Overview of Special Issue: Human Geographical Studies of Mount Fuji Region Focusing on Tourism

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I. Human geographical studies of Mount Fuji

Mount Fuji was listed as a UNESCO World Heritage site (cultural site) under the title: “Mt. Fuji: Object of Worship, Wellspring of Art,” on June 22, 2013—still a recent memory. This World Heritage site comprises a total of 25 assets scattered around Mount Fuji. We compiled this special issue, titled “*Human Geographical Studies of Mount Fuji Region Focusing on Tourism*,” with a view to exploring two new approaches. The first approach is to use human geographical studies methods to illustrate the characteristics of the region comprising Mount Fuji and its foothills. The second approach is to ascertain the characteristics of Mount Fuji as a tourism area with diverse characteristics.

The designation of the collective assets of Mount Fuji, as described above, has attracted interest not only among the general public but also among researchers. It is also a fact that Mount Fuji enjoyed the public spotlight for many years before the designation. For example, mountainous terrain is a ubiquitous feature throughout Japan, as a glance across the whole of the territory of the nation would reveal. Nevertheless, Mount Fuji is invariably regarded as an “exceptional mountain”. Mount Fuji is the highest mountain in Japan, and has a uniquely shaped peak with a broad skirt. Due to these physical conditions, Mount Fuji has become an object of admiration among the Japanese, and many mountains in Japan use “Fuji” in their names, examples being Ezo-fuji (Yoteizan in Hokkaido Prefecture), Takai-fuji (Nagano), and

Sanuki-fuji (Kagawa). Furthermore, Mount Fuji is closely linked to spiritual beliefs, which is due in no small part to its “exceptional mountain” status. This link led to the development of *Fuji-ko* (devotional Fuji confraternities) and the practice of climbing the mountain as an act of worship.

Mount Fuji's “exceptional mountain” characteristic also relates to where it is situated. Tokyo has been the political center of Japan since the Edo Period (1603–1868), and the ability to see the mountain from Tokyo sets Mount Fuji apart from other mountains. Moreover, the view of Mount Fuji from the Tokaido Road, which has been a major arterial route between Tokyo and Kyoto since the Edo Period, has become much admired. While means of transport may have changed from foot, to rail, to expressway, and to *shinkansen* (bullet train), travelers still feel the same emotions.

Thus, Mount Fuji has characteristics that set it apart from other mountains: it is a tall volcanic mountain with extensive foothills. Furthermore, within the territory comprising Mount Fuji and its foothills, there are heterogeneous local characteristics. Accordingly, there is considerable internal diversity in the human activities of the area, and the distinctive and diverse blend of industrial locations, land use, and vistas can be seen as the results of such internal variations.

The broad foothills of Mount Fuji have been used for agricultural production. However, the area has proved to be poorly suited to paddy farming, the basic agronomy of Japan, due to conditions attributable to the area being in the foothills of a volcanic mountain, including a scarcity of

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water and development of volcanic ash. Therefore, many parcels of land in the foothills of Mount Fuji were set aside for post-war reclamation (Asagiya, 1972). Furthermore, there is a distinctive blend of agriculture in the area, including dairy farming, stockbreeding (poultry, swine, etc.) highland vegetable production, and turf grass production (Ogaki, 2000). Looking at the area spatially, the southwestern foothills and the eastern foothills are situated at 600 meters above sea level, and are characterized by a diverse range of land-use categories (Maruyama, 1994). On the other hand, the western and northern foothills are situated between 500 and 1,000 meters above sea level, and they are characterized primarily by dispersed rural settlements focused on stockbreeding.

Because the area is unsuitable for agricultural production, there was, naturally, a need to find some other sources of income. One is the tourism industry, as discussed later, but manufacturing also plays an important role. In the northern foothills of Mount Fuji, a small-scale cotton fabric industry developed across an extensive area that included Otsuki City (Tsujimoto, 1972; Yuzawa, 2009). Meanwhile, the southern foothills saw the development of modern industry, and large-scale plants were established during the period of high economic growth, reflecting the influence of the Pacific belt (Ota, 1972).

Due to its “exceptional mountain” characteristic, Mount Fuji has also enjoyed a privileged status as an object of tourism. As something to look at, as something to climb, and as a high place that rises far above sea level, Mount Fuji and its foothills became a destination for popular tourist activities. In this special issue, we approach Mount Fuji primarily as a tourism area, and seek to illustrate the various aspects of Mount Fuji as such. In the following section, we clarify and discuss the changes that Mount Fuji has undergone as a tourism area, and provide a summary of the contents of this special issue.

II. The changes Mount Fuji has undergone as a tourism area

1) Before World War Two

Within the area comprising Mount Fuji and its

foothills, there is considerable internal variety in terms of Mount Fuji's characteristics as a tourism area. Regarding the practice of mountain climbing as religious worship during the Edo Period, while this practice can be distinguished in some respects from tourism activities, the places that served as base points for climbing the mountain were the villages of *oshi* pilgrim masters (low-ranking Shinto priests) who managed *shukubo* (pilgrim guesthouses). During the Edo Period, villages in the part of the Mount Fuji area that lies within Shizuoka Prefecture included Omiya and Murayama (both of which now make up Fujinomiya-guchi), Sugiyama (Gotemba-guchi), and Subashiri (Subashiri-guchi). On the Yamanashi Prefecture side, there were the villages of Yoshida (Yoshida-guchi) and Kawaguchi (no longer extant). These villages all formed starting points for mountain climbers and were homes to *oshi*, particularly those associated with the Sengen Shrine (Yamamura, 1994). A comparison of the numbers of *oshi* at the end of the Edo Period reveals that Yoshida and Kawaguchi had much higher numbers than other villages, and that climbers started their ascents from the northern foothills in many cases. The unfavorable conditions in the northern foothills prompted a search for sources of income other than farming. The efforts of the *oshi* in this regard bore fruit in the form of large numbers of mountain climbers (Naito, 2002).

After Japan opened itself to the outside world in the 1850s, the tourist destination aspect of Mount Fuji gradually gained weight, and in time, tourism development became fully-fledged, albeit sometimes strong and sometimes weak. Initially, foreigners played a major role in developing tourism. Inbound tourism was already taking place at the end of the Edo Period. It was in September 1860 that Mount Fuji was first climbed by a foreigner: the British Consul-General in Japan, Sir Rutherford Alcock. Subsequently, mountain climbing as a leisure pursuit rather than a devotional act grew in popularity. Theodor Edler von Lerch, an officer of the Austro-Hungarian Army who introduced skiing techniques to Japan, attempted to climb Mount Fuji with skis alongside

his compatriot Egon von Kratzer, a merchant residing in Yokohama (Nakano, 1964). Lerch and Kratzer began their ascents from Gotemba-guchi in April 1911, but they failed to reach the summit. Around this time, the Fuji Five Lakes started functioning as tourism resources in addition to the mountain; for example, in 1895, a hotel for foreigners was established by a lakeside of Shoji Lake. In 1936, the Fuji-Hakone-Izu region was designated a National Park, and this increased the international fame of the area.

The number of visitors, including inbound tourists and subsequent Japanese tourists, increased in tandem with transport infrastructure development. In 1889, the Tokaido Railway Line was laid along what is now the Gotemba Line, and Gotemba Station was opened. On the northern side, what is now the Chuo Line was developed. In 1902, it extended to Otsuki, and by 1903, it had reached as far as Kofu. In 1929, the Fuji Sanroku Electric Railway (now the Fujikyuko Line) was opened; it ran between Otsuki and Fuji-Yoshida. Around this time, a horse-driven tramway was laid in the Mount Fuji foothills connecting Gotemba and Otsuki (Naito, 2002).

2) High economic growth period and asset inflation-led economic bubble period

The natural landscape resources of the area, including Mount Fuji itself and the Fuji Five Lakes, have enough appeal in themselves to attract scores of tourists. However, these resources were supplemented by various facilities and services in order to attract even more visitors. Thus, Mount Fuji tourism underwent rampant development, particularly in the period of high economic growth (between around 1960 and 1973).

Initially, this development involved second-home or vacation-home areas, golf courses, and amusement parks. The work of developing a second-home area had already begun around 1930, but this development focused primarily on the northern foothills. The reason for this was because a large part of the northern foothills fell within the territory of Yamanashi Prefecture, and the prefecture had embarked on a plan to carry out the large-scale development of a second-home area on publicly owned land (Yamamura,

1994). This trend continued into the period of high economic growth, which saw conspicuous development in the northern foothills and scarcely any in the southwestern foothills. Alongside the development of second-home land, there was extensive construction of accommodation facilities, primarily *hoyo-jo* (lodgings owned by companies or governmental bodies for use by their employees), in the northern foothills, particularly along the shores of Yamanaka Lake. Training camps for sports such as tennis also saw considerable development (Sasaki, 1988).

Another notable construction around this time was the opening of the Fuji Five Lake International Skating Center in 1961. This was renamed Fuji-Q Highland in 1964 and subsequently saw a considerable expansion in scale. Another amusement park, Odakyu Gotemba Family Land, was opened in Gotemba in 1974. The park closed in 1999, but the site was repurposed and opened in the following year as the Gotemba Premium Outlets. On the other hand, construction of golf courses tended to be focused on the eastern foothills. This can be attributed to the presence of the Tomei Expressway, which offers good access to the area from Tokyo. Other developments in this area include ski slopes, water sports recreation facilities, and services. The abovementioned developments continued to be witnessed during the asset inflation-led economic bubble years. However, such tourism development was notable for its inconsistency among the various local areas within the Fuji foothills, a result of the disparities in land ownership and use forms.

Japanese tourist behavior, when compared to that of Europeans or Americans, is characterized by the short amount of time spent on vacations and by the predominance of sightseeing tourism. The sightseeing tourist tradition is argued to date back to the Edo Period (Ota, 2013), but the allure of Mount Fuji among sightseeing-loving tourists can be attributed to its wealth of sightseeing resources and their compositeness. Along the shores of the Fuji Five Lakes, for example, composite facilities provided not only lodging but also activities such as bass fishing and sports. In addition to natural scenery such as the Fuji Subaru Line and

the Fuji Five Lakes, there are many other kinds of tourism resource, including the abovementioned amusement parks, museums, and hot springs (spas). The presence of these resources helped develop sightseeing in the Fuji foothills.

Over time, regional discrepancies emerged in Mount Fuji tourism. In the northern and eastern foothills, tourism and tourist-related facilities continued to be developed. In contrast, the scale of tourism development in the southern and western foothills was smaller. These regional disparities probably came about as an effect of transport conditions and government policies.

3) After the economic bubble burst

During the recession that gripped Japan after the economic bubble burst around 1995, the tourism industry as a whole went into stagnation. However, even amid such circumstances, Mount Fuji continued to attract reasonable levels of tourists due to its proximity to metropolitan areas and its “exceptional mountain” status. After the turn of the century, a number of changes took place. While inbound tourism had not been particularly emphasized in the post-war years, it was now being developed in earnest. Mount Fuji tourism was also heavily influenced by a mountain climbing boom, its listing as a World Heritage site, and the diversification of tourist behavior.

As inbound tourism developed from the year 2000 onward, particularly from around 2010, Mount Fuji came to be recognized as an important object for foreign tourists. Since the end of the Edo Period, Mount Fuji has been regarded among foreigners as a symbol of Japan. Indeed, a predominant behavioral pattern observed among Chinese visitors to Japan is the practice of traveling excursively between Tokyo and Osaka by bus, and a key part of this pattern is appreciating the view of Mount Fuji (Jin, 2009). It can be assumed that Mount Fuji's designation as a World Heritage site increased its recognition and enhanced its reputation. The large number of foreigners who stop at Yoshida Route 5th Station is arguably a reflection of Mount Fuji's increased recognition.

Mount Fuji still retains its popularity, due in no small part to the mountain climbing boom. Mount Fuji can only be climbed during a certain period

(from July to early September), and mountain climbers come in droves during this short window of time. Furthermore, the four climbing routes (Yoshida, Gotemba, Subashiri, and Fujinomiya) are visited by around 300 thousand climbers a year, and around 60% of these use the Yoshida route. An ongoing issue is the question of how to maintain a balance between utilization and environmental preservation. This issue touches on topics such as the optimal utilization of mountain huts and the traditional utilization of climbing routes.

On the other hand, tourism behavior with respect to Mount Fuji is continuing to diversify. Ecotourism, geo-tourism, and rural tourism are supported by the government, and growth is expected in these areas. There is increasing interest in ecotourism and geo-tourism based on Mount Fuji and the diverse natural environment that exists around it. The vast sea of trees and the varied vegetation make for attractive ecotourism assets, and there is an increasing focus on geo-tourism based on volcanic landforms, wetlands, natural springs, and lava tree molds. Rural tourism is developing in farming areas of the Fuji foothills, and the proximity to Tokyo has enabled many more farmers' markets and tourist farms to be established. There is also increasing importance being placed on food tourism, which centers on *Fujinomiya Yakisoba*, *Yoshida Udon*, and *Houtou*. On the other hand, little emphasis is placed on cultural tourism surrounding the *Fuji-ko*, despite the fact that the *Fuji-ko* constitutes a key pillar of this World Heritage site, which is an issue that must be addressed in the future.

In this way, Mount Fuji has developed as a mass tourist destination based on its ease of access from Tokyo. While visitors still tend to be concentrated in the northern and eastern foothills, as well as at specific tourist destinations, one can also observe that tourist destinations are becoming more scattered as a result of the diversification of tourism behavior. Thus, the expansion of the Mount Fuji tourism area has brought with it changes in tourism behavior. The catalysts behind this are two-fold: the rise in foreign visitors and the World Heritage designation. Foreign visitors tend to rely

on public transport to travel within Japan, which explains why there remain conspicuous concentrations of visitors around the northern and eastern foothills.

However, a serious issue concerning Mount Fuji tourism of late, following its World Heritage designation, is how to respond to the recommendations of the World Heritage Committee (Noguchi, 2014). Without a doubt, Mount Fuji makes an excellent case study when it comes to examining the relationship between World Heritage and tourism, particularly the balance between preserving tourism resources and promoting their utilization.

III. Summary of this special issue

As described above, *Fuji-ko* represent the oldest form of tourism in the Mount Fuji region. Matsui and Uda (2015) explore the part played by ascetic mountaineering and tourism in Fuji worship during the early-modern era, focusing on the holiness attributed to Mount Fuji, the common folk who went on trips to the sacred mountain for the purpose of climbing it as a form of worship, and the *oshi* who organized and presided over such trips. *Fuji-ko* started forming during the early-modern era, and they would organize proxy pilgrimages. *Oshi* would make arrangements for pilgrimages which, from Edo (Tokyo), entailed an eight-day journey. While the purpose of such journeys was to climb Mount Fuji, the itinerary would often include devotional visits to other sacred mountains. The function of an *oshi* settlement was to provide mountaineering ascetics with lodgings and services in connection with their ascetic ascent of Mount Fuji. One of these settlements, Kamiyoshida, has scenery characterized by oblong terrain partitions; here there had been over 100 *oshi* dwellings. For people from Edo, Mount Fuji had a visible presence despite being situated far away. However, notwithstanding the familiarity of Mount Fuji, the strong admiration and expectations of the mountaineers and the strong sense of satisfaction associated with summiting the mountain denote that Mount Fuji is accepted as a mountain with “special significance” and that the devotional journey to the mountain has been reproduced.

Nakanishi (2015) lays out depictions of Mount Fuji in Japanese paintings and examines changes in the way it is depicted. He introduces and briefly annotates the results of past research on depictions of the mountain in Japanese paintings and mountain climbing guides, and also presents original data on panoramic maps from the Taisho Period (1912–1926) onward. While his investigation is limited to pre-war depictions, it is the first study to classify mountain climbing guides and panoramic maps under the category of “paintings” and to undertake a comprehensive overview of depictions of Mount Fuji in such paintings. During the medieval period, Mount Fuji was depicted as a volcanic mountain, a fearfully high mountain, and an unapproachable abode of gods. However, pure or genuine depictions of Mount Fuji came into vogue during the early-modern era, and many of these works reflected things that the artist had seen or experienced. During the early-modern and modern eras, mountain climbing guides were depicting Mount Fuji as a mountain that is summited as an act of worship, and they included elements such as climbing routes and *oshi* settlements. From the beginning of the Taisho Period onward, many panoramic maps were produced, and these depicted Mount Fuji as an object of modern tourism; in other words, a place to go sightseeing by train or by car. The change in the way that Mount Fuji is depicted in these paintings mirrors the transition of Mount Fuji from being a mountain of worship to being a mountain of tourism.

The image of Mount Fuji is also recognized as an important research methodology. Bito (2015) focuses on how the view of Mount Fuji from the foothills is appreciated by local residents, whose lives have been so closely linked to the mountain. He makes a comparison from an environmental perspective between the residents of the northern foothills and those in the other foothills, and he clarifies the landscape framework that the northern foothill residents seek to cherish in their relationship with Mount Fuji. The comparison of the northern foothills residents with the residents of the other foothills reveals that residents of municipalities that offer a good view of Mount

Fuji place much more value on the environment of Mount Fuji than those in municipalities where the mountain cannot be seen. He also examines the landscape plans of municipalities that place particularly high importance on the Mount Fuji environment. He finds that these plans aim to create excellent landscapes wherein Mount Fuji appears as a distant background vista, viewable from anywhere in the municipality, and is complemented with highly original foreground elements. Taking the example of Fujikawaguchiko, in this municipality one can view Mount Fuji and one of its lakes simultaneously, and this view is complemented by natural vistas in the foreground, including the lake surface and specific vegetation. Residents consider this to be a superb landscape. However, the environmental/landscape framework of local residents does not always accord with a tourist's view, which is a topic for improving tourism plans henceforth.

Conversely, Tanaka and Hatakeyama (2015) focus on impressions of Mount Fuji. They clarify changes in the Japanese people's impressions of Mount Fuji in terms of landscape consciousness, and the particularities of impressions of Mount Fuji following its World Heritage designation. They begin by tracing changes in impressions of Mount Fuji among people in the capital across ancient times, medieval times, early-modern era, modern era, and today. They find that an impression of Mount Fuji is formed by such factors as the position of the capital and opportunities for people to see Mount Fuji, and that the symbolic aspect of Mount Fuji grew in emphasis after the capital was relocated to Edo. From the early-modern era on, there were developments such as the increasing popularity of climbing Mount Fuji and the diminishing of its religious significance; nevertheless, Mount Fuji retained its symbolic weight. Even today, the notion persists that Mount Fuji has beauty, majesty, symbolism, and religious qualities as witnessed in depictions of the sun rising atop the peak. Such a notion reflects a view of nature and culture that is so fundamental to the Japanese people. However, unfavorable portrayals of the mountain that focus on negative elements, such as the garbage

issue, were generated by the mass media around the time of the World Heritage designation, and these images are informing a new impression of Mount Fuji. On the other hand, the increased transmission of information by the mass media has augmented information available to citizens who are not so familiar with Mount Fuji, thereby facilitating a uniform impression of Mount Fuji among the entire population.

