

Panopticonization towards Space and Society in Modern Japan: A case of a coal-mining region

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I. Introduction

In Japan the *Meiji* 明治 government had rapidly proceeded modernization policies with incredible speed. The national government had promoted industrialization, militarization, creation of traffic and urban infrastructures, preparation of educational, institutional and assembly systems, and also bureaucracy, from the *Meiji* through the *Taisho* 大正 era. The former 300 feudal spaces were then integrated into one space of the nation state of Japan. Under several institutions through, as it were, “the *panopticonized*” space, people were been watched as members or agents of one modern nation, *the Empire of Great Japan*.

Among the modern industries, we can refer to coal mining as one typical example to which the nation state was strongly committed and took an active hand. In *Takashima* 高島, *Nagasaki* 長崎 prefecture, the formation of “*Gemeinschaftliches Gesellschaft*” can be seen. It is usually peculiar to modern coal mining society, and coupled with *Takashima*'s own geographical location as a peripheral island, is becoming drastically depopulated nowadays. There had been several controls through the ages of modern imperialism, modern capitalism, and global capitalism. In addition, through mutual checks among social strata, the modern institution of “*Naya* 納屋,” and afterwards through that of “*Tsume-sho* 詰め所,” the daily life of the people there had been watched in some ways. The watch-system like as *panopticon* partially had, a system of mutual aids at the same time there. It is ironic that in the modernization process such as the pre-modern-like “*Gemeinschaftlich*” character of a local society, mutual aids and watching system, has lingered in a coal-mining region.

In this paper, following after the two opportunities at the International Comparative Study of Coalminers (Toronto Univ., 1996) and at the Inaugural International Conference of Critical Geography (Vancouver, 1997), the author focuses on the spatial situation of modernization in Japan with the example of *Takashima* to consider the coal mining industry and the character of the regional society.

II. Policy of the *Meiji* government and industrialization in the modern era in Japan

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The feudal age of Japan ended in 1868, with the *Meiji* Restoration. The reign of *Tokugawa Shogun* 徳川将軍 (the *Yedo* 江戸 era: 1603-1868) closed its history of approximately 270 years. During the *Yedo* era Japan was divided into about 300 small countries. Since the *Meiji* Restoration, the national government promoted political centralization and industrial modernization. The many 300 fragmented spaces were integrated into one nation space with political and economic meaning. As for industrial modernization, I once referred to that of the tea industry through local, regional, national and global levels, with the example of *Yame* 八女 region, *Kyushu* 九州, Japan (Tsutsumi, 1996a). The national government also thought much of education. Through these policies of modernization, the nation state of Japan, or its image, was formed.

From the middle of the *Meiji* era (1868-1912), Japan was considered to be a modern military state. Especially through the *Taisho* era (1912-1926) and the early part of the *Showa* 昭和 era (1926-1989), the militarization of Japan became stronger. This tendency was sustained with the armed invasion by Japan of foreign, especially, Asian countries.

The modernization of Japan before W.W.II. can be thought of as the history of industrialization and militarization. After very serious armed attack, Japan was defeated and occupied by the allied forces in 1945. Many heavy industrial regions were bombed by the U.S. Air Force, and it was necessary that industrial facilities were re-constructed upon the ruins. However, the Korean War occurred in 1950, then emergency demands were generated due to the outbreak of the war, and brought postwar economic rehabilitation and revitalization to Japan.

After that, particularly around the 1960's, Japan had experienced high economic growth. As symbols of its growth, we often refer to the Tokyo Olympic Games and the opening to business of the *Shinkansen* 新幹線 (the super-express) in 1964. But just as it is in this age, depopulated regions and over-populated regions have emerged all around Japan. Migrants from rural regions have flowed into cities, changing the rural labor force into an industrial one in urban regions.

As for depopulated regions, especially rural regions, mountain villages, fishery villages and coal mining regions, where traditionally natural environment and resources were used for daily subsistence or industry, and where through such tradition social ties were created and reproduced, drastic out-migration and the decline of regional social and economic functions were experienced.

In other words, the high economic growth of postwar Japan was only possible through the formation of depopulated and overpopulated regions, and through the uneven development.

III. Panopticonization towards space and society

As is well known, the “*panopticon*” was treated by Foucault (1995. originally 1975), after Bentham had referred to it as one of the modern systems. In recent day, Hannah (1997) analyzed the “*panopticism*” to consider the relationship between power and individuals under that control.

