Gender equality and progress of gender studies in Japanese geography: a critical overview

Yohei Murata

Department of Geography, Graduate School of Letters, Kyoto University, Yoshida-honmachi, Sakyo, Kyoto, 606–8501, Japan

Abstract: This paper examines gender equality in Japanese academic geography and provides an overview of gender studies undertaken in the discipline. First, I point out the serious gender imbalance which exists in Japanese geography, through an examination of data on gender participation in academic societies, publications and faculty promotions. Secondly, I provide an overview of geographical research on gender in Japan. Thirdly, I point out as major issues concerning gender studies in Japanese geography that the Japanese male geographer tends to misunderstand gender and ignore sexuality. In conclusion, I suggest that Japanese male geographers need to realize that gender is their own issue and that there is a need to conduct men’s studies in Japanese geography.

Key words: gender, Japanese geography, male geographer, men’s studies, positionality, sexuality.

1 Introduction

In contemporary international human geography, gender studies have been recognized as an important academic subdiscipline. Yet both theoretical and empirical studies have been mostly on and from English-speaking countries while geographical studies on gender in Japan are hardly recognized. This is partly due to the language barrier: few geographical articles on the gender situation in Japan have been published in English, and few geographers outside Japan have shown interest in publications in Japanese. Such a barrier has prevented geographers outside Japan from learning what is going on in Japanese geography. In fact, research on gender in Japanese geography has been developing especially in recent years. Introducing the situation of geographers’ work in Japan will contribute to academic exchange between English-speaking countries and Japan. This paper thus aims to examine gender equality in Japanese geography and also to provide an overview of gender studies conducted in the discipline. The progress of gender studies and gender equality among researchers is closely interrelated, and the exploration of the two will illuminate current issues to be addressed in Japanese geography.

The paper will first examine gender equality within the discipline by exploring the position of women in Japanese geography.
Data such as women’s participation in academic societies, their publications and faculty promotions are examined. Secondly, the progress of gender studies in Japanese geography is documented. Thirdly, issues concerning gender studies in the discipline are raised. The conclusion will then consider how to remedy these issues.

II Gender equality among Japanese geographers

Gender equality has been examined by geographers since the 1970s, mainly addressing the issues of women’s underrepresentation and their lower level of career achievement in North America and in Europe (Zelinsky, 1973; 1975; Berman, 1974; Rubin, 1979; McDowell, 1979; 1990; Momsen, 1980; Golledge and William, 1983; Garcia-Ramon et al., 1988; Mackenzie, 1989; McDowell and Peake, 1990; Lee, 1990; Falconer Al-Hindi, 2000; Luzzadder-Beach and Macfarlane, 2000; Winkler, 2000; Hall et al., 2002; Monk, 2004). As no studies seem to have been published on the Japanese situation,1 this paper will attempt to examine the following aspects of gender equality among geographers in Japan: (1) gender balance in academic geographical societies; (2) percentages of women/men who have written papers in the area; (3) percentages of women/men who served as referees for academic journals; (4) rate of women/men who administer geographical societies; (5) gender distribution of geographers who have teaching positions in colleges/universities.

First, data on the gender balance in academic geographical societies are to be examined. There are two major academic geographical societies in Japan: Nihon Chiri Gakkai (The Association of Japanese Geographers: AJG) and Jim bun Chiri Gakkai (The Human Geographical Society of Japan: HGSJ). AJG, founded in 1923, is the oldest Japanese geographical society and has the largest number of members. In 2001, the Association had approximately 3,200 geographers as members. The society is aimed at both physical and human geographers, and it publishes an academic journal Chirigaku Hyoron (Geographical Review of Japan) 14 times per year (12 issues in Japanese and two in English). The Secretariat is located in Tokyo. On the other hand, HGSJ, founded in 1946, is a society only for human geographers. It publishes an academic journal Jim bun Chiri (Human Geography) six times per year. Approximately 1,600 geographers were members in 2002, and its Secretariat is located in Kyoto. Most Japanese geographers join either or both of the two societies. These societies are considered as two major representatives, and an examination of geographers who belong to the societies will provide a fairly good reflection of the situation in Japanese geography.

Using the name lists of the two societies, I calculated percentages of women/men geographers.2 The result is shown in Table 1. In 2001, the percentage of women members of both societies was approximately 8%, while male membership was about 92%. If compared with data collected in 1990, the percentage of women is slightly higher, but it is still less than 10%.

