

# *Japanese Domestic Tourism and the Search for National Identity\**

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Japanese domestic tourism, recreational travel by Japanese within the home islands, is a huge industry and one of the primary recreational activities undertaken by Japanese in all walks of life. As of the early 1980s, it was estimated that Japanese each year took nearly 150 million leisure trips within the country but outside of their home regions, just under 1.5 trips for every Japanese citizen of all ages and nearly thirty times the number of overseas trips taken. More than 40 percent of those trips were taken by women and “a large percentage” by people aged 20 to 39 years. Nearly 35 percent of those tourists traveled in large (bus-sized) groups, 35 percent in small groups, less than 30 percent in family groups, and the remainder (less than 5 percent of the total) alone. With a population of only 150,000 people, Nara at that time received an average of 4 million visitors per year; Kyoto, a city of 1 million, received between 50 and 60 million visitors per year (*Graburn, To Pray, Pay, and Play* 3).

More recent figures confirm this assessment of the magnitude of the phenomenon. From his analysis in the early 1990s of visitation to sites displaying “heritage farmhouses” (minka), Ehrentraut concludes that “the audience exposed to the ideology of rural heritage architecture numbers literally in the tens of millions of people” (Ehrentraut, “Heritage Authenticity” 273). “Castles with donjons,” he estimates, which number about 70 in all, “have nowadays over 15 million visitors per year.” The latter figure, he notes, “may well be doubled” if we include visitors who do not pay for admission to the castle proper but only wander the grounds, as well as

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visitors to the many other castles without their donjon still in place (Ehrentraut, "The Role of the Mass Media" 1–2, 4).

The sheer number of travelers, however, is not the only (or even the principal) reason for undertaking a study of Japanese domestic tourism. Robertson notes that leisure is in the 1990s "just ... becoming an industry in its own right in Japan" (*Native and Newcomer* 32). Knight (1993), Moon (1997), and Graburn (1998) have recognized the dominance of tourism among the solutions proposed to address the problems of continued depopulation, stagnant economies, and outmoded industries in Japan's rural areas. Moon observes that programs directed at rural problems, from efforts in the 1970s and 1980s to the *mura okoshi* (village revival) program of the 1990s, have most often relied on the catch phrase "Agriculture and Tourism" (*nōgyō to kankō*) to convey the importance of tourism as a "nice supplement" to previously established rural industries (221). Representing a "fervent, often short-sighted, and desperate desire to develop a tourist industry," the promotion of tourism as an economic panacea has in recent years been "invading" Japan's villages "on a major scale" (Moon 234).

Tourism and concepts related to it, such as *furusato* (to be discussed below), are readily apparent in the dominant discourses of postwar Japanese life. In introducing the first fully realized anthropological study of the subject, moreover, Graburn argues that the Japanese "have had a very long history of domestic tourism" and that travel within the country is deeply rooted in Japanese culture: "the Japanese are inveterate tourists ... [and] the country is, perhaps, the best organized in the world for mass internal travel, and not only in modern technological terms" (Graburn, *To Pray, Pay, and Play* 2). The subject of tourism, Graburn continues, may serve as a useful window into a study of how long-established and clearly differentiated cultural practices unique to Japan have been affected by exposure to the West and modernization. He suggests that tourism allows us to explore "whether Japan, in its alleged Westernization and modernization, is converging with the cultures of the Western world or whether such convergence is more a matter of appearance, while underneath we may discern a parallel evolution" (Graburn, *To Pray, Pay, and Play* 2).

In the nearly fifteen years since the publication of Graburn's study, much has occurred in the social and economic development of Japan, as well as in the development of the theoretical tools available to scholars engaged in the study of culture. Japan has seen cycles of economic boom and bust on a nearly unprecedented scale, as well as the beginnings of a return to activity in the international sphere that has been closed off from

the country since the defeat of its imperialist government in 1945. In theoretical academia, cultural studies as a distinct discipline, not long ago “regarded as a rather marginal, even eccentric, preoccupation,” has “moved into the center of the social sciences and humanities” (Dissanayake 2). In Wilson and Dissanayake’s book *Global/Local*, it has been pointed out that in the process of that move studies of modernity have become overshadowed by studies of postmodernity, which in turn have been challenged by studies of globalism and localism.

