Tourism Study in Cultural Anthropology in Japan

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Abstract
Tourism studies in the discipline of anthropology began in Japan in the mid-1980s. In 1988, the then-associate professor of the Museum of Ethnology, Shuzo Ishimori, organized a collegium “Ethnological Study on Travel and Tourism,” which was composed of twenty-six researchers (including non- anthropologists). At the same time, a research project headed by Ishimori, “Cultural Anthropological Research on Tourism in Island States,” was funded by the Ministry of Education and fieldwork was carried out in developing countries for three years after 1988. Seven anthropologists participated in the project, most of whom have since led anthropological tourism studies in Japan.

Reflecting the research trends in Europe and the United States, there were at least three categories of studies on tourism by the end of the 1990s. First, there were studies on the reasons why tourists engaged in tourism; second, studies on the socio-cultural effects of tourism on host societies; third, studies on the “tourism culture” created and refined by the interactions between tourists and host societies. Apart from these, there were studies on community development, poverty alleviation, and the utilization of tourism that emerged in the twenty-first century. Most of these studies have borrowed and applied theories and concepts from other disciplines such as sociology, geography, and so on to the anthropological study of tourism. Furthermore, most of these studies deal with the tourism phenomena among the ethnic minorities in the developing countries in which the researchers have conducted their anthropological research. On the other hand, studies dealing with tourism phenomena in Japan have emerged recently, probably reflecting the social problems in Japan. Case studies on tourism in Japan are still being conducted.

In this paper, the trend of the anthropological approach to tourism in Japan since the 1980s will be discussed briefly.

Keywords: anthropology, mass tourism, Japan, alternative tourism

I Introduction

Tourism studies in cultural anthropology in Japan have just commenced. This late start is probably the result of the number of cultural anthropologists that are interested in tourism. There were 1,928 members of the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology in 2006, of which 1,660 indicated their areas of interest in the membership directory. Only 86 members (5.18%) of the society expressed their interest in tourism study. We can calculate the level of interest in tourism studies from the number of articles with the keyword “tourism.” Thirty-six hundred and thirty-one articles, including research notes, appeared in the Japanese Journal of Cultural...
Anthropology, which is the official journal of the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology, between 1935 and 2008. Only ten articles (0.275%) were on the topic of tourism.

One of the biggest reasons for this is that cultural anthropologists dislike being mistaken for tourists and tend to avoid the topic of tourism in the field. Cultural anthropologists have chosen their fields in foreign countries and have carried out fieldwork for a long period. The areas in which they conduct their research tend to be remote from urban areas and tend to have extraordinary environments, things, and people. Many tourists visit these areas to experience this extraordinary atmosphere. Cultural anthropologists dislike being perceived as tourists. Furthermore, although tourism itself is a sort of play, it is considered ridiculous to study tourism as a play that is practiced during leisure time (Nash 1996, 3; Eguchi 1998, iv). As tourism has become more important as an industry and as more people have become involved in it, cultural anthropologists have started to realize that it is essential to study tourism in order to understand contemporary societies. As a result, cultural anthropologists have finally begun to study tourism.

II Tourism Study in Cultural Anthropology in the U. S. A.

Before reviewing the tourism study in Japan, we had better look at the history of anthropological tourism study in the U. S. A. which has affected the Japanese cultural anthropologists in the study of tourism. Tourism study in anthropology in the U. S. A. started in 1974, when the American Anthropological Association held its annual conference in Mexico and the first symposium on tourism took place. In 1977, Valene L. Smith edited Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism, which was based on the papers submitted at this symposium. The second edition of this book was published in 1989. In this book, Smith defined the concept of tourism, classified it, and discussed the relations between the guests and the hosts. In 1973, the Annals of Tourism Research was published by Jafar Jafari of the University of Wisconsin at Stout, founder and editor-in-chief. This is a social sciences journal that focuses on the academic perspectives of tourism.

