

# The Shaping and Progress of Korean Historical Geography Since 1945

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## 현대 한국 역사지리학의 형성과 발전

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**Abstract** : Korean historical geography as a distinct subset of modern geography began with the path-breaking efforts of Do-Yang Roh in the second half of the 1940s. He was joined in 1960 by founding father Dr. Chan Lee who carried with himself the Berkeley geography he learned from Fred Kniffen, his advisor, and Robert West at Louisiana State University. Dr. Lee, the single-most important figure in the development of Korean historical geography, founded in 1988 the Association of Korean Cultural and Historical Geographers in order to pull together those interested in past geographies and geographical change. Korean historical geography took off in the 1980s when large numbers of doctoral theses were produced domestically and abroad and British cross-sectional methodology added. Diversity in research theme and methodology characterizes present-day Korean historical geography.

**Key Words** : historical geography, Chan Lee, the Association of Korean Cultural and Historical Geographers, the Berkeley school, cross-section

**요약** : 현대 역사지리학은 일제강점기 일본 여러 대학의 지리역사과에서 수학한 1세대 지리학자, 특히 노도양의 선구적인 활약에 힘입은 바 크며, 1960년에 미국 유학을 마치고 귀국한 이찬에 의해 본격적인 출발과 비약적인 성장을 기대할 수 있었다. 사우어의 문하생인 니펜의 지도를 받은 연유로 이찬은 답사와 문헌자료에 입각한 버클리 학파의 방법론을 한국에 이식하였으며, 1988년에 한국문화역사지리학회 창립하여 과거의 지리와 지리적 변화에 관심을 가진 학자의 역량을 결집하는 구심체로 삼았다. 2세대 학자가 양산된 1980년대 이래 한국 역사지리학은 케임브리지 학파의 단면법의 성과를 수용하면서 연구의 활성화를 기하고 있으며, 주제와 방법론의 폭을 넓혀가고 있다.

**주요어** : 역사지리학, 이찬, 한국문화역사지리학회, 버클리 학파, 단면법

## 1. Introduction

Emerging from the borderline between history and geography, historical geography is defined as a disciplinary quest for the geographies of the past and

changing landscapes. The popularity of this sub-discipline in America, Great Britain and Japan led to the emergence of the famed Berkeley, Wisconsin, Cambridge and Kyoto schools of historical geography.

To begin with, Carl Sauer (1889-1975) made a harsh criticism on the traditional concern with region bound

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up with uniqueness, specificity and static configuration - or geography of areal differentiation - and his discontent with Hartshornean ahistorical mode of doing geography paved the way for the historical geography of changing cultural landscapes (Sauer 1941). Andrew Clark (1911-1975), Sauer's pupil, built up a stronghold for historical geography in the true sense of the word in the Midwest guiding 19 students in the challenging doctoral program (Ward, 1977). Across the Atlantic H. C. Darby (1909-1992) laid a considerable influence in the formative years through his methodological writing, empirical research, education and training graduate students in establishing and promoting identity of historical geography as a distinct scholarly arena rather than a mere handmaiden to history (Baker, 1992). In Japan, the Kyoto school also left behind the lingering legacy of characteristic Japanese historical geography. Although haunted by the compromise with imperial ambition in the 1940s, the institution managed to recover from S. Komaki's misconceived geopolitical trial and succeeded in re-establishing by K. Fujioka's efforts its commitment to historical geographical studies in post-war Japan (Takeuchi, 2000).

Stemming from *yange dili* (geography of changing territorial boundaries) Chinese historical geography was able to be relieved of the subservient status in relation with history around 1950 owing to the efforts of historian Jien-Gang Gu (1893-1980) and his three pupils of Ren-Zhi Hou (1911- ), Qi-Xiang Tan (1911-1992) and Nian-Hai Shi (1912-2001) who established research centers of historical geography at Beijing, Fudan and Shaanxi Normal Universities respectively. In particular, Ren-Zhi Hou who worked with Darby at Liverpool University to become the first Chinese Ph.D in historical geography in 1949 made a significant contribution to modern historical geography in mainland China. After a duration of inactivity under Communist regime, Chinese historical geographers rebound

from the doldrums thanks to the liberal policy: Historical Geography Special Committee was established within the Geographical Society of China in 1979, annual conference of historical geography held since the 1980s, journals of *Chinese Historical Geography Studies* and *Historical Geography* initiated in 1981, and constructive conversation with Western scholars resumed (Que, 1995; Chiang, 2005; Choi, 2012).

Against this background, historical geography has become a self-conscious subset of geography throughout the world since the end of the 1960s. Let us take a look at some prominent developments. IBG Study Group for the Terminology of the Agrarian Landscape (Historical Geography Research Group since 1973) was organized in 1968; *Historical Geography Newsletter* (*Historical Geography* since 1976) was launched three years later in 1971 as an annual journal of research, commentary and reviews. Then the year 1975 witnessed two very important occasions. For one thing, trans-Atlantic interaction of Canadian and British historical geographers led up to a meeting which turned out in 1979 to be a conference called CUKANZUS, an acronym for Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand and the United States. The forum was renamed the International Conference of Historical Geographers in Baton Rouge, Louisiana to be held every three years in different parts of the world. For the other, *Journal of Historical Geography* released the first issue in that same year under the co-editorship of John Patten and Andrew Clark. Further, international partnership got strengthened by the organization of Historical Geography Working Group at 1976 International Geographical Congress in Moscow. The Association of American Geographers came to have Historical Geography Specialty Group in 1979 (Lee, 1981; Lee *et al.*, 1981; Butlin, 1987), while H-HistGeog lately offers an online forum for international audiences interested in the intricate relationship between space and time.

Besides the institutional progress, historical geography has made a dramatic progress in scope, content and methodology. The practitioners have made fairly sustained efforts to work out elaborate ways of analyzing patterns and processes over time. They take issues with new questions and, to resolve them, employ explicit definitions, statistical data, techniques, models and theories. Their quest for a new kind of historical geography ends up with the emergence of geohistorical social science - an interdisciplinary strategy nourished by intellectual tolerance that combines the generalizing geographical goal with the particularizing concern of history through the medium of hypothesis, theories and models from social science (Earle, 1992; Hong, 2001).

Korean scholarship, especially since Dr. Chan Lee - the founding father of modern historical geography - returned from Louisiana State University in 1960, has been keeping track of the theoretical and methodological development going on in the United States, the United Kingdom and Japan. To our regret, however, the rich historiography of Korean historical geography is marginalized by the Anglophone geographers. That is the reason why I make a case for Korean journey. This review essay examines the institutional origin and progress in Korean historical geography since 1945 and recent methodological addition. First part of this paper touches on the founding period focusing on the most important contributors, Drs. Do-Yang Rho and Chan Lee. The second part elaborates on the progress of Korean historical geography relying on the analysis of the articles published by major journals. And then I move on to discuss main themes and prominent methodologies. Lastly, I will reflect on what shall we do for the development of Korean historical geography.