The current work attempts to look at Japanese domestic tourism in light of the changes seen since the publication of Graburn’s study. After a summation of Graburn’s findings and a discussion of some of the ways in which tourism has been envisioned in the theoretical literature of anthropology and cultural studies, a more up-to-date picture of Japanese tourism will be sketched, and some examples of potentially divergent types of touristic activities in Japan will be described. Finally, recent theoretical concepts will be invoked to suggest ways in which we might make sense of these newly seen dynamics in the long-established patterns of Japanese domestic travel.

### **Graburn’s Analysis of the Nature of Japanese Domestic Tourism**

More than a decade after its first publication, Graburn’s 1983 study of Japanese tourism is still widely considered the most “comprehensive analysis” (Hendry 181) of the subject now available. Graburn looks at tourism in Japan in historical, anthropological, and economic terms and reports various conclusions that shed much light on the ways in which the institution operates within Japanese society. His accounting of the common characteristics of Japanese tourism is summed up in the title of his work, *To Pray, Pay, and Play*, which is intended, he says, “to convey the very high frequency with which ‘pilgrimage-like’ and ‘tourism-like’ behaviors are parts of any one journey” (11). In his studies of tourism in the West, Graburn writes, he has usually distinguished between natural and cultural sites, but he finds the distinction “less useful” in the Japanese context, as natural sites are most often given cultural resonance as well (12). In an extended discussion, he documents the link between contemporary tourism and pilgrimage, noting the similarity between today’s traveler and the medieval religious tourist, both of whom are well-known in Japan for dividing their attention between the shrine or temple that serves as the object of their pilgrimage

and the pleasure quarters located, quite often, just outside the religious sites main gate (22, 50–5).

Graburn stresses the importance of ties between the traveler and those left behind, calling this “the important aspect of social organization which differentiates Japanese travel from that in the West” (44). These ties, most fully expressed through the highly regularized exchange of *senbetsu* (farewell gifts) and *omiyage* (gifts brought from the visited sites), indicate that “the traveler is ‘sent’ as a representative of the enduring group most of whom are left behind — and indeed travels ‘for them’ and buys things that they would have bought” had they made the journey (Graburn 46). An institution related to this exchange of gifts is the collection and display of *kinen* (mementos), which serve as a “legitimizing, commemorating, material symbol” and “the culturally approved evidence of having been to the right places and done the right things” (Graburn 47, 48). In addition to their role in the legitimation of culturally approved travel, *kinen* are another link to the practices of pilgrimage, as they are derived from the pilgrim’s *goshuincho*, the “special red stamp book” in which worshipers formerly collected evidence of the successful completion of their pilgrimage (Graburn 48).

Graburn’s conclusions highlight these two aspects of Japanese tourism, the integration of various touristic activities (such as the religious and the recreational) and the importance of travel to the “accentuating” of social bonds (Graburn 57). The close ties of the traveler to the home community and the necessity of connecting spiritual or educational activities with pleasurable ones, he concludes, are two sides of the same coin: “Like *hima* [spare time], *asobi* [play] has negative connotations of selfishness, and some moral excuse is likely to surround its performance.... [I]t implies something non-constructive, not contributing to the group endeavor” (Graburn 57). To engage in “non-constructive” recreation is not only a waste of one’s own time but is a waste of the group’s resources as well.

Most fundamental to Graburn’s analysis is that Japanese tourism, by requiring the tourist to carry with him or herself both the structures of the home (in the guise of the group tour) and the obligations of the individual to the group (in the form of *senbetsu* and *omiyage*), “takes place within an accepted, approved and known cultural structure” and therefore is essentially always a “reaffirmation of Japaneseness” (Graburn 60), rather than an escape into an Other (see, for example, Frow 129). Domestic tourism, he concludes, is most clearly seen as an effort on the part of Japanese to “seek nostalgic confirmation of their cultural landscape” (Graburn 63) and so is always an exploration or evocation of Japanese national identity.

## Theoretical Approaches to Tourism

The peculiar circumstances of tourism have long been the subject of commentators in fields from the humanities to the social sciences to studies of business and marketing. By far the longest-lived strain of commentary on the institution of tourism has been a disdainful one, and the long-held assumption in the West that the tourist is “the lowest of the low” (Culler 128) has only recently been challenged. Culler points out the “animal imagery,” such as “herds, droves, flocks, [and] swarms” used to describe tourists (Culler 128) and cites the common distinction between the tourist and the traveler: in the commentaries of self-styled travelers, he writes, “the true age of travel has, it seems, always already slipped by; other travellers are always tourists” (Culler 130). The distinction between the two, he says, is integral to tourism: “part of what is involved in being a tourist is disliking tourists” (Culler 130).

