

Globalization and Local Cities: Focusing on Cities in Tohoku Area¹⁾

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In this paper, several issues that emerge during analysis on local cities in globalization will be observed by focusing on local cities in Tohoku area. In the first part, the author will observe the context of review on modernity which is brought about by globalization, by clarifying the social connotation of locality / 'individuality of place' through reexamination of 'central - local' framework. In the next part, the author will focus on local cities in Tohoku area, to clarify the strong connection of 'peripheral Tohoku local cities' with the mechanism of modernity, while observing how is the 'far and away Tohoku society' changing inside the wavering nation state, and how it shows in the present form of Sendai as a regional core city. And based on the above arguments, in the last part, while exploring the issue on theory of typologies of cities in post nation-state, the author will once again observe the contents of meaning of locality.

I. Globalization and Locality

Along with the progress of globalization, social connotation of locality, which can no longer be captured in the conventional frame work of 'central-local' converged on nation-society, is being widely talked about. If we look back, for a considerably long period of time, modern city has been positioned inside the framework of the above-mentioned 'central-local,' which is after all the structure of modern nation-state.

'Modern nation-state dissolved herself in the movement of "uniformity and accumulation" that led various opposite factors in the composition of labor force which took shape inside a national economy, into one "central". Furthermore, an illusion called communal society was formed inside the mechanism of nation-state, and various movements of discriminating or classing in the society were integrated towards the "nationalization of civil society (Saito Hideharu)." In this "nationalization of civil society," the so called "civilian public sphere" occupied an important position. ... and as "integrating institution" (Yazaki Takeo) or "knotting institution" (Suzuki Eitaro) which appeared on such "civilian public sphere," city functioned more than just as a media' (Yoshihara, 2000: 25-26).

Also, according to Marxist discourses which posited city as the 'cohesive point of market relations' (Lenin - Otsuka Hisao - Shimazaki Minoru), city was put inside the context of modernity basically. And when it comes to local city, local city placed itself as being integrated into the 'central' metropolitan area in a subordinating position, while placing its feet firmly in the

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context of modernity. Consequently, it was usual to place 'local' as 'peripheral' or 'inferior.' Such composition was accelerated by a series of post-war regional development, and the supporting factor for this was no other than the 'local/periphery's motion of getting caught inside the merciless centripetal force of the central' (Yoshihara, 1997: 73).

However, globalization has made an inroad upon the foundation of modern nation-state/national economy, and this brought about a new 'local' = locality which can no longer be contained in the aforementioned circle of 'central-local', 'center-periphery'. In other words, this is the 'local' = locality which emerged as the paradox of globalization, or what McGrew points out as the five consequences of globalization, namely 'universalization vs. particularization,' 'homogenization vs. differentiation,' 'integration vs. fragmentation,' 'centralization vs. decentralization,' 'juxtaposition vs. syncretization,' in which linkage to place and locale serves as the mutual base (McGrew, 1992: 74-75) ²⁾. There are of course some arguments, such as David Harvey's, which identify the above-mentioned paradox of globalization and localization as an effect of differentiation by capital. However, there is one important point to be emphasized, i.e. while in some parts it resonates the argument which tries to reinstate the 'diverse local' which has been denied by modern nation-state, there emerges a stand point which tries to discover new development factors in local cities.

Some recent arguments on cities in Tohoku area give emphasis for example on 'individuality of place' (Takahashi Hidehiro) or 'social bases inherent in city' (Hashimoto Kazutaka). Incited by the argument mentioning city's 'original individuality' as the 'local indigenous asset' (Sasaki Masayuki), Takahashi captures 'individuality of place' as a totality of 'human resources or subjective factors in the economic development of local cities "psychological climate which can be said also as "local character," or natural, social historical "original unity", or "the society's natural environment a industrial climate" (Takahashi, 2002). These arguments have some affinity with the once flourishedly argued theories of indigenous development or localism, but it also shows strong critical recognition of those theories as having some sides which in the end they were merely an 'imposed spontaneity,' or 'passive spontaneity' (Kainuma Makoto). In any case, the social connotation of locality which specifies cities in Tohoku area, is now being reconsidered as 'historical, geographical, social, cultural, informational /intellectual individuality or characteristics of local cities' (Takahashi, 2002) amidst the progressing 'homogenization vs. differentiation' and 'homogeneity vs. diversity' that accompany the process of globalization.

