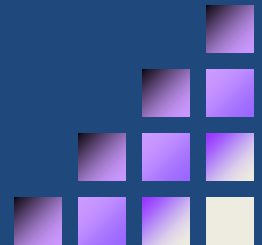


# Fieldwork Education Practice in Graduate Schools:

A Case Study on Human and Regional Geography Classes  
at University of Tsukuba



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# Introduction

- **Purpose**
- the significance and the problems of fieldwork education in graduate schools through a case study on U.T.
- **background**
- the importance of fieldwork as a research method is beyond question. However, in the Japanese graduate school curriculum, few universities have established fieldwork as a formal subject.
- U.T has incorporated fieldwork into the regular curriculum of the graduate school and has conducted regional surveys as a method of study for a long time.

# Contents

- History of fieldwork education
- Preparation for fieldwork class
  - Deciding on the field and coordinating
  - Orientations
  - Survey Groups and planning
- Conducting the fieldwork
  - General survey
  - Land use survey
  - Seminar
- Changes and problems
- Concluding remarks

# Part 1: History 1/2

- Fieldwork classes have been conducted for over 35 years, from 1978, when fieldwork classes were first implemented in the course of human geography.
- It is common for fieldwork studies to be conducted from spring to early summer, corresponding to the agricultural off-season, and from autumn to early winter.
- In principle, every student is required to participate in both fieldwork classes every year and to write and publish an academic paper in Tsukuba University's official report.

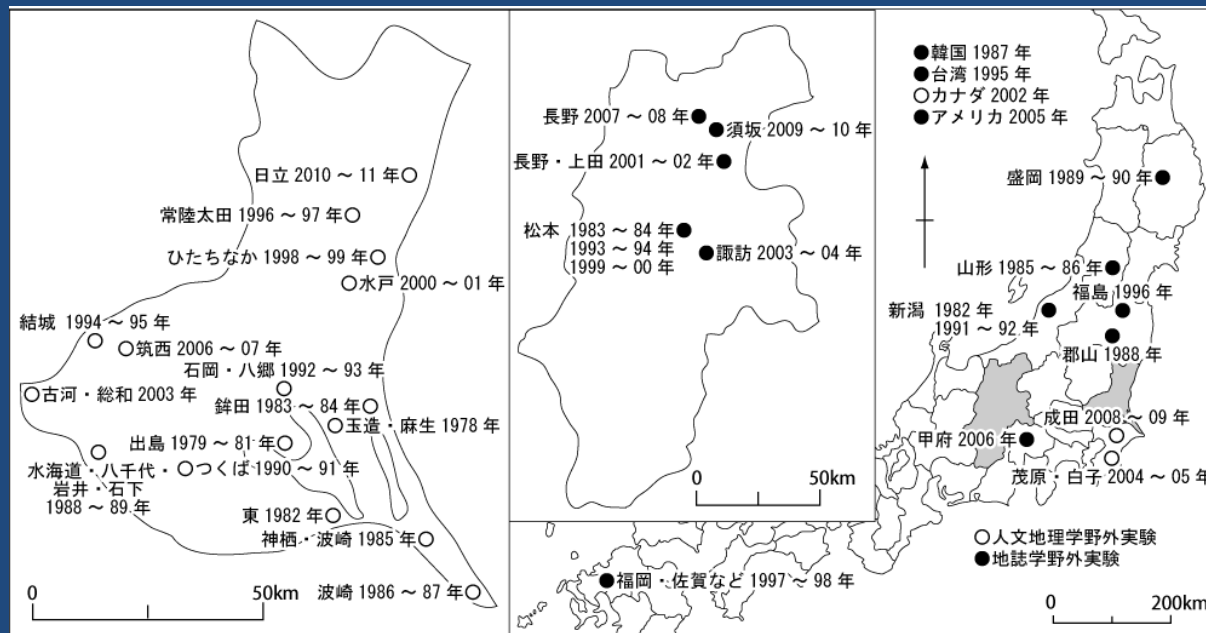


# Part 1: History 2/2

- In the course of human geography, the teaching staff and graduate students are organized into several groups in the study area and conduct field surveys collaboratively.
- For example, groups are composed according to themes such as livelihoods, economic activities, lifestyles, residential styles, social structures, daily activities, and population structure in the study area.

# Part 2: Preparation 1/3

- The study area is basically chosen by the teaching staff. In the course of human geography, it is common for fieldwork to be conducted in small and medium cities in the Kanto region, with a focus on Ibaraki and Chiba Prefecture.



## Part 2: Preparation 2/3

- Research conducted in Ibaraki Prefecture also has implications for regional contribution, but additionally, proximity to the field is important.
- It is convenient for the students to do additional survey to save the time and transportation costs.
- In order to set well-balanced survey themes, there has been a trend to favor small and medium cities, which include both urban regions and rural areas, as targets for research .

## Part 2: Preparation 3/3

- After the field location is determined, coordination with relevant organizations is carried out.
- Students offer formal greetings to institutions such as city halls or town/village offices, the local chambers of commerce and industry, the Japan agricultural cooperative, the leaders of the local government and merchants' association, and other organizations or persons who will assist the students during their surveys.



## Part 2: Deciding on the Field and Coordinating 1/2

- Additionally, the students consult with these organizations about the contents of their surveys and other topics related to the study area and request coordination.
- Among these relevant institutions and persons, contact with local government is particularly important.
- Fieldwork class is different from individual research in that a total of over 30 participants perform an on-site survey over the course of one week.
- As a result, the burden (survey pressure) placed on the region is greater.