The tourist began to be redeemed with the 1976 publication of the first edition of MacCannell’s *The Tourist* and continued with Culler’s 1981 article “Semiotics of Tourism.” In these works, MacCannell and Culler each emphasize the semiotic aspects of tourism. Tourists are “interested in everything as a sign of itself, an instance of a cultural practice”; they are semioticians engaged in “the sociological study of modernity” (Culler 127, 128). Moreover, the tourist has a mission greater than any simple understanding of the signs of the modern world. He or she is seeking to redress some of the central wrongs of modernity. Tourism, Culler writes, is ultimately “an attempt to overcome fragmentation by articulating the world as a series of equivalent spectacles — each society with its characteristic monuments, lifestyles, cultural practices, and scenery, all of which are treated as nonfunctional displays of codes” (Culler 140).

Culler concludes from MacCannell that the tourist “can serve as the model for modern man in general,” the person who tries to make sense of the modern world through the reduction of difference to simple signs of difference (Culler 140). “With the decline of moral consensus,” he says, the “touristic code,” described as “the sense of what one must see, what you ‘ought not to miss’,” is “the most powerful and widespread modern consensus and a major stabilizing force in society” (Culler 139). This body of “systematized knowledge of the world coupled to a widely-accepted series of moral injunctions” (Culler 139), limited and superficial as it may be seen to be, is presented as the only “system of interpersonal values” that we can agree to. As Culler sums up the situation: “One may be uncertain as to what

people ought to think about capital punishment but one knows what they ought to see in Paris" (Culler 139–40).

Culler limits his conclusions regarding tourists to a conception of modernity and the "modern man," but his proposals have great resonance with the postmodernity of Baudrillard and Deleuze (Frow 126). Other writers, moreover, have seen the tourist explicitly as a model for the postmodern person, who at once takes pleasure in the play of signs and acknowledges the constructedness of the symbol system, and more recent discussions have posited the existence of the post-tourist, a tourist not content to accept the simple "series of moral injunctions" identified by Culler. "More sophisticated post-tourists," Featherstone writes, "... seek a whole range of experiences and direct encounters with locals.... [They] are not at all worried that what they are presented with is a simulation of a local culture, and are interested in the whole paraphernalia of the 'behind the scenes' and the construction of the performance and set" (Featherstone 67). Urry uses similar terms: "The post-tourist finds pleasure in the multitude of games that can be played and knows that there is no authentic tourist experience. They know that the apparently authentic fishing village could not survive without the income from tourism [and] that the glossy brochure is a piece of pop culture" (Urry 140).

### **Tourism and Nostalgia**

In most discussions of the concept, postmodernism is intimately related to nostalgia. Frow notes Baudrillard's "melancholy vision of the emptying out of meaning," which is at the heart of the discussion of the simulacrum and its accompanying "chain of simulations," and he posits it as "the equivalent of a moral fall" (Frow 126). In Featherstone's view, postmodernity can "be understood not as a new epoch which is now replacing the modern age, but a growing awareness of the limits of the claims of the project of modernity," a "loss of confidence in the master-narratives of progress and enlightenment which have been central to Western modernity" (Featherstone 59). The loss of confidence is as well a refusal to believe in the successful progress of the past toward a better future: "as postmodernism empties itself of historicity, it is haunted by the memory of the erased past and anxious about the unarrived future" (Miyoshi and Harootunian, vii).

Nostalgia is equally the domain of the tourist. Asserting that "nostalgia ... is everywhere," Stewart argues that it serves both as an emotional response to loss and a cultural strategy to counter structural changes in our

social life. "In positing a 'once was' in relation to a 'now' it creates a frame for meaning, a means of dramatizing aspects of an increasingly fluid and unnamed social life" (Stewart 227). One of these possible strategies — Stewart's immediate concern is with alternatives to it — is "the tourist's nostalgia for style and enclosure," which takes comfort in the activity of "taking in framed scenes from a maintained and exercised distance" (Stewart, 238, 235). In the face of the failure of the "master-narratives of progress and enlightenment" not long ago at the center of touristic activity, present-day tourists take refuge in the structure of the touristic experience: "many tourists ... are locals whose contact with another set of locals in the tourist location is highly regulated and ritualized" (Featherstone 67).