The development of second-home areas has played an essential role for overall tourism development in the Mount Fuji region. The accumulation of second-home properties in this region is one of the most important in Japan. Sato and Shibuya (2015) clarify the process of expanding the second-home area in the Fuji foothills and the forms in which these second homes are used. During the Meiji Period (1868–1912), second homes primarily served as summer retreats for foreigners, but from the end of the Meiji Period, second homes for Japanese people started being built around the shores of Yamanaka Lake and Kawaguchi Lake. In the early Showa Period (1926–1989), second-home land started being developed in earnest around the Yamanaka Lake shore. In the early 1960s, there was a surge in second-home area development that took off at the north side of Yamanaka Lake and the Fujizakura Kogen at the south side of Kawaguchi Lake. Around 1970, after expressway infrastructure was arranged, there was extensive second-home area development driven by major capital investment. This development took place across an area spanning the shore of Kawaguchi Lake, the Juriki Highlands, the Fujigamine Highlands, and the Asagiri Highlands. While the second-home area of the Fuji foothills is used for weekend stays in some cases, it is mostly used for summer visits from mid-July to mid-September. People with time on their hands, such as retired people, are particularly likely to use a second home during the summer.

In parallel with the dominance of second homes, the *hoyo-jo* is a distinctive lodging facility of this region. Watanabe (2015) focuss on the *hoyo-jo* that have accumulated on the shore of Yamanaka Lake. A *Hoyo-jo* is a type of facility unique to

Japan. Most are “directly operated dormitories” (*chokuei-ryo*); i.e., dormitories that are operated by a company and are used exclusively by that company’s employees. However, in Yamanakako Village, there are also *hoyo-jo* with a special form of ownership, namely “chartered dormitories” (*kashi-ryo*), and these two types of *hoyo-jo* are situated in separate districts from each other. Chartered dormitories are operated by members of the local community based on contracts with the owning company. The *hoyo-jo* were formerly important places for lodging. However, developments from the late 1990s onward, including changes in tourist behavior among the Japanese people and changes in company-provided employee benefits, prompted a dramatic decline in the numbers of people using *hoyo-jo*. At the same time, the number of these facilities has also declined. The buildings of chartered dormitories that closed as part of this trend continued in most cases to be occupied in their existing form by the families that operated them, and some of those families started operating the dormitories as private guesthouses. Among the directly operated dormitories that closed, many buildings remain in a state of disuse. While the *hoyo-jo* had played an important role in the tourism industry of Yamanakako Village, there are now calls for utilizing these dormant resources as part of a sustainable tourism initiative.

Suzuki (2015) discusses the significance of Mount Fuji’s World Heritage designation and related issues, focusing on the mountain’s connections with the cultural landscape. He provides a carefully laid out explanation of this World Heritage designation and the process of the transition from natural heritage to cultural heritage. Mount Fuji’s World Heritage designation has led to a rise in the number of tourists. He focuses on tourists from overseas, who get their taste of the World Heritage experience in an easy and affordable form by making use of attractive but reasonably priced package tours. Faced with a language barrier and time constraints, they purchase tours that are, as it were, “cheap, close, and short.” Foreign visitors on package tours have few opportunities to encounter up close the constituent assets connected with Mount

Fuji worship (*fuji-ko* and Fuji Sengen worship), which is the core of its World Heritage status. By and large, they rely exclusively on explanations provided by tour conductors. Deliberations on the question of how to convey the authentic heart of this World Heritage site to tourists with limited time on their hands are closely connected to the task of responding to additional recommendations of the World Heritage Committee.

As shown above, tourist behavior in the Mount Fuji region has distinctive spatial characteristics. Sugimoto and Koike (2015) present a study that seeks to ascertain the characteristics of tourist behavior in the tourism area of the Fuji foothills. They focus on differences in travelling distance based on destination points. They conducted a questionnaire survey among roadside station users who had come by car during the Obon holiday season (middle of August), and analyzed survey data on travel characteristics pertaining to 194 effective responses. The analysis reveals that the predominant type of tourist in the Fuji foothills is a domestic tourist travelling independently by car, and that the common purpose for visiting the Fuji foothills is to enjoy scenic views. However, the data also reveal that form of travel and spatial behavior vary depending on travelling distance. In other words, the predominant form of travel among residents who live in the neighboring areas of the Fuji foothills is that of a day trip for the purpose of enjoying ordinary, everyday leisure activities. On the other hand, those who come from further away tend to carry out extraordinary leisure activities around famous sightseeing spots, and their form of travel can be characterized as touring around these spots and staying in an accommodation facility.

Whereas the image of Mount Fuji as a tourist destination is changing with the times, Arima (2015) examines this issue by analyzing the contents of *Rurubu Fujisan*, a travel guidebook publication that is useful for examining changes in the images of tourist spots and how they are explained. It is a leading travel publication in Japan that is reissued every year. He lists the words that appeared frequently in table of contents captions over the twenty-year period

from 1995, and establishes chronological divisions based on analogous discursive elements. He then conducts a more detailed examination of the tourism elements in each chronological category. Images of Mount Fuji tourism are characterized by mountain climbing, but the mountain climbing image only became established in earnest from the year 2000 onward. Once young women started joining the mountain climbing craze alongside the middle-aged demographic, the guidebook started including extensive content on mountain climbing, enriching this content and reflecting the fact that the mountain climbing boom was now being spearheaded by young women in addition to middle-aged people. In recent years, however, there has been both an enrichment of information on climbing Mount Fuji and also the inclusion of additional content on topics such as B-grade gourmet (cheap, yet delicious, local comfort foods), sacred spots, and World Heritage.

Oka *et al.* (2015) ascertain vegetation structures in the ecotones of Mount Fuji and elucidate their dynamics. Specifically, they examine how a larch (*Larix leptolepis*) scrub community is formed around Oniwa on the northwestern slope of Mount Fuji and how its growth mechanism is affected by the natural environment there. They note that a scrub region (ecotone) has formed over an area 2,390 to 2,650 meters in altitude. They examine the relationships between tree size and tree age with respect to the larch scrub community in the ecotone, and find that trees of greater heights tend to be younger and trees of lesser heights tend to be older. They conclude that while a transition is taking place in the ecotone, particularly in its lower area, scrub formation will remain fixed in the long term due to the unstable conditions of the location and strong winds. The *Ochu-do* trail has a number of sites where one can observe ecotones with similar ecological characteristics; for example, besides Oniwa, there is the Hoei-zan crater and the Osawa-kuzure collapsed mountainside. These sites can yield useful data on the formation mechanisms of Mount Fuji and its landscape. Therefore, the *Ochu-do* trail is ideally suited to ecotourism development. While the *Ochu-do* trail requires repairs, assisting eco-

and geo-tourism development on the *Ochu-do* trail will lead to a better understanding of Mount Fuji.

The foothills of Mount Fuji provide an important study theme on agricultural land use. Ota and Kikuchi (2015) focus on changes in agricultural land use in the Fuji foothills. They find that changes in agricultural land use vary between different sectors spread around the summit of Mount Fuji and between different increments of altitude. In other words, in the southern foothills (coastal zone of Suruga Bay) the ratio of land used for permanent crops has risen, and the tea and fruit cultivation sectors have grown. On the other hand, the eastern and western foothills have similar characteristics: namely, the predominant land use at lower altitudes is vegetable cultivation, and at the middle altitudes it is paddy farming. However, the western foothills do have one distinguishing characteristic: the presence of dairy farming. The northern foothills have a characteristic that sets them apart from the other foothills. To wit, agriculture in the northern foothills is based on tourist visits. Traditionally, farmers here managed multiple small holdings in which rice or wheat cultivation was combined with sericulture. The main form of farm management has now become agri-tourism and farmers' markets, or cultivation of vegetables for consumption in accommodation facilities. Ota and Kikuchi attribute these internal discrepancies to differences in land conditions (soil type, land form, etc.) and rate of urbanization and tourism development. The development of rural tourism in particular, based as it is on proximity to Tokyo, is a major factor in determining the characteristics of agriculture in the Fuji foothills.

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