, intra-regional economics, national land use and regional policies. Each of the four was supposed to form a segment of more general conception, chiiki kozo (regional structure), defined by Yada as the spatial system of divi-
sion of labour at national-economy level, which was to be explained “through the integration of locational system and ‘economic region’” (Yada 1982:67).

Among the past contributions of the alterna-
tives, chiiki kozo assigned the position of its direct forerunner to the tenet of Kawashima. In an earlier work (Yada and Aono 1975), Yada explicitly supported Kawashima’s analyses of the uneven distribution of Japanese industries and vertically disintegrated spatial division of labour within the national economy; and Yada attempted to extrapolate it into the 1970s. In carrying out this analysis, Yada put forward a tenet which sounded much like the shift-share analysis: “the uneven regional development of industry is essentially determined by two fac-
tors: inter-sectional unevenness of industrial de-
velopment, or regional manifestation of the in-
dustrial structure changes, on the one hand, and the inter-regional unevenness of the develop-
ment within a particular industrial sector, namely the locational processes of industries, on the other” (Yada and Aono 1975:68). From this standpoint Yada stressed the necessity to “theoretically explicate the locational mobility of capital from the standpoint of Marxist econ-

In order to materialise this research agenda, Yada, together with some other alternative geog-
raphers (most of whom had been trained as a geographer from the beginning) organised scores of other social and economic geogra-
phers, which included graduate students and some conventionals, into a research group for the study of “regional structure” of Japan, called Chiiki Kozo Kenkyukai. The main task of the research group was to pick out and de-
marcate functional economic regions produced jointly with location of industrial production processes and distribution of their market, in an attempt to identify a universal regional divi-
sions of economic activities within Japan (Kitamura 1988:8–9). The outcomes of this research were published as a six-volume series titled The Regional Structure of Japan, with vol-
umes dealing with regional concepts and re-
gional structure, manufacturing, agriculture, commodity and information flows, migration, and income and finance.

One might well ask, if this research practice is really that of alternative. The concepts of nodal regions and shift-share analysis are indeed the favourites of the conventional and neoclassical, and much sophisticated research would be neces-
sary to bring these concepts to terms with, and
to subsume them into, the alternative, Marxist conceptions. In this regard, Kitamura, the head of the research group, was not hesitant in accepting the fact that their concept *chiiki kozo* originated in the melange of Japanese geographers, including many of exceptionalist chorographers as well as exceptionalist alternative geographers such as Okuda (Kitamura 1988: 1–7). The concept of *chiiki kozo* thus contained from the beginning strong conventional elements. True to Kitamura's claim, most of the volumes in the series gave little mention to such vital concepts of Marxist political economy as value, classes, crises, dialectical contradictions or something of similar sort. Marxist land rent theory, that Yada had originally drawn upon heavily, was also entirely absent. Indeed, two decades later, Yamaguchi (1994a: 48), once one of the strongest advocates for *chiiki kozo* conception, reflected that the conception had failed to develop elaborated theoretical methodology, lacked research orientation at global scale, confined itself to industrial geography in the narrow sense and shared no consciousness for socially-relevant issues.

As for the critical appraisal of bourgeois location theories from Marxist perspective, the work of Yamana (1972) was much more profound and comprehensive. Yamana was a geographer by training but held a professorship in the Faculty of Commerce of Osaka City University, where Kawashima also taught as a professor in its Faculty of Economics. His work, appeared as a volume of a series titled *Marxist Economics*, was one of the most theory-minded of all the books with alternative orientation at that time. True to his faith, he later introduced works of Sheppard and Barnes (1990) into the community of Japanese geographers (Yamana 1991).

Yamana (1972) had, nevertheless, crucial shortcomings in terms of the spatial theories: each theory was dealt with in a chapter that corresponded to the economic sector that the theory explicitly represented: Alfred Weber in manufacturing, Thünen in agriculture and Lösch in commerce etc. He did not examine further the variegated spatial logic per se underlying in the structure of those different theories. The organisation of Yamana's book was thus inevitably confined to the existing "pigeon holes" that the historical development of bourgeois location theories had created. It failed to create an original spatial logic of the location theories in Marxian terms that deserved to be called Marxian location theory. In spite of these shortcomings, however, Yamana's work gave at least an intermediate answer to the research agenda that Yada had posed on himself.

