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The influx of foreign tourists into Japan reminds one sociologist of American soldiers stationed in Japan immediately after the Second World War. What does he think of the current tourism boom? In this essay, Professor Miyajima's essay covers several perspectives that are critical to thinking about this issue.

Early Memories of the Post-War Period

Perhaps it is just a fancy of mine, but for someone who spent their childhood and youth in post-war Yokohama, the current influx of foreign tourists to Japan reminds me of the officers and soldiers of the American occupation. Looking back, it seems like a storm that blew fiercely, then passed; seven or eight years during which there were several American bases and barracks in the city. Of course, Okinawa has been experiencing the same thing continually since the war, but elsewhere there has never before, or after, been so many foreign soldiers and military personnel immersed in daily life in Japan.

We know that the press (newspaper) and radio codes laid down by GHQ were strict, and forbade criticism of the



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occupying forces, or reporting of undesirable behavior. But I and my contemporaries had many opportunities to see the soldiers' behavior at very first-hand. I hated seeing drunken soldiers acting like vandals and going around breaking the windows of people's homes, and was almost traumatized. Yet, at the same time, I also had a positive impression when I saw how some soldiers might be trying to change Japanese culture. For example, on a train I once saw a man I presume was an American soldier order a youth to get up and give his seat to an old person who was standing up and holding onto the straps.

I also remember how wonderfully lively and energetic the girls at my school were. They often talked about movies they'd seen and been impressed by, such as *Madame Curie*, *One Hundred Men and a Girl*, or *Little Women*. Their eyes were opened by these films; it seems to me that they had decided to look for their own way to live, not just be women who do housework and sewing. By choosing and releasing these American films, the occupying force inspired young women enormously.

On another occasion, around the first year of middle school, I was on a train reading one of a set of books of literature for young people which was called *Cuore*. An American soldier sat down next to me and looked over at the European-style illustrations with interest, then asked me what I was reading. I told him about the Italian story, and he replied that he was an Italian-American, and that *cuore* means "heart" in Italian. That was all that happened, but I'll never forget it, and it was a conversation that touched my own heart.

Thinking back, he must have only spent a few years at most as a guest here in the Far East. And even though it was just a passing encounter, it was a cultural encounter, and one that left a long-lasting mark on me as a human being.

Encounters in unexpected places: the wave of new tourists

Each year the news reports record-breaking numbers of foreign tourists coming to Japan, and every year there are new pictures of tourists posing and smiling as they stand in front of the huge lantern at Kaminarimon in Tokyo's Asakusa.

This wave of tourists has also reached Japan's regions. From around fifteen years ago, when restrictions on group tours from China were lifted, I have seen tourists staying and shopping even in Tokai region towns (not a typical sightseeing area). From about five years ago I've also encountered visitors from Europe and the United States in unexpected places. Once I bumped into a group of ten or more German men and women in Tsumagoi, a post town of the Kiso Valley, an area which will be familiar to readers of Shimazaki Toson's novel, *Before the Dawn*. They were strolling around the village taking lots of photos of the houses, and told me that they were staying at an old *ryokan* inn in the town.

Following the global financial crisis, the yen became relatively cheap and it became easier for foreigners to visit Japan. At the same time, distinctive off-the-beaten-path travel itineraries began to appear (I wonder who chose them?), that differed from the standard route of Narita Airport

arrival, Tokyo, Kyoto, Kansai Airport departure. Even greater numbers of tourists come from Asia, and they often use budget airlines, frequently starting and ending their journeys at somewhat unlikely regional airports. For that reason, the range of areas being visited has expanded considerably.

Is omotenashi hospitality really a good thing?

Looking into and researching Japan's tourism policy is my own specialization, but for a while I've sensed that two things are missing from Japan's tourism policy.

One is how it lacks the useful kind of specialization. In its bid for the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics, Japan strongly stressed and promoted its culture of *omotenashi* hospitality, but I feel there is something unfocused about this. People say that, "We must be kind to visitors." Of course, smiling and being kind is very important, but for a successful tourism industry, it is more important that we have information centers located in the right places that can deal effectively with visitors, as well as qualified staff who are able to give proper guidance on buying tickets, arranging accommodation, historical sites, and the historical background to these. A kind of specialization is necessary. It is too easy just to have a few well-meaning locals with limited English volunteering to help foreign visitors, and at the end of the day it doesn't help much.

Japan's Tour-Guide Interpreter qualification dates back over half a century. According to the 2016 Tourism White Paper, although 190,000 people hold the qualification (2015), three in four are not active as guides. Many registered guides live in metropolitan areas such as Tokyo, and the vast majority are registered as English-speaking. Conversely, few guides can speak languages such as Chinese or Korean, so there is a mismatch with demand. During the last twenty-five years, the number of visitors to Japan from abroad has doubled and tripled, so one would have expected the assumption that all tourists speak English to have changed significantly.

Yet, the nation and the tourism industry have not sufficiently changed their way of thinking when it comes to dealing with foreign languages. Chinese, Korean and Peruvian people living in Japan might work in the industry, and since there are no nationality restrictions, we should encourage them to take the exam. Incidentally, in the immigration-based society of the United States there are officially qualified guides from many ethnic groups, and this is how they meet the needs of tourists from many diverse cultures.