## 2. Setting a Place for Time in Geography

To the extent that humanity has an innate curiosity about terra incognitae, the history of Korean geography is justifiably said to trace far back to the ancient period. Layers of traditional geographies are reflected in chorological works and various general and thematic maps which have survived the test of time. The encyclopedic compilation of geographic information took a systematic turn with the coming of the *Silhak*, or a Korean pragmatism of the mid-17th and early 19th century. The self-conscious nationalistic *Silhak* scholars discussed and wrote critically on Korean land, history, territory, mountains, streams, transportation, commerce, maps, earth science and world geography following the line of Pattison's (1964) four main traditions of geography (Lee, 1965; Choe, 1979; Yang, 1983; 2002).

The year 1876 marks the historic moment when Korea opened door to the world and the modernization of traditional geography set in. Geographical information on the world diffused throughout the nation in tandem with modern school systems which laid emphasis on the enlightenment of citizen and rural people. The colonization by the Japanese, however, interrupted abruptly the progression towards modern geography. During the thirty six years under Japanese rule, geographical studies were led by Japanese scholar-cum-officials under the auspice of Government General for the purpose of ruling and exploiting the colonized land. The documents from the survey influenced the way in which post-colonial Korean geography takes shape.

The modern geography taught and practiced by Korean geographers had to wait until liberation from Japanese oppression. The establishment of geography institutions ensued right after the independence in

1945. The Chosun Geographical Society (Korean Geographical Society since 1949) was founded in that year and the first geography department at Seoul National University in 1946 which was followed by other colleges thanks to the efforts of the first generation of modern Korean geography. Of note with respect to historical geography is that most of the pioneers were educated in the department of geography and history in Japan (Hong, 1998; Oh, 2004). At that time Japan was the best place for Korean geographer to learn new geography.

A major difference of modern or new geography from traditional one might lie in an effort to formulate general concepts and embrace universal laws instead of making geography simply of rote learning discipline. The modern geography the first generation learned in Japan was the art of description and analysis practiced under such systematic principles of causality and synthesis. After graduation, the Korean geographer-cum-historians returned home and taught geography and history in the middle and high schools before finding positions at universities.

Do-Yang Rho (1909-2004) - I assume the first modern Korean historical geographer - was one of the intellectuals who came into contact with new geography. He was graduated from the department of geography and history at Komazawa University in 1932. As Senda (1982) and Kinda (1997) explain, a tradition of historical-geographical scholarship was well established even before scientific methods were received from Europe in the late 19th century. In the 1930s when Rho studied geography and history Japanese historical geographers accomplished remarkable success relying on cross-sections of past societies and changing landscapes. The news of the surrender of Japanese imperial army was heard when he served as a teacher at Sungnam Middle School. No sooner had the transfer of the sovereignty been announced than he called for the establishment of the Chosun Geographical Society in September

1945. Rho tried to provide Korean geography with an independent professional status.

Rho's historical geography took shape with the lecture on "Revisiting F. Ratzel's Environmentalism" delivered in front of the CGSS in April 1947 (Roh&Lee, 1963). However it was with the well-known commentary titled "Historical dimensions in geographical phenomena" that he got publicized widely. In Roh's (1953) elaboration, geography was composed of continuous changing factors of nature, humanity, interplay and cultural phenomena, so that the clarification of temporal aspects was indispensable for the proper understanding of geographical features. As for him, geography was nothing less than a series of cross-sections resulting from contingent and necessary historical causes.

He wrote another well-organized introductory essay in 1964 on a geographical background of Korean culture in which the themes of site and situation, relief, climate, ocean, soils, natural resources and feng-shui were explored in association with their implications upon the shaping and transformation of Korean culture and historical geography (Roh, 1964). His genius conditioned natural environment to be simply one out of numerous options; it was Korean people who decide within the context of human and social environment which way to go. When it comes to feng-shui, he also took a balanced stance saying that despite the lingering skepticism on the part of scientifically-minded commentator the traditional geomancy needed to be counted in the interpretation of Korean culture and history.

Then in 1969 he submitted dissertation to Kyung-hee University at the age of sixty. The degree-winning thesis titled *A geographical study on Korean industries in the fifteenth century* made his historical geography the geography of the past styled after Ralph Brown (1898-1948) and became instrumental in making historical geography a recognized and respectable subfield in Ko-

rea. As is well known, the hallmark of Brown's historical geography is an avoidance of methodological splendor and an empirical recreation of past geographies making use of contemporary illustrations of maps, scenic views and eyewitness accounts (McManis, 1978). The availability of trustworthy geographical materials, therefore, was the key to the successful completion of historical geography (Brown, 1938; 1943). A case in point must be *Mirror for Americans: likeness of the Eastern Seaboard 1810* in which Brown reconstructed the geography of the Atlantic seaboard as it was perceived in the year 1810 by an imaginary person Thomas Pownall Keystone. Keeping up with Brown's precedence Dr. Rho reconstructed successfully the landscapes of agriculture, fishery, livestock herding and household industries in the 15th-century Chosun dynasty (1392-1910) which were presented in the form of various thematic maps.

Serving as the president of the Korean Geographical Society, he additionally translated Chung-Hwan Yi's (1690-1752) human geographical masterpiece *Taeng-niji* (Book for choosing settlement) and wrote several important articles. When he was writing Dr. Roh was affiliated with the department of social studies at Myongji University. While teaching culture history, human geography and geographies of Europe and Africa there, he tried to establish geography department in vain. In spite of this, Korean historical geography was able to find a solid foothold in the 1960s thanks to his diligence and ingenuity.

There were other geographers and their writings to be mentioned in the discussion of the early days of Korean historical geography. *Historical geography* by Nakki Woo comes first. The volume published in 1961 might be the earliest among book-length discussions under that title. The introduction clarifies the concept, methodology and definition of historical geography. He presents a brief sketch about notable scholars, time-space and cross-section before defining historical geog-

raphy as the science concerned with the reconstruction of landscapes and changing landscapes. However significant, the book failed to attract attention because the subsequent chapters were devoted exclusively to the issues of territory and political boundaries.

On the contrary, Do Seung Rah, Jung-shik Ro, Seong-Hak Lee and Sang-Ho Kim were remarkable historical geographers despite themselves. Rah (1968) described transportation, commerce and rural settlement along the Keum River, while Ro (1968) paid attention to the bibliographical achievement of *Silhak* scholars and Lee (1968) talked about roadside stations on the highways of Chosun dynasty. Sang-Ho Kim is exceptional in that belying his specialty in geomorphology he wrote one of the most widely cited papers in historical geography. Based on statistical data drawn from historical documents, he traced meticulously the prevalent piedmont location and increase of areas of paddy fields and the improvement of dry fields into paddy. Importantly he identified population pressure as a driving force of the emergence of intensive agriculture in addition to irrigation facilities such as reservoirs and diversion dams (Kim, 1969). That is the story of the first stage of modern historical geography in Korea.