I also compared this situation with those of other social sciences in Japan. Table 2 shows percentages of women/men scholars in various academic disciplines: the percentage of female scholars who belong to The Japan Sociological Society was 18.6%, that of The

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1</th>
<th>Percentages of female members in Japanese geographical societies, judged by first name, with those of unknown gender removed from the total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Society</td>
<td>1990</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Association of Japanese Geographies (AJG)</td>
<td>5.3a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Human Geographical Society of Japan (HGSJ)</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes

1 Ota (1990a). 22001.

Source: Lists of members’ names from each society.
Gender equality in Japanese geography

Japanese Psychological Association was 26.0% and that of the Japanese Society of Ethnography was 26.3%. It shows that women's participation in Japanese geography is lower than that in other cognate disciplines.

Secondly, I examined the percentage of academic publications of both women and men geographers. The publications investigated are papers in the journals *Chirigaku Hyoron* and *Jimbun Chiri* over three periods (1976–80, 1986–90, and 1996–2000). The result is shown in Table 3. Generally, the percentage of papers written by women geographers has increased over the years. Although these numbers seem to be low when compared with the situation in other academic disciplines in Japan (Table 2), it has to be noted that, for all three periods, the percentage of female authorship in geography is higher than the percentage of women's membership in the discipline.

Thirdly, the percentages of women/men who have served as referees for the two academic journals are examined. The data utilized were from name lists of the referees for *Chirigaku Hyoron* and *Jimbun Chiri*. Female referees for *Chirigaku Hyoron* in 1995 reached 7%, whereas those for *Jimbun Chiri* in 2000 amounted to 6.3%. This means that only a small number of women are involved in making decisions on what articles are to be published in academic journals.

Fourthly, the rate of women/men who administer geographical societies was explored. Only two female members (0.7%) have served as council members in AJG until 2000 (Nihon Chiri Gakkai, 2001: 398). The HGSJ did not have a female council member until 2000. Both societies have never had a female chairperson. All clerical employees for the societies, however, have been women (Jimbun Chiri Gakkai, 1998). In Japan, women are seldom involved in the administration of academic geographical societies.

Finally, the gender distribution of geographers who hold teaching positions in colleges/universities was explored, utilizing the data from the name list of AJG. The percentage of women geographers who hold teaching jobs at universities was 6.3% in

---

**Table 2** Percentages of females in neighbouring academic societies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Japan Sociological Society</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>11.7, 27.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Japanese Psychological Association</td>
<td>26.0</td>
<td>30.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Japanese Society of Ethnography</td>
<td>26.3</td>
<td>28.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Notes**


Percentage of authors in *Shinrigaku Kenkyu* (Psychological Research).


---

**Table 3** Percentages of female authors in Japanese geographical journals, judged by first name, with those of unknown gender removed from the total (in cases of collaboration, the gender of the first author's name was counted). Rounded up to one decimal place

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Geographical Review of Japan (A)</em></td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>6.1</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>13.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short report</td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>10.5</td>
<td>8.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Human Geography</em></td>
<td>Article</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>5.6</td>
<td>11.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Short report</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>18.6</td>
<td>23.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average</td>
<td></td>
<td>8.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>14.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 4 Details of female teachers belonging to the Association of Japanese Geographers (D.C. = Doctor Course)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teaching Post</th>
<th>Geography course</th>
<th>Other disciplines</th>
<th>Subtotal</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>With D.C.</td>
<td>Without D.C.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Professor</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate professor</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time lecturer</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subtotal</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant, Part-time lecturer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: List of members’ names from each society, Kojyunsha (2001), homepages of Japanese universities, and word of mouth.

2001. The percentage was an increase from 3.3% in 1989 (Ota, 1990a). This number is, however, lower than the average percentage (12.3%)\(^5\) of female faculty in all Japanese universities. Table 4 shows a more detailed distribution of female geographers. In Japan, professors, assistant professors and full-time lecturers have tenure-track jobs. The number of female faculty working in universities which grant geography degrees was only 15 in 2001 (five professors, eight associate professors, and two full-time lecturers). Furthermore, the number of female faculty members working in universities which grant geography PhDs is only five. In short, female geographers rarely supervise doctoral dissertations.

All of these results point to the severe gender imbalance in Japanese geography. Japanese geography needs to consider why there are such a small percentage of women geographers. Increasing the number of women in geography, however, is not the final solution, because even when the gender ratio becomes 50–50 in the discipline, gender discrimination does not necessarily disappear.

This section has quantitatively examined gender inequality in Japanese geography but, to understand gender discrimination at a deeper level, structural problems of the discipline need to be qualitatively explored. One of the best ways to illuminate the structures of the discipline is to examine how gender studies in Japanese geography have been developed and recognized. Thus, the next section will explore existing gender studies in Japanese geography and, hopefully, reveal some structural problems within the discipline.