As one of the central institutions created as a part of the project of modernity, the nation state itself may be seen as one of the primary objects of postmodernity's nostalgia. The nation state, writes Miyoshi, is for some "a sheer annoyance, but for a vast majority it serves as a nostalgic and sentimental myth that offers an illusion of a classless organic community of which everyone is an equal member" (Miyoshi 93). The veracity of the myth is certainly not at issue here, for the nation state has never rested on anything other than a mutually agreed-to fiction. Anderson asserts that "communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (Anderson 6). In concluding his *Legends of People, Myths of State*, a comparative study of nationalism in Australia and Sri Lanka, Kapferer remarks that "nationalism makes culture into an object and a thing of worship" (209), and he goes on to dispute the notion that "if a tradition is invented or constructed it is less real and less potent than those that are not" (210). A similar argument is presented by Ehrentraut, whose comparative research in Europe and Asia leads him to conclude that "castles and museums are symbolic building blocks of genealogical mythologies that ... need not be founded upon any verifiable historical realities to become intensely meaningful to people searching for such mythologies" (Ehrentraut, "Cultural Nationalism" 229).

### **Present-day Domestic Tourism in Japan**

Most recent studies of Japanese domestic tourism do not vary significantly in their conclusions from Graburn's 1983 findings. Ehrentraut cites the 1983 study in maintaining that "modern tourism has remained a highly structured institution" ("Cultural Nationalism" 263). Citing Graburn as the primary source for her theoretical framework, Hendry agrees that "age-mate groups"

often travel together; she reports as well that housewives also travel, “particularly once their children are grown up and their obligations to the home have slackened off.” Family holidays are more popular than in the past, she says, but they usually last only one or two nights, until the father of the family becomes “itchy to get back to work after what he may well describe as ‘family duty’.” Most important to the support of Graburn’s thesis, the *senbetsu* and *omiyage* practices given such emphasis in the 1983 study are said still to remain very much in force (Hendry 181, 182).

Without citing his work by name, many commentators give what appear to be restatements of Graburn’s conclusions concerning both the rigidity of Japanese expectations for travel and the social obligations intimately connected to the activity of domestic tourism. Clammer refers to the “very structured and almost pilgrimage-like nature of [domestic] tourism” (Clammer 32). Kato expresses one of the most reductive versions possible of Graburn’s nuanced study: “Like the early pilgrimage, present-day Japanese group travel ... tends to have an educational or religious nuance that camouflages, or at least justifies, the recreational element.... What we see here standing out in bold relief is the character of the Japanese, who cannot even go on a simple pleasure trip without choosing a socially approved form of travel” (Kato 57, 59).

Central to Graburn’s analysis of tourism is the observation that Japanese domestic tourists are primarily engaged in a search for “nostalgic confirmation of their cultural landscape” (*To Pray, Pay, and Play* 63). Since the 1970s, one of the most important symbols in that nostalgic search for the national identity has been the *furusato*, literally the “old village” but more closely translated as “home” or “native place” (Robertson, “*Furusato* Japan” 494). By way of a process of “rehabilitation” that has allowed for the use of certain relatively “untainted” national symbols, the concept of the *furusato* draws for its strength on the prewar symbol of the *mura*, the “village community or hamlet,” central to prewar and wartime imperialist visions of the national character (Ehrentraut, “Cultural Nationalism” 220; Yoshino 95–101). During the 1980s, *furusato* was “one of the most popular symbols used by Japanese politicians, city planners, and advertisers” (Robertson, “*Furusato* Japan” 494), used to sell everything from government policies to bath soap. Marked by both a “compelling appeal” (Robertson, “*Furusato* Japan” 494) and a conceptual ambivalence (see Moeran, “The Language of Japanese Tourism” 252), *furusato* serves both “to locate and preserve a ‘world we have lost’ in an idealized notion of country life and country folk” (Kelly, “Japanese No-Noh” 70) and, in the



form of *urusato zukuri*, “home-place making,” as a marker of the 1980s “reorientation” of the national government’s activities “from a materialistic to an affective focus” (Robertson, “*Furusato Japan*” 510). Thus, it signals both the “motherly love” associated with the carefree pleasure of the mythical hometown and the self-conscious attempt on the part of government bureaucrats to “attend to the spiritual needs of the Japanese people” (Robertson, “*Furusato Japan*” 500, 510).