### 3. The Saurian Tradition and the Consolidation of Historical Geography

The institutionalization and professionalization enable historical geography to shake off the shameful title of the handmaiden of other disciplines and acquire an independent status. Technically, the institutionalization includes the initiation of school geography, the inclusion of a geography subject for college admission requirement, the education of geography teachers, the establishment of geography department, the opening

of degree programs, and the founding of geographical societies and journals (Koelsch, 2001).

National curriculum drafted in 1945 decreed that geography be taught in high schools, which was instrumental for the renewed emphasis on the discipline and a growing demand for geography teachers. On top of this the leading roles played by the first generation led to the increase of geographers educated professionally at various organizations. At the outset, geography was taught in social studies department of Seoul National University in 1946 which was followed by a whole bunch of others in the 1950s (Kim, 1989; Oh, 2004). The 1950s and 1960s also saw the initiation of degree programs: the first master's program in 1951 at Seoul National University and the doctoral program in 1966 at Kyunghee University (Oh, 2004). In the meanwhile the Korean Geographical Society attended for the first time the International Geographical Union held in Tokyo in 1957 and three years later enrolled its name on a full member roster at Stockholm meeting. The first issue of the *Journal of the Korean*

*Geographical Society* was published in 1963 (Roh & Lee, 1963; Kwon, 1976). There was a growing sense of identity shaped among geographers.

Korean historical geography under integrated principles develops on this solid foundation. It was in 1960 when Dr. Chan Lee came back from Louisiana State University to herald the new era of historical geography. As a benchmark scholar he is compared to Carl Sauer and H. C. Darby in honour of what he did for Korean historical geography (Figure 1). He introduced new theories and methodologies, showed a standard of scholarship, educated undergraduate students, trained a number of quality masters and doctorates, and founded a professional institution and a flagship journal.

Given that geomorphologist Sang-Ho Kim became the first domestic doctorate in 1966 and Do-Yang Roh earned his doctoral degree in historical geography in 1970, Dr. Chan Lee's achievement was quite impressive. The doctoral degree awarded in 1960 by Louisiana State University was the first in the history of Korean geography. What is more, Chan Lee worked his thesis on a culture history of rice with Fred Kniffen, one of 37 doctorates Sauer supervised at Berkeley from 1923 when he was appointed to the chair until he retired in 1957 including J. Leighly, J. Spencer, A. Clark, R. West, J. Parsons, E. Rostlund, W. Zelinsky, P. Wagner, D. Sopher, M. Mikesell and many others, not to mention Kniffen himself (*Historical Geography Newsletter*, 1976, 78-80). The intimate relations with his advisor made Dr. Chan a minor member of the cultural and historical geography of the Berkeley school which laid emphasis on cultural landscape, genetic (or historical) approach, human agency, material cultural traits, rural areas, and empirical attitude focusing on field works.

Chan Lee did exactly what Sauer did at Berkeley. Foremost he trained historical geographers in the department of geography education (1960-1967),



Figure 1. Founder Dr. Chan Lee (1923-2003)

graduate school of education (1967-1975), and department of geography (1975-1988) at Seoul National University. He supervised Duck-Soon Im (Choongbuk National University), Bokyoung Yang (Sungshin Women's Univ), Moon-Jong Lee (Kongju NU), Il-Ki Kim, Je-Hun Ryu (Korea NU of Education), Kyong-Yeol Won (Chuncheon NU of Education), Bong Nam-gong (Chunbuk NU), Boo-Sung Kim (Korea Univ), Han-suk Ock (Kangwon NU), Jungman Lee (SNU), Duk-Hyun Kim (Kyungsang NU) and many others for their doctoral or master's theses. Some of young aspirants were stimulated to go abroad to learn new perspectives and sophisticated methodology.

Young-Jun Choe, one of his undergraduate students, moved over to LSU to work with Milton B. Newton, Jr., Kniffen's disciple, for his dissertation on Korean royal roads. Dr. Choe, an emeritus professor of Korea University, played the same integral roles for the development of historical geography in Korea just as Andrew Clark, a firmly *historical* historical geographer, did for North American scholarship. He has authored monumental articles and books and produced many students who are now teaching historical geography in the universities. The Berkeley connection does not cease here. Je-Hun Ryu, Dr. Lee's master's student, worked with Paul English at the University of Texas for his dissertation. His advisor was a Clark's disciple along with other eighteen doctorates including H. Merrens, D. Ward, R. Harris, J. Lemon, T. Jordan, S. Hilliard, R. Vicero, R. Mitchell, and so on (*Historical Geography Newsletter*, 1976, 80-81). Jeon Lee, a professor at Kyeongsang National University, worked with Hilliard for his doctoral thesis on the agriculture of the South.

In a way, Dr. Lee, his research students who studied historical geography in American universities, and those trained by American Ph.Ds symbolize the infiltration and spread of Berkeley's perspective and methodology with a strong historical orientation backed up

by substantial field and library works. Then it is fair to say that Korean historical geography under the reign of Dr. Lee experienced a sea change from the Japanese paradigm of doing historical geographies to the American way. The greatest contribution made by Chan Lee, notwithstanding, was the founding of a 55-member professional organization the Association of Korean Cultural and Historical Geographers in 1988. The association stemmed from a forum for Korean traditional geography held once a month starting from May 1987. The association now holds an annual conference, symposium, seminars, and field trips every year.

One thing curious is that the association gathers both cultural geographers and historical geographers together. Sauer (1937[1931]) seems to answer the question when he explained the nature of cultural geography: "The development of cultural geography has of necessity proceeded from the reconstruction of succes-

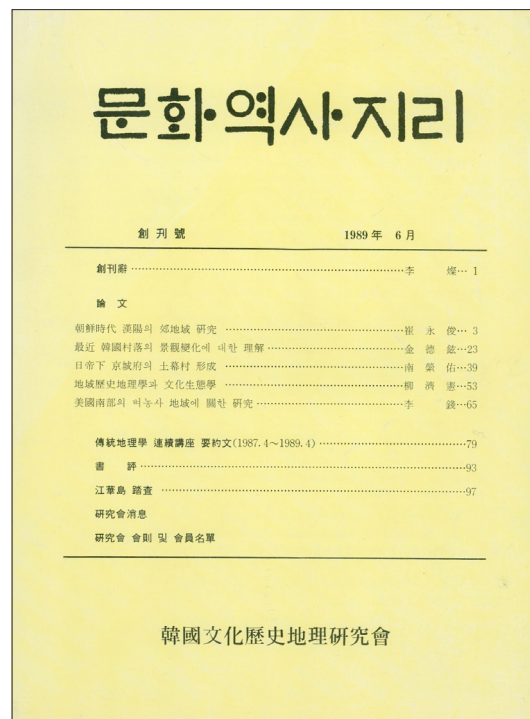


Figure 2. Title Page of the First Issue of JCHG

sive cultures in an area, beginning with the earliest and proceeding to the present... Its method is developmental, specifically historical.” The citation testifies that the genetic approach in Berkely’s cultural geography inevitably leads to an examination of the past. Sauer (1963[1925]) is cited as saying elsewhere that “historical geography is the series of changes which the cultural landscapes have undergone and therefore involves the reconstruction of past cultural landscapes.” In line with this cooperative spirit, the title of the association’s major journal was decided to be *Journal of Cultural and Historical Geography* (Munhwa Yeoksa Jiri) (Figure 2). The first issue was published in June 1989 featuring editorial, articles, lecture summaries, book review, field-trip report and AKCHG news, which was really a breakthrough.