III The progress of gender studies in Japanese geography

1 Before daybreak: in the first half of the 1990s

At the end of the twentieth century, two books on the history of Japanese academic geography were published (Takeuchi and Masai, 1986; 1999). These books were based on interviews with well-known Japanese geographers of the past. The front covers of these books consisted of photographs of the geographers, and all of them are men. This suggests that Japanese geography of the twentieth century was dominated by male geographers. It was at the beginning of the 1990s, however, that such a tradition of Japanese geography began to change. Geographers started recognizing the importance of gender issues, including the gender imbalance of geographers who work in the discipline.

The first significant arguments on gender were made in a geography magazine Chiri (Geography). This magazine is a monthly magazine for people who are interested in geography. From 1989 to 1992, Chiri serialized articles on gender as well as those on ethnicity,

Gender imbalance was found, however, even among geographers who wrote these articles on gender. While nine articles were written by male geographers, there were only four by female geographers (Kogo, 1989; 1990; Tanaka, 1991; Sato, 1992). In addition, discussions on gender were less lively than those on ethnicity. Although there were these problems, the series of Chiri was the first indication that gender was beginning to be recognized among Japanese geographers.

One of the results of the series was that the gender imbalance in academic geography was critically discussed for the first time. For example, I. Ota (1990a) pointed out gender discrimination within Japanese geography in his article entitled ‘Women do not exist in Japanese geography’:

> When I attend an academic conference held periodically in fall and spring, I see that it is all women who are lining up behind the reception desk to receive members for registration. Members of the geographical societies are overwhelmingly men, and there are only a few women in rooms for research presentations. The number of women decreases even further at a social gathering [after presentations] because younger generations of geographers participate in it less than older generations, and thus the rate of men increases even more. Only the reception desks seem to be in a different world. (I. Ota, 1990a: 18)

Here Ota criticizes gender division in relation to the uneven distribution of professional power too. Tanaka (1991) also discusses the same issue:

> In Japanese geography, there are very few women geographers who are actively engaged in the research, having an academic position. The members who attend geography conferences are mostly men, which gives me an illusion that ‘women are forbidden’ there. To me, knowing many women geographers in the AAG – I do not know the precise percentage, but my impression was 30% [of the geographers of the AAG were women] – this Japanese situation seems abnormal. (Tanaka, 1991: 16)

She points out how Japanese geography is inclined to be male-orientated, especially compared with the situation in the USA. Her remark is evidence that professional female geographers were very few in Japan in the early 1990s.

There were other voices to criticize such gender imbalance, raised by women geographers who actually experienced gender discrimination. On 12 June 1991, Ochanomizu Women’s University invited Susan Hanson from Clark University, who at the time was the president of the AAG. Hanson provided a lecture, and a focus group was also held (Mitsuhashi, 1992a; 1992b). Thirteen people, all of whom were women, attended the group. Discussions between Hanson and the participants who were Japanese women geographers have been reported as follows (Mitsuhashi, 1992a):

> Hanson: I hope that those of you who are professors will encourage your students to consider studying in the States for a PhD, and if you are a master’s student also after you finish your masters degree, I would like to see more Japanese women coming to the US to get the PhD. And especially Clark.

> [Geographer] G: I am not sure whether it is a good idea for women geographers of Japan to earn a PhD from a major American university ... I have been teaching for a couple of decades both in the US and in Canada, but no geography departments in Japan have offered me a job. They do not count me as a geographer. I have offers from American, Canadian, Malaysian and Hong Kong departments, but not any geography department in Japan. Japan has to open its market for geographers, like in North America, so that women geographers can compete with male geographers on the academic level.

> [Geographer] H: I have earned a doctoral degree from the University of British Columbia ... Having earned the PhD, I taught in York University located in the suburbs of Toronto for about two years. I came back to Japan about two years ago, but I had quite a tough time to find a full-time job.
Geographer G says that earning a PhD in the USA does not necessarily help women to obtain a job in Japan. Geographers H and I who received a PhD in North America but had a tough time finding a job in Japan support the argument. Their experiences show that they have been judged by being a woman, not by what they have achieved. Discussing the problem in this focus group, Hanson introduced the network of American woman geographers, The Committee on the Status of a Woman in Geography (CSWG) of the AAG, and the focus group talked about the possibility of establishing a similar institution in Japan. However, the idea has not yet been realized.