For Yada himself, he rarely committed in theoretical research to fulfil his promise for a "Marxian spatial economics". He rather grafted bourgeois location theories eclectically onto the ad hoc Marxian interpretation to describe industrial spaces that Japanese economy has created. An example can be found in Murata (1980: 130–138). Without taking Yamana's contribution into account, Yada gradually sidled up to the "safe" heaven of exceptionalism in the conventional institution in concurrence with more and more geographers being attracted to the *chiiki kozo* group. They have eventually grown into a "school" or a separate institution in itself on top of the existing institution of geography.

Many of the young alternative geographers entered into the *chiiki kozo* group, which offered too comfortable environment for the young graduate students, as their "alternativeness" was guaranteed automatically, without engaging in ideological struggles against the conventionalists, or fear of losing opportunities for future university teaching appointments.

Lately, Yada virtually converted his positions into those in co-operation with the conservative Government in various capitalist spatial development projects, including the Fifth National Comprehensive Development Plan. He now serves on various Government committees offering development consultations, and has thus transferred the followers to the central bastin of capitalist spatial processes, and fulfilled the promise to serve the nationalistic needs expected to the institutionalised geographers as pointed out by Capel (1981).

The demise of the *chiiki kozo* school, after all, manifests a quaint articulation within the institution of geography between a meta-disciplinary intersubjectivity for mirage of alterntiveness and conventional practice of economic geography in the reality. The conven-
tional thus persists in Japan.

The Advent of the “Society and Space” Orientation and the Rise of Disconstructionism

The false consciousness created as to the chiiki kozo school also seems to have come from another factor. Japanese alternative geographers have had unfounded but strong parochial belief that the academic standard of Marxism in Japan was superior to those of any other capitalist countries: thus application of Marxism to social and economic geography was bound to be superior to the equivalent practises of any other. T. Aoki, who once served the president of the JAEG, boasted that the work of Kawanishi “has attained the highest standard of Marxist economic geography in the world” (Aoki, T. 1961:6, italics added).

This consciousness was not without ground: a professorship of Marxist economics exists in almost every faculty of economics in Japanese universities; and as many as one third of the total copies of MEGA, the collection of original manuscripts of Marx and Engels published in former East Germany as its national project under the domination of SED-led orthodox Marxism, were reported to have been sold in Japan.

As the trend of political economy in geography clearly came to emerge in the English-speaking countries along with the advent of neo-Marxism in Western Europe, the parochial belief as to their Marxism among the alternative geographers in Japan had been functioning as a “non-tariff barrier” against the internationally-produced society-and-space debates. If their ideas stood at zenith and were backed by the most superior knowledge of Marxism, where is rationale for learning anything from “barbarians” abroad? Furthermore, the Japan Communist Party, still retaining the obsolete “democratic centralism” and claiming “orthodoxy” in the interpretation of Marxism, is in hatred of almost every tenet of neo-Marxism, which includes the regulation school, the theories of Poulantzas and so forth. Therefore, many alternative geographers subscribing to this political line saw the new development of the political-economy stream in geography abroad, drawing upon the conceptions of neo-Marxism, with much scepticism. Coupled with the virtual conversion of the chiiki kozo school into conventional, this parochialism and the sense of orthodoxy have brought Japanese alternative geography into ossification as compared to its international counterpart.

The consequence of the above has come to manifest itself recently in a curious situation, whereby many of the latest developments of the society-and-space debates in English-speaking countries have been accepted first by those in other disciplines as sociology or economics, with geographers following the track already beaten by those non-geographers. For example, a major work of Yi-Fu Tuan (1977) was translated into Japanese by a scholar majoring in English dramatics; general academics in Japan often believe that David Harvey is an urban sociologist rather than a geographer! In this context, Takeuchi (1993:14), who has kept and expressed his interest in the activities of alternative geographers overseas from their earliest stage of development, deplored, “why the geographers’ circle of Japan did not experience the tumultuous four decades, as in other countries, from the quantitative revolution of the 1950s to the current full bloom” of the new streams of geography.

Amidst the disciplinary crisis thus manifested, some alternative geographers in Japan finally realised a task to absorb the new trends of geography abroad as well as to create theoretical conception of geography of their own. A group of mostly young geographers thus founded in 1991 a new study group in the AJG, called the “Theories and Tasks of Social Geography”, headed by Takatsu, the translator-in-chief of David Ley (1983) into Japanese.