#### 4. Progress in Korean Historical Geography

At the time when the late Dr. Lee made efforts to institutionalize historical geography there was only one branch or specialty group within geography, the Korean Association of Professional Geographers (1973). Put differently, most geographers got together to discuss comprehensive agenda, making dull of keen spirits. In retrospect the initiation of AKCHG accelerated the pace of professionalization to the benefit of Korean geography as a whole. Stimulated by the identity-searching effort by historical geography, boundary setting among sub-disciplines gathered momentum and new organizations turned up one by one: the Korean Association of Geographic and Environmental Education (1993), the Association of Korean Photo-Geographers (1993), the Korean Association of Regional Geographers (1995), the Korean Urban Geographical Society (1997), and the Korean Cartographic Association

(2000). In due course, all of these come to have their own periodicals through which some articles dealing with historical geographical themes are published as well (refer to Figure 3 notes). In addition to those, I take into account *Journal of Geography*, *Journal of Geography Education*, and *Journal of Applied Geography* affiliated respectively with SNU Institute for Korean Regional Studies, department of geography education at SNU, and Korea Institute of Geographical Research at Sungshin Women’s University. These journals publish mainly excerpts of master’s theses.

In order to trace the trajectory Korean historical geography has followed since 1945, I look through the eleven journals and search for articles touching on historical geography in terms of scope, content and methodology. In doing so I tries to be comprehensive as far as I can, because every geography does not stand still. Take folk housing for an instance, a subject matter explored almost single-handedly by Dr. Bo-Woong Chang. The truth is that the traditional houses he surveyed in the 1970s and the 1980s do not remain as it were or simple do not exist any longer, which makes Dr. Chang’s cultural geographical articles historical geographical documents to be analysed. Once Darby (1953) declared, to my credit, that the geography of the present-day is but a thin layer that even at this moment is becoming history.

The papers selected according to my criteria are classified in chronological order, from which Figure 3 is constructed to cast an overall research trend from 1963 to 2011. Relying on this quantitative and serial evidence, I make some comments on the progress of historical geographical studies in Korea. A qualitative analysis will be presented in next chapter with reference to themes and methodologies.

Over all, articles associated in some way or another with historical geography head upward over time, showing the sign of enhanced consciousness of time dimension in geographical studies. Ten articles pub-



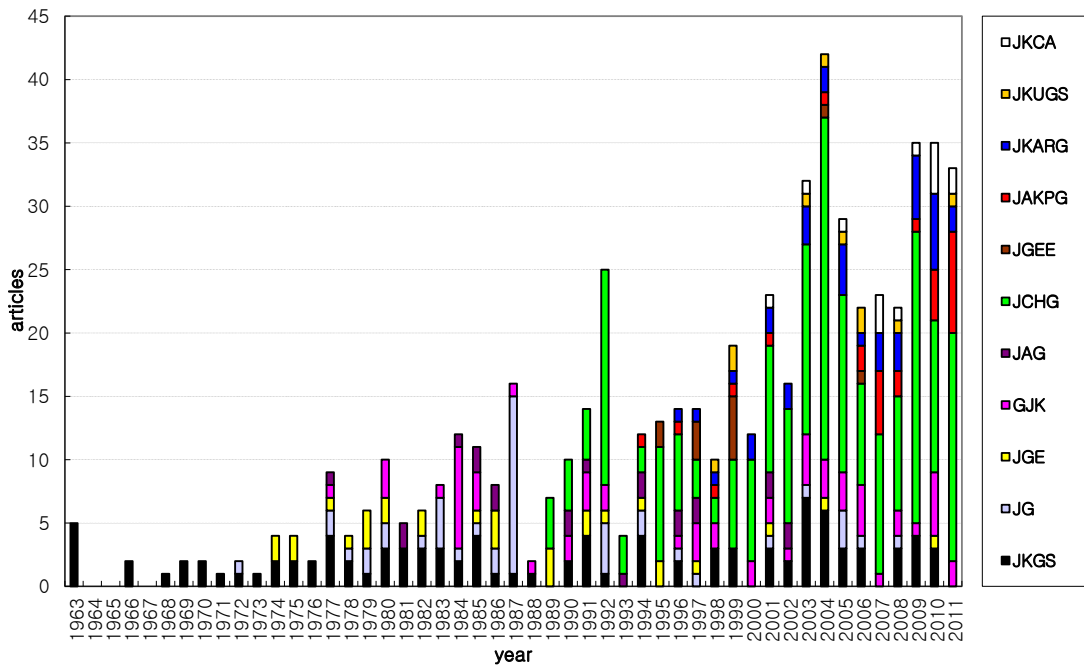


Figure 3. Research trend in historical geography

Notes: JKGS (*Journal of the Korean Geographical Society* 1963), JG (*Journal of Geography* 1970), JGE (*Journal of Geography Education* 1973), GJK (*Geographical Journal of Korea* 1973), JAG (*Journal of Applied Geography* 1975), JCHG (*Journal of Cultural and Historical Geography* 1989), JGEE (*Journal of Geographic and Environmental Education* 1993), JAKPG (*Journal of the Association of Korean Photo-Geographers* 1993), JKARG (*Journal of the Korean Association of Regional Geographers* 1995), JKUGS (*Journal of the Korean Urban Geographical Society* 1998), JKCA (*Journal of the Korean Cartographic Association* 2001)

lished in the 1960s increased to 35 in the 1970s, 85 in the 1980s, 135 in the 1990s, and 324 in the first decade of the 2000s. The growing pace appears in the 1980s and remains sustained throughout the 1990s until recently. As Figure 3 shows this is to some extent due to the multiplication of professional organizations and journals during the last 50 years. Yet the outcomes are to a greater extent a function of doctorates produced.

During the 1960s we have only two, Drs. Do-Yang Roh and Chan Lee, and even this is not bad compared with the 1970s when Hong-Seok Oh (1974) was listed alone as being awarded a degree with his work on settlements in Cheju province. The situation shows a sign of improvement in the 1980s when 16 names were identified including Bo-Woong Chang (1980

folk housing), Young-Jun Choe (1982 old road), Hae Un Rii (1982 transportation), Duck-Soon Im (1985 the capital city), Giyeop Choi (1987 rural settlement), Eunsook Lee (1987 urban transportation), Joon Sun Lee (1987 clan village), Je-Hun Ryu (1987 colonial transformation), Bokyung Yang (1987 county chorology of *eupji*), Moon-Jong Lee (1988 rural villages), Il-Ki Kim (1988 fishery and salt-making), Jong-Suh Park (1988 temple village), Jeon Lee (1988 agriculture), Joong Sung Shin (1989 religion), Jaeha Lee (1989 periodic market), and Kyong-Yeol Won (1989 old map of Korea). Upon completing degree programs this second generation of historical geographers was able to find posts in the universities and published articles on their specialties consistently, leading what Ryu (1996) calls

the take-off period. Six doctorates out of these worked in Louisiana, Texas, Michigan, Paris and Hiroshima, with Seoul National University and Kyunghee University becoming dominant institutions for training domestic scholars in the decade.

