

***Japan Academy Prize to:***

Ken'ichi MIYAMOTO  
 Professor Emeritus, Osaka City University  
 Professor Emeritus, Shiga University

for *A Critical History of Environmental Pollution  
 in Postwar Japan*



***Outline of the work:***

Dr. Ken'ichi Miyamoto has long been regarded as a leading Japanese scholar of environmental pollution issues. In the book, *A Critical History of Environmental Pollution in Postwar Japan* (Tokyo: Iwanami Shoten, 2014), he presented a full-scale history of environmental pollution in relation to the politico-economic background of postwar Japan. As a concerned scholar, he supported social movements and related juridical procedures to solve environmental pollution issues. Though he has presented all the cases by using a thorough and steadily objective attitude, such experiences facilitated to make his analyses of the issues critically sharp and vivid.

In the Prologue, the author states that the main focus of environmental pollution issues shifted from the issues on property rights (mainly in agricultural and fishing industries caused by mining and manufacturing pollution) in the prewar period to damages to inhabitants' health and human rights in postwar Japan. Furthermore, he points out that the globally notorious Japanese environmental pollution in the postwar period of high-economic growth was a systemic problem because of the socio-economic order to sustain collusion between bureaucrats, politicians, and big businesses. In such an order, the government could not move autonomously to resolve the market failures, such as environmental pollution. Therefore, the injured local inhabitants were indispensable actors for resolution of the issues through their social movements and struggles in Japanese courts. This was in contrast to Germany, where political parties and the government were used to set up anti-pollution measures "from above."

According to the historical review in Part I, "Historical Development of Postwar Environmental Pollution," the Japanese government did not care about environmental pollution problems in the process of postwar economic reconstruction. Consequently, air pollution worsened in major Japanese cities, like Yahata having steel plants. In 1964, a citizens' opposition movement in Mishima, Numazu, and Shimizu managed to halt a project to construct a petrochemical complex. Yet, after its discovery in 1965, official recognition of Minamata disease was postponed until 1968. In the second half of 1960s, progressive local governments, including Mayor Ryokichi Minobe's metropolitan government, began to grant environmental rights to their inhabitants. Against such a trend, big businesses, represented by Japan Business Federation (KEIDANREN), demanded that a balance be maintained between industrial development and anti-pollution measures. Thus, the Basic Act for Environmental Pollution Control, enacted in 1967, is founded on such a notion of balance.

In many company towns, such as Yokkaichi and Kumamoto, inhabitants harmed by pollution had to file a lawsuit for rescue. The author's detailed analyses of four major juridical contests on environmental pollution since the late 1960s clarify the significance of alteration in a frame of reference in courts from an individual pathological investigation to an epidemiological study of social groups. Nevertheless, in succeeding juridical contests, judgements became closer to the notion of balance. The Pollution-Related Health Damage

Compensation Act, enacted in 1973, where the polluter-pays principle, was declared for the first time in the world, also acted to defend the interest of big business corporations by providing a subsidy beyond the amount of polluters' payment.

Part II, "From Pollution to Environmental Issues," describes how the public administration to control environmental pollution retreated in accord with both termination of high-economic growth and the decline of progressive local governments. Also, it analyzes how new types of environmental pollution issues, such as asbestos-related cases and the result of Fukushima atomic power plant accident, occurred in addition to unsettled pollution problems including aerial pollution. The retreat in public administration to control pollution was initiated by widely weakening the environmental standards regarding carbon dioxide, and by narrowing the official definition of Minamata disease in the late 1970s. In 1987, a full-fledged revision of the Pollution-Related Health Damage Compensation Act excluded many areas from the officially recognized aerial polluted zone so as to induce public opinion that "environmental pollution is now over." However, through trials on road pollution, the official designation as an aerial polluted zone was recovered in Nishi-Yodogawa, Kawasaki, Amagasaki, and the southern part of Nagoya. Thus, the trials also "internalized a part of social costs of automobiles."

The author also exemplifies "exports of environmental pollution" to other Asian areas by Japanese multinationals. U.S. military bases in Okinawa can be perceived as an American "export of environmental pollution." In Europe, though Germany intensified environmental policies against acid rain, the social movements for halting nuclear power generation momentarily lost momentum when necessity for it became stressed as a measure against global warming. Although the United Nations declared "sustainable development" as a leading principle in 1987, it could not show a desirable alternative socio-economic system to replace the conventional strategy for "modernization."

Finally, the author appreciates German policy to abolish nuclear power plants after the shock of the disastrous accident at Fukushima, argues for breaking the policies to prioritize economic growth, and expects to change the mass-consumption social system for a future sustainable society.

Thus, this work presents a synthetic critical history of environmental pollution issues in postwar Japan with persuasive substantive evidence and in broad politico-economic perspectives. It must serve as an essential premise to seek strategies for sustainable ecological order for our society. However, in this work some points, which require further consideration and study, remain unaddressed to be followed up. For instance, was the retreat of Japanese policies to control environmental pollution entirely the result of the economic depression after the first oil crisis? The effects of promoting neo-liberal globalization of the Japanese economy should also be considered when answering this question. As a comprehensive history of environmental pollution, the issues concerning waste disposal, recycling, and conservation of nature are also desirable research topics.

Despite these points further to be followed up, there is no doubt that this work is an epoch-making academic contribution to the historical studies on environmental pollution in postwar Japan, sufficiently worthy of the Japan Academy Prize.