Editor’s Preface:
On the Progress of Contemporary Korean Geography

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Abstract: This special issue is planned to introduce the recent academic state of the Korean geography, as the 32nd International Geographical Congress (IGC) in Cologne, Germany, 2012 is approaching. Korean Geographical Society successfully hosted the 29th IGC 2000 in Seoul and had a chance to introduce trends and achievements of Korean geographers at the time. This issue is to review the achievements of Korean geography research for the past ten years, and to overview the academic prospect of the Korean geography.

Key Words: International Geographical Congress, Korean Geographical Society, research trends and prospects of contemporary Korean geography

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There is not much institutional changes in the geography field of Korea for the past ten years, meaning no new university department or research institute. However, as various political and social issues (territorial conflicts, place naming, regional development,
and environmental protection, etc.) emerge, many geographers have gained ground in many fields of speciality beyond geography field, including government organizations. Academic achievement is also remarkable as the number of academic articles has increases rapidly and a great variety of research topics has been explored. Another notable trend in korean geography is the growth of various specialized academic organizations. So, the field of korean geography has grown to take an active role in korean society, and to secure academic specialities as well.

This issue overviews the recent trends and achievements of korean geography, in ten specialized fields: physical geography (geomorphology, climate, and ecology), human geography (economic, urban, social, and historic), GIScience, spatial statistics, and geography education. Many young active geographers contributed their insight for the academic review. It should be noted that each review is designed and written independently by each author.

The first three papers overview research topics of physical geography. K. Park review major developments of geomorphology and soil geography in Korea. He introduced three remarkable achievements in those field: a fierce debate on the traditional mountain concept, which expanded the general public’s understanding of geomorphology; scientific researches on the coastal sand dunes related to costal developments vs. conservation conflict; and increased research and social interest on the geomorphological hazards.

E. Lee et al. examine recent research issues in korean climatology scientists. They identified that research on climate change has rapidly increased for the past ten years and studies on precipitation variability have been given continual attentions among Korean climatologists. They also pointed out that, in climate change research, meteorologists focused on characteristics, prediction, and causes, while geographers were more interested in characteristics and impacts of climate change.

J. Park comprehensively review three general academic issues in korean biogeographical studies: relationship between environmental factors and plant distribution, past vegetation and climate, interaction between humans and environment. He emphasize that the future for biogeography in Korea seems promising although the field is poorly developed and has been generally neglected by geographers in Korea.

Next four articles cover the major research fields in human geography. The first paper by W. Lee et al. classify studies on economic geography in Korea into for periods by research issues and approaches: foundation (~1950s), positioning(1960s and 1970s), jump and rush(1980s and mid-1990s), and transitional period(late 1990s~). Although economic geography in Korea has developed significantly both in quantitative and qualitative perspectives, authors pointed out that most researches have been limited in some specific scope and issues.

J. Choi and Nam review the development of Korean urban geography since 1960’s. They suggested that korean urban geography research has evolved through initial stage, transition stage, maturation stage, and expect it would turn into the matured stage. They also point out that increasing number of urban geographers has made mutual relationship more complex and diverse, while quantitative studies have been increasing their weight since the 2000s.

B. Choi overviews the general trends and issues in social geography in the 2000s with theoretical perspective. He examined the development of social geography in Korea with several viewpoints including publications of several Social Geography textbooks, increased social geographical concerns and discussions on informational society, multiculturalism and/or transnationalism, political ecology and environmental justice, and feminism.
Hong’s paper on the Korean historical geography examines the development of the field by following major scholars of the field since 1945. He points out that since Korean historical geography took off in the 1980s when large numbers of second generation scholars emerged and British cross-sectional methodology accepted, research theme and methodology of Korean historical geography has been rapidly expanded.

Ku et al. overview recent issues of GIS research in Korean, particularly on web GIS and National GIS. Authors introduce that Web GIS in Korea is now evolving to mobile GIS which requires portable hardware, wireless Internet, and GPS receiver. They also introduce Korean government’s 4th phase NGIS project.

S. Lee and Kim examine current academic trends in geospatial analysis and modeling in Korea, focusing on spatial data analysis and spatial statistics, spatial optimization, and spatial simulation among various aspects of the field. Authors argue that geospatial analysis and modeling in Korea got through the initial stage during the 1990s when computer and analytical cartography and GIS were introduced, and moved to the growth stage during the first decade of the 21st century when there was a surge of relevant researches, and now is heading for its maturity stage.

Seo and Kim’s article on geography education reviewer the current status and research issues of the field in Korea, by introducing major journals of the field and papers published through those journals. Authors examine recent research trend from three perspectives: 1) nature of geographic knowledge, learning, and curriculum, 2) teacher education in geography, and 3) strategies in the geography classroom.

Editors wish to thank all the contributors, for their efforts in bringing this special issue to fruition. We look forward to future achievement in Korean geography research. We also hope geographers in Korea and all other countries could further communicate and interact with each other.

References


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