A total of 17 doctorates were produced in the 1990s including Bong Namgoong (1990 reclamation), Hongryeol Han (1990 craft industry), Jinsook Yoon (1990 colonial city), Jeongman Lee (1991 rural ecology), Han-suk Ock (1991 mountain village), Kihyuk Kim (1991 agricultural rent), Mongil Lee (1991 feng-shui), Jung-shik Ro (1992 world map), Sangjun Nam (1992 geography education), Hae-Ock Park (1993 ancient capital), Kwang-Joong Jeong (1994 handicraft crops), Youngmin Lee (1995 Hawaiian immigration), Il-Rim Kim (1996 Buddhist temple), Jae-Wan Kim (1999 saline trades), Chi-Young Jung (1999 mountain village), Keumsoo Hong (1999 settlement system) and Donghwan Seong (1999 feng-shui). Next decade turns out to be most prolific counting 22 in all: Won-Suk Choi (2000 feng-shui), Jonghyuk Kim (2001 river basin), Kyeong-Su Kim (2001 reclamation), Sang-hak Oh (2001 world map), Jong-Han Jeon (2002 lineage group), Ki-Bong Lee (2002 ancient capital), Jin-Seong Choi (2003 religion), Seonjeong Kwon (2003 feng-shui), Hiroshi Todoroki (2004 transportation), Sun-Bae Kim (2009 toponym) and Yunjung Yang (2010 classified military maps), to name a few. These scholars mostly in their forties are most active in pursuing historical geographical imperative. Along with Seoul National University, a traditional stronghold, Korea University and Korea National University of Education have increased their share in supplying researchers with high caliber.

Given this encouraging circumstance on supply side, it is no wonder then that the achievement during the last 30 years should be remarkable. Additionally, it also needs to be considered that the number of issues per journal almost doubles as time goes. For instance,

*Journal of the Korean Geographical Society* issued once a year in the early days became a biannual before being a quarterly up to the present. The years when special issues are worked out feature more papers than usual, as is the case in 1987, 1992, 2004 and 2009. *Journal of Geography* features 14 historical geographical articles in a festschrift in honour of Professor Chan Lee's retirement, while *JCHG* has 67 articles within special editions in commemoration of Dr. Lee's seventieth birthday, in memory of his passing and for the 20th anniversary of the Association. Another point of interest might be the impact factor of each journal, and not surprisingly *JCHG* stands out among eleven journals. Out of 589 articles *JCHG* takes the largest share of 38.2% with 225 articles published.

Books and monographs are also instrumental to the development and popularization of historical geography. Most of the doctoral theses listed in references at the end of this paper have been edited anew in publishable format for geography students and ordinary readers. The monographs are joined by the following new titles: Chang-Jo Choi's (1984) sketch of Korean feng-shui, Chan Lee's (1991) annotated collection of old maps, Han-suk Ock's (1994) monograph on an historical geography of social change in the Gwandong area, Young-Jun Choe *et al.*'s (2000) historical regional geography of Yongin city, Jong-Han Jeon's (2002) landscape interpretation of the local elite communities, Young-han Park and Sang-hak Oh's (2004) elaboration of reclamation project in Chosun dynasty, Wookung Huh and Hiroshi Todoroki's (2007) description of transportation in the fin-de-siecle Kyeongsang province, Ki-Bong Lee's (2008) ideological interpretation of urban areas in Chosun dynasty, AKCHG's (2008) collection of toponymic explorations, Young-Woo Nam's (2011) provocative reconnaissance on clandestine survey of Korea by Japanese imperialist, Hong-key Yoon's (2011) artistic story about the sensitive realm of geomentality, and AKCHG's (2011) tours de force

*The Korean historical geography.* These are all precious supplement to the literature on Korean historical geography.

## 5. Main Themes

Since Sauer (1941) and Whittlesey (1945) made strong pleas for the fourth dimension of time in their presidential addresses, historical geography has never been the same as before. They protested against the lack of interest in or outright rejection of historical processes and declared all geography is historical geog-

raphy. Recently Baker (2002) catches a pleasing sign of an historical turn in geography.

For our purpose, Meinig (1989) asserts historical geography is not a body of facts or theories sitting there to be applied, but a perspective and a way of seeing and thinking. More specifically, Baker (1995) mentions that debate about substantive *issues* and research *methodologies* lies at the heart of historical geography. When he implies that “a principal concern of historical geographers has been with *describing, explaining* and *understanding* the geographical changes,” Baker without himself touches on Prince’s (1971) tripartite worlds of themes and, by extension, methodologies: the real, abstract and imagined.

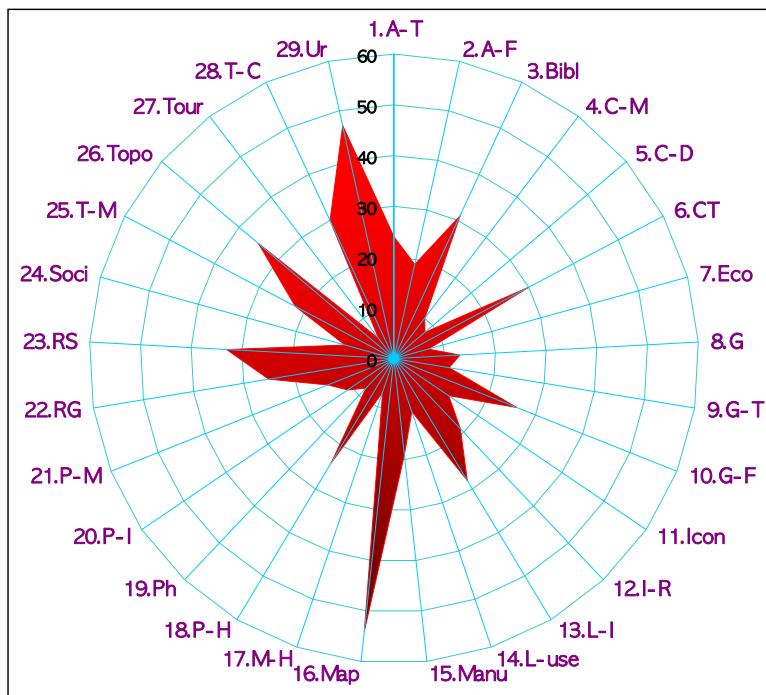


Figure 4. Thematic categories of articles published, 1963-2011

Notes: A-T (administrative & territorial), A-F (agriculture & fishery), Bibl (bibliographic), C-M (colonial & modernity), C-D (commercial & distribution), CT (cultural), Eco (ecologic & environmental), G (general), G-T (geographical thought), G-F (geomancy & feng-shui), Icon (iconography), I-R (irrigation & reclamation), L-I (landscape & image), L-use (land & land-use), Manu (manufacturing), Map (man & surveying), M-H (memory & heritage), P-H (perception & natural hazard), Ph (physical), P-I (place & identity), P-M (population & migration), RG (regional), RS (rural settlement), Soci (social), T-M (theory & method), Topo (toponym), Tour (tourism), T-C (transportation & communication), Ur (urban)