Tourism studies in cultural anthropology and sociology became active in the U. S. A. and Europe after this period. The themes of tourism study have diversified as more scholars have participated and as contact with other disciplines has increased. Some themes deal with the relations between hosts and guests; others deal with stage acts analyzed mainly by sociologist Dean MacCannell (1976), who bases his ideas on those of Irving Goffman; other themes deal with the negative impact of tourism on traditional cultures. With respect to the negative effects of tourism, Cultural Survival Quarterly, for which cultural anthropologists and reporters submit papers on the issue of ethnic minorities, twice published special issues on tourism and ethnic minorities. The first issue, titled The Tourist Trap: Who’s Getting Caught? was published in 1980. The second issue, Breaking out of the Tourist Trap, was published in 1990. Articles in both these issues dealt with ethnic minorities and discussed the negative impacts of tourism on cultures and environments. Thus, as an antithesis to the negative aspects of mass tourism, themes on alternative tourism have been dealt with in cultural anthropology in the 1990s (Smith and Eadington 1992).
III  Beginning of Tourism Study in Cultural Anthropology in Japan

Forerunner of Tourism Study in Cultural Anthropology in Japan

Japanese cultural anthropologists started to focus on tourism study in the late 1980s. Former associate professor of the National Museum of Ethnology (present Director of the Center for Advanced Tourism Studies of Hokkaido University), Shuzo Ishimori, promoted tourism study in cultural anthropology. He organized a collegium in 1988, “Ethnological Study on Travel and Tourism,” for three years with 26 cultural anthropologists and some researchers from other disciplines. At the same time, he organized a research team, “Cultural Anthropological Study on Tourism in Island States,” using a grant-in-aid from the Ministry of Education for three years. Seven cultural anthropologists participated in the latter study. Most of the attendants at the collegium and the participants in the research have since led tourism studies in cultural anthropology and adjacent disciplines. Although there were a few studies on tourism presented by Kazuya Hashimoto before 1988, Ishimori’s attempt was the first study at the group level. Tourism studies in cultural anthropology in Japan began at this point, and scholars from other disciplines also participated in them.

Tourism Study as an Odd Job

In 1999, Kazuya Hashimoto, who is the forerunner of tourism study in cultural anthropology in Japan, reviewed tourism study in Japanese cultural anthropology. According to him, most cultural anthropologists treat the study of tourism phenomena as odd jobs in relation to their main themes (Hashimoto 1999). Furthermore, most of this interest in tourism has not been maintained. Since tourism is characterized as the “selling and buying of some well-known things in foreign lands for momentary pleasure” (Hashimoto 1999, 9), it is difficult for scholars to retain their interest in tourism study.

IV  Development of Tourism Study and Change in Themes

In this paper, the author briefly reviews the trends of tourism study in Japanese cultural anthropology over the last 20 years. Nelson Graburn (1983), Shinji Yamashita (Yamashita ed. 1996) and others categorize the main themes of tourism study in cultural anthropology as follows: (1) the motives and reasons for tourism, (2) the effects of tourism on the societies receiving the tourists, and (3) the culture created or the ethnic identity strengthened through tourism or the interactions between guests and hosts. Most studies in Japan are classified into these three categories. In addition to these three, the main themes include: (4) a re-examination of the concept of tourism and tourism culture and (5) the role of tourism in alleviating poverty. Themes (1)–(3) have been dealt with since the 1980s; theme (4) since the 1990s; and theme (5) emerged in the twenty-first century.

Study on the Motives and Reasons that People Engage in Tourism (Before 1988)

In the 1970s and 1980s in the U. S. A., some psychologists and sociologists studied the reasons why people opted for tourism. The Japanese scholars often borrowed some of Graburn’s ideas on cultural anthropology and some of MacCanell’s on sociology. Graburn utilized the concept of rites of passage and MacCanell believed that tourists that were seeking authenticity opted for
tourism. The contrast of tourism with profane labor is extraordinary (MacCannell 1976). Graburn states that tourism is a “sacred journey” through which tourists experience extraordinary moments. According to MacCannell, we live in an alienated world and are unable to find our true selves. Thus, we travel in search of an authentic world. Eric Cohen distinguishes between tourists that opt to travel in groups from backpackers, and criticized MacCannell’s study (Cohen 1979). This is not dealt with in detail here.

