The Localness, Materiality, and Visuality of Landscape in Japan

MORI Masato
Mie University

Abstract
This paper aims to track the interlinked trajectories of the production of aesthetic landscape experience and the creation of senses of belonging to Japan during the formation of the modern nation-state of Japan. Particular emphasis was placed on an examination of the monthly tourist magazine *Tabi* (official English title is *Travel*), as tourism is a visual practice that frames vision, and mobilizes and assembles people and nature. The paper elaborates on how the culture of Japaneseness was embodied in the form of national parks and the selection of the New Eight Landscapes of Japan in the late 1920s and the early 1930s, as well as in the quest for the localness witnessed in the 1970s practice of traveling to and around various *Sho-Kyoto* sites recognized as pretty historic towns. In particular, the article focuses on the intersection of scale, materiality, visuality, and tourism using two periods of time to illustrate how the landscape of nature shaped the racialized homogeneity of Japan. The article clarifies that the national and local geographical scales are not opposed, but mutual and supplementary. It also addresses how landscapes of nature materiality were used to instill moral and physical discipline, and how photos as a visual assemblage played a significant role in conveying a particular preference for localities featuring nature.

Key words: landscape of nature, tourism, national landscape, localness, materiality, visuality

1 Introduction

The official website for the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO) categorizes sightseeing areas into seven types: cityscapes, industrial districts, historic towns, ports and harbors, hot springs, resorts, and nature. The fact that the website lists far more nature sites than any other category is indicative of the widespread transformation of vast portions of the national land base into scenic natural landscapes. The images of these natural sites as they appear on the JNTO website reveal no signs of human impact or existence, thus rendering an image of a neutral nature that exists beyond society. Yet, as countless studies under the banner of “geographies of nature” have aptly demonstrated, so-called “nature” is inevitably inscribed through “social” (cultural, economic, and political) modes of production and encounter. It is through discursive and representational practices that “nature” scenery is formed and Japanese “nature” is made legible as a site to visit and experience. For example, the manner in which the JNTO website narrates nature for the viewer suggests that Japan’s allegedly unique relationship with the four seasons and its harmonious relationship with nature since ancient times had created a
uniquely beautiful national landscape. This is not a pre-socialized natural landscape, but a landscape infused with specific cultural values.

Critical analysis of the so-called "landscapes of nature" provides a key means of addressing the complex socio-political processes that shape our presupposed perceptions of "nature." The term "landscapes of nature" is a translation of "shizen keikan," a Japanese term signifying a natural landscape independent of human activity. This term signifies an imaginary pre-socialized nature and is a leading example of the social construction of a human and nature dualism that this paper aims to deconstruct. Nature and "landscapes of nature" are socio-political tools deployed to define an essentialized Japaneseness and Japanese nation. "Landscapes of nature" are nationalized and racialized at particular historical moments, such as times when the nature-nation link must be solidified in order to smooth over cracks in the socio-political edifice. This paper tracks the interlinked trajectories of the creation of landscape aesthetics and the production of senses of belonging to the country during the formation of the modern nation-state of Japan. It draws on a body of literature that addresses the connections between landscape as aesthetics and the construction of the nation-state (Kaufmann and Zimmer 1998; Nogué and Vicente 2004; Olwig 2002).

More specifically, this paper aims to historicize the nexus of national-natural in the construction of scenic Japanese landscapes. Research on Japanese landscapes has asserted that nature and landscapes of nature were driving forces behind the creation of an essentialized national identity in the 1920s (Arayama 1995; Kanda 2012), while other research has called attention to the way in which landscapes of nature have been produced at the intersection of Japanese nationalism and colonial resource extraction (Nakashima 2000). This article focuses on two moments in particular: the selection of representative national landscapes in the 1920–30s, and the rise of social interest in nostalgic landscapes in the 1970s. These two periods were the key moments in which the nature-nation link was solidified to redefine the culture of Japaneseness. Japanese nationalism arose in the early 19th century when Western countries forced Japan to be engaged in unfair trade. The Sonno-Joi movement attempted to protect the Japanese emperor by eliminating foreigners. The Meiji government, the modern Japanese government, was established in 1868. The government also launched campaigns to encourage Japanese purity and invented Japanese myths to suggest Japanese originality. Meanwhile, the westernization was desired to become a same level of the West civilized through material provision of infrastructures. The military victory of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 and the Japan economic prosperity after the 1910s led to regard Japan as having transcended the West. This new self-consciousness underscored a Japanese spirituality that was superior to the West, emphasizing the term "culture," which signified a spirituality and particularity distinguished from other Asian countries, on behalf of the term "civilization" (Nishikawa 2001). By the 1930s, the definition of the culture of Japaneseness was further expanded to some extent through the installation of national landscapes. During the postwar period, with a massive boost received from the Korean War, Japan’s economy embarked on a prolonged period of extremely rapid growth, led by the manufacturing sectors, including steel, automotive, and electronics. These achievements were underscored by the 1964 Tokyo Olympic Games and the Osaka International Exposition in 1970. Within this economic prosperity, Japanese society began to lose the “traditional” way of living and culture. In 1970, the Japanese National Railway initiated the “Discover Japan” campaign, which encouraged people to discover cultures of “Japaneseness” in local areas. Attuned to the cultural heritage policies of the 1960s, local cultures and rural landscapes were
featured and then re-interpreted as the national culture representing "Japaneseness" (Ivy 1995).