With respect to research issues, topics or repertoires of historical geography, some meaningful categories were suggested by Clark (1972) when he reviewed American historical geography under the rubric of regional geography, urban interests, general topical studies, methods and models, changing geographies, cultural geography, morphological interests, environment and perception. Compared with this Baker's (2003) is more schematic: regional geographies, locational geographies, environmental geographies, landscape geographies, iconographic geographies, and geohistory. But if we remember their earlier comments that historical geography is not a topical specialism within geography and its concepts and methods are applicable to all branches of the subject (Clark, 1954; Baker, 2002), it will be more proper to be wide open as far as research themes are concerned. Indeed thematic diversity has been a distinct feature of Korean historical geography; articles cover a wide range of research topics. To be more precise, I classify the articles analyzed in the previous chapter based on 29 thematic categories (Figure 4).

I have mixed results: some themes are represented excessively; others reasonable; and still others just under-represented. Cartographic theme centered on the description and interpretation of old maps yields a striking outcome with a total of 54 articles featured. Included in the subjects discussed are origins, types, contents, intellectual background, map as fine arts, representation, techniques and map-makers. Just as Butlin (1987) comments on England's situation, the historical geography of maps has become almost a separate subfield here in Korea, too. What looms large is the role played by the late Chan Lee and the combined efforts of Bokyoung Yang, Sang-hak Oh, Ki-Bong Lee and Kihyuk Kim for the advance in this research field. Kihyuk Kim (2007) sheds light on the progress in cartographic studies.

Other themes of note are urban (47), toponym (34),

rural settlement (33), biobibliographical (31), cultural (30) and transportation (30). In the first place, new sources and data revitalize the studies of towns and preindustrial cities. The urban category has some prominent topics such as location, townscape, transformative processes, symbolism, hierarchical systems, transformation of the walled towns and spatial structure. Of utmost importance might be Ki Suk Lee's (1968) pioneering attempt to reconstruct former county seats which are now left deserted on account of displacement of major transportation lines. His precedence has been followed by subsequent researches focusing mainly on walled county seats. The working of additive and transformative processes in shaping and changing modern urban structures, colonial inner-town differentiation and townscape are captured by Young-Jun Choe (1974), Han-suk Ock (1982) and Jeong-Suk Youn (1985) as to the treaty ports of Incheon, Masan and Kunsan, in that order.

Toponym has become another widely debated theme within which the origins, types and distribution of generic names are analyzed in the context of cultural identity and territoriality. Sun-Bae Kim shows how to interpret place names of *hangeul* (Korean alphabet) and Chinese character in the discussion of cultural politics and social construction rhetoric. Moving on to rural settlement, Hong-Seok Oh has carried on researches in villages of mountainside, mining, orchard, fishery and hot springs, while Giyeop Choi, Moong-Jong Lee and many other experienced scholars turn to the villages of *yangban* or scholarly and military aristocracy. Although urban areas enjoy popularity these days, rural settlement is still an unwavering stronghold of historical geographers. Widely debated are shaping history, location, distribution, function, expansion, transformation, spatial structure, type and landscape.

Biobibliographical studies conducted within the bound of traditional geography are without doubt the best place for new sources and insights. Famed schol-

Table 1. Subjects discussed in the articles

Category	Articles	Subjects
L-I	28	specific type (town, rural, bocage,...), characteristics, shaping process, changes, dynamics, symbolic meaning, morphology, representation, reading, symbolic war
G-F	26	<i>bibo</i> (therapeutic modification), feng-shui as text, f-s discourse, f-s landscape, auspicious sites, housing and tomb sites, f-s on old maps, f-s logic, world view
RG	25	local, regional, national geographies of the past, structure, cross-section, systems, hierarchy, centrality, realms, transformation
P-H	24	landscape perception, naturalism, environmental perception, heimatkunde, utopianism, elite view, flooding, earthquake, meteorological hazard, adaptation
A-T	24	national territory, boundary, territorial dispute, administrative area, nationalism, county seats, mountain fortress, identification of location
T-M	22	theory and methods in historical geography
A-F	19	crops, crop diffusion, agricultural practice, shifting cultivation, tenancy, agricultural region, fishing instrument
Manu	19	salt-making, craft industry, industrialization, industrial location, industrial area
I-R	19	irrigation system, distribution of reservoir, diversion dam, irrigation practice, reclamations of tidal flats, riverside and mountainside, community building
P-M	14	migration of <i>yangban</i> , Japanese immigration, Sakhalin immigration, Yanbian immigration, Korean War refugees, impact of immigrants, immigration policy
G	13	history of historical geography
Icon	13	landscape as a Confucian symbol, landscape and social status, power and Sinto temple, cosmic symbolism, planning of the capital
G-T	11	intellectuals (Han-ki Choe, Yak-Yong Jung, Chung-Hwan Yi..), impact of Western imperial geography, traditional environmentalism, Rites of Zhou, geographical thinking in enlightenment
P-I	11	fragmentation of place identity, placeness of religion, urban identity, transformation of identity, regional identity
L-use	11	plan of royal capital of ancient kingdom, urban land-use, rural land-use, changing land-uses, agricultural use, transportation and land, checkerboard cadastral pattern
C-M	10	colonial modernity, prostitution and sexuality in colonial cities, ethnic segregation, modernization, financial space, urbanization, industrialization, colonial education
Soci	10	regionalization of local yangban community, social network of local elite, social agency of landscape, territoriality of commoner's community, marriage network
C-D	8	periodic market, market networks, commercialization and regional structure, transportation and distribution
Ph	8	climate change, topography and ordinary life, paleo environment
Eco	7	forbidden mountain, mountain village management, human modification of coastline, weather and agriculture, feng-shui ecology
M-H	7	landscape memory, cultural heritage, historic relics, historical village making, village resources, world heritage
Tour	5	literati's travel journey, travel account, leisure space

ars - geographers, historians, cartographers, historical geographers, or whatever they are called - and their lifetime legacies are searched, interpreted and added to the inventory of historical geographical literature. So far, *Silhak* scholars, intellectuals of the enlighten-

ment and colonial periods, and heroic map-makers have been introduced (refer to Yang, 2002), together with their notable geographical works including public reports, diaries, photographs, regional geographies, personal anthologies, textbooks, magazines, travel ac-

counts and foreigners' description of the land of Korea.