There are few studies in Japanese anthropology on the motives of tourists.

Study on the Effects of Tourism on the Societies Receiving Tourists (1988–early 1990s)

During the peak period of the Japanese bubble economy, mobility within and outside Japan was rather high. The Resort Act (Comprehensive Resort Area Maintenance Act) was enforced in June 1987. The first article of this Act stated that a resort is developed in an area “with good natural conditions” by “utilizing the capacities of the private sector.” The aim of this act was to “expand domestic demand,” “promote areas facing depopulation and liberalization,” and “give leisure to urban dwellers” (Sato 1990, 9). As a result, the development of 7,250,000 hectares (19.2 % of the total land area of Japan) of land for resort (ibid, 3) was planned. In this period, keywords such as tourism, resorts, hotels, etc. were abundant in Japan. The number of travelers going abroad exceeded 10 million in Japan for the first time in 1990.

The hosts themselves and sometimes other outsiders tend to objectify, commodify, and sell the hosts’ songs, dances, handicrafts, and other aspects of their lives. Rural people and ethnic groups tend to retain their pride, strengthen their ethnic identities, and earn profits economically by creating commodities that objectify culture (tourism culture). Studies on this phenomenon have emerged in this period. For example, Hiroaki Kuzuno studied tourism and the issue of the copyright of ethnic culture among the Samis in Lapland. The Finns, who are in the majority in Finland, act as Lapps and sell Lapp souvenirs to tourists visiting to see the home of Santa Claus. To deal with these problems, the Samis started a movement on cultural copyright. Through this type of movement, the Samis redefined themselves (Kuzuno 1990, 1991, 1996).

On the other hand, Yoshinobu Ota studied the imbalance of power between tourists and the rural people or the ethnic minorities who strengthened self–image and identities through tourism. People have objectified their culture and provided it to tourists. The objectification of culture is to reconstruct it and manipulate it as a commodity (Ota 1993, 391). Ota pointed out that tourism played an important role for the people of Okinawa, Tono, and Ainu in reconstructing their identities (Ota 1993). Kazuyoshi Otsuka also postulated the important role of tourism in maintaining the core of Ainu culture by commodifying and presenting culture to tourists, even though the Ainu tourism phenomenon reconstructs and spreads a false “traditional” culture (Otsuka 1996). Thus, both Ota and Otsuka conceive of tourism as a means of reconstructing ethnic identities and cultures.

Study on the Culture Created or Ethnic Identity Strengthened Through Tourism or Interactions between Guests and Hosts (Latter half of the 1990s–2000)

The end of the previous period saw the Rio Summit in 1992, which emphasized sustainable development, and the United Nations’ International Year of the World’s Indigenous People in 1993. The fourth period is concerned with environmental conservation, ethnic groups, and women. Since nature has been regarded as an object to be exploited since the industrial revolution, various environmental problems have occurred, one of which is global warming.
Ethnic minorities have been forced to assimilate with ethnic majorities in the course of nation-building and have become targets of discrimination. The history of these issues should be considered.

As the antithesis to mass tourism, alternative tourism has since grown. In 1991, the bubble economy burst in Japan. Vast areas that had been planned as resorts were deserted due to financial problems and mass tourism was criticized. Absolute measures became ambiguous in many aspects of our lives, and keywords such as post-modern came to be used in everyday life. Rural areas and localities now provided restitution. Most Japanese anthropologists in Japan cited foreign countries as their fields of research for case studies. In particular, Bali was focused on as a popular field of tourism study. In Japan, some marginal areas such as Tono, Iwate Prefecture, and Okinawa received more attention.

Publication of Two Books on Anthropology of Tourism

This period is characterized by the publication of two books on the anthropology of tourism in Japan. Shuzo Ishimori edited the first serious book on the anthropology of tourism (Ishimori 1996). This book was written by 14 Japanese anthropologists and was based on a symposium titled “Tourism in the Twentieth Century” that was held at the Museum of Ethnology on 13–15 October, 1994. This book focuses on how tourism promoted changes in ethnic cultures through the commodization of ethnic cultures, the self-reliance of ethnic minorities, tourism states, the utilization of nature, the historical remains of ancient civilizations, etc. Only one of these cases dealt with Japan (Ainu’s case), while others dealt with cases abroad. As Kazuya Hashimoto stated, most of these scholars (besides Ishimori and a few others) treated tourism studies as odd jobs.

Shinji Yamashita edited the first textbook on the anthropology of tourism in Japan (Yamashita 1996). Twenty-two authors, including cultural anthropologists, primatologists, sociologists, and undergraduate students in cultural anthropology contributed 15 chapters and columns. This book deals with a wide variety of topics such as the history of tourism, how the Parisians in the 1920s viewed Bali, tourism from the point of view of colonialism, the development of “sustainable tourism,” media and tourism, Disneyland as a pilgrimage, the creation of “paradise” in Bali, the copyright movement of ethnic culture in Lapland tourism, study of tourism and sex through a case study of the female hill tribe in Thailand, nostalgia and reconstruction of traditional culture through folk tale tourism in Tono, possibility of a new “tourism culture” through the stage direction of ethnic culture in Fiji, the frontier of Chinese tourism through the creation of “local culture,” the present position of folk arts between conservation and tourism, and ecotourism as coexistence with nature. Although this book contained most of the themes discussed before this period, it was a rather timely and appropriate book. Even today, this book can be used as a good textbook for tourism. Besides Yamashita, Hashimoto, and Kuzuno, however, most of the authors of this book dealt with tourism studies as odd jobs.

Studies on Culture Recreated and Created Through Tourism

Though studies during this period continued to experience some of the trends of former periods, such as Eguchi’s concern with the uneven power relations between guests and hosts (Eguchi 1998), many of these studies focused on cultures recreated through tourism. Yamashita (Yamashita 1992a, 1992b, 1993, Yamashita ed. 1996) studied the creation or reconstruction of traditional culture in Bali that occurred through tourism; this was referred to as “Baliseering Bali” (Nakamura
The creation or reconstruction of traditional culture not only contributed to the promotion of tourism but was also adopted into everyday Balinese life.

There have been similar cases in the rural areas of Japan. In the well-known *Tono Story* that was edited by Kunio Yanagita in 1910, the strange, curious traditions and phenomena of Tono, Iwate Prefecture have been mentioned. However, these traditions had disappeared in Tono owing to the assimilation policy enforced by the central government and the mass media since the Meiji period. On the other hand, urbanization has taken place all over Japan and many people have migrated from rural to urban areas such as Tokyo to join the labor force, especially after World War II. When Japan had achieved high economic growth and economic stability, the World Exposition was held at Osaka in 1970. Seeking the good old home depicted in *Tono Story*, tourists started to visit Tono as well as other old towns and rural areas. The residents of Tono began to re-evaluate their lost traditions through interactions with tourists and started to reconstruct the world described in *Tono Story*. This reconstruction process in Tono was studied by Ota (Ota 1996) and Kawamori (Kawamori 1996).

**Studies on Other Topics**

Ota studied the relationship between primitiveness and civilization using ecotourism in Belize (Ota 1996). In his paper, Ota states that we have to acknowledge ecotourism as a commodity and ecology consciousness as a symbolic capital; Ota explains the process of the production, marketing, and consumption or ecotourism. He insists that it is the aim of anthropology in tourism to explain the symbolic–economics of ecology consciousness (Ota 1996). Eguchi, using the case of the Caribs in the Commonwealth of Dominica, analyzes how the reconstruction of the ethnic identity and ethnicity of the Caribs has been influenced by tourism and how this process relates to the country’s policy toward nation-building (Eguchi 1997).

**Study on the Re-examination of the Concept of Tourism and Tourism Culture (Since the 1990s)**

The hosts at tourist destinations provide guests with dance, songs, and handicrafts. These samples of culture come from the contexts of the hosts and are commodities that are provided to tourists. This is rather different from cultures that have been studied by cultural anthropologists, which are referred to as tourism cultures in the context of tourism. These cultures are created through the interactions between guests and hosts. Hashimoto discusses this issue (Hashimoto 1999). Even cultural anthropologists have often referred to dances, songs, and handicrafts as culture. Hashimoto claims that tourism culture is different from culture itself, and that cultural anthropologists have to study how tourism culture is created through the interaction between guests and hosts. It seems that Japanese cultural anthropologists have just started to study tourism from a disciplinary point of view.

**Study of the Role of Tourism in Reactivating Towns or Alleviating Poverty (2000–)**

**Diversification of Topics and Fields on Tourism of Anthropology**

Although this trend has been maintained since the earlier period, areas of study have diversified both in foreign countries and in Japan. As an example of the diversification of topics, Eguchi proposed to study the anthropology of cruise ship tourism. Cruise ship tourism is one of the most important types of tourism in the Caribbean. Although demand in cruise ship tourism both in Japan and other developed countries has been increasing, little research has been done.
Thus, it is appropriate to say that the cruise ship is an important research frontier for tourism studies and anthropology (Eguchi 2001). In terms of the diversification of fields, not only Tono, Okinawa, and Hokkaido but also other localities have been dealt with as fields for tourism studies in Japan.

Studies of the Role of Tourism in Order to Reactivate Towns

The low economic growth rate and poverty is significant in this period. Further, the revaluation of local traditions has been emphasized as a part of the revitalization of local societies in many areas of Japan. Naoko Ando dealt with the case of the annual events in Morioka, Iwate Prefecture and discussed the relationship between the modern edition of traditional events and authenticity (Ando 2001). Many local communities have launched revitalization programs through the promotion of tourism. Classic events have been reedited for tourism and new dances, souvenirs, etc. have been created. These phenomena have been observed all over Japan. Traditions have been invented for tourism, as stated by Eric Hobsbawm (1983).

"Anthropology of Tourism" Borrowed by Other Disciplines

Not only cultural anthropologists but also scholars of other disciplines, such as architects, sociologists, consultants, etc., have dealt with similar tourism-related issues. In particular, scholars from other disciplines have studied rural societies and have appealed the necessity of local revitalization programs that use the keywords “anthropology of tourism.” These scholars like to use keywords such as tourism, traditional culture, local community, residents, hosts vs. guests, and so on. In other words, scholars in other disciplines have acknowledged the anthropology of tourism study in this period.

For example, according to Miyuki Ichisugi, who studied tsumago-shuku of Nagano Prefecture, the preservation of rows of houses along streets has a close relationship to local revitalization through tourism. Thus, it is rather useful to use the standpoint of the anthropology of tourism, which deals with the role that tourism has played in the creation and revitalization of tradition and culture when we understand its nature (Ichisugi 2000). On the other hand, Etsuko Takeuchi studied the authenticity of a certain locality in Aichi Prefecture from the tourism anthropological viewpoint. She analyzed how the residents objectified their culture based on local history in the process of local promotion in the form of tourismization. She concludes that various authenticities found by different actors lead to the creation of tradition (Takeuchi 2007).

Study of the Issues Concerning Development through Tourism, or the Role of Tourism in Alleviating Poverty

While there are studies on local promotion from the anthropology of tourism point of view, there are also studies on how we can utilize tourism to alleviate poverty. Kazuya Hashimoto and Yukio Sato edited a book consisting of seven chapters in which the authors suggest how tourism developments in the island states should be promoted (Hashimoto and Sato 2003). This is a sort of textbook that demonstrates the problems related to tourism development. On the other hand, Yuji Yamamoto reveals why the Thakalis from an ethnic minority in Nepal have contributed to the tourism development in Pokhara even though they are politically distinguished as an ethnic minority (Yamamoto 2008). Eguchi studied the relationship between an indigenous village community of the Arawaks in Guyana and tourism. He also lists the necessary conditions for promoting community-based tourism in which the entire community participates to earn a
profit (Eguchi 2008).

We can thus find papers that deal with local revitalization, poverty alleviation, etc. from the anthropology of tourism viewpoint in this period. The anthropology of tourism seems to be shifting to a more applied direction. This reflects the social environment in Japan. Rural communities have been trying to promote tourism through utilizing resources on hand such as natural environment, classic events, rice terraces, etc. to earn a profit.

V Conclusion

Although Japanese anthropologists have disliked being mistaken for tourists, they have finally started to study tourism in the 1980s. This coincides with the booming of tourism in the wake of stable economic growth. Anthropologists visited tourist destinations as “tourists” and observed the tourism phenomena as participant-observers. Although the themes of study have almost matched social conditions, most of them define “culture” such as the cultural contact between hosts and guests, the reconstruction of certain human/community/ethnic groups, the strengthening of ethnic identity, etc. Further, most studies deal with issues in foreign countries. In Hashimoto’s words cited in the introduction, most Japanese cultural anthropologists seem to have studied the tourism phenomena as odd jobs in relation to their main themes (Hashimoto 1999). Thus, the anthropology of tourism has remained a minor discipline in Japan even though it is known by other disciplines and is used for local promotion through tourism.

Anthropologists are members of the real world and face various problems. We not only study the tourism phenomena as researchers, but it is also necessary for us to help alleviate and solve these problems by utilizing knowledge and the means accumulated through the study of tourism. Yamashita’s evaluation of a home-stay program in Sabah, Malaysia (Yamashita 2009) and Eguchi’s report on a home-stay program in Penang, Malaysia (Eguchi 2010) may contribute to promoting community-based tourism.

In Japan, issues on marginal communities that cannot hold traditional events or maintain roads for agriculture are some of the critical social problems faced by many rural communities (Ohno 2005). As far as local residents allow and wish, I believe that cultural anthropologists can help bridge the gap between residents and outside support organizations such as local governments, and NPOs. I think that we can revitalize the rural community through tourism with home-stay programs or volunteer tourism. In this way, we not only deepen the cultural anthropological study of tourism phenomena but also seek to solve problems in our everyday life through tourism.

Notes

1. The Japanese Journal of Ethnology was renamed the Journal of Cultural Anthropology on April 1, 2004, when the Japanese Society of Ethnology was renamed the Japanese Society of Cultural Anthropology.

2. In 2009 Japanese Review of Cultural Anthropology, Vol. 10 (2) which is English version of the supplement to Japanese Journal of Cultural Anthropology set up a special issue on tourism edited by Shinji Yamashita. Five scholars including Yamashita dealt with new trends of tourism from heritage tourism in Indonesia to environmental tourism of Miyama, Kyoto Prefecture in Japan from the context of contemporary Asian tourism/migration.

3. The second edition was translated into Japanese by a group of architects and graduate students in Kyoto University and was published in Japan in 1992. This group was already quite interested in how tourism could be utilized to maintain a row of houses along streets and to revitalize towns. This tendency has continued until today.

4. The purpose of this journal is to encourage the development and dissemination of tourism research and to facilitate the application of data and theoretical frameworks to both the academic and the practical problems of the tourism phenomenon (<Statement of Purpose> Annals of Tourism Research).
References


