Japanese views on human geography

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Human Geography is a high quality generalist review. It is written in Japanese, but each paper is followed by substantial abstracts in English. It is a pity that the legends on maps and graphics are not also translated along with the titles of Japanese books reviewed at the end of each issue. In that way, the magazine would have a better international audience and the illustrations could be used by authors of geography textbooks published in other major scientific languages.

Authors are seniors and juniors in geography : it is a good way to enforce unity of the community and to prepare a renewal of themes. Topics are highly various ; this reveals a true liberty and lack of dogmatism. This review does not express a school, but all tendencies of geography. Theoretical and paradigmatic papers are published as well as monographs on all aspects of human geography. The place of historical geography must be pointed out. This multidisciplinary approach was preeminent in France until the 1960s. Then, historians and geographers separated, but during the last decade new collaborations were conceived and a commission of Historical Geography has been recreated in the French National Committee of Geography. The effects of this have been admirable, because geography has had to leave the protectionist reflex of encirclement and has to appear as necessary for all other human and environmental sciences. On the environment, in particular, *Human Geography* contains a remarkable paper written in English by J. M. Powell (1999, 5). One of geography's specific aims is to study the relation between man and his environment. It is one of the essential

branches of geography, allowing us to move forward from the old separation between physical and human geography. Let us also mention the Shizuyo Sano's paper (1999, 4) dealing with environment, irrigated agriculture, political and social geography and showing the landlords place in environmental management of medieval Japan.

Several papers published in the years 1999-2000 will be freely commentated in order to open discussions.

- Yoshio Sugiura draws attention to Edward Ullman's works (1999, 1). Is spatial analysis really a new concept and practice in geography? Is it not a little bit arrogant of researchers to change geography in spatial analysis? In reality, quantitative and qualitative approaches are not so different and do not exclude mutually. Some realities can only be studied with qualitative methods. Researchers, with good and sure statistics always demand for complex interpretations combining models, and multi-faceted intuitive explanations. The boundary between hard and soft science is not so clear.
- Failures observed by Atsushi Kawakubo (1999, 2) are significant of the productivist farming crisis. The only model of world farming for half a century is today contested. The economic foundations of it appear to have been wrong. Inputs are very expensive, so prices are too high for consumers in poor countries to buy the excess production coming from rich countries. This type of highly-subsidized agriculture is also too expensive for taxpayers. Pollution involved is critical, because of the excessive use of fertilizers and pesticides. Landscapes are uniformised with total lack of feeling for the local or tourists. The same lack of sensitivity concerns world food issued from such an economy. It is time to promote an agriculture

- strongly related to the geographical, physical and human environment.
- Kazuaki Sugiyama (1999, 4) studies the social place of a night district of Toyama. Geography will appeal to non-geographers if its interests are related to behavior and the daily space of societies, if some amelioration of welfare is consequently possible.
 - Historically and politically, the Kunitada Narumi's paper (1999, 6) demonstrates the cartographic qualities of Japanese rural inhabitants in the early Edo period. He points out the fundamental question of spatial knowledge in preindustrial societies. For them, surfaces and heights are as essential as for industrial societies. It is particularly true in old Japan characterized by high land pressure and high educational level, one of the highest in the world.
 - Neil Smith (2000, 1) treats the central question of globalization. History and geography suggests that this inevitable reality has no determined consequence : it is not good, nor bad. Everything depends on the users. The poor inhabitants of the planet are today fragile in front of such a revolution, and acceleration in the rate of change. But reasonable and sustainable solutions are possible with a sense of responsibility, imagination and generosity.
 - Koji Ohnishi (2000, 2) writes about an original topic : children's living space and perception. It is a kind of gender study, a fashionable way of doing geography in Anglo-Saxon countries (not in the Latin European countries). He employs the socio-economic approach, rather than the individual one. Let us say that the two points of view are not opposite. Man is a social animal, but he/she has also a strong personality, important to understand spatial organization.
 - Honami Kageyama is interested in apartments offered in the 1930s in Otsuka to working women. It is another original example of gender geography. Ways of habitation are more and more studied in cultural geography, especially inside space. For a long time geography has chosen to focus upon outside space (called landscape). Fortunately, This is changing.
 - *Sake* breweries organization during the Meiji era seems a topic far away from geography. But Takahiro Aoki (2000, 5) offers very interesting spatial conclusions. Quality amelioration is a good solution for the problem of competition among *sake* breweries. This is an excellent lesson at the moment for agriculture, but also industry and services, in rich as in poor countries.
 - In general, modern industries and services are not so well studied in *The Human Geography*, which is more interested in past situations. Hidekazu Aoki's paper (2000, 5) is an exception. It describes the principles of localization in the Sony company and the impact of factories in chosen regions. It is essential to renew studies in economic localizations, chiefly paying attention to local culture and enterprise. Traditional economic geography has been interested only in apparent costs. We should welcome this evolution.