Bo-Woong Chang and Joong Sung Shin stand out in the areas of historical cultural geography or cultural historical geography, if you want. As I mentioned earlier, the former is interested in folk housing with his main emphasis laid upon typology, distribution and regional differences, whereas the latter pays close attention to religions and their diffusion in places over time. Elaborated by other minor writers are churches, temples, material cultures and ethnicity, in addition to such familiar themes of cultural geography as distribution of cultural traits and their diffusion.

Transportation and communication, the 6th most significant theme, has a prolific figure. Young-Jun Choe, an outstanding field man and superb archive detective, has written a series of articles on the royal road *Yongnamro* which linked Seoul and a gateway county of Dongrae in the southeastern corner. Historical background, former roadway, functions of the road, roadside settlement, and landscape changes are discussed in detail. Subject matters invited by other practitioners for discussion are varied: electric street car, canals, river transportation, railroad, intra urban street pattern, traffic lines, roadside stations, functional changes, and time-space convergence.

Likewise landscape motifs traced back to Sauerian cultural tradition, Darby's (1951) new historical geography as opposed to old environmentalism, and Hoskins' (1988) landscape history enjoy unchanging popularity. The young practitioners nowadays take issues with the value-free interpretation and try to discover the symbolism, code, meaning, ideology and power reflected in landscapes. Owing to the efforts of Hong-key Yoon, Chang-Jo Choi, Won-Suk Choi and Seonjeong Kwon and their thought-provoking writings, feng-shui has laid a significant influence on historical geography. The East Asian geomantic ideology has multiple ramifications with respect to locating a capital city, county seats, towns, villages and even

graveyard, serving as an ideological agency of changing the face of the land of Korea. The subjects discussed in these two categories are summarized in Table 1 alongside the rest of thematic categories.

Disappointing is that cutting edge topics of gender, women's lived experience and gendered representation are rarely touched in historical geography, which is striking given what has been done within and without geography. Besides, if we remember what Chan Lee (1999) called for in his keynote speech delivered in front of the Association in celebration of the 10th anniversary and if we take it for granted that little progress has been made ever since, we must make environmental history an oyster for our field of study. Hopefully sustained concerns and efforts fill these gaps in the growing body of historical geographical literature in the near future.

## 6. Methodologies of Korean Historical Geography

The themes and subjects aforementioned can be grouped into the threefold worlds of the past: the real (topical categories 1, 2, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15, 19, 21, 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29...), abstract (7, 16...) and imagined (4, 10, 11, 13, 16, 17, 18, 20, 24, 26...). Next question is how to handle these. Doubtlessly resolving the proposed agenda calls for appropriate methodologies. Since general introductions to methodologies taken by Korean historical geographers have already been presented elsewhere (Roh&Chang, 1976; Lee, 1983; Ryu, 1996; 2002; Lee, 2009), I would like to take on some representative cases.

Technically the real worlds are suitable for empirical approaches along with description, the abstract for quantitative approaches with analysis, and the imagined for humanistic approaches with interpreta-

tion. Of these the reconstruction of the real worlds of the past prevails in Korean scholarship and it is based on empirical methodology by which facts are made to speak for themselves with little theoretical, normative and metaphysical presentation. Historical geographers of the real worlds are required of experience and expertise in collecting sprinkled evidence and weaving it together to come up with rigorous synthetic interpretations, which is in Sauer's (1941) term a slow detective work.

The first step to resuscitate the geographies of the past is to get familiarity with and mastery of written document in archives. Vital is the ability to discover, evaluate and make selective uses of primary sources including maps, Broek's (1941) choice, which offer a panoramic view of spatial patterns and structures to us. Field as geographers' laboratory embodies another richest source of information. Penetrating observation, constant alertness to clues, and flexibility in hypothesis constitute an essential trilogy for a rewarding field work. And there is urgency in such field studies. Suffice it to quote Sauer (1941, 17) saying almost seventy years ago: "Year by year the sweeping hands of modern industry and commerce brush away more and more of what is old. Traditions die with the old people; documents are destroyed; weather, storm, and flood erase the physical remnants; science and market standardization destroy old crops."

Once these preliminary works are done, what follows is one of Darby's (1953) four main approaches to the real worlds of the past: past geographies (the geographies of the past), the history behind geography (changing landscape), the geography behind history (geographical history), and the historical element in geography (the past in the present). By the same token, we can make our choice out of Estaville's (1991) ways of constructing past geographies, *i.e.*, the temporal cross-section (the past and relic cross-sections), the synchronic cross-sections, the diachronic subsection

(s), and integrations of two or more of these.

Traditional paradigm directs the geographies of the past as the dominant view of Korean historical geography, and the reconstruction of past geographies has been accomplished relying on cross-sections which are presented in the forms of maps, photographs and other visible illustrations. The research design of the sort has been called Domesday geography from a 1086 statistical document *Domesday Book* (Darby, 1977; Butlin, 1987). Do-Yang Roh's (1969) outstanding work *A geographical study on Korean industries in the fifteenth century* might be an archetypal example of the reconstruction of past geography for a particular period. He presented a series of thematic maps as a proxy for the cross-sections of the 15th-century industrial geography. Hae Un Rii's (1984) elucidation of residential segregation in 1935 colonial Seoul, Moon-Jong Lee's (1992) clarification of the early 17th-century Sosan region and Kyeong-Su Kim's (2000) explanation of the urbanizing Youngsanpo in the 1910s also fit in with this category.

The reconstruction tactics of Roh and many other practitioners, however, stop short of going beyond a description. Provided that the geographies are always in flux, identifying horizontal cross-sections or distribution patterns over space alone will not be enough. The processes causing geographical changes through time must be explained at the same time. In addressing this and in responding to Darby's (1962) request for explanatory or interpretative description, synchronic cross-sections might be a reasonable alternative to past geography. The method was implied by Whittlesey's (1929) premise of stage during which human occupation remains constant in its fundamental aspects and his well-known declaration that "human occupation of area carries within itself the seed of its own transformation." From the inevitability of the transformation driven by a diversity of triggering factors do stages or layers of occupation result.

A series of cross-sections are relied upon by Korean historical geographers whether they be the ultimate end or simply part of vertical narrative. The method has been extended with distinction by Young-Jun Choe (2005) who concentrates, despite the wide-ranging scope of his concern, on reconstructing the past geographies in the process of interpreting landscape changes. He presents, for instance, four transformational stages of the reclamation of the Kanghwa region: original coastline, end of Koryo period (918-1392), the 1800s and the 1990s. For the elaboration, he conducts extensive library works, practices field surveys and finally presents a synthetic interpretation supported by skillfully drawn maps.