Here I use the word “*panopticonization*” to analyze modern power and its control over industry in Japan, in particular using one example of a small coal mining society. That is, the *Meiji* government researched, integrated and controlled the national land of Japan with its strong power, and because these tasks had to be completed in a short time, so the government had to consider the national space under the watching and controlling system like *panopticon*. It is one of

the schemes that modern power structures and systems required. Such *panopticonization* has been seen in small coal mining societies, and that is critical point here.

The small coal mining society in Japan was one of the modern heritages that had survived partly until recent day. In that sense the character of such a society is a unique one, because as the famous Japanese sociologist, Yasuma Takata (1922) once suggested, the more *Gesellschaft* continues to emerge, the less *Gemeinschaft* proceeds on through the modernization process in Japan.

In addition, using an example of coal mining society is interesting when analyzing the modernity within the era called “*postmodern*.” Such a small coal mining society, located especially in peripheral areas, was placed under the powerful control and aids by the national government, and sustained the nation’s resource management and insurance. However, because imported coal costs only one-third of domestic coal, the coal mining industry declined to its silent death under severe international competition and the global economy. For these reasons, in this paper I observe and analyze such a *panopticonized situation* in a small coal mining society to illustrate and consider modernity in the present day.

IV. *Takashima* : society and space there

1. Coal mining industry in *Takashima*

Takashima is located in *Nagasaki* prefecture, about 15km southwest of the *Nagasaki* Harbor, *Nagasaki* city. *Takashima* as a town consists of four islands, but only one island "*Takashima*" is inhabited by about one thousand people. The island is very small to house such a big industry; it has a size of only 6.4km in circumference and the town area is only 1.27 square km, which is the smallest figure of a Japanese municipality. In March 1995, the population count was 1,100 with 606 households. The population per household was 1.83. At that time, this figures was also the smallest of all Japanese towns. However this town has a record of being the most densely inhabited town in Japan, from the 1960's through 1970's.

The first time that machines were introduced into the digging process of coal mining in this country was after the *Meiji* Restoration (1868), meaning the end of the feudal age in Japan, at *Takashima* coal mine, where a feudal landlord *Nabeshima* 鍋島 and a Scottish merchant Thomas Glover jointly operated the coal mine. In 1881, the *Takashima* coal mine fell into the hands of *Yataro Inasaki* 岩崎弥太郎, who had established the *Mitsubishi* 三菱 Financial Group. We can trace the origin of the present biggest financial clique (“*Zaibatsu* 財閥”) in Japan to *Takashima*. In other words, the *Mitsubishi* Group was born in *Takashima*. For more than one century, the coal mine at *Takashima* was under the control of the *Mitsubishi* Group till 1986 when the mine was closed.

It has been said that two coal mines, *Miike* 三池 and *Takashima*, were the best ones in the industrial area, and as a result they were recognized as the "Build Mines" which the National Government had planned to support politically and economically for a long time(Yada, 1975, 1981, 1994). However, the two mines were shut down during the last stage of the national coal mining policy (*Takashima*, in 1986; *Miike* in 1997). And there were only two coal mines at the moment in 1999 in Japan, *Ikesbima* 池島 in *Nagasaki* prefecture and *Taiheiyo* 太平洋 in

Hokkaido 北海道 but both of them have closed. At its peak, *Takashima* recorded more than 1.2 million tons/a year of coal production (1965), but during the period of severe conditions in coal mining in Japan (The Energy Revolution for petroleum and the importation of cheaper coal), its production was reduced to little more than 0.3 million tons/a year in the last year of its running in 1986.

2. Regional characteristics of *Takashima*

Takashima has been called "a region of one island, one town and one company," because its population consists of the residents of an isolated island (*Takashima* island) forming one town, and the town has been a company town (in Japan we express it as "company castle town").

Often people say that there were three headmen in *Takashima*, that is, the headman of *Takashima* town, the director of the *Takashima* Division of the *Mitsubishi* Coal-mining Company, and the executive leader of the Laborers' Union of the coal miners at the *Takashima* Division of the *Mitsubishi*. So, there were three power poles in *Takashima*. This situation developed because of the characteristics of *Takashima*, the extreme company town controlled by one company, the *Mitsubishi*.