The other thing that I have sensed for a while is that there are no high-standard basic guidebooks with quality contents, either for Japanese people or for foreigners. The shelves of book stores are filled with all sorts of guide books, but most seem to contain simple advice on famous locations, local souvenirs, festivals and eating. For forty years, I've been using Michelin guides when traveling in Europe, and there is nothing comparable in Japan.

The Michelin guides were created by the French tire maker to help popularize driving holidays. The books were wonderfully well made, comprehensive and easy to read. They quickly dominated the market, and versions in various languages have been made. I have one to hand

here (a guide to Provence), and if I open it I find that of the 329-page total length, summaries of the region’s history, languages, literature, art and architecture account for forty-five pages. If I look up the relatively minor sightseeing area of Tarascon, it has around three pages. Half a page covers history, one and a half pages detail several scenic sights and churches, half a page is a map of the town, and half a page is filled with photos. These are the guidebooks that French people take with them when traveling. So, when they come to Japan and must rely on a single Michelin guidebook, *Japon*, they must feel something is lacking. Yet, even in that one book, of 680 total pages, 80 are devoted to a well-written general description of Japan titled “Comprendre Japon.” Of course, it is up to publishers to produce guidebooks. But as a country we can’t ignore the need for a high-quality guidebook written by Japanese people and translated into various languages. There is a need for a properly standardized overview of Japanese history, as well as material on Japan’s distinctive historical and cultural features, temple and shrine architecture, styles of art, and other topics.

How foreign tourists are portrayed

According to the Japan National Tourism Organization, which makes its calculations based on the Ministry of Justice’s statistics on the number of non-Japanese entering Japan, the number of foreign tourists¹ to Japan in 2015 was around 17 million. Once again, this is a record. In the general breakdown, 14.67 million visitors were from Asia, accounting for 86% of the total and dominating the top of the list (see figure).

Although, the vast majority of visitors are from Asia, the media have covered the topic slightly differently. The tourists that are positively portrayed on TV walking around Tokyo’s working class districts and rediscovering those forgotten fascinating aspects of Japan that Japanese people don’t notice are overwhelmingly from Europe and the United States. When Asian tourists are shown, the focus is usually on Chinese people, and many of the reports are on their shopping sprees or “bad manners.” The contrast between these portrayals is worrying, and these stereotypes need to be corrected.

Even among visitors from Asia there is much variety, and China and South Korea are different. Chinese-speaking visitors are all lumped together, but the People’s Republic of China accounts for 45%, while the remainder includes people from different countries such as Taiwan, Hong

Figure: Visitors to Japan from overseas in 2015 (by nationality)

Nation	Number of Tourists	%
China	4,237,920	25.0
South Korea	3,519,608	20.7
Taiwan	3,505,149	20.7
Hong Kong	1,480,564	8.7
U.S.	749,393	4.4
Thailand	737,943	4.3
Australia	330,677	1.9
Singapore	272,566	1.6
Malaysia	266,805	1.6
Philippines	212,795	1.3
Canada	199,834	1.2
U.K.	182,213	1.1
Other nations	1,273,659	7.5
Total	16,969,126	100.0

Source: Japan National Tourism Organization data

Kong, Singapore and Malaysia. In terms of per-capita GDP, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Singapore can be considered developed or near-developed countries, and the tourists from those countries are ordinary members of their middle classes. Chinese tourists are often described as the “rich few.” Although group tours of Chinese are common, and they tend not to speak English, and communication with some can be difficult, there is no need to view them differently. I will discuss this later, but when you think back to groups of Japanese tourists visiting Paris and New York thirty years ago, you might have said the same about them.

Curiosity-driven tourists from Asia

Locations where you might see lots of foreign tourists include Osaka Castle and Kumamoto Castle prior to its partial destruction in an earthquake. Some Korean and Chinese visitors are interested in Japanese history, and some groups can be seen carefully reading information displays. A few years ago, on a visit Osaka Castle, I encountered a group of four or five Koreans at a huge rock (5.5 m high and 11.7 m wide) known as the Takoishi. They were admiring the rock and discussing it. One of their group could speak Japanese and he asked the Japanese tourists nearby: “Is there a mountain in Japan big enough to cut this rock out of?” and “Why did they bring it from there?” The Japanese explained that it was cut from an island in the Seto Inland Sea, then brought by boat, and that until a century ago Osaka Bay was much larger, so goods could be offloaded from ships right by the castle. Nodding, the Korean tourists said, “I see,” and looked satisfied.

Just like this, there are Asian tourists who come to see, read, listen, discuss and try to understand Japanese culture. That some understand Japanese helps them a lot. Some find meaning in their Japan visits through eating Japanese food and various other “experiences.” Meanwhile, many young people are prompted to see and explore Japan by their interest in manga, anime and music. I don’t know what exactly this behavior by Asian tourists tells us, but I can sense a huge curiosity towards Japan.

A one-sided view?

On the other hand, it may be a sign of their materialism, but we can’t ignore the fact that these tourists tend to go shopping for large quantities of goods: from cosmetics and the latest electronic appliances, to toothpaste and diapers. This is what you might call the inevitable symptom of a distortion in their own domestic market. Even as they produce excellent industrial goods for export, they lack consumer goods of the quality they need for everyday life. Also, these shopping trips for expensive goods are closely tied to the strategy of Japanese companies who organize tours and include trips to Ginza and famous department stores to encourage tourists to spend money. In reality, the policy and priority of both Japan’s tourism industry and large shops such as department stores is for visitors to spend money in Japan. Thinking about what these tourists

might want to see or learn comes second. In that sense, the kind of European tourists who might want to slowly see Japan without spending much money on shopping are not very welcome. (It is clear that tourists from England, Germany, Italy and other European countries spend relatively little money on shopping.) By comparison, Chinese tourists spend 57%² of their travel money (excluding plane tickets) on shopping, so that's why they are treated as important customers.

Yet, thirty years ago tour groups of Japanese tourists would appear at the Paris Mitsukoshi Department Store or the Galeries Lafayette, communicating through interpreters, and making such purchases as ten bottles of Chanel 19 perfume at a time. French people were astonished at the sight. This was well before Chinese "shopping sprees." The shops were delighted, and it seemed mostly companies on the French side that adroitly arranged the shopping stop-offs. French people did not, however, decide that "Japanese people come to France for shopping." They saw that all sorts of Japanese people were coming to France, and knew that many carefully looked round museums, and that some also visited the cathedral at Chartres and Romanesque churches in the countryside. Japanese people should also take a slightly more adult view of foreigners and not focus on just one side.

In any case, the wave of shopping sprees are said to have now subsided. Recently, customs checks for returning Chinese tourists have apparently got stricter. Meanwhile, cross-border electronic commerce means that Chinese people are becoming able to shop in Japan over the Internet without even setting foot in the country. It will be fascinating to see how Chinese visitors' interest in Japan develops and changes.

Acts of hate?

But, there is something that concerns me. I have touched on this already, but there is a double standard in the way that Japanese people deal with foreigners. When it comes to people from Europe and the United States, Japanese are friendly and kind, and don't treat them as inferior. But when the tourists are from Asia, Japanese people treat them differently, roughly and without smiling. Japanese people, it seems, haven't yet lost that old-fashioned desire to be part of Europe, not Asia. Not speaking Chinese or Korean might be one reason, but that's why it is a good thing that more electronics shops and hotels are employing more people from other Asian countries who speak excellent Japanese.

Even so, some shocking things have happened to those tourists in our country temporarily as guests. Last October, the Osaka outlet of an urban sushi restaurant chain served South Korean tourists sushi filled with large amounts of wasabi: and it became apparent that they had been doing this regularly. This claim only originated on the Internet, but judging by the color photos it wasn't food that an ordinary person would eat, so I can only assume the intention was to play a trick on these customers.

A worrying thing about this is the recently much discussed issue of hate speech towards non-Japanese. Although an anti-hate speech law was finally passed in May 2016, it was Korean-

Japanese who were unjustifiably singled out by groups who made anti-foreigner declarations and staged demonstrations. It is hard to imagine that it was the official policy of the sushi restaurant, but I wonder if when Korean-speaking customers entered the restaurant the sushi chefs thought they were a nuisance and didn't want to serve them. Even if there was no discrimination at play and they just wanted to see the customers squeal when the wasabi hit, they were serving paying customers so their actions were surely outrageous.

I am not going to explore here why such feelings of hate have spread among some Japanese. But it is an extremely serious matter when those working in tourism and customer service express this hate. It may be that some sort of action needs to be taken: for example, the tourism authorities investigating the sushi restaurant and issuing corrective advice; or using this occasion to make human rights education compulsory for interpreter-guides, or customer service staff in hotels and restaurants.

Notes

1. For the purpose of Ministry of Justice statistics, "Foreign Tourists" refers to short stay visitors to Japan. Business travelers are not included, but those visiting friends and family are. (JNTO homepage).
2. Ministry of Land, Infrastructure, Transport and Tourism, 2016 Tourism White Paper, p. 250. The figure for tourists from the U.K., Germany, and Italy is 14% to 15%.
3. For more details see, *Fighting Hate Speech* by Arita Yoshifu (Iwanami Shoten, 2013). I would like to point out that anti-foreigner demos where hate speech occurred first took place around the Shin-Okubo area of Tokyo where there are many recent Korean immigrants.

Translated from "Tokushu 1 Ibunka-sesshoku toshiteno Inbaundo: Indaudo to Nihonjin — Gaikokujin tsuurisuto zodai ni yotte towarerumono (Special Feature 1 Inbound Tourism and Experiencing a Different Culture: Inbound Tourism and Japanese People —Issues related to the increase in tourists visiting Japan from abroad)," THE TOSHI MONDAI (Municipal Problems), January 2017, pp. 4-9. (Courtesy of The Tokyo Institute for Municipal Research) [January 2017]

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