The members of the study group enthusiastically engage in various collective activities of study, discuss and propagate the society-and-space debates in English-speaking countries. They plan to publish a booklet containing translated seminal papers which appeared in the late 1970s to the early 1980s and gave directions to the debates (scheduled to come out in 1996); to create their own theoretical conceptualisations of dialectics as space is
subsumed into society (Mizuoka 1992a, 1992b, 1995, for example); and to conduct various field works covering such new issues as gender, ethnicity, segregation, slums, etc. In 1993 the study group played a vital role in organising a symposium at the 40th annual meeting of the JAEG, titled “Society and Space”, with David Ley invited as guest speaker (Ley 1994); again in autumn 1994, they hosted a symposium in the academic meeting of the AJG, where David Harvey delivered the keynote speech as an invited guest (Harvey 1994). The study group also organises a seminar twice a year, where guests from other disciplines of social science with interest in space are invited.

Through the activities of the study group, at least a part of Japanese geography is now exposed directly to the lively debates among the alternatives abroad. Reflecting the spectrum of the society-and-space debate abroad, the topics that the study group members cover are fairly wide, not limited to the political-economy orientation but stretching over very wide fields of research: urban planning, historical geography, political geography, behaviourism and intersubjectivity, ethnicity and gender, cultural studies, post-modernism and studies of the socially marginalised, to name a few.

Yet, mainly through the humanistic and cultural orientation of the spectrum, various influences of post-modernism crept into their practice. The propensity of post-modernism, where anything with general, formal framework is treated with scepticism, tends to bring about deconstructionism and lopsided emphasis on idiosyncrasy. When pressed to the extreme, this leads to “legitimacy” for sweeping denial of the “modernist” theoretical conceptualisations of space, or in some cases of the academic and behavioural consistency of the academics themselves as well. Here, idiosyncratic regional descriptions, which are in fact a stone’s throw away from the exceptionalist chorography, are bound to recur.

Yamada, for example, in criticising endeavour to formulate a general theory into which the element space is explicitly subsumed, declared, on the occasion of the JAEG symposium mentioned above, that “the knowledge of so-called ‘theory of spatial configuration’, interpreting Marx through David Harvey and working to seek internal consistency of the theoretical body of Marxism... could be totally useless to the geographers who describe human affairs by walking actually over the hard surface of the earth” (Yamada 1993:42). In contrast to nomothetic sociology, “geography, even though it seemingly aspires to social science with causal observation, essentially recurs back to idiosyncratic descriptions of unique regions (societies) scattered over space” (Yamada 1993:44). Two and a half years later, he was elected as a councillor of the AJG, with some support from graduate students.

Some other members of the study group actively take part in field researches of socially relevant issues. Niwa (1996), the most engaged in this direction, advocates that, while Harvey (1973) and other Western radical geographers have kept strong consciousness towards social relevance, Japanese geographers “have not, above all, actively taken up the cases even when social inequality takes obvious spatially manifested forms, as in the discriminated people (buraku) or clustering of Korean minority in Japan”.

Although Niwa associates himself with Harvey, Niwa's practice is apparently much closer to that of Bunge (1971), whose practice Harvey himself saw with much scepticism: “it does not entail yet another empirical investigation of the social conditions in the ghettos....Nor is it a solution to indulge in that emotional tourism which attracts us to live and work with the poor ‘for a while’ in the hope that we can really help them improve their lot....”, instead, “our task is to mobilise our powers of thought to formulate concepts and categories, theories and arguments, which we can apply to the task of bringing about a humanising social change....” (Harvey 1973:144-145). Unless efforts are made to positively relate such research agenda as postulated by Niwa to the general theorisation of the spatial configuration of society, it would merely mean its relegation into “socially-relevant” regional description put forward by Kamoizawa a generation ago, or into the primitive level of American radical geography in the early 1970s as represented by Bunge’s (1971) practice in Fitzgerald, Detroit, to which Niwa
Explicitly gives support. The success of the society-and-space debates in the English-speaking countries, which have attained robustness at par with other fields of social sciences and already done away with exceptionalism, lies in the very fact that it has got over such a crude propagation of "social relevance".

The consciousness and concomitant practice among social and economic geographers to respect existing social and economic theories, and then attempts to formulate comprehensive theoretical framework of geography's own for understanding of economic and social space are thus vital, as demonstrated in the postures of Harvey (1982) to Marx, Gregory (1978) to Giddens, and Scott (1988) to the institutionalist economists well demonstrate this. In Japan, attempts of this sort have just set in recently. Tsutsumi (1992) engaged in elaborated study of German social geography, Onjo (1993) did it for Raffestin, Shimizu (1993) for Durkheim, and Oshiro (1996) for Foucault. Peck and Miyamauchi (1994) attempted to apply the regulation concept to Japanese capitalism, and Mizuoka (1992a, 1992b, 1995) attempted to create the original framework of alternative economic geography which sets forth the dialectical logic whereby homogeneous pristine space transforms itself into heterogeneity of spatial configuration as the former is subsumed into society.