As is often the case with coal mining regions, society was typical in *Takashima*. There were three hierarchically-structured classes; "*Shokunin* 職員"(white-collared workers), "*Koin* 鉱員" or "*Honko* 本鉱"(normally employed coal miners), and "*Kumifu* 組夫(subcontracted coal miners). They lived apart from the other classes (spatial segregation), and socio-economic differentiations were very clear among the classes; in housing, salary etc.

Most of the "*Koin*" lived in company apartment houses with two rooms (9 square meters each) and a small kitchen. There was no bath room in such a company apartment house, so they shared the public bath house offered by the company. Through such a bath system and intimate relationships formed in the neighborhood, networks of information and rumor were locally formed. "Gemeinschaftliches Gesellschaft" was generally formed in the coal mining region, and *Takashima* was not as exception.

During the pre-modern era through part of the modern era in Japan, there were many bond laborers pens called "*Naya*" in the watching system in the coal mining regions. The bosses of "*Naya*" collected coal miners and forced them to work under severer labor conditions. *Takashima* was not an exception. In the early *Meiji* era, there were special prisons for digging coal in *Hokkaido* and *Miike*, called "*Shu-chi-kan* 集治監," although they were soon abolished. During W.W.II, the national government of Japan forced Chinese and Korean people to engage in compulsory labor at domestic coal mines in Japan. As a result, the labor system in coal mines in the modern era was deeply related to exploitation, constraint, and severe control of the miners. That is, the Japanese coal mining society has had a history which related to *panopticonization* of the small society by power and industrial capitalism.

After W.W.II, the system of guardhouses called "*Tsume-sho*" was established in each small area in coal mining regions. In *Takashima* the members of "*Tsume-sho*" often checked the labor or health conditions of the miners, even their living conditions. The members of the "*Tsume-sho*" sometimes took the role of policemen, so it was said that there were almost no tasks for the real policemen in *Takashima*.

Yamamoto (1991) referred to the characteristics of the sub-culture of coal miners. He points out seven items related to on them as described below.

- 1.pride in daredevil job
- 2.strong friendship among colleagues
- 3.self-identity to a dandy
- 4.tendency to conspicuous consumption
- 5.everyday dependency on drinking
- 6.familial and marital complexity
- 7.antagonism against the intellectuals

I cannot accept all of the items as typical characteristics of coal-miners, but I think that most of the items were typical for some people among "Kumifu" class. Yamamoto referred to such items as above because he intended to clarify the characteristics of coal-miners by comparing them with those of white-collared salary men. In another words, Yamamoto compared the sub-culture of coal-miners with that of salary men.

3. Out-migration and regional changes in *Takashima*

According to the National Population Census of Japan where research has been conducted almost every five years since 1920 to the present, the population of *Takashima* town has recorded its peak in 1960 at the census level (20,938). After the 1960's, its population was reduced mostly because of rationalization and restructuring of the *Takashima* coal mine. Just before the shutting down of the coal mine in 1986, there were about 6,000 people in *Takashima*. With the shutting down many people lost their jobs and were forced to seek new jobs and to live new lives outside the town. The population of *Takashima* decreased to about 1,100 or so. That is, in March 1995, there were 1,110 people and 606 households. Originally *Takashima* was the narrowest self-governing body in Japan (1.27 square km), but the population per one household was also the smallest of Japanese towns (1.8). *Takashima* then attained the most drastic depopulation in Japan (-95.1%/1960-1995). From these statistics, we can see the drastic depopulation and out-migration from *Takashima* after the shutting down of the coal mine.

When the *Takashima* coal mine was shut down (Nov.27, 1986), we organized a study group in *Nagasaki* prefecture. The majors of the members consisted of hygienics, geography, anthropology, financial policy and so on. Among them my task was to analyze the migration from *Takashima*. The data of migrants from *Takashima* developed into a huge volume, so I continue to analyze it even now. At the present, I can refer only to the outline of migration from *Takashima*. The characteristics of the migration are listed as below.