I. Ota (1992a) also criticizes the situation. Ota is specialized in ethnicity, not gender, but he ended up serving on a Japanese committee of Gender and Geography sectional meeting in the International Geography Union (IGU) for several years (I. Ota, 1992c: 69). He lamented as follows:

It is deplorable that a person like me [who is not specialized in gender research] is the Japanese representative to attend the IGU sectional meeting for gender studies. (I. Ota, 1992a: 21)

As seen above, articles on gender began to appear in the early 1990s. Most of them appeared in general geographical magazines, not in academic journals, and criticize gender discrimination existing in Japanese geography. The absence of geographical research on gender was pointed out, but few academic studies on gender were conducted at that point.

Considering such an academic climate, it was notable that Yoshida (1993) introduced geographical studies on gender which had been conducted in English-speaking countries. In the journal Jimbun-Chiri, she provided an overview on economic geography and also examined some studies on working women. Although her interests were more in economic geography than in gender, her review was one of the earliest studies which paid attention to gender.

To sum up, in the first half of the 1990s, discourses on gender began to be produced in Japanese geography, but academic case studies had not yet appeared. Thus, the period can be described as ‘before the daybreak’ for gender studies in Japanese geography. This period became the basis for gender studies in Japanese geography in the latter half of the decade which will be examined in the following section.

2 After daybreak: from 1995 to present
During the latter half of the 1990s, geographical gender studies began to appear in more professional and academic journals. The icebreaker was Yoshida (1996) who provided an overview of feminist geography in English-speaking countries in Geographical Review of Japan. She explains the reason why she wrote this article as follows:

The reason I wrote this paper is that I realized that geographers of our country have shown very little interest in feminist geography to date, and I became convinced that showing the existing literature [from English-speaking countries], which is substantially to introduce feminist geography [to Japanese geographers], will stimulate geographers of our country. (Yoshida, 1996: 254)

Yoshida addressed the issue that feminist geography received little attention in Japan up until 1996. This review was important in that it introduced gender studies to Japanese geography for the first time, although she did not discuss why gender had been ignored in Japanese geography.

It was two years later that case studies on gender appeared. In 1998, Kageyama reported the formation of residential space in Kohoku New Town of Yokohama on the basis of gender (Kageyama, 1998). This study elucidated how homemakers negotiate their
gender role in the private space in a suburban new town. Also, as a case study of public space, Yoshida (1998) reported the meaning of home and workplace for women truckers. Kageyama (2000) provided a historical analysis of a women’s apartment of the 1930s as a gendered space. The apartment was a space of residence for working women. Also, I explored representations of male existence, examining their daily places to show that Japanese middle-aged single men were alienated in many places (Murata, 2000). As these articles show, an increasing number of studies on gender were published. Finally in 2002, the magazine Chiri had a special issue entitled ‘Viewpoints of Gender’, which presented five articles on gender (Ishizuka, 2002; Kageyama, 2002; Kinoshita, 2002; Niwa, 2002; Yoshida, 2002). Considering the situation of the first half of the 1990s when geographers specializing in gender did not exist, the latter half of the 1990s surely witnessed great progress.

Thus, we may describe the latter half of the 1990s as the period which witnessed a steady growth of academic gender studies in Japanese geography.

IV Issues to be addressed
As we have seen, gender studies are becoming more popular in Japanese geography these days. The subdiscipline in geography, however, also presents two major problems. The first problem can be described as a ‘feminization’ of viewpoints of gender, that is, ‘thinking through gender’ is somehow regarded as what women researchers would do. The second problem is that the issue of sexuality is almost totally ignored in gender studies. I will address each of these problems respectively.

1 The concept of gender misunderstood
   a ‘Feminization of viewpoints of gender’: What I have called the ‘feminization of viewpoints of gender’ refers to the phenomenon that Japanese geographers tend to think that viewpoints of gender are viewpoints of women. Let me give three examples of Japanese geographers’ discourses on gender which contribute to this feminization.

   The first example is from Yamazaki (2002) who reported on a symposium, held in Kobe, Japan, by political geographers, on the 9/11 terrorist attack on New York and Washington, DC. In the report, Yamazaki (2002) pointed out the gender imbalance among the speakers:

   Although there were also women attending this meeting, all of the people who spoke were men, which probably had something to do with the fact that the discourses around military affairs and security are male-centered. It is an important political issue to incorporate viewpoints of gender (women) into arguments on Japanese military and security which will be more actively made in the future. (Yamazaki, 2002: 53)

   While Yamazaki points out the existing masculinism in discussions on states and security issues and argues that it is necessary to have viewpoints of gender to address the problem, he makes a clear equation between gender and women: whether viewpoints of gender exist depends on whether women express their opinions. In other words, for Yamazaki, men cannot think through gender, and it is only women who have access to viewpoints of gender. So is ‘thinking through gender’ the same as ‘thinking from a woman’s viewpoint’? If women speak up in a symposium, does it become possible for geographers to have a viewpoint of gender? Criticizing the gender imbalance among political geographers, Yamazaki is at the same time imposing another gender division on geographers’ epistemologies. A completely opposite meaning is given to ‘gender’.

