

Moving Japan Scientific Scene into the 21st Century: the need of Ecofeminism for Emerging Diversity and Minorities

*Christopher A Gomez^{1,2}

1. Kobe University Faculty of Maritime Sciences Volcanic Risk at Sea Research Group, Kobe, Japan, 2. Universitas Gadjah Mada, Faculty of Geography, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

One of my PhD director, who was doing her own PhD in the Himalayas in geosciences in the 1970s was telling me that she remembered very vividly that she was just considered by male scientists for her cooking skills and her ability to carry a load on the mountain flanks - although this did not stop her from becoming a world-class scientist and from presiding international committees.

But being a woman in a "man's world" or being a foreigner in a Japanese world have both in common a social positioning as a minority; and a **minority with a label**, in which once one is trapped it is very difficult to escape in order to be given equitable chances. In Japan, a similar pattern exists against women and furthermore against foreigners, and this positioning is particularly pervasive because it is not university bounded it is a prejudice that is carried out through the all society, even television commercials where women are in the kitchen or doing the laundry, gays and transgender on TV only as caricatures and white foreigners tolerated as English teachers, all vehiculate the same form of discriminatory labelling. One of my famous colleague, geologist in Japan, will always get asked at which Curry House he is working when he is on a night out. I am always asked where I teach English (when as a French, I could not teach much of it). This **discrimination** is omnipresent in any foreigner's life even at the university.

But all of a sudden, any white male (myself in this case) gets a taste of its own medicine, a taste of centuries of colonialism (and post-colonialism) and gender oppression. From the eyes of an **ecofeminist**, those forms of **oppression** are all embracing a dominant-dominated relationship, which is, unfortunately, characteristics of female working in **academic environments**, especially in Japan, characteristics of how male human beings have been dealing with nature and anything in encounters in its environment.

This plague does not only concern Japan, however, it has been a rampant issue in the corridors of most faculties. Nevertheless, overseas, the last few years have seen real progress towards equality of chances, and this has partly come from overcoming the confrontational feminism of the 1970s to embrace the cause of - not equality but - equity. This allows the recognition that women are facing socio-cultural and biological challenges that differ from the one men face. In this contribution, I will discuss those issues from concrete examples, often taking the stance of ethics and I will also provide examples of structural modifications that have risen in very recent years at universities in Australia, New Zealand and USA, in order to reach some levels of **equity**.

Equity can only happen with the respect and the acceptation of the differences. As Kaneko Misuzu wrote "Everyone/thing is different, everyone/thing is good" (mina chigate, mina ii), which is a message of respect that has not sufficiently impregnated post-WWII institutions and social life in Japan as yet.

Keywords: ecofeminism, academic