1. There were not so many migrants going to three big city areas (*Tokyo* 東京, *Osaka* 大阪, *Nagoya* 名古屋), but about 91% of them (1,947/2,140) migrated to *Kyushu* Island.
2. Most of the migrants had originally come to *Takashima* from peripheral regions and many of them, after the shutting down of the coal mine, went out to peripheral regions. This pattern of migration is different from the usual migration in Japan.
3. Among the "*Shokuin*"(white-collared workers), "*Koin*"(normally employed coal miners), and "*Kumifu*"(subcontracted coal miners) could be seen a differentiation of migration;

"*Shokuin*" and their family tended to go to bigger cities, because the "*Shokuin*" did not lose their jobs with the shutting down of the mine but only transferred to the related companies of the *Mitsubishi* Group. All of the "*Koin*," however, lost their jobs, and had to leave *Takashima* to seek new jobs or to be trained for new jobs (to get a driver's license etc.). The "*Kumifu*" class experienced the shutting down under the severest conditions; some of them were not able to receive the special money for loss of jobs that was usually offered by the *Mitsubishi* to the "*Koin*" class.

As referred to above, characteristic migration flows occurred from *Takashima*. Especially through the sudden shutting down of the coal mine which affected a unique regional community of coal miners ("*Gemeinschaftliches Gesellschaft*"), unique migration as such had occurred, so we can see the unique characteristics of *Takashima* by analyzing the migration flow (Tsutsumi, 1991).

The drastic depopulation generated more and more depopulation. Not only coal miners and their families but also people who ran or who worked in shops had to close their shops and leave the island, because the population in *Takashima* was reduced to the level of the threshold population of sustaining the shops. In addition the financial conditions of the town worsened; the tax income from the company of the *Mitsubishi* was drastically reduced; huge volumes of migration more than had been imagined occurred. Regional functions decayed and a vicious circle of structural depopulation caused people to move ("Depopulation brings more depopulation"; Kamino, 1970). Including the case of *Takashima*, regional deprivation of functions of social and economic life occurred without exception. The hospital, elementary school and junior high school which were run by the town reduced their scale, and the *Takashima* High School run by *Nagasaki* prefecture was abolished.

It was one of the biggest tasks or wishes for *Takashima* to create new working places. During the time just after the shutting down, the town office established a company of flatfish breeding as a tertiary sector. However its facilities were hit by a typhoon and all the flatfish escaped from it, so the new enterprise had to be given up. Afterwards, a tomato breeding company was established, but its running is currently reduced. One company dealing with miscellaneous goods and bedclothes came to *Takashima*, but it had to pull back because of operating in the red.

After the time when the "boom town" disappeared, people in *Takashima* had to recognize that *Takashima* was an isolated island where there were no other economically useful resources than coal. Since then it has been difficult to generate new working places in *Takashima*.

4. Remaining problems of *Takashima*

Through the *Takashima* study, we recognized some points or critical tasks as below.

1. From the standpoint of security of energy holding, and from that of the remaining technology and techniques for mine digging, it is a pity to shut down coal mines in Japan (now in 2003, there is no coal mine in Japan).
2. We must think about regional revitalization or redevelopment not only by attracting new companies but also through the renewal and reactivation of regional functions which cover living functions of daily life.
3. The policy for the unemployed and elderly old people has become more and more

important for the town, in order to avoid more depopulation in the future. The treatment of financial conditions, which have been worsening must be based upon both as industrial policy to attract new companies and a policy for severe population problems.

V. Uneven changes in spatial integration

Several activities such as economic, political, social and cultural ones, develop differently in spaces. From a spatial perspective, economic activities tend to proceed widely or borderlessly. But cultural activities, especially local ones, are enclosed in narrower local spaces. We can see this more easily when we think about the narrower scales (not so global but regional or local scales) where economic, political, social and cultural activities develop. That is, there is a spatial order created by the four kinds of activities within heaped different spaces. In fact, the idea of these spaces has relationships to AGIL scheme by Talcott Parsons.

Most of the depopulated regions in Japan have their cultural roots in local environments like *Takashima*. In those cases the social ties in such communities are stronger (*Gemeinschaftlich*). But following the high economic growth of the 1960's, economic spatial integration has proceeded in this country. Spaces have been integrated economically into a wider space through the centralized function system of Japan. The trends of the global economy had effects upon the main industries in peripheral regions; mining, agriculture, forestry, and fishery etc. But in the case of local cultural space, such spatial integration has not occurred easily: within such space, spatial integration or spatial "averaging" faces resistance against changing. That is, although spatial integration through economic activities tends to proceed, the movement into local culture would experience resistance against change or integration into a wider space. Thus *Takashima* is a unique and typical case from this point of view.

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