Nevertheless, with few exceptions such as those quoted above, the geographers in the study group have so far bothered little to deal with materials related to the fields of economic geography, including that of the regulation school, new international divisions of labour and the like. This could perhaps be explained by the fact that a more intense study is necessary to acquire sufficient comprehension of the framework of economic theories than its counterpart in social geography.

We could thus infer from the above that many of Japanese alternative geographers with the interest in the society-and-space debate have only hit the tip of its iceberg, but not much beyond: some new imported jargons might have been added to the geographers' parole, but real research mentality and methodology have scarcely changed. Encouraged with the justification coming from post-modernism, some of them even have come to show much scepticism in devoting themselves to the intensive research towards theoretical conceptualisations of space.

After all, the academic environment is not something like automobile production: there is no instant, mass-produced way for the society-and-space debates. Thus, the introduction of recent international trends of geography into Japan must be regarded as yet premature, for it still lacks much of the "social infrastructure" necessary for these debates to take root. Without proper theoretical conceptions of geography created through the support of this infrastructure, the nature of academic exchanges with other disciplines would remain the same as that a generation ago, where it ended up with passive consumption of research outcomes with respect to space created outside the geography pigeon hole.

Indeed, the forces that have created the pendulum still remain mostly intact; and the countervailing forces to get over this pendulum still scant. It is still a short step away to the legitimisation of idiosyncratic exceptionalism in the name of disconstructionism and the subservient position of Japanese version of "society and space" debates within the academic division of labour, which was prevalent decades ago. Japanese geographers have yet to find success in securing its own standing in social science in general, and in exerting considerable influence over other disciplines of social science. The long-lasting stigma of Japanese geographers, that they are not well respected by other fields of social science, still seems to persist. What is really deplorable is, however, that those geographers are not conscious of the real location of the source of their stigma: the fact that it lies within.

Conclusion

The "humanly-created environment" for Japanese alternative geographers is thus reification of their own internal disciplinary dialectics, which has so far had little prospect of transcendence. In Japan, where the barriers between pigeon holes are high, for the human relations within the institutionalised academics
themselves still retain the characteristics of oriental community. All the initial attempts to create the conceptual, theoretical framework in the hands of alternative have strong propensity of degenerating into exceptionalism akin to the conventional.

Recently there seems to have shown up yet another swing in a popular monthly journal of geography, in a series of short essays titled "An Invitation to Geography Debates". Here a physical geographer with brief knowledge of Marxism preaches a human geographer (this is, incidentally, already a hallmark of the institutionalised geography) for the alternative, while deploiring the conventional practise (Koizumi 1995–96). Without giving mention to the recent development of alternative geography in the international academic community, he sings the words of criticism to the tunes that have worn thin already. Yamaguchi (1994b), who once turned down Kamozawa’s work (1960) as subscribing to “economic chorography” conception, now turns back in support of the “return to chorography” move again and praises his work to be “still of much value as the fundamental literature of Marxist economic geography in Japan” (italics added).

It seems that the day when Japanese alternative geographers secede the parasitism to the conventional and succeed in bringing its social and economic geography into a fully independent discipline within the academic division of labour of social sciences, and thus in doing away with paradoxical yearning for institutional protection, still seems to lie in some distant future. Japanese alternative geographers immediately need to set off more serious attempts to transcend the disciplinary dialectics that has given rise to the pendulum swings, in order to create a robust theoretical conception of space capable of persuading the practitioners of other social sciences the real value and unique contribution of geographical science. Without this endeavour, the outlook of Japanese alternative geography for attaining the intellectual level at par with the international counterpart and gaining respect within the academic division of labour of social science in Japan must remain bleak.

(Received Mar. 18, 1996)
(Accepted May 25, 1996)

References

Kawanishi, M. 1942. *Toa chiseigaku no koso (Conceptualising the East-Asian geopolitics).* Tokyo: Jitsugyo no Nihon Sha. (J)


Yamada, H. 1993. Facing sociology as a geographer, or a phantasy of the theoretical studies of space.

In *Kukan to shakai (Space and society)*, Abstracts of the symposium at the 40th annual meeting of the Japan Association of Economic Geographers, 41–45. (J)