To some extent Je-Hun Ryu (1979), Bokyung Yang (1980), Joon Sun Lee (1989), Chi-Young Jung (2004) and Keumsoo Hong (2006) come up with their own phases of period in the explanations of morphological changes of rural landscape, changing land-uses at *yangban* village, development of paddy rice farming, spatial diffusion of biographical path, and improvement of flood-plains. The comparative statics used by these writers are not simply to show the geographical patterns of certain periods but to deal with the vertical processes of changing landscapes or geographical changes. This strategy of alternating descriptive cross-sections with explanatory narratives is one way of addressing Clark's (1960) discontent with too little concern with changing patterns and refining what Darby (1983) terms *thin* cross-sections to be *thick* ones. Korean scholarship endeavors to follow the precedence set by J.O.M. Broek (1932) who combined successfully the horizontal and vertical approaches in his magnum opus *The Santa Clara Valley, California*. He worked out four cross-sections spaced at three intervals by the socio-economic forces that led to a series of changes in the visible landscape.

When it comes to Prince's abstract worlds of the past few attempts have been made and little have been

done so far. Even though it is speculated that the quantitative turn has aided in the sophistication of data processing and database creation, Korean historical geographers remain suspicious and feel discomfort with the positivist spatial analysis employing theory, model and statistics. Nevertheless systemic approaches to regional structure focusing on hierarchical distribution of nodal centers were adopted to re-create spatial organizations of periodic markets, macro-regional systems, and centrality and rank-size distributions and their changing patterns through time (Yu, 1972; Hong, 2005; Choe, 2006). Some *cultural* historical geographers have employed seemingly scientific methods such as diffusion model to interpret the expanding patterns of ginseng field (Lee, 1980), Catholicism (Choe, 1999) and other cultural traits over space.

Another field of methodological debate is concerned with historical GIS. Expected to play a significant role for the practice of historical geography, it provides the means to capture, structure, integrate, analyze and display text, numerical, image and map data and by doing so allows us to improve our understanding of changes of spatial patterns (Knowles, 2002; 2008; Gregory&Ell, 2007). Although being in its earliest stage, historical GIS in Korea is making itself a promising outlet for geographical research of the past. During the last decade Institute of Korean Studies at Korea University has been a leading organization; it reconstructed historical boundaries of *do* (province), *gun* (county), and *myon* and compiled Chosun Culture Electronic Atlas (refer to <http://www.atlaskorea.org/historymap>).

In the meantime, some historical geographers have turned away from the reconstruction of the geographical conditions of the past as it were, expressing instead their interests in images of the world in the past held by people and communities. Historical geography in the imagined worlds has been adapting to new theories and philosophies from studies of natural hazards



and, in particular, new cultural geography. Stirred by Duncan's (1980) provocative critique on the Sauerian superorganic view of culture and encouraged by the IBG Social Geography Study Group's iconoclastic reinterpretation, a group of historical geographers cast a suspicious glance on a narrowly-conceived past and a rigid interpretation of it. They are now engrossed in postmodernism, poststructuralism, postcolonialism, phenomenology or, combined together, humanistic historical geography.

There are growing numbers of works applying postisms to, for instance, landscape studies in an attempt to disclose the meaning, power and symbolism embedded in. This group views landscape as a way of seeing projected on to cultural images rather than as an object of empiricist investigation. They structure the discussion around what Daniels and Cosgrove (1988) term iconography, or the theoretical and historical study of symbolic imagery. It can be safely said that most geomantic studies have been done within the bound of this paradigm. Along with these, Giyeop Choi (1983) characteristically discusses the non-positivist epistemology before interpreting the symbolic structures of walled-town plans, while Duk-Hyun Kim (2003), from an insider's point of view, reads Confucian landscapes of a traditional yangban village as a text and discloses the ideological functions of site, streams, forests, pavilions, private schools, a head house and an ancestral shrine. Jin-Seong Choi (2006) captures the signifying roles played by Shinto shrines as a socio-political symbol of the sanctity of Japanese imperialism.

In a similar context, interpretation of old maps takes a postmodern turn as well. Following the lead of Harley (1989) who takes maps to be a particular human way of looking at the world rather than a transparent value-free opening to the world, Sang-hak Oh has been reading between the lines and in the margins of old maps so as to discover the value-laden views of the land of Korea, Japan and other parts of the world. In Jeon

Lee (2004), even the forbidden realm of Korean nationalism traceable back to a walled-town state of Old Chosun (2333 B.C.) is put to the test, disapproved and reinterpreted in line with Benedict Anderson's imagined community.

Memory, nostalgia and heritage have been buzz words these days, and historical geographers are, according to Hardy (1988), well-positioned to make a valuable contribution. Owing much to the influential works of Lowenthal (1961; 1985) historical geographers engage themselves in the debate concerning traditions, conventions and cultures inherited from the past. In pursuing this enterprise a balanced and critical understanding of historical landscape has been asked for, and as if to answer the request Ji-Eun Han (2008) makes a persuasive case for how to deal with modern landscapes of memory and nostalgia in the context of inner city regeneration. Han's is just one of Graham and Nash's (2000) proposals for modern historical geographies: globalization, identity, imperialism, colonized world, environment, landscape, urbanism and the present. Korean scholarship begins to discuss the issues of wars, public memories and heritage reflected in relic landscapes, or the past in the present.

## 7. Reflection and Prospect

It has been more than 60 years since modern Korean historical geography attained an institutional status. I have so far reviewed some scholarly achievements made in the realms of theme and methodology during the interim to make sense of the progress in geographical studies of the past. To summarize, modern Korean historical geography has two prominent figures on the road of development, Do-Yang Roh and Chan Lee. Particularly, the late Dr. Chan Lee played a significant role in training quality practitioners, instilling

Berkeley historical geography into Korean scholarship, and founding the Association of Korean Cultural and Historical Geographers, in addition to displaying his research capability in the fields of old maps and history of Korean geography. Under his leadership, historical geography made great strides both quantitatively and qualitatively to find a solid place within the discipline of geography. Diversity in themes characterizes the current state of Korean historical geography, and there is a mounting sign that young practitioners have widened the methodological horizon as well.

Despite these splendid achievements Korean historical geography is now at a crossroad. The intra- and interdisciplinary *raison d'être* of historical geography is put to the question. Positions of retired professors are filled by those who have speciality in other areas. Young scholars take a skeptical attitude toward the established priorities; previous subjects, sources, concepts, theories and methods as a problem-solving scheme do not appeal to them any more. To make matters worse, illiteracy prevails among young students in reading historical documents written in classic Chinese character.

Tremendous efforts will be required to get over this critical time of uncertainty. First and foremost, a high alert in teaching and training talented students is crucial for the continuation of our duty. For this nothing is more important than critical interpretation of primary sources, sound historian's craft, rigorous field works and penetrating geographical imagination. Secondly, we need to communicate with humanity, social science and natural science to enhance our competitiveness and to attract disillusioned young scholar's attention. Common wisdom is that historical geography can gain much in terms of technical skills, theoretical expertises and philosophical underpinnings by ignoring formal disciplinary boundaries. Thirdly, to ensure a support of the public books comparable to those on the list of Cambridge Studies in Historical Geography

series need to be stacked in libraries and bookstores. Much sought after are books and monographs rich in regional detail and theoretical insight. These tasks to revitalize Korean historical geography are assigned to all of us.

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