TAKEDA Yuko and KINOSHITA Reiko eds.:

***Chizu de miru nihon no josei*
(Gender Atlas of Japan).**

Tokyo: Akashi Syoten, 92 pp., 2007 (ISBN 978-4-7503-2512-5).

For a long time it has been said that a gender atlas of Japan should be published. This gender atlas book is just what we have expected. This atlas with a variety of colored maps attracts readers.

The gender atlas received its initial popularity and attention in the field of feminist geography which emerged in the U.S. and European countries in the 1970's and developed in the 1980's. The gender atlas played an effective role in developing feminist geography. It used to be argued that human beings were only men, not including women. Feminist geographers, questioning this assumption, tried to make women visible in society. Feminist geographers argue that women who have been historically invisible should be visible by locating them in society. The gender atlas can be effectively used to show the differences between men and women, and the relative position of women in society.

What kind of power do maps have? When we try to describe current social phenomena, we can use statistics, photography and documentary films besides words. It can be said that the map is one of the strongest tools that can clarify "what" happens, in "how much scale", and "where". Seager, author of *Women in the world: an international atlas* (1986), pointed out that the map is an extremely powerful tool with which we describe not only social relationships between men and women, but also the differences and similarities among women in different areas, as discussed in her study of gender differences among various countries. Seager showed how effective the map was as a tool to describe social phenomena. She located women's positions in politics or the labor market. In addition, she focused on gender issues such as breast cancer, AIDS, domestic violence and rape by making a variety of maps to identify social problems.

Although the importance and usefulness of a gender atlas were recognized by Japanese researchers who had learned of the gender atlas in the U.S. and Europe, it was hard to publish a gender atlas in Japan because of such problems as data collection and the technology of map-

making. This book *Gender Atlas of Japan* was published by authors who are interested in GIS and the issue of welfare for the first time in Japan, 20 years after Seager's original gender atlas.

This book has its special strength in specifying items for making social maps. There are four major chapters of 28 items for making maps in the book: marriage, work, childcare/education, and life/social welfare. Among them, maps to indicate women's recent social activities illuminate our understanding of the current situation of women in Japan. The maps deal with the dynamic relationship among marriage, space for living, and areas. The authors focus on unmarried women in their thirties by comparing the average age of first marriages among prefectures. Among unmarried women, the rate of living with their parents is higher in areas with a low unmarried women rate than in ones with a high-unmarried women rate. This can be interpreted that it is common for unmarried women to live with their parents in an area with a low unmarried women rate in Japan. In the Tokyo metropolitan area, the rate of married women is higher in the suburbs. However rate of living with together parents indicates different social phenomena. The low rate of living with their parents can be interpreted as indicating either a high married rate or a high unmarried rate. This should be discussed together with the issue of space for living.

The authors also explore the issue of unmarried women who live alone. The areas with a high rate of unmarried women who live alone are concentrated in the Tokyo area. The rate is higher in wards such as Shibuya, Nakano, Meguro, and Suginami. The authors argue that single women who have decided to marry late or not to get married tend to choose to live in these areas since they can get jobs to be economically independent, and apartments for single women and social services benefiting them are available there as well. From this argument, any reader of the maps in this book can clearly understand why single unmarried women in their thirties

tend to live in these areas. I wish the authors would make some discussion about such areas with a high rate of single unmarried women such as Hokkaido and Nagano.

This book has special features to benefit its readers. First, maps in the book shed light on new themes in feminist geography. When a researcher reads peculiar patterns of social indicators in the maps, she/he can begin to do research on the patterns to discover new themes in geography. For example, by reading gender maps, a researcher may find a higher rate of women employees in hot spring areas or in the tourist industry along related indicators and then begin his/her research focusing on those areas.

Second, maps in the book illustrate employment instability issues such as unemployment, “freeter”, “NEET” as well as changing family patterns by dealing with the unmarried rate, the late-marriage rate, and the divorce rate. They also illustrate serious social problems such as domestic violence and aging. The authors are keen to these social issues in Japan by making gender maps. By making multi-faceted maps about gender issues, the authors provide readers with insights to understand the current situation of women in Japan.

Even though this book is a pioneer of gender atlases

and it has illuminating power for further research by showing a variety of maps, new items for maps should be added. The items to be explored should include women’s social status such as job ranking in an organization or personal assets, as well as gender power relations, and body and culture.

I believe that this book is good enough as it is since the maps in the book illuminate gender issues vividly. But if possible, it would be very beneficial for readers to have another book which interprets the meanings of all the maps, especially for introductory level students of gender issues. One weakness of this book is that maps sometimes spread over pages so that instructors may have some difficulty in using it when making comparisons among different areas on the map.

Finally, I would say that this book, which is published as a gender atlas for the first time in Japan, can function as a useful introduction of gender studies. I expect that this book will evolve itself further and stimulate new themes from a feminist geography perspective in Japan.

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