This paper will not question the theoretical aspect of the above arguments. The important thing is that those arguments do not merely conclude 'cities in Tohoku area as periphery,' which sees 'local' as a 'place for central government to implement its policies,' or as 'place for central government to gain its profit' (Uehara Senroku). And based on the arguments that saw 'cities in Tohoku area as peripheral', the next part of this paper will explore the way local cities have been understood up to the present, and theoretical result from such point of view on local cities.

II. Cities in Tohoku Area as Periphery

Ishimoda Tadashi once mentioned Tohoku area as ‘remote and inferior region, which was ruled by the oldest form of feudal system, ‘and’ colony of central’s culture through the history,’ (Ishimoda, 1952 & 1953). Ishimoda’s emphasis was of course on the fact that ‘after Meiji Restoration, the above mentioned Tohoku area freed itself from feudalistic isolation, and was engulfed in the progressive movement of a united Japan’s nation building ‘ (Ishimoda, *ibid.*). Still, it is also unmistakable fact that after Meiji, Tohoku area keeps to be recognized as ‘inferior Tohoku, and ‘peripheral Tohoku’ with image of a remote area. However, it is also difficult to easily consider all of those images emerged merely from a prejudice. For example, during the period from the Russo-Japanese War in which Japan’s modernity achieved ‘the first core’ until the Taisho era, it can not be denied that the urbanization of Tohoku area fell decisively far behind which then led to phenomenon of ‘backward Tohoku’. In relation to this slowness in urbanization, Kawanishi Hidemichi discovers that at the beginning of Meiji era the city of Sendai, Akita, Yonezawa in Tohoku area were among 30 cities and comprised 10%, but not long before the Sino-Japanese War only Sendai remained, and after the Russo-Japanese War until Taisho era the rank was getting lower (Kawanishi, 2001: 189-190).

While Tohoku society was carrying out one role as ‘local,’ and ‘periphery,’ the composition of ‘central-local’ and ‘center-periphery’ structure was passing through a period of more than half century and reached its peak during the high economic growth period, or the period when Japan’s modernity reached a certain critical phase. As we have observed in the above paragraphs, Japan’s postwar development policy has built the skeleton for local cities, and determined their social configuration. In the case of cities in Tohoku area, three cities, i.e. Hachinohe, Sendai port, Joban Kouriyama, were appointed as new industrial cities, and in the New National Comprehensive Development Plan, lake Mutsuogawa emerged as large-scale industrial development area. However, the above mentioned development policy resulted in the rapid progress of population decrease in rural area, and stimulated the characters of source area for labor supply which was hierarchical and discriminative. Referring to two monographs compiled by Watanabe Sake and Haneda Shin, we can see that even though the number of migrant workers from Tohoku area reached its peak during economic high growth period, and was decreasing in the later half period, the center point for post war migrant workers in Japan had always been the demand and supply pipe from Tohoku rural areas to Keihin areas (Watanabe & Haneda, 1977 & 1987). Needless to say that cities in Tohoku area had served as intermediary for the positioning of discriminative and hierarchical labor composition at the lower level, in which the above mentioned migrant workers was incorporated into national economy through modern nation-state hegemony. From other point of view, it can be said that, as relations with various factors in the higher level strengthened ‘peripheral cities of Tohoku area’ continued to bear the image as remote area, which was then reorganized profoundly.

III. Change in the far and away Tohoku society

Starting from description in the above paragraphs, we should once again focus on one point, as can be seen as follows. The phase which supports independence of place as urban space, combined with the carrying out of communicative role of cities in Tohoku area and also with the

above mentioned continuing existence of image as remote area and its reorganization process, underwent a change from stratum of folkways that was hiding at the base of 'individuality of place', which has been observed in the above paragraphs, to stratum of modernity which is backed by skillful 'dialogue' between power and capital. For a long period of time Tohoku area has, in fact, been supported by thickly layered stratum of numerous folkways and 'shared illusion' which emitted from the stratum. The terms 'stratum of folkways' and 'shared illusion' are based on statement from Uchida Ryuzo (Uchida, 1998), but if we pickup the world as thought by Yanagida Kunio, there will be more than we can count. In folklore, such things are taken as shamanism about 'the honored' and 'the cursed.' However, if we try to give shape to those terms, it will be the 'gloominess' of Tohoku area. The author once explained this character, based on description by Omura Ryo and Ishikawa Takuboku.

"As Omura Ryo once said, on one hand, the darkness side of Iwate rural area often said as the Tibet of Japan, is discovered as 'severe labor, poor living, with village community's rules giving restrictions to the people's individual freedom' where 'the people had been left behind several hundred years to make their start, and they make strenuous effort to catch up with the rest, ' these people 'work and work through the season of spring ... when the pomegranate they planted starts to bloom, then comes the summer, then goes the autumn, follows by the winter when the village is buried under the snow,' these people are by no means inferior if compared to they who 'live a prosperous life due to good geographical condition, and come from wealthy family'. The phrases of Omura clearly brings out the darkness dragged by Tohoku society for a long period of time. It is also obvious that the darkness of rural area half contributed to the cause of such condition. Furthermore, Ishikawa Takuboku, native of Tamayama Mura said in his poem that 'my sickness was caused by the far and away. I closed my eyes and I feel it.' Ishikawa's 'far and away' is side by side with poverty and severe labor. However, at the same time it suggest a certain flexibility that is locked in the heart of the darkness of Tohoku society, which is not converged in the poverty, and is deeply rooted in the climate characteristic of the area. This also becomes the foundation of 'shy' character that we can see in each work of Dazai Osamu" (Yoshihara, 1997:74-75)

Recently there seems to be a tendency among studies on Tohoku area, to once again give a form to the 'gloominess' of Tohoku society, where urban and rural have been weaving a world together (regarding this meaning, the author gives attention to technique of the studies on Tohoku area. However, this paper will rather elaborate recent development, i.e. the abstraction of 'far and away' = 'gloominess', in parallel with the above mentioned decolorizing and homogenizing in 'individuality of place' by Takahashi. Certainly in this abstraction process we can see that a series of scenarios of a 'gap correction' have been planted from outside or from the top, and in cooperation with this there has been a slogan of 'breaking away from backwardness' from the 'periphery,' and they have cultivated a 'result' of self-praising among technocrats of the bureaucracy. But at the same time, we should not forget that in this case the afore mentioned continuing existence of image as remote area is still being reorganized, and it is in itself supported by a certain capital overflow. Because, as we have observed, it is not until such capital flow intervenes that the 'far and away' = 'gloominess' character is 'opened' from the stratum of folkways, towards the abstract stratum on one hand and image flow on the other

hand, and along with this, it also makes such character loses its autarchy³⁾. Needless to say that the world of tales of old Japan condensed in *The Tales of Tono* (*Tono Monogatari*), the collapse of folk custom, and not less important is the growth in number of ‘shutter-down roads’ which is now becoming the feature of small local towns, all are deeply connected to the above mentioned lost of autarchy.

IV. The Change of Sendai as a Regional Core City

In this part, we will now observe configuration of cities in Tohoku area, in which the above mentioned change into ‘far and away Tohoku society’ had been the foundation.

As we all know, during the period of high economic growth, there was a rapid urbanization (in term of population), with a striking population concentration mainly into three metropolitan areas. At the same time regional core cities also showed rapid growth. Afterwards, having gone through ‘the age of decentralization’ there was an advancing move towards ‘concentration into one pole, Tokyo’, but during this period only regional core cities maintained a relatively high population growth. And when it comes to cities in Tohoku area, in 1995 number of cities that showed increase in population (compared with 1970) reaches to 43 cities among 63 cities, and number of cities which were losing population is 20 cities. The interesting point is, 8 out of 10 cities in Akita prefecture which was highly dependent on agriculture, forestry, fishery, and on structurally depressed industries were experiencing a lost in population, whereas in Iwate prefecture 8 out of 13 cities were undergoing the same lost (it is represented in Kamaishi city and Oga city which suffered respectively 28% and 18% of decrease in population). This shows that a change in the structure of industry brings direct consequence to the city’s decline. On the other hand, there are cities that enjoy high increase in population, such as Kitakami city (80% increase), Sendai city (42%), Tagajo city (35%), Natori city (33%), also Morioka city (32%). Even though we should also consider the effect from annexation of neighboring municipalities (cities, towns, villages), the enlargement of greater Sendai area which includes Tagajo city and Natori city, is remarkable. In this connection, we should once again give attention to the rapid growth of Sendai as regional core city, which has caused the above mentioned condition.

The factor, which caused Sendai’s rapid growth, is the rise of (city) centrality. The index often applied to measure this centrality is focused on the width of wholesale market-region with its wholesale selling amount. Figure 1 points out ranking of cities based on wholesale selling sum, in which we can see that together with Fukuoka city, centrality of Sendai as regional core city shows a remarkable rapid increase (Hino, 2001a: 13). Another index for centrality is accumulation of branch offices. Sendai has been for a long time described as ‘city of branch offices economy,’ whose head offices are in Tokyo or Osaka, and they started advancing to Sendai after 1950s (Yoshida, 1972). In 1972, percentage of branch offices for wholesale business, which had their head offices in Tokyo or Osaka, had already reached 45% in Sendai (Hino, 2001a: 13). This in itself points out that while Sendai is incorporated into the system of ‘central-local’ and ‘core-periphery’ whose unit is one national economy /labor organization, the city also bore the function of wide area where regional block served as its territory.

However, regarding this centrality or territory, since 1990s the character as ‘city of

branch offices economy' began to show a considerable change. The change can be seen in the trend of branch offices accumulation in Sendai, in which the city itself is positioned amidst a whole decline of Tohoku cities which are compelled to make reductions, or as being pointed out in Table 1, i.e. on one hand the rise in number of branch offices from Tokyo enterprises shows a sharp curtailment, while there is an increase in number of branch offices from enterprises inside the regional block itself. And as Hino Masateru so aptly points out, 'a certain character as foothold' is being developed, and this character is different from the 'centrality of regional block' that has been shut into a circle of 'central-local' (Hino, 2001b: 30). Such formation of character as foothold/reorganization of territory can be considered as acute manifestation of regional core cities' 'self-initiated reorganization of space, in connection with, or by mediary of world core cities' (Iyotani, 1993:104) which is becoming stronger along with the progress of globalization, and also as a 'miniature copy that elaborates the development process of hierarchy-making concerning various city, in which world core cities become the nucleus' (Iyotani, *ibid.*). In any case, in the new development of branch offices Sendai, which seems to be 'lone winner' city among Tohoku cities, we can catch a glimpse of the globalization's shadow, which is mediated by the development of media technology.

Table 1 Increasing rate of local enterprise and enterprise in other regions of regional core cities in 1986-96 (%)

enterprise	Sapporo	Sendai	Hiroshima	Fukuoka
total	39	44	29	40
local company	39	40	29	39
enterprise in other regions ¹⁾	38	49	30	43
Tokyo enterprise	31	43	23	37
enterprise inside the regional block ²⁾	25	79	18	66

source : Hino (2001a : 16)

note : 1) indicates enterprise whose headquarter is located inside the regional block

2) indicates enterprise whose headquarter is located with other municipalities inside the regional block