From the point of view of the inhabitants of rural areas, the term *urusato* refers to the “sentimentalization” of rural culture. As the years put distance between the villages themselves and the image of the *mura* as the spiritual heart of an imperialist Japan, “the quaintness of farmhouses, the integrity of farm work, and the bonds of the village community ... are celebrated rather than castigated” (Kelly, “Rationalization and Nostalgia” 606). In Kelly’s formulation, the countryside is caught between competing discourses of modernization and sentimentalization. He locates his semi-agricultural community in northern Honshu within the competing “languages” of rationalization (mechanization, greater attention to markets, more efficient work patterns) and nostalgia. The inhabitants of the countryside are faced with a great challenge. Since the war, “the people of Shonai ... have sought to transform their daily lives through a language of rationalization without flatly denying the contours of the region’s past, and have tried to keep alive certain of those traditions without falling prey to a cloying sentimentality” (Kelly, “Rationalization and Nostalgia” 614).

To perhaps all but the people who live within the villages labeled with the term, the concept of *urusato* carries with it an unshakable aura of nostalgia. Symbolic of a “pristine native culture” (Robertson, “*Furusato Japan*” 508), the “primordial landscape of [a] nostalgic imagination” (Ehrentraut, “Cultural Nationalism” 229), *urusato* embodies also the sense of change, in point of fact a process of change for the worse: “This ‘pure’ culture is presumed to have existed in pastoral tranquility until vitiated and transmogrified by outside forces — such as westernization, industrialization, urbanization, and today, internationalization” (Robertson, “*Furusato Japan*” 508). Featherstone remarks that Japan stands alone as the one country which has experienced a version of the modernizing process while in “the formation of the nation ... draw[ing] upon cultural resources which have yet to be modernized, such as the cultural memories, symbols, myths, and sentiment surrounding the ethnic core” (Featherstone 56). While Featherstone’s explication of his concept of the “ethnic core” is not well developed, it appears that for Japan the *urusato* would stand quite easily in its place.

The nostalgia of the *furusato*, however, is not a simple one. Robertson argues that the concern for *furusato* is really a “nostalgia for nostalgia” (Robertson, “*Furusato Japan*” 495), since the person experiencing the loss has most likely never really experienced what he or she is mourning. Members of the younger generations were likely born and raised in urban areas, but even for the older generations, the villages from which they came to the urban areas are utterly changed. “With the rapid urbanization of the countryside since the postwar period,” Robertson argues, “the Japanese ‘can’t go home again’ . . . . There is no particular place to ‘go home’ to; consequently, there is no particular place to feel nostalgic toward.” She links the nostalgia experienced through the concept of the *furusato* directly to current theories of the mood of postmodernity: “Homelessness today is a postmodern condition of existential disaffection; nostalgia for the experience of nostalgia” (Robertson, “*Furusato Japan*” 497).

A number of observers have remarked on the fictiveness of the relationship between the domestic tourist, generally living in an urban area, and the imagined *furusato*. Robertson describes the practice of selling “honorary” memberships in rural villages as the creation of an “imagined community.” The honorary villagers, “who pay an . . . annual residency fee of about \$50,” are included in village events and activities, including “picking mushrooms and flowering ferns, slopping hogs, and planting rice seedlings,” but remain distanced from the concerns of the rural residents in that they do not have “to actually depend on agriculture for a living” (Robertson, “*Furusato Japan*” 509). Knight locates the same practice in terms of the marketing strategies of the tourism industry. Describing *furusato* as “an idiom through which those unrelated to the village can be metaphorically incorporated into it” (Knight 207), he sets the selling of memberships in “the context of the commercial competition between villages for the patronage of urban consumers” (Knight 208). The rural areas are caught in a paradox, he notes, in that they “have learnt the importance of marketing themselves as accommodating *furusato* for the urban population . . . [but] have also learnt that they must have a diacritical identity that distinguishes them from other *furusato*” (Knight 208).

### Localizing Tourism in Japan

Even as he attempts a summation of the characteristics of the institution, Graburn acknowledges that the situation of tourism in Japan may be in the process of significant change. Graburn cites Moeran (1983) as the source for the suggestion that newly instituted strategies for marketing products

may be “creating a consumer society of individualists by appealing to the younger generation to break out of the group forms of travel ... and immerse themselves in the sports and the cultural milieu of their tourist destinations.” Graburn is uncertain both whether such appeals would be successful and if so, whether new practices would be carried on into adult life or would serve simply as “an exploratory stage of youth ... [not] commonly repeated in later stages.” