A Biobibliographical Study of Katsue Misawa (1885-1937), a Japanese Geographer and Geography Educator

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Abstract

Katsue Misawa was a scholar who attempted to promote scientific geography and geography education in Japan in the 1920's and the 1930's. Misawa had never attended a university or even secondary school; however, he studied by himself and obtained a teaching license for the secondary school level. He was not directly affected by the geography of foreign countries, but formed his own academic position while teaching at Suwa Middle School in Nagano Prefecture, Japan.

Misawa studied geography with practical concern over the rural improvement in Nagano Prefecture. Though the 1930's were the heyday of geography as morphology of earth's surface in Japan, he parted from it and attempted to fulfill his responsibilities as a geographer for the actual society.

In teaching geography he adopted a methodology of settling questions, taking the subjectivity of pupils into consideration. He made pupils learn the methodology of geographical study, emphasizing actual on-site observations. It has been evaluated that his method of geography education rose above the level of social studies after the post-war reform of the school curriculum in Japan.

Key words: history of Japanese geography, geography of landscape, *fudo* (local environment), local industry based on *fudo*, geography education.

I. Education, Life and Work

Katsue Misawa was born in Nagano Prefecture, Japan, in 1885. He went to elementary school in his home town, and graduated from its advanced course in 1899 when he was 14 years old. Thereafter, he taught himself, passed the Ministry of Education's Examination for the Teaching License in 1907, and was appointed an elementary school teacher in 1908. He studied so hard that he was said to have read all Japanese publications of pedagogy and philosophy. He published a number of papers on geography and history teaching at the elementary school level. One of them (Misawa, 1911) is evaluated as one of the most important theses in the modern history of educational thought of Nagano Prefecture.

While teaching at elementary schools, Misawa started studying geography, and passed the Ministry of Education's Examination for the Teaching of Geography at Secondary Schools in 1915. He was appointed a teacher of geography at the Matsumoto Commercial School, Nagano Prefecture, in 1918, was transferred to Nagano Prefectural Suwa Middle School in 1920, and came to conduct academic research on geography and geography teaching (Fig. 1).

1. Study of natural sciences

Misawa began to observe the sunspot in 1921, spending 30 to 40 minutes or more every day. The data was sent to the scholars of the Central Meteorological Observatory, the Imperial University of Kyoto, the Government-General of Korea, etc. He thought that the movement of the sunspot influenced upon not only astronomy and the atmospheric phenomena but also the production of agriculture and industry. He kept observing the sun as long as 14 years.

Moreover, Misawa observed such atmospheric phenomena as icicles and glaze ice in the central part of Nagano Prefecture, and conducted research on the water veins of hot springs and the land forms in the Suwa area (Misawa, 1923, 1924). In this period, he produced a large number of achievements in the field of natural sciences.

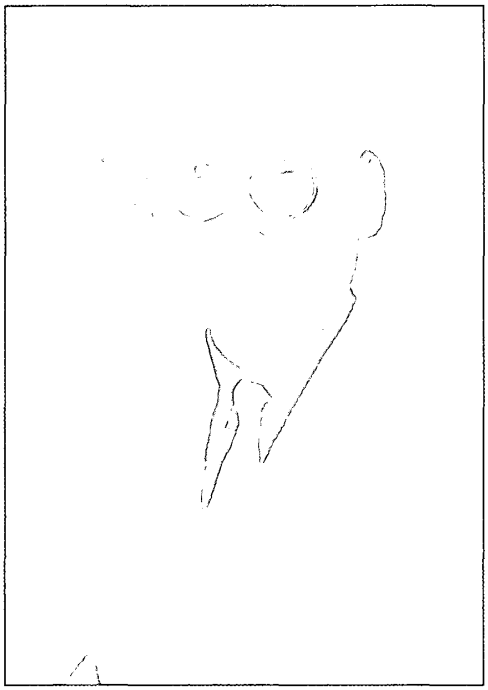

Fig.1 Katsue Misawa
(source: *Chirigaku (Geography)*, vol. 5, no. 10, 1937)

2. From study of human geography to study of landscape-geography

From the latter half of the 1920's, Misawa conducted studies on the Suwa area's silk reeler industry, an industry extremely important to this district; hot springs and Lake Suwa as resources for tourism (Misawa, 1926); and agricultural geography in the northwestern foot of Mt. Yatsugatake (2889m) to the southeast of the Suwa area (Misawa, 1927). He clarified the following points. 1) Sericulture prospered in this region in recent years, and most of the cultivated fields were changed to mulberry farms. The structures of farm houses were remodeled to suit to sericulture. 2) As side jobs in winter, people made various straw-craft in straw-thatched hovels set up especially for this purpose. Inside the hovels was kept warm and damp to make the straw supple and facilitate the work. 3) The construction of the irrigation channels in many places promoted land development and village formation. 4) In regions where streams were scarce, fountain water was conducted into grass land first, and then this water was irrigated into rice fields by way of the water course called *"nurume"*, which warms the water before entering the rice fields.

The above-mentioned studies are economic-geographical, and include historical considerations. In that respect, they are clearly different from the natural scientific research he conducted in the early 1920's. He also wrote a report of a regional diagnosis of the Sugadaira area (the northeast of Nagano Prefecture) at the request of the Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Ueda City, Nagano Prefecture (Misawa, 1928). This way he came to put his geographical studies to some use for the practice of local economic improvement policies.

From around 1930, he seldom conducted economic geographical studies with historical considerations, and came to make use of a large number of landscape-geographical terminology and publish papers on geographical theories (Misawa, 1929), geographical education, and regional geography of various places in Nagano Prefecture. For instance, in a regional study of the southwestern foot of Mt.

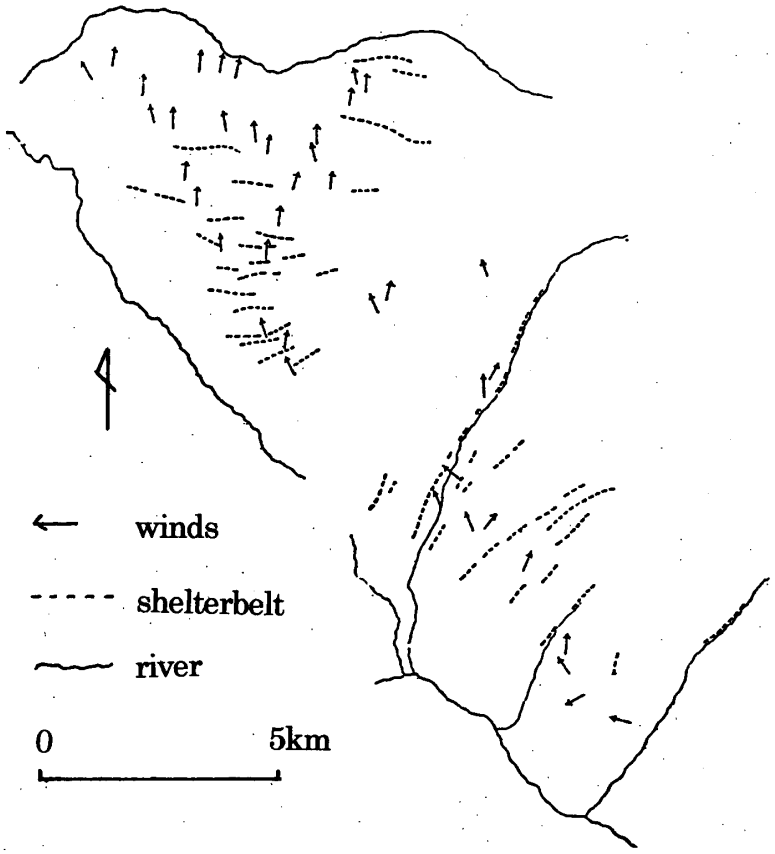

Fig.2 The directions of the prevailing winds in summer and the shelterbelt fencing the farmland in the southwestern part of the foot of Mt. Yatsugatake, Nagano, Japan (Misawa, 1929)

Yatsugatake, he clarified that the splendid harmony between various cultural landscapes and natural landscapes enabled this piedmont, 800 to 1600 meters above sea level, to be a prosperous farming region (Misawa, 1929). In this thesis he pointed out the following. 1) Relative spring temperatures are deducible by specifying the eighty-percent blooming dates of the early-flowering cherries, and the intensity and the directions of the prevailing winds in summer by observing the forms of the wind-deformed persimmon trees and ginkgo trees. 2) The distribution of spring temperatures is closely related with rice crops, the distribution of old villages and the sericulture of spring. 3) The shelterbelts fencing the farmland from the strong summer winds are planted with full consideration of the land forms, the soil features, and the tree kinds (Fig. 2). These shelterbelts improved agricultural production, and brought about a higher density of population in this region.

Misawa's academic works of this period are characterized in Misawa (1931). Chapter I described, from the viewpoint of landscape-geography, the essential qualities and methodology of geography and the main points of field work. Chapter II dealt with the purpose of geographical education and the importance of homeland geography, and provided with plenty of geographical teaching materials collected in his field work in Nagano Prefecture.

Misawa (1929) published in *Chirigaku Hyoron (Geographical Review of Japan)* was evaluated highly, and he was offered membership of the Association of American Geographers in 1931. However, it is said that he was not able to join it for economic reasons. In 1933, he was admitted to the Association of

Japanese Geographers, though its membership at the time was still confined to people of the Imperial University of Tokyo.

3. Devotion to the study of "*fudo*"

Misawa in his later years, from 1934 to 1937, hardly used the terminology of landscape-geography in his discussion of geography and geography education. He witnessed the impoverishment of farm villages in Nagano Prefecture under the impact of economic depression of the time, and wished to make his studies serve for the remedy. He sought for ideal ways of economic activities which would harmonize with the *fudo* (local environment), and vigorously advocated that such industries had to be promoted in various places.

The results of his studies in this period are collected posthumously in Misawa (1937). Its former half deals with geography education as part of school curriculum, and its latter half, the importance of geography in social education. The former half consists of four chapters: geography education, homeland geography, geography education of Japan, and geography education of foreign countries; above all the largest number of pages are dedicated to homeland geography education. The latter half consists of the records of his lectures given for the Nagano Prefecture Society of Erosion Control and of his seminars on homeland study for the youth and women's societies of Nagano Prefecture. In these lectures, he stressed the importance of making the best use of the power of nature and of harmonizing the economic activities and the human lives with the *fudo* of each region. (Fig. 3).

Misawa observed the sunspot since 1921, but got a cataract in 1934, and lost sight in his left eye. In addition, he underwent an operation on his stomach cancer in 1935. Thus he was under the necessity of fighting against his illness in his house, but earnestly conducted his studies and activities for diffusion of geographical knowledge to the last of his life.

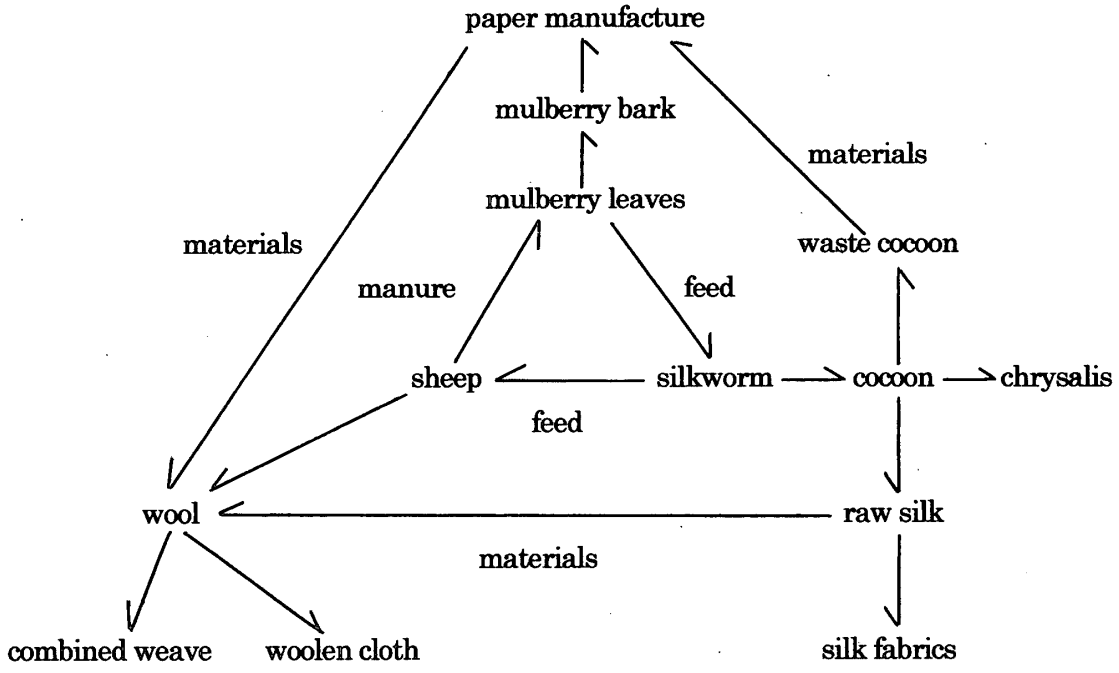

Fig.3 K. Misawa's plan of sericulture in Nagano Prefecture, Japan (Misawa, 1937)

For instance, in his regional study of the southern foot of Mt. Yatsugatake (Misawa, 1937), he clarified how closely the relations were formed and developed between the inhabitants' life and the social and natural environments in this region. He pointed out in extreme detail as follows. 1) In the cultivated fields and forests, mixed cultivation or mixed planting is made to adapt to the nature of the soil and the humidity in each place. 2) Barley seeds are sowed in lines or in clusters according to the height of the temperature, and the directions of the furrows in the barley field matched the land forms. 3) Barley seeds are sowed even in the ridges between rice fields. Small dry farmlands are made by collecting rolling stones brought by the degradation of Mt. Yatsugatake, which became suitable farmlands for barley, pumpkins, and spring onions. 4) The selection of the kinds of plants, such as bamboos, zelkovas, Japanese chestnut oaks, and Japanese red pines is made according to the dryness and wetness in each region. 5) The woods around the houses and lots are made to function as protection from winds, landslides, and sunshine. The houses are structured to make use of the sloping ground. The roof styles and the material of the roofs are adapted to the great fluctuation in temperature and humidity in this region. 6) Construction of a large number of irrigation ponds which catch snow water increased the production of rice.

Misawa presented a paper entitled "Geography and geographical education" at the geography section in the 7th International Council of Education, which took place at the Imperial University of Tokyo in August, 1937. Since, however, he already lay in his sickbed, it was translated into English and read by his pupil at Suwa Middle School, Taiji Yazawa (a graduate of the Imperial University of Tokyo).

II. Scientific Ideas and Geographical Thought

1. Concept on the nature of geography

Misawa's research activities are divided into several periods, and his concept on the nature of geography showed substantial changes over time. The nature of the changes is related to the academic environment and social conditions of the time in Japan.

Misawa's studies on human geography became his major concern since 1926. In those days, he discussed the nature of geography in his own terms, the *'chiiki-no-chikara'* ('local power') and the *'chihyo-gensho'* ('phenomena influenced by the earth's surface'). He also did some field work and historical studies from the economic geographical point of view. It certainly seems that, during this period, Misawa was closest to the geographical thought of Michitoshi Odauchi (1875-1954), who was a part-time lecturer in geography at Keio University and established the *Jinbun Chiri Gakkai* (Society for Human Geography) in 1926.

Misawa, from 1929 to 1933, discussed the nature of geography in such terms as the *'chiri-teki-keikan'* ('geographical landscape'), the *'chiiki-sei'* ('regional characteristics') and the *'chiri-teki-chiiki"* ('geographical region'), which were the main current terms in Japanese geography at the time. There can be recognized reciprocal influences on the *'chiri-teki-keikan'* between him and Taro Tsujimura (1890-1983), who was an associate professor of the Imperial University of Tokyo and one of the founding members of the *Nippon Chiri Gakkai* (Association of Japanese Geographers). Furthermore, there can be recognized reciprocal influences on the terms, *'chiiki-sei'* and *'chiri-teki-chiiki'*, between Misawa and Keiji Tanaka (1885-1975), who was a professor of the Tokyo Higher Normal College, an associate

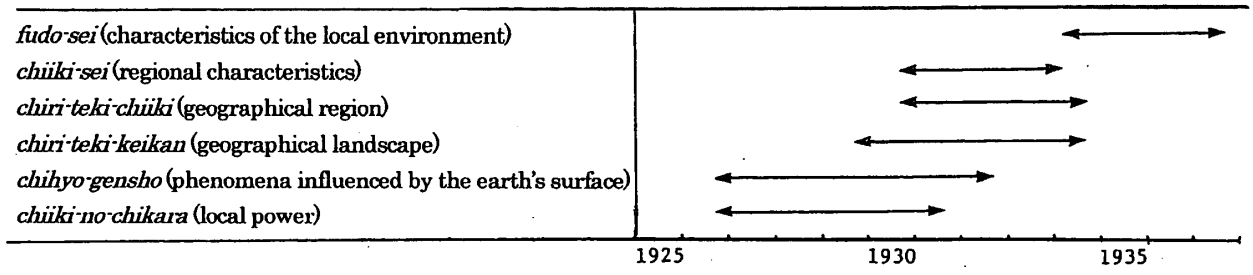

Fig.4 K. Misawa's key words and the periods in which they were used (Okada, 1989, 1992, 1993)

professor of the Tokyo Bunrika University, and one of the founders of the *Otsuka Chiri Gakkai* (Otsuka Geographical Society) founded in 1930. These facts show that Misawa was most deeply concerned with the main currents of contemporary Japanese learned circle of geography. Regarding the history of his own research, historical considerations in his regional studies were replaced by landscape studies, affected more or less by the main currents of the time.

In 1933, Misawa replaced his term *'chiiki-sei'* with *'fudo-sei'* ('characteristics of the local environment'), which contained ecological implications, slightly different from the previous term. He went into mountain villages in extreme economic depressions with this concept, *'fudo-sei'*, in his mind, and encouraged the villagers in need of socio-economic improvement at local level by means of production suited to their own regionality, or *'fudo-sei'*. Though the mid-1930's were the heyday of landscape-geography in Japan, he adopted this concept and attempted to fulfill his responsibilities as a geographer in the actual society (Okada, 1989, 1992, 1993) (Fig. 4).

2. Thought on geography education

In teaching geography, Misawa adopted a method of settling questions that respected the subjectivity of pupils. Furthermore, he appreciated close relationships between the pupils' experience and their thinking, and tried to help them to be applied in their lives. In his view, the purpose of geography was to investigate the characteristics of local environment (*fudo-sei*), and the duty of teaching geography was to make pupils understand the existence of the *fudo-sei* by their own experiences. Thus he tried to realize the results of geographical education in the rationalization of human life.

Misawa attached extreme importance to homeland geographical education. He explained the grounds as follows. "The subject matter of geographical education is the 'contacting zone of the earth and atmosphere', which means, the 'field', and the essence of geography education is to teach the phenomenon of the contacting zone in the field. Therefore, the pupils' homeland, that is, the vicinity of their dwelling places, best suited for their observation and investigation, is the most significant geographical teaching material." He also maintained that "the essence of homeland geography education is to make the pupils recognize and comprehend the existence of the local environment in their own homeland through their own lives, and to help them develop geographical viewpoints and capabilities. It is necessary for them to deal with the comparative studies of other regions in Japan and foreign countries on the basis of their own lives and experiences in their native lands. Therefore, geography education on the whole country of Japan and of foreign countries is an extension and enhancement of homeland geography education."

It was between 1929 and 1937 that Misawa stated as above. That period coincided with the initiation of the Ministry of Education to promote homeland education. However, he never intended to keep up with this fashion. On the contrary, he criticized both the frivolous movement of starting homeland study with insufficient examination or selection of teaching material. Misawa developed his own theory of geography education, though it was subject to some influence of Michitoshi Odauchi's and Tsunesaburo Makiguchi (1871-1944)'s.

Misawa's thoughts on geography education were restricted by the early days (the 1920's and 1930's) of modern geography and geography education in Japan. For instance, social phenomena, such as the cycle of economic prosperity and the distributive machinery, were not taken into consideration within his vision of geography education. Nor had he not paid attention to the problems derived fundamentally from capitalistic economy and landlordism.

III. Influence and Spread of Ideas

1. Before his death

Misawa's discussions on both the nature of geography and regional landscape study showed his originality and foresightedness. He should have caused a strong impact in the geographical circle of Japan, but in actuality he could not manage to exercise influences over major academicians.

At the time, the Japanese geographer who most highly evaluated Misawa was M. Odauchi, who appreciated Misawa's arguments on "local power", which were not grasped by the main stream Japanese academicians of geography of the time. He expressed a strong intention to write a major thesis on Misawa at the time of his death. Odauchi wished to write of Misawa as an educator who strived for harmony between education and studies, and as a geographer who had his own way of studying *fudo* and the local economic activities adapted to *fudo* in the homeland, free from the ways of research adopted by the contemporary main stream Japanese academicians of geography.

Among his 120-odd theses and books, Misawa (1929) evoked a big echo. It was appraised as a work to indicate the direction of the study of landscape geography. Moreover, he came to be requested to take leadership in regional research at various places in and around Nagano Prefecture. After World War II, Ryuziro Isida (1904-1979) evaluated Misawa (1929) the highest among the studies of landscape geography in Japan, and recorded this thesis in the readings, *Sanchi no Chiri* (*Geography of the Mountainous District*) published in 1956 in Tokyo. Misawa's first book, Misawa (1931) was well received especially by young scholars and students, and went through several printings, though it was criticized by some as having narrowed the object of geographical study. Moreover, Misawa (1932) was the first geographical research of the windbreak forest in Japan, and thereafter, it promoted similar research works in various districts of Japan.

In Misawa's later years (1935-1937), his essays appeared in almost each number of *Chirigaku* (*Geography*), published monthly by Kokon-shoin in Tokyo, making him the most noted geographer and geography educator in Japan. He was requested to give lectures and conduct field surveys at various districts in and around Nagano Prefecture on how the industries and the human lives were harmonized with the *fudo* of each district (Fig. 5). In spite of his illness, he granted the requests, which counted as many as 100. It can be said that his theory of geography and local environment gained better under-

standing and deeper sympathy from the producers and inhabitants in the mountainous villages than from his contemporary Japanese academics.

2. After his death

His voluminous book, Misawa (1937), was published by Kokon-shoin in Tokyo. The first half, which dealt with the theory of geographical education and geography, was republished by Kokon-shoin in 1950 under the title, *Shin Chiri Kyoiku (New Geography Education)*, and with the subtitle, "for the practice of social studies". His theory of geography education had anticipated the curriculum of the social studies *(shakai-ka)* established with the Education Reform after World War II. In some respect he had attained more in the sense that he made pupils learn a method of geographical study emphasizing on-site observations.

The latter half of Misawa (1937), under the title, *Fudo Sangyo (Industries Harmonized with the Local Environment)*, was republished as many as four times in total by the publishers in Nagano Prefecture in 1941 and 1947 and by Kokon-shoin in 1952 and 1986. Moreover, the record of his lectures given in 1936 on local industry based on *"fudo"* was serialized in four issues of a monthly magazine, *Gendai Nogyo* (*Modern Agriculture*) (published by Nosangyoson Bunka Kyokai in Tokyo), in 1987. Thus, Misawa's theory of local industry based on *"fudo"* is evaluated highly by the practitioners of agriculture and by the researchers in agronomical sciences, and his *Fudo Sangyo* is counted as one of the main reference books for agricultural meteorology.

Evaluation of his study of microclimate is also extremely high, and he is qualified as a pioneer of microclimatology of Japan. The *Nihon Kisho Gakkai* (Meteorological Society of Japan) held a symposium on the evaluation of Misawa as its theme at its regular meeting in 1964. To mark the centennial of his birth, the Association of Japanese Geographers held its regular meeting for two days in the Suwa area, Nagano Prefecture, in 1984. In the meeting, Taiji Yazawa, a

Fig.5 Eighty-percent blooming dates of the early-flowering cherries in the Tenryu Valley, Nagano Prefecture, Japan, in 1936 (Misawa, 1937)

(The numerals on the map, such as 19, 20, etc., indicate the dates in April, and those such as 5.1 and 5.2 indicate May 1st and May 2nd.)

former president of the Association of Japanese Geographers, gave a lecture on the theme, "Katsue Misawa and Geography".

Additionally, the magazines, *Chirigaku* (*Geography*) and *Chiri* (*Geography*) (published by Kokon-shoin), issued special editions on the life and works of Misawa in 1937 and 1987, respectively. Eiichi Fujimori, an archaeologist out of office, who used to be Misawa's pupil at Suwa Middle School, wrote a book in 1973 with a vivid description of Misawa's education, studies and life, making his precious existence widely known to the public. Kosaku Miyasaka's work in 1990 positively reevaluated Misawa's achievements in detail mainly from the viewpoint of social education studies. These two books were widely read. Furthermore, *Misawa Katsue Chosakushu (Collection of Misawa's Writings)* edited by Taiji Yazawa was published in 1979. In the three-volume books, numerous persons, including Yazawa, remembered Misawa's life and work.

Thus, Misawa is highly evaluated in each field of geography, geography education, social studies, agriculture, climatology, and meteorology, and his achievements are succeeded to and developed even today.

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1923 'Kami Suwa onsen no senmyaku ni tsuite' ('The fountain vein in Kami Suwa hot spring'), *Chikyu (The Globe)*, vol. 2, 190-199.

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Chronology

1885 Born 25 January in Sarashina District, Nagano Prefecture, Japan

1899 Graduated from the advanced course of Minochi Elemental School of Kami Minochi District in Nagano Prefecture

1907 Passed the Ministry of Education's Examination for the Teaching Licences

1908 Appointed a teacher of elementary school in Nagano Prefecture

1915 Passed the Ministry of Education's Examination for the Teaching of Geography at Secondary Schools

1918 Appointed a teacher of geography at Matsumoto Commercial School in Nagano Prefecture

1920 Appointed a teacher of geography at Suwa Middle School in Nagano Prefecture

Passed the Ministry of Education's Examination for the Teaching of Natural History (Mineral) at Secondary School

1921 Began observations of the sunspot

1925 Traveled in Korea, Manchuria, and North China

1931 Was offered membership of American Geographical Society

1933 Was admitted into the *Nippon Chiri Gakkai* (Association of Japanese Geographers)

1934 Observation of the sunspot was discontinued due to his cataract

Lost sight in left eye

1935 Undergone an operation on stomach cancer

1936 Retirement from Suwa Middle School due to cancer

1937 Presented a paper to the sectional meeting of geography at the 7th International Council of Education

Died 8 August in Suwa area, Nagano Prefecture

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