## Part 2: Deciding on the Field and Coordinating 2/2

- In addition to the convenience of using statistical data and obtaining various types of regional information, coordination with local government is also important for building a relationship of mutual trust with the region.



# Part 2: Orientations 1/2

- After the decision on a field region and formal greetings to local government has been completed, an orientation is conducted for the students. Pre-fieldwork orientations, which target all participants, are held three times: two months prior to the start of the fieldwork, one month prior, and immediately beforehand.
- At the first orientation, the field survey's purpose, overview, cost, schedule, cautionary points, and so on are explained and the confirmation of the participants is attempted.

# Part 2: Orientations 2/2

- Because the human geography fieldwork classes are conducted on the principle of group surveys by the teaching staff and students, before the orientation, the students obtain cooperation from doctoral course students who are highly experienced in regional surveys and exchange opinions on topics such as group composition and research themes.

# Part 2: Survey Groups and Planning

## 1/2

- The number of survey groups and the survey contents differ by study area, but all survey groups have the established purpose of clarifying the study area's geographic characteristics.
- An academic tradition has been inherited that places great importance on training geographers who can record regional characteristics by observing the field while walking around with topographic maps and field notes, even in an area with no major distinctive features.

# Part 2: Survey Groups and Planning

## 2/2

- For example, the Narita survey was composed of the following six groups as follows: the Urban group (Narita-san Shinsho-ji Temple town area), the Residential group (Narita New Town community activities), the Lowland Agriculture group (the Inbanuma lakeside village), the Upland Crop Farming group, the Tourism group (inbound tourism in the area surrounding Narita International Airport), and the Distribution group (freight forwarders in the area surrounding Narita International Airport).

# Part 3: Conducting the Fieldwork

## 1/4

- Every year, the fieldwork class usually takes place over six nights and seven days, starting on a Sunday and finishing on the following Saturday morning.
- In recent years, in both human geography and regional geography, the first-year survey has generally taken place in autumn/winter (late October to early November), with the second-year survey taking place in spring/summer (late May to early June).
- The principal objective of the first-year field experiment is to narrow down the research theme and direction while proceeding with the on-site survey.

# Part 3: General Survey

## Conducting the Fieldwork 2/4

After arriving at the field, a “general survey” is performed by all members. Directed by the group leader, the participants conduct an inspection tour of the proposed survey region. The general survey is important in order to take an overview of the whole area and also for the participants to share a concrete image of the survey region.

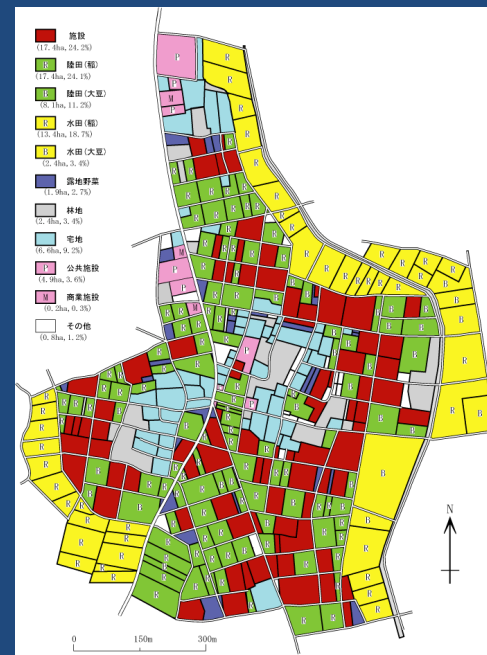




# Part 3: Land Use Survey

## Conducting the Fieldwork 3/4

We think the land use survey as a distinctive feature of the first-year survey. The land use survey work is divided among all members and conducted in the center of the city and the agricultural areas targeted in the survey. Using cartographic information such as city planning maps, aerial photography, and residential maps as a reference, the participants clarify the actual land use.



# Part 3: Seminar

## Conducting the Fieldwork 4/4

The seminar is an arena for testing the students from lower academic year groups. It is common for their mistakes in transcribing interviews or insufficient surveys to be pointed out by other members. However, as the survey proceeds, opinion exchange at the seminars gradually becomes active, and there is a sense that all participants have furthered their understanding of the region.



# Part 4: Changes and Problems

Qualitative and quantitative changes in various ways.

- 1) changes in graduate school entrants' senses of purpose,
- 2) diversification in their career aspirations,
- 3) changes in academic trends in geography (the separation of human geography and physical geography),
- 4) a demand for social contributions (a preference towards "useful" research),
- 5) changes in interpersonal relations between graduate students (from a vertical hierarchy to a network format),
- 6) an increase in entrants inexperienced in geography (a decline in basic academic performance),
- 7) limitations in Japanese language ability due to internationalization,
- 8) a lack of skill at using new tools among teaching staff.

# Concluding Remarks

- In this paper, we examined fieldwork education practice and results in relation to academic tradition based on a case study of the human and regional geography fieldwork studies at Tsukuba University.
- The environment surrounding fieldwork studies is becoming harsher year by year. With the advent of a society that highly values thorough protection of personal information and privacy, it is becoming gradually more difficult to conduct the traditional fieldwork.
- At the same time, the creation of safety support systems within fieldwork is an urgent task.
- Under such conditions, new efforts and initiatives are necessary in order to cultivate fieldworkers, who are the lifeblood of geography.