V. The Ever-Changing Locality

We can see in the above paragraphs that combined with the abundant entry of media technology, at present, the hierarchy/territory composition which forms the foundation of Tohoku cities contains configuration of cities which is not necessarily bound inside a chain of system of monistic 'central-local' which is used to be the supporting factor in formation of space of nation-state. Needless to say that the intervening factor in this case is the borderless capital flow, and mechanism of modernity, which makes abstraction of folkways stratum while resonating such capital flow. However if we are going to thoroughly discuss this matter, there will not be enough space in this paper. Yet there is one point that the author wants to add to the above explanation, that is, in the afore mentioned phase of reorganization of hierarchy/territory, the logic of localism or indigenous development which retain the residue of Fordism, is no longer

adaptable. Locality which enters the range of progressing globalization, has its side of de-territorialization that symbolizes diverse areas, and at the same time possesses the side of re-territorialization that is liberated from the metaphor which predominantly symbolizes the myth of 'nature of place'. In the end, locality turns over globalization. And consequently, the characteristic of locality which is stimulated by globalization lies in the fact that while the characteristics is based on the afore mentioned autarchy which is the underground of the stratum of folkways, it does not necessarily return to the latter ⁴).

To be added as the last remarks, the author will lightly touch upon the subject of genealogy in urban sociology which is directly connected to the above explanation, but the question will not be on the formation of local city theory as one genre in urban sociology. Rather, concerning thesis on analytical axis for local cities, the question is more on the number of accumulation of theory that can serve as reference for study on local cities, and whether there is a kind of genealogy of study. Regarding this point, we must focus on typologies of cities. In fact, in the field of urban sociology and region and community studies, there have been a number of scholars who make lucid and systematical genealogy on typologies of cities, and therefore in this paper the author does not want to make another unnecessary repetition. However, to roughly make a summing-up, the conventional typologies of cities has put emphasis on structural determinant or on organizational constraint, which tends to focus on each city as being integrated to 'central' or 'core', or to treat the transition in city's differentiation and configurational structure which is based on historical development of city, as a mere additional of 'the whole.' Contrary to this, structuring and self-organizing side of local cities, or the way each city defines/redefines 'the whole' are being neglected. In the end, each city's 'social relations which reflect the city's historical stock, city's culture (living in every day life and culture), the unique characteristic formed by the city itself, or the actors of the city etc..... are being set aside' (Ajisaka, 1999: 11). In addition to this, we still have not obtained typologies of cities, in which the dynamics of globalization and locality are largely covered, where convergence and distancion repeatedly intertwine and form layers, at the phase of post nation-state, which is not integrated into only one nation-society.

Reexamining typologies of cities, will naturally question the perspective of urban comparison. Even though there is not enough space in this paper to discuss the matter thoroughly, if we still want to grope for the horizon which connects comparative study to study on local cities, not only that we maintain the heretofore main stream perspective which attaches each local cities to classification of city's scale or to strata-making, by making full use of statistics or data from the government, but we also should consider comparative study which applies 'different/diverse' method to observe and to rearticulate each city/ local city's realities.

Notes

- 1) This paper is based on the author's presentation in the symposium of Japan Association on Urban Sociology, held in Hokkaido University on July 8, 2001. The author would like to express his gratitude to the moderator and panelists of the session for their valuable comments. For a more detailed theoretical base for this paper, see (Yoshihara, 1999).
- 2) These paradoxical results of globalization originally come from the characteristics of 'modernity'

pointed out by Baudelaire, C. as follows. ‘The painter of modern life.....is the transient, the fleeting, the contingent; it is the one half of art, the other being the eternal and the immutable.’ (Quoted from Harvey (1989, 10)).

- 3) This so called autarchy serves as the base of what Polanyi, K. calls as ‘economy of subsistence,’ and Illich, I. points out as ‘conviviality,’ and the recent issue in environment theory puts it as ‘commons.’
- 4) Regarding this point, the author does not see locality as ‘pure native culture.’ In this connection, Smith, P. mentions that the present ‘conceptualization of the “local” ‘has a tendency towards ‘ontologically discernible space that exists as purified “inside”, understood as clearly distinct from the transnational flows of ideas, information, financial transactions, religious and cultural movements, media images, and people’ (Smith, 2201: 102). Smith mentions such stance as ‘privileges the local as a space of “authenticity” ’(ibid., 103)

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