   A second example is found in Wakabayashi et al. (2002) who examined single women in urban space in Japan. Six out of eight authors of this study are men, but they never explained from what viewpoint they looked at those single women, although the study is also entitled ‘The urban internal house market and house search action from the viewpoint of gender’. Without reflecting their own positionality, they regard women as
mere research objects. This is not different from the conventional approach that men gaze at women from a privileged, unaffected position. Wakabayashi et al. seem to misunderstand that, although they claim that their studies have the viewpoint of gender, they forget to reflect their own positionality.

A third example is seen in Chitose (1997), whose survey was entitled ‘University Education and Gender’ by the Institute for Gender Studies of Ochanomizu University in Tokyo. Since 1996, the centre has conducted the project and the situation of academic geography was also investigated, and Chitose, a male geographer, was in charge of it. Here is what he reported on Japanese geography:

> It is more difficult to produce highly persuasive academic papers for disciplines which explore society and culture with sensibilities than disciplines which study cities and economics with positivism. Women geographers tend to specialize in the former than the latter, which has led to a scarcity of existing productive research conducted by women. It explains why women cannot obtain a university faculty position. Also, exploring topics in such disciplines [which explore society and culture with sensibilities] is like a hobby, and is not very much associated with pertinent societal problems in the real world which need to be solved very soon. Because the society does not demand these disciplines very much, universities cannot offer many jobs for people who are specialized in such disciplines. (Chitose, 1997: 95–96)

Although Chitose did not clearly explain what ‘society and culture’ explored with ‘sensibilities’ means, his remark implies that positivism (reason) is more important than sensibilities (emotions). This is derived from the modern dichotomy that positivism is masculine, rational and more important, whereas sensibility is feminine, emotional and less significant. His logic is that women cannot obtain a university faculty position because they choose to study social/cultural geography topics which are not pragmatic and are closer to a ‘hobby’ for pleasure. In other words, it is women’s fault not to be able to obtain jobs in geographical research or teaching.

The confusion over women and gender is further established in the AJG member guide which contains a list of specialized fields of its members. Among them there is a category named ‘women’s geography’, which stands for gender studies and feminist geography. This is further evidence that Japanese geography considers gender as women’s business.

The question which needs to be examined is why has such a situation arisen?

**Translation as a trap:** One possible reason gender has been misunderstood in Japanese geography may have to do with the fact that translated articles on gender issues have not yet been fully digested.

Since the Meiji period (1868–1912), translation has been seen as an important tool for modernization as Japan tries to learn from western countries. Generally, Japanese academia actively translates publications from overseas, especially from English-speaking countries. Geographic studies on gender are not an exception as many articles in geography on gender have been translated since the latter half of the 1990s. An examination of these translated articles will show what research topics are favoured by Japanese geography.

Let us look at some concrete examples of translated articles. For example, the journal of *Kukan, Shakai, Chiri Shisou* (*Space, Society and Geographical Thought*), which has been in publication since 1996, presented three special features on translated gender studies of geography from 1998 to 2000. *Kukan, Shakai, Chiri Shisou* volume 3 (1998) had six translated articles (Winchester, 1991; Townsend, 1991; Jackson, 1991; McDowell, 1993a; 1993b; Valentine, 1993) and was entitled ‘Gender geography I’. The journal that came out the next year had five translated articles (Burnett, 1973; Tivers, 1978; Hanson and Pratt, 1988; Nesmith and Radcliffe, 1993; Pain, 1997) and was entitled ‘Gender geography II’. ‘Gender geography III’ appeared in volume 4 (2000) of the journal and had two articles (Christopherson, 1989; Nash, 1993).6
Translated articles on gender were introduced not only in the above journal. In 2001, Rose’s *Feminism and geography* (1993) was translated by Yoshida *et al.* and published as a book. Furthermore, nine articles (Elson and Pearson, 1981; Monk and Hanson, 1982; Hanson and Pratt, 1991; McDowell, 1993a; 1993b; Jacobs, 1994; Rose, 1995; Schroeder, 1997; Hubbard, 1998) were translated to form an introductory textbook of feminist geography (Kamiya 2002).

It is certainly good that some major gender studies in English-speaking countries have been introduced to readers in Japan. It is also problematic, however, that an anthology of gender studies exclusively from English-speaking countries became an introductory guide to feminist geography for Japanese geographers. The concept of gender is to expose discrimination against women in the everyday space where we actually live. If geographers publish an introductory book, they need to start with (or at least include) gender issues which people in Japan actually face every day. Without discussions on gender issues in the Japanese context, such an introduction of translated studies which were conducted outside Japan runs the risk of giving an impression to readers that gender is something distant and foreign.7

Actually, it is no longer a risk, but a real danger: Many Japanese geographers do not realize gender as their own issue. Niwa (2000) translated Rose (1993) and gave an explanatory note as follows:

> Finally, I would like to conclude these explanatory notes, quoting a witty and *chaamingu* line from McDowell’s review on this book [=Rose (1993)]. ‘If the bookstore in your neighborhood has this book on the shelf which is not for geography, you should move it back to geography.’ (Niwa, 2000: 269)

Niwa describes the above remark by Linda McDowell as *chaamingu*. The word *chaamingu* is originally from the English word ‘charming’, but has been accepted as a word used in everyday life in Japan. *Chaamingu* in Japanese is a word only about women. It is generally used to describe the traditional femininity of a woman, implying her appealing, engaging or pretty attitude. It is unlikely that Niwa intentionally used this word for gender discrimination. However, such easy positioning of women, the very thing which feminist geography has criticized as sexism, appears here in the texts. Niwa’s discourse above is evidence that he does not understand issues of representation or positionality, despite the fact that he translated a study on gender from English into Japanese.

Similar problems can be seen also in theoretical discussions on gender. For example, as he introduces English-speaking postmodern geography developed by scholars such as Harvey and Soja, Kato (1999) argues that feminist geography is also a useful viewpoint to understand current society:

> We can learn that feminist geography in the latter 1980’s began to establish critical theories which question ‘knowledge’ (whether it is masculine or whatever) which is peculiar to geography ... This criticism is directed also to *wareware-jishin* (ourselves), and in that sense, [we are] singled out for criticism. The diastrophism which shakes geographical knowledge is happening under *jibun* (my) feet. (Kato, 1999: 64)

As Kato points out the necessity to reconsider geographical knowledge from the viewpoints of feminist geography, his discourse reveals a different story. Expressions such as ‘whether it is masculine or whatever’ glibly overlook the fact that geographical knowledge has long been masculine! Also, to express first person, Kato chooses gender-neutral terms such as *wareware-jishin* (ourselves) and *jibun* (my), and thus ‘neutralizes’ the discussion on gender. Instead of admitting the subjectivity of the author, Kato goes back to a previous stage where arguments are supposed to be ‘objective’ and ‘gender-neutral’. In fact, Kato never mentions his own positionality of gender in his article, despite the fact that one of the most important points feminist geography makes is the author’s positionality which is constructed through
gender. He makes the claim that the feminist perspective is useful, but he fails to apply it to his own work.

As we have seen, although there has been an increasing number of translations of geographical studies on gender from English, Japanese male geographers do not seem to have fully understood and digested feminist thoughts on gender. They seem to regard gender as an issue for women, not as their own problem. It is a serious problem that the concept of gender is often taken advantage of and even exploited. In that sense, as many as the translations have been, they have ironically created a 'distance' between the geography of the English-speaking countries and that of Japan.

In addition to problems with translation, these days there are many studies which explore women simply because they are women, or studies to which only the variable of sex has been added but the study itself is still conducted with an old methodology or epistemology in Japanese geography (Kageyama, 2002; Murata, 2004a). It is disappointing that innovations which feminist geography brought into geography are often ignored.

2. The concept of sexuality ignored

If Japanese geography has generally misunderstood the concept of gender, it has likewise overlooked the viewpoint of sexuality. So far, few studies on sexuality have appeared in Japanese geography journals. It would be extremely interesting to examine the reasons for this.

In the magazine Chiri, for example, Watanabe (1991) talks about his experience of studying in the USA and makes comments which are related to sexuality:

We should not forget that gay people have established their rights in universities of the US. But I cannot write anything on them without collecting their information, because I have no knowledge on that world now. I hesitate to approach them, however, because I have a feeling almost like a great 'confidence' that gays would fall in love with me as soon as they see me. So, for this time I decided to write on sexuality of just ordinary men and women, putting such issues of mine aside. (Watanabe, 1991: 93)

It is obvious that, to Watanabe, compared with heterosexuality, homosexuality is this horrible and inscrutable thing that belongs to 'the other world' certainly not his. Furthermore, his remark that 'gays would fall in love with me as soon as they see me' reveals his misconception that gays are all over-sexed impulsive beings who would fall for anyone of their own sex. Such statements by Watanabe (1991) are clear evidence of the heterosexism and homophobia that Japanese geographers harbour.

As Bell (1991) criticizes the homophobia in English-speaking geography, Niwa (1992) has also noticed the homophobia in Japanese geography:

I hear he [Larry Knopp] is going to have two sectional meetings on the geography of gay and lesbian communities in the International Geography Union at University of Washington held this coming summer. In Japanese geography, however, I think that people hesitate to discuss such a topic even as a presentation in a conference. (Niwa, 1992: 79)

Niwa points out the difficulty in conducting sexuality studies in Japanese geography. It is important to note that he says Japanese geographers 'hesitate' to discuss these themes. Generally in Japanese geography, studies in English-speaking countries tend to be regarded as 'progressive'. In spite of this tendency, if Japanese geographers cannot help hesitating discussing homosexuality, it must indicate that there is a strong heterosexism in Japanese geography. At least in the early 1990s, issues on sexuality were almost not accepted at all in academic meetings and geographical journals in Japan.

The situation did not seem to have changed in the latter 1990s as few Japanese geographical studies on sexuality exist. Two articles on sexuality and geography (Valentine, 1993; Binnie and Valentine, 1999) have been translated and can be regarded
as exceptional contributions. Sugiyama, one of the translators of the above articles, writes:

In Western geography, studies on sexualities are actively conducted, whereas in Japan there are very few studies which explore them. If the geography on gender and sexuality is discussed in Japan in the future, what those discussions should awaken would be the necessity to understand, from a 'queer perspective,' our present situation that this kind of topic seldom becomes a focus. (Sugiyama, 2000: 117)

While the number of researchers who are interested in gender research in geography is increasing, research topics are biased toward those that are not related to sexuality. In other words, the concept of sexuality is still ignored in Japanese geography. Still, in the latest editions of Chirigaku-Jiten (The Dictionary of Geography) (Yamamoto et al., 1997; Ukita et al., 2001), terms related to sexuality are completely missing. This is in sharp contrast to the latest edition of The Dictionary of Human Geography edited by Johnston et al.

In order to improve this situation, I have stressed the necessity of exploring sexuality geographically at an annual conference of AJG (Murata, 2001). For my part, I have studied the meaning of maleness in public space from discourses of Japanese sexual minorities (Murata, 2002a) and illuminated the spatial meaning of male heterosexuality (Murata, 2002b). Gender studies which ignore the concept of sexuality are fundamentally problematic because gender discrimination is accompanied inevitably by compulsory heterosexuality. I am hoping future work in this area will transform Japanese geography.

V Conclusion: towards men’s studies

Having examined gender equality and the progress of gender studies in Japanese geography, as well as its bias against sexuality orientated research, I would argue that, in order to improve the current situation, it is important to advance men’s studies in Japanese geography. The current problem is that most geographers are unaware of the masculinity of the discipline, and even geographers who have already realized the importance of gender have not fully understood what gender means.

Male geographers are also having problems thinking of gender as their own matter, as evidenced by the following discourse:

Through various experiences and learning, men [geographers] who are the majority can understand the position of women who are the minority. It is not so easy, however. And, to do so, it is necessary for the discipline of geography to have women researchers, who can speak her own reality using her own words, as many as possible. What we male researchers should do above all is to listen humbly to them, shouldn’t we? (Kumagai, 1991: 19)

What Kumagai suggests makes sense, but just ‘to listen humbly to them’ is not a fundamental solution. Male geographers, above all, need to face their own reality first. Otherwise, they can never understand the reality of the Other.

Jackson (1991) has already suggested that male geographers can advance men’s studies for the geography of English-speaking countries. Hopkins (2000) further suggested how male heterosexual geographers have to respond to feminist geography and gay/lesbian geography. Their common argument is that, if male heterosexual geographers, who are the majority in their academic discipline, wish to explore issues of gender, they need to understand gender as their own matter, and they must not regard women as the Other. When male geographers recognize gender as their own matter, they can ‘experience’ gender, and then men would become able to communicate with feminism. To extend their arguments, I have argued the necessity for male geographers to consider gender as their own matter in my analysis of the meaning of place for Japanese middle-aged single men (Murata, 2000). In today’s Japan, there are many other societal issues considered as associated with men, and many of them are very
much geographical problems (e.g., ‘Karoshi’,8 Suicide9, ‘Hikikomori’10). These problems are clearly related to men who are suffering from a loss of place where they can be themselves. It is important for Japanese male geographers both to examine these specific societal problems and to explore broader structural issues such as how men have been socially and spatially constructed in Japan. Such an examination may run the risk of collapsing the male identity as a researcher (Niwa, 1992), while enabling male geographers to recognize gendered places. If the current gender inequality in Japanese geography prevents male geographers from becoming aware of it, this gender deviation is a problem not only for women but also for men.

If male geographers in Japan begin to examine gender as their own matter, they may take advantage of the existing large number of male researchers, so that they can explore men’s problems from diverse viewpoints. So far, Japanese geography has been less successful in producing gender studies than the English-speaking countries, but the discipline has much potential to produce interesting gender research conducted in Japanese contexts. It will surely be able to contribute to geography in the world. Then the discipline of geography both in Japan and in other countries will become even more exciting, especially to men who make up half of the world’s population.

Acknowledgements
I would like to thank Josephine Ho, Nathuko Chubachi, Dennis Rumley and Kaori Nomura for their guidance in developing this paper. Acknowledging their generous assistance, all shortcomings are the sole responsibility of the author.

Notes
2. Whether one is male or female is determined by the first name. There were 10 names which could be for both sexes. I eliminated these names from the analysis so that they do not affect the calculation.
3. The list of referees’ names of Chirigaku Hyoron has been announced in the journal for all 12 issues every year since 1993. That of Jimbun Chiri is compiled by Jimbun Chiri Gakkai (1998: 160–74) and provided at the end of the journal.
4. In this paper, I included only female geographers who belong to AJG; accordingly, female geographers who do not belong to AJG are not included. However, AJG is a nationwide organization that most Japanese geographers belong to, so an examination of its membership should be enough for grasping the gender distribution of Japanese geographers.
5. This percentage contains professor, associate professor, full-time lecturer, and assistant (Ochanomizu University Institute for Gender Studies 1997).
7. Moreover, in Japanese, the word ‘gender’ sounds ‘neutral’ while ‘feminism’ is ‘radical’. So, ‘feminism’ tends to be avoided, and ‘gender’ is used (e.g., Kamiya, 2002). Such word use also reflects that the radicality and importance of the concepts will be excluded.
8. Karoshi means sudden death due to overwork and is a characteristic phenomenon in Japanese society, especially in males.
9. Suicide rate among Japanese is about 30,000 people per year in recent years, of which males make up about 80% (Murata, 2004b).
10. Hikikomori means the state of remaining secluded in a room without having any relation to society and is a characteristic phenomenon in Japan these days. The number of people in the state of hikikomori is estimated to be about one million in Japan. Hikikomori is a problem that also more affects the male (Murata, 2004b).

References


Chitose, H. 1997: Chiragaku to jyosei kenkyusha [Geography and female researchers]. In Ochanomizu University Institute for Gender Studies, editor, Daigaku kyokusho to jendar [University education and gender], 89–98. [J]


Hara, H., editor 1997: Jyosei kenkyusha no kyaria keisei [The career formation for female researchers]. Tokyo: Keiso Syobo. [J]


1992: Esunishiti jendar 34: dai san sekai no kaibutsu to iyoare wo megutte [Ethnicity and gender 34: development of the third world and women]. Chiri [Human Geography] 37(7), 73–75. [J]

Lee, D. 1990: The status of women in geography: things change, things remain the same. The Professional Geographer 42, 202–211.


Mitsuhashi, S. 1992a: Gairi hakusei ni okureru iyoare ni chii [Susan Hanson kasyo wo konde [Status of women in the field of geography: the charasmanship of Susan Hanson included]. Chiri [Human Geography] 30(7), 81–89. [J]


2004a: Has a male architect been able to incorporate a gender perspective into space? A case study of a social housing project, the South Block of Hataun Kitagata in Japan. Chirigaku Hyoron [Geographical Review of Japan] 77, 463–82. [JE]


Ochanomizu University Institute for Gender Studies, editor 1997: Daigaku kyōiku to jendar [University education and gender]. Tokyo: OuiGS. [J]


Translated by Yoshida, Y., editor, 2001, Feminizumu to chirigaku, Kyoto: Chijin Syobo. [J]


Sato, Y. 1992: Esunishiti jendar 35: mainoriti no shiten wa omoshiroushi to omoimasen [Ethnicity and gender 35: is the minority viewpoint interesting?]. Chiri [Geography] 37(8), 86–89. [J]