This study will reveal a complex knot of contradictions: (1) the national nature landscape was constructed through myriad representational practices infused with nationalism and tourism that inscribed unique meanings on the landscape of nature; (2) there was a complex relationship between national and local practices; and (3) the landscape aesthetics were formed by the materiality and visuality of nature, as well as verbal representations.

The national scale is not diametrically opposed to the local. Rather the two are tightly interwoven. National landscapes are local (Filippucci 1997; Sörlin 1999) and evoke a sense of localness (Arayama 2003). Nature is not opposed to, but rather always intersected with “culture.” This emphasis on the cultural construction of “nature” is not meant in any way to deny its materiality. Rather the substance of “nature” indicates particular cultural expressions of reality. The materiality of nature, such as soils, grass, trees, and rocks are not fixed and defined across time and space; they are situated in context. Nature is cultural in that landscape is a matter of the reinscription of meaning that gives material presence to nations (Crag and Tolia-Kelly 2010; Jazeel 2005). This is a type of “ecological citizenship” that forms “racialized” homogeneity and differences, and fosters the senses of belonging, attachment, and exclusion through identification with ecological textures such as soil, plants, and rocks (Tolia-Kelly 2010).

Nature is a driving force of racialization. In addition, our geographical imaginations are visually as well as discursively constructed. What we are (not) seeing is not neutral but situated by a vast range of politics, sociality, and technology (Foster 1988; Rose 2003, 2012). As the production of picturesque paintings and literatures was an aesthetic visual discovery in a particular period by a specific British social class (Daniels and Watkins 1991; Seymour, Watkins and Daniels 1996), Japanese national landscapes aesthetics can be situated in a particular time and social context. Visions of landscapes bring particular natural elements together and allocate them through particular visual technologies and devices. This is the materiality of vision. Tourism is a visual practice: tourists view objects situated in a framework of visibility that highlights key moments of anticipation, rewriting, remembrance, and reliving (Scarles 2009). Tourism takes part in framing vision, and mobilizing and assembling people and things. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1997) identifies tourism as an “agency of display” that provides visual processes through which significant cultural referents, such as nationhood, identity and social structure are encoded in certain materialities that are then projected onto society.

This paper employs post-structural and cultural theory to facilitate an understanding of how the meanings of nation and landscape have been partially constituted by text, representation, and discourse. It places particular emphasis on an examination of travel magazines in order to identify the role of tourism in building a national landscape aesthetic. This analysis focuses on articles from the monthly tourist magazine Tabi (official English title is Travel), a publication launched in 1924 by Nihon Ryoko Bunka Kyokai (i.e., Association of Travel Culture in Japan) and last published in 2004. There are three reasons to focus on articles from this magazine. First, since the magazine was published for eighty years, the articles allow us to historicize travel discourse. Second, since the association created the magazine to convey a particular ideology fashioned by the state, it is possible to identify the relationship between power and landscape. Third, the magazine was renowned for high quality photography and delivering its message through visual technologies, thus enabling us to assess how a particular landscape aesthetic has been visually produced.

The paper begins by briefly introducing the modern tourism industry in Japan, focusing in
particular on travel bureaus, and the selection of “national” landscapes by the tourist industry. This is followed by an examination of landscapes of nature as a vehicle for producing Japanese nationhood and the entanglement of these sites with the locality. The paper then explores the materiality and visuality of Japanese landscapes of nature, focusing on how the materiality of nature is valued and used to create a national morality, and how visual technologies create particular visions of nature and localness.

II A Brief Introduction to the Landscape of the Japanese Tourism Industry

Travel Agencies and State-led Tourism
In the Edo period (1603–1868), travelers and pilgrims were actively encouraged to visit the Ise Shrine by religious guides and trainers referred to as Oshi. While the period’s government strictly controlled travel, they did allow people to conduct journeys associated with religious beliefs such as Shinto or Buddhism. During the Meiji period (1868–1912), various aspects of modernity were imported from the West. A project to host foreign tourists was undertaken by Kihinkai, an agency established in 1893 and eventually succeeded in 1912 by the semi-governmental Japan Tourist Bureau (Shirahata 1992). The Japan Tourist Bureau was closely associated with the Ministry of Railroads and initiated the travel magazine Tourist (1913–1943), which was written in both Japanese and English.

The domestic tourism industry was promoted to the Japanese public by Nihon Ryoko Bunka Kyokai (Association of Travel Culture in Japan). This association was established in 1924 through the reconfiguration of Nihon Ryoko Bunka-Kai, an association officially launched in 1921. These associations were the outgrowth of local tourism clubs launched in the late 1910s as Japan experienced the establishment of banking systems and an increase in exports and economic prosperity during World War I, as well as rapid industrialization and urbanization. At this time, the modern leisure industry was developed for the growing middle class, for which the Association of Travel Culture in Japan targeted through the monthly travel magazine Travel, which was launched in 1924. The Association was renamed Nihon Ryoko Kyoka (i.e., Association of Travel in Japan) in 1925, and in 1934, reunited with the semi-governmental Japan Tourist Bureau to become Nihon Ryoko Club (Japan Travel Club). After the war, the Japan Travel Bureau (JTB) was established in 1945 as an incorporated foundation. The Japan Travel Bureau continued publishing the magazine Travel until 2004 (Mori 2010).

From its inception, the association aimed to enlighten ordinary people through instruction on modern knowledge and moral behavior. As part of this enlightenment process were lessons on how to view landscape and use nature found in tourist destinations. Although it was private, from the outset the Nihon Ryoko Bunka Kyokai association was influenced by the Ministry of Railways. While most articles were pro-government, the association became politically regulated after 1934 as the country prepared to go to war. Tourism became used for propaganda.

Landscapes of the Nation
During the Edo period, famous scenic landscapes were enjoyed through Japanese poetry, in which prominent scenic sites such as Amanohashidate (天橋立), Matsushima (松島) and Miyajima (宮島) were narrated and illustrated. Together, these sites are often referenced as Nihon Sankei (i.e., the three famous views of Japan). In the 1920s, the idea of a national landscape was developed by the central government in cooperation with newspaper publishers. Three national
parks were designated in 1934 by the Home Ministry through the National Park Act of 1931. In 1927, the *Nihon-Shin-Hakkei*, or the “new famous eight scenes of Japan,” were selected by the Osaka Mainichi and Tokyo Nichinichi newspapers. The differences between pre-modern famous landscapes and the new scenic landscapes selected during the 1920–30s can be understood through concepts of “nation” and modern scientific vision. The Meiji government founded the institutions and systems of the modern nation-state. This system was based on an imagined community of a single nation for which material apparatuses such as censuses, maps, and museums produce a single national history, myth, and language (Anderson 1991). Notably, there exists a gap between the aesthetic landscapes of the pre-modern and modern period. While the pre-modern aesthetic had been based on Chinese landscape painting, which assumed the idealized landscape as a priori (Karatani 1988) and framed such landscapes through folk tales and poems (Kashiwagi 1987), the modern landscape aesthetic was produced through a series of scientific examinations that objectified nature as something to be observed.

After World War II, Japan's national landscapes were verified through a series of selections. The Mainichi Newspaper selected the top one hundred tourism destinations in Japan and in 1957, the Yomiuri Newspaper chose Japan's top one hundred sceneries. In 1966, the Japan Travel Bureau also created a list of Japan's top one hundred travel destinations, as selected by readers of *Travel* magazine. Twelve mountain and twelve highland sites were listed. The most
popular tourist destination was Mashuko Lake and the second was Cape Shiretoko, both in Hokkaido. While natural scenery was favored until the mid-1960s, local historic architecture sites began to attract tourists to nostalgic landscapes after the late 1960s. The local nostalgic landscapes are explained as a mixture of human histories and local environments.

III The Discourse of Landscape of and for the Nation

Nature and Landscape in the Modern Period

Not only was nature re-discovered through modern aesthetics, but this rediscovered nature was also intricately connected to the idea of the culture of Japaneseeness. Nature and natural landscapes began to be inscribed with special values for modern Japanese society. These sites and scenes were portrayed as cures for unhealthy minds and bodies degraded by modernization and urbanization. Tourism was identified and promoted as the means to transport people to these restorative sites and scenes. The Association of Japan Travel Culture portrayed nature as important to tourists. In volume 1 of Travel, Ryutaro Nomura, president of the association, advised the following:

Recent social development has constructed fashionable buildings and skyscrapers, but also separated us from nature and soil. However when considering our nature, we cannot survive apart from the soil. Nature cleans up the dust accumulated in daily life. Traveling takes us back to nature (Travel: April 1924).

Nomura argued that tourism provides humans with an opportunity to commune with the environment. In particular, he suggested that Japan had “beautiful nature” and that the distinctive character of the Japanese nation could be found in the connection between people and nature. He regretted the separation of people from nature in modern life and promoted transportation as a means to bring people back to it. The principal aim of tourism, for both Nomura and his association, was to provide the Japanese nation with an organic connection to nature through modern transportation. He criticized the period’s other tourism promotion agencies for their lack of determination in reconnecting people and nature. It is possible to understand his assumption: the character of the Japanese nation is deeply connected with nature, in contrast to Western countries that celebrate the material comforts of civilization rather than the beautiful simplicity of nature. However, it is not difficult to find contradictions in his logic. While this argument rested on the belief that the importation of modernity had severed the essential relationship between Japanese people and nature, it proposed their reconnection through modern transportation and modern tourism, two key practices within the very package of modernity that supposedly disrupted these harmonious connections in the first place.

Landscapes of nature were key sites for building national identity. The quest for national identity and the outbreak of Japanese nationalism were connected to the production of a national landscape. In his well-known book Nihon-Fukeiron (Japanese Landscape), geographer Shigetaka Shiga (1893) developed his theory of landscape through a hybrid of objective modern science and the poetics of pre-modern literature and arts. Published amidst the rising nationalism that followed the Sino-Japanese War (1894-95), Shiga’s work aimed to categorize landscapes and nature as landforms according to objective physical features, regardless of how
they were framed and appreciated by pre-modern society. This is exemplary of the way in which geographical practice has been deployed as a modern spatial reformation project (Hogari 2005).

National Parks, the New Eight Landscapes of Japan, and the Identity of Japaneseness

The new landscape aesthetic was embodied in the form of national parks and the selection of the New Eight Landscapes of Japan in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. In 1920, the Hygiene Bureau of the Home Ministry (Naimusho Eiseikyoku) hired Tsuyoshi Tamura, a landscape architect and forester, to conduct research aimed at selecting appropriate sites for national parks. Tamura developed the idea of creating national parks in Japan at the end of 1910s and cited that 1) parks represented the nation-state; 2) they included heritage sites, natural treasures, and national icons; and 3) they provided facilities for leisure activities (Tamura 1921). His idea for national parks was cultivated through a series of articles that eventually helped lead to the passage of the National Park Act of 1931 and the establishment of three national parks in 1934. The national parks were expected to further justify that the political regime of the time had inherited the legacy of ancient times and also to represent the national spirit (Arayama 1995). One traveler contributed an article to Travel that expressed appreciation for the richness of nature, stating “there is no country with more various kinds of beautiful trees than my country” (Kano 1931: 5). He also praised the national parks as containing a “variety of landscapes” (Kano 1931: 4). National parks were recognized as icons of the beauty of Japanese nature by both experts and the public. The landscapes of nature were implicated in the creation of “racialized” homogeneity.

The quest for landscapes that could represent the nation was also propelled by the mass media and tourism industry. In 1927, the construction of new architecture and a new landscape aesthetic created conditions for the selection of Nihon-Shin-Hakkei, the New Eight Landscapes of Japan. This selection was promoted and conducted by newspaper publishers and sponsored by the Ministry of Railways. The organizers of this landscape selection process stipulated eight categories—mountains, valleys, waterfalls, hot springs, lakes, rivers, sea coasts, and plains—and asked readers to vote for their favorite site from each category. Famous novelists, painters, scholars, and politicians then reviewed the top ten landscapes from each category and selected one from each during a series of committee meetings. The magazine also published articles describing authors’ visits to places nominated for the new landscapes in order to provide readers with information pertaining to the site and its conditions.

The end of 1960s witnessed a rising interest in local culture that was connected to the sense of loss that swept Japan during the 1950s–60s. Amidst the high-growth economy of these years, the social life of many Japanese people was radically transformed, traditional buildings were destroyed, pollution-related diseases proliferated, and many individuals began to emphasize the importance of traditional culture. Also, this period witnessed the creation of the concept of “Environment (kankyō)” (Mori 2009); the Environment Agency was established in 1971 and began to produce leisure spaces that enabled people to enjoy nature (Nakashima 1998).

A sense of nostalgia was evoked by traditional town landscapes. In the late 1960s, the term Sho-Kyoto was increasingly used to describe towns, neighborhoods and streetscapes, that had managed to preserve old architecture and atmosphere. In 1969, the journal Travel printed a special issue on Sho-Kyoto that introduced fifteen exemplary sites. Editorial chief Kishu Okada wrote:
One hundred years have passed since the inception of the Meiji period. It is time to reevaluate the cultural heritage created before the Meiji period. This is why we are publishing a special issue on Sho-Kyoto. The local towns referred to as Sho-Kyoto continue to preserve what Kyoto itself has already lost. (Travel: April 1969, 226)

The quest for localness was embodied through the practice of traveling to and around various Sho-Kyoto sites, recognized as pretty historic towns that were different from modernized Kyoto. Following a symposium that was held after the selection of Japan's top one hundred tourism sites, one man noted that “no one knows” (Travel: November 1966, 101) historic places such as Hagi, Tsuwano, Oono, and Kakunodate. Poet Utaro Noda defined the Sho-Kyoto as “small ex-castle towns which retain respectable history and culture” and “still prosper with a calm atmosphere” (Travel: January 1975, 69). Apart from Sho-Kyoto, Tsumago in Gifu prefecture, a stage town along the old Nakasendo Highway, also launched a preservation movement on the occasion of the 100th anniversary of the beginning of the Meiji period. This movement aimed at restoring the town’s former landscape by burying telephone lines underground and repairing structures with wood (Arayama 1999). In 1970, the Japanese National Railway initiated the “Discover Japan” campaign, which encouraged people to discover cultures of “Japaneseness” in local areas. Campaign advertisements utilized photographs of young women who evidently lived in large cities but traveled to historic towns (Mori 2007). As a result, local culture was highlighted and then interpreted as representative of a national culture of “Japaneseness.”

The Local-national Nexus and the Ubiquity of Beautiful Nature

The geographical scales of national and local are not opposed, but mutual and supplementary. There are two aspects of the local-national nexus that call for our attention. First, the process of selecting national landscapes provided an opportunity to produce local geographical knowledge and local identity. The final selections for the New Eight Landscapes of Japan were very different from the sites that received the most votes from the public, resulting in controversy. In particular, the selections of Muroto Misaki Cape and Kamikochi were harshly criticized due to the few votes they received during the initial round of public voting. Even a member of the final selection committee confessed that he did not anticipate these selections. A well-known case of local eagerness in soliciting votes was Muroto Misaki Cape in the Kochi prefecture (Arayama 2003). Tosa Hoshokai, the local association for preserving the local landscape, and Tosa Shida, a local history group evoked local identity in their efforts to encourage people to vote for the cape site. However, this local campaign to solicit votes drew strong outside criticism. In July 1928, Travel printed the travel log of a pilgrimage to Shikoku Island by Minoru Iijima. In this article, Iijima wrote of his visit to Muroto and strongly criticized the site as unworthy of national landscape recognition, as well as the committee’s decision to select it. Iijima was particularly upset that the committee had selected this site, but failed to include Mt. Fuji on the list. He wrote, “There is no value in a discussion about landscape if Mt. Fuji is absent” (Travel: January 1929, 35), thereby casting his doubt about the selection fairness. He believed that the selection of national landscapes should not be beholden to local interests. It was also possible to identify a more complicated national-local relationship in the controversy surrounding Iijima’s criticisms, to which Travel first objected. In November, the magazine published an article written by a Ministry of Railways public relations officer who was a member of the selection committee. The author cited four reasons for which he approved of the selection process: 1)
unknown landscapes of great beauty became better known; 2) people who had not been interested in landscape developed an interest; 3) public taste for landscapes were transformed from tranquil sceneries to dynamic landscapes; and 4) a criteria for evaluating the aesthetic quality of landscapes was produced through the process.

Local landscapes provided an image of a stable home to which to return amidst modern society. Particularly during wartime, local culture — as opposed to the modern culture of large urban areas — was highly appreciated for maintaining refuges of morality and rich daily life to which urbanites could return when they became overwhelmed by big city life. The increased social interest in local folk culture in the late 1920s was interrelated with the development of mobility in the form of railways and bus services, as well as the development of the domestic tourism industry. However, the increasing emphasis placed on the significance of local culture was also connected to the production of national culture. The Journal of Japanese Folklore Studies, Minkandensho, was consequently launched in 1935.

Similar representational constructions of ruralness could be found in the nostalgic landscape of the 1960s. As Sho-Kyoto became popular tourist destinations, Travel printed a special issue dedicated to them in January, 1975. Takayama city in the Gifu prefecture drew the most visitors among the twenty-five locations, attracting approximately 1,600,000 visitors in 1975. Sociologist Hidetoshi Kato established a clear distinction between Kyoto and Takayama. He described Kyoto as a place that maintained an elegant culture and atmosphere with sophisticated artifacts and arts, while Takayama was a place in which local folk cultures were preserved. He revealed his preference for local architecture that embodies the simple dignity of local folk culture over the elegance of Kyoto. Local artifacts, foods, meals, and hearths are, he wrote, not merely things, but simply “folk spirits and human life” (Travel: January 1975, 76). The artifacts, foods, and hearths representing Takayama’s folk culture were connected to particular environments; the folk culture, contrasted to Kyoto’s elegance, was interpreted as an outcome of the wilderness and roughness of Takayama’s natural environment. It was said that Takayama city’s landscape represented a history of how local people expanded their own culture in a unique environment.

IV Materiality and Visuality of Nature

Using Nature to Shape National Morals

As explained in the previous section, in the selection of the New Eight Landscapes of Japan, dynamic landscapes were evaluated higher than static landscapes. One member of the committee explained that “beautiful sea shore landscapes must be masculine with huge rocks and whirlpools” (Travel: February 1929, 41). Masculine landscapes, in contrast to feminine pre-modern landscapes, represented the strength of modern Japan. Nature was not just viewed as a passive entity, but encoded with special meaning to produce human subjectivity.

Japanese people, particularly men, were expected to cope with and manage the overwhelming power of masculine natural landscapes in order to reach a higher level of humanity. Tourism was seen as a way to provide people with opportunities to encounter nature, with national parks as the venues. Ichiro Kano, a novelist and translator, criticized urbanization and modernization for destroying human nature, and underscored the role of national parks rich with nature in recovering and disciplining depraved human spirits.

Nature, as a symbol of Japoneseness, was an arena in which moral discipline was executed. In
1937, *Nihon Kanko Renmei* (Japan Travel and Tourism Association), declared its slogan “solidarity of the nation for cleaning up the land.” Taro Tsujimura, a geographer, echoing the slogan, contributed the article “Proposal for Cleaning up the Land” to *Travel*. He highly evaluated the beauties of various Japanese landscapes, arguing “[T]here are no other countries like Japan where the appearances of mountains, rivers, and plants are elaborate, and powers and elegance are properly mixed” (Tsujimura 1937, 3). The scenery for which he showed appreciation was not just natural landscapes, such as pine trees, the sea or mountain scenery, but also landscapes of harmony between humans and nature, such as the scenery of a small village surrounded by shore and bamboo woods and a condensed village at the foothill of a mountain. He wrote, “Landscapes of local homelands are absolutely graceful” (Tsujimura 1937, 3), in order to suggest that beautiful landscapes were not only found in national parks. Accordingly, he urged the nation to clean the landscape and “wash our national spirit” (Tsujimura 1937, 3). The removal of waste to recover the beautiful local landscape was to both produce a beautiful national landscape and to develop national morals. Landscapes used to teach morality were ubiquitous, and included both national and local material landscapes.

Nature was expected to provide an opportunity for reforming public mentality through tourism and sports. In the summer of 1924 issue, *Travel* discussed summer tourism activities, with articles that informed its readers of how to enjoy mountain climbing and camping. In August, *Travel* published an article by Chuji Inomata, a chief of the Japan Tourist Bureau, in which he introduced the western concept of summer resorts. “There is nothing other than tourism which can purify human spirits ... walking around unknown mountains and rivers, seeing primitive wild landscapes of nature or observing modern cities is extremely meaningful” (*Travel:* August 1924, 2). Mountain climbing requires physical and mental strength. The association aimed at promoting climbing because it provided opportunities to feel and touch “sublime nature” (*Travel:* July 1924, 2). The association showed films about camping in a Tokyo department store in July 1927, and held a “Mountain and Camping Life Exhibition” in June 1936.

Winter was valued as a prime opportunity to instill discipline in people through sports such as skiing and skating.

In the winter, do you long for warm sea resorts and hot springs in the southern districts? It is natural to have a travelers’ spirit for winter. There are very attractive activities during this season: skiing and skating.... It is a pity that every winter you lose your travelers’ spirit and escape to warm destinations such as hot springs and warm sea coasts, without braving the winter. (Kitagawa 1928, 36).

He harshly criticized people's desire to escape from winter. He described winter as the “most masculine of the four seasons,” and argued that coping with cold weather was the “modern human’s way of being.” Skiing demonstrated human “strength and bravery” (Kitagawa 1928, 36–38). It was assumed that modern humans should never surrender to nature, but to overcome or tame it.

After 1934, when Japan began to invade northeast China, nature became recognized as an apparatus to strengthen mentality and to promote a fighting spirit and produce strong bodies. In 1934, the Association of Japan Tourism and the Ministry of Railways highlighted the importance of a national health campaign, while they criticized tourism for leisure. They argued that the “primitiveness of nature” could provide Japanese people with an opportunity to “refresh
unhealthy psychological conditions” (Travel: June 1934, 25). Hiking drew public attention as a form of “spiritual training” (Travel: September 1934, 39). The journal introduced the social movement of Wandervogel, which promoted hiking as a means to “grow healthy bodies, a love for nature and homeland, and preserve folk tales and dance” (Travel: June 1934, 28). In addition to hiking, sports that allowed people to confront, engage, and overcome nature were strongly promoted.

It was not only verbal representations of local culture but also landscape as matter that played a significant role in invoking nostalgia. In Travel (February 1973), one author explained this sense of nostalgia by writing of how people were relieved when they saw old-fashioned houses, as old houses in major and regional cities were frequently replaced with modern ones. This criticism of modernism and an appreciation of the past implied that history provided a sense of stability amidst dynamic social change. The old architecture provided a material base for the senses. Local foods recalled shared illusions of the past. For example, Miso, a soy bean paste that represented Takayama’s local foods, “smells like mum’s body odors” (Travel: April 1969, 78). Foods made from local ingredients were feminized: mother represented “home” and nature. Through these materials, the poetics of localness were assembled. Materials reproduced social illusions of the home. In the 1950s, Japanese society experienced an influx of population in the larger cities. Many young tourists who found nostalgia in the Shos-Kyoto and old cities had not experienced life outside the metropolis. For example, one author staying in Shirakawa village, which is famous for its distinctive appearance and the structure of its houses, wrote, "I have no idea why I feel nostalgia for hearth. I have never experienced it in my life, but to my surprise, I feel the nostalgia" (Travel: September 1971, 108). The material presence of signified things in the discourse about nostalgia created the illusion. To feel the powerful deployment of nature and local culture in the national landscapes and rural areas is to shape senses of belonging in Japan.

Assembling Images of Nature

The sense of nostalgia composed around the illusion of localness is both material and visual. Photos as a visual assemblage played a significant role in conveying a particular preference for localities with nature. A magazine’s reader sent a letter to the editorial board, in which was written “photos of a row of old houses have rustic charm. I think visiting local towns is better than traveling abroad” (Travel: December 1973, 279).

The magazine Travel received much praise and an outstanding reputation for its photography. The relationship between the magazine and photography was demonstrated by its advertisements. The magazine carried advertisements pertaining to travel, such as insurance, snacks, watches, and cameras. Figure 2 shows a camera advertisement from January 1926 in which three features of the camera are highlighted: lightweight, easy to attach to tripods, and
auto-focusing. These features enabled travelers to travel with the camera and to more easily take photographs.

In the post-war period, camera advertisements continued to appear in *Travel*. Japan began the export of cameras to USA in 1956. In 1962, they overtook Germany in production quantity and value, and then surpassed them in export volume in 1964 and in export value in 1966. In the 1960s, cameras became mass produced in order to sell high quality, low priced products. Cameras with auto-exposure and auto-shutter functions were introduced in the early 1960s, while those with auto-focusing, electronic flash, and auto-rolling films were first presented in the early 1970s (Takeuchi 2003). The emergence of electric compact cameras enabled ordinary people to acquire and easily use them. After the late 1960s, compact cameras and color film were advertised on the back cover of the magazine nearly every month.

At first, drawings were used on the cover while photos were placed on frontispiece pages. The photos were nature scenes, such as mountains, lakes, rivers, and bogs. They were used to attract people to tourist places and draw interest to amateur photography, which made its appearance in the early twentieth century. *Travel* put further effort into photography in the 1930s as the editorial board realized the effectiveness of photos (Miwa 1943).

In the 1930s, a photographer employed by *Travel* used a German single-lens reflection camera. The photographer brought films back to the office to process and print and conducted further editing himself. The portability of these cameras allowed photographers to freely travel and increased the number of nature photos used for the covers. While single-lens reflection cameras were expensive and required special knowledge, the auto-focusing compact cameras were affordable and manageable for women and young people. Photos of young people and women enjoying photography began to appear in magazine advertisements (Figure 3). Photographs used in film company advertisements were taken by ordinary tourists in order to emphasize how travel memories could be preserved even after returning home.

Photos invoked the imagined landscape of many places readers had not yet visited, as well as created visions. An article described tourists in Takayama city as, “being excited to find places which are exactly the same as photographs in guidebooks and magazines, as if they had discovered their home town” (*Travel*: October 1978, 232). Photo exhibitions also created images of landscape. When the selections for the New Eight Landscapes of Japan were announced, Nihon Ryoko Kyokai held a special photo exhibition in a building in front of Tokyo Station that featured approximately three hundred photos. An article published in August 1927 announced

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**Figure 3.** An advertisement for film in the magazine

*Source:* *Travel* (October 1975)
that 200,000 visitors had attended the exhibition.

V Conclusion

This paper has sought to demonstrate how Japan’s landscapes of nature are implicated in the creation of a nation, focusing in particular on the national parks and New Eight Landscapes of Japan in the 1920–30s, and the landscape of nostalgia in the 1970s. Particular emphasis was placed on an examination of the monthly tourist magazine Tabi 旅（official English title is Travel) as tourism is a visual practice that frames vision, and mobilizes and assembles people and nature.

The quest for national identity and the outbreak of Japanese nationalism were connected to the production of a national landscape. Not only was nature rediscovered through modern aesthetics, but this rediscovery was also intricately connected to the idea of the culture of Japanese nature. Nature and natural landscapes began to be inscribed with special values for modern Japanese society. These sites and scenes were portrayed as cures for unhealthy minds and bodies that resulted from modernization and urbanization. The paper elaborated on how the culture of Japanese nature was embodied in the form of national parks and the selection of the New Eight Landscapes of Japan in the late 1920s and the early 1930s. It also focused on how the quest for the localness was embodied through the practice of traveling to and around various Sho-Kyoto sites, which were recognized as pretty historic towns in the 1970s. Nature was articulated by the unique character of Japanese landscapes and culture to evoke a sense of belonging. Nature had been racialized.

The explanation has suggested that it is necessary to consider the locality, materiality, and visuality of national landscapes, as well as the continual inscription of particular values onto these landscapes. Local practices and the culture of localness were connected with Japanese landscape usage practices which embedded a sense of both local and national belonging. To feel the arrangement of nature in the national landscapes, in the 1920s and 30s, and the local culture and rural areas, particularly in the 1970s, was to shape “raced” and a sense of belonging in Japan, as nature provided a special opportunity to construct the nations’ morality and bodies. “Nature” is social, cultural, and political. The landscape of nature shapes the raced and territorialized senses of belonging in Japan: it is nature-nation building. Visions of landscape are assembled through particular lenses. Landscape and nationhood are visualized around agencies of display such as photography, exhibitions, and tourism. The cultural geography of nature and landscape should be used to open a discussion on cultural politics.

Notes

1. Quotation marks will be used to indicate the author’s critical stance toward “nature” and “landscapes of nature.”
2. Tolia-Kelly (2010) explains that “ecological citizenship” addresses issues related to the process whereby identification with ecological textures such as soil, plants, and rocks provides the basis for identity, belonging, and embodied connections to place, space, and nation.
3. Amanohashidate, located in Miyazu Bay in northern Kyoto prefecture, is a sand bar of 3.3 km long and covered with approximately 7000 pine trees. Matsushima is a group of 260 tiny islands covered in pines islands in the Miyagi prefecture. Miyajima, in the city of Hatsukaichi in the Hiroshima prefecture, is an island in which the Itsukushima Shrine (嚴島神社), a Shinto shrine, is located and best known for its “floating” tori gate (Figure 1).
4. The references to articles in Tabi are referenced by month and year of issue, with pages hereafter. All citations are translated from Japanese by the author.
5. The selected New Eight Landscapes are Muroto Misaki Cape (seashore), Towada Lake (lake), Onsendake (Unzendake) (mountain), Kiso River (river), Kamikochi (valley), Kegon Falls (waterfalls), Beppu Hot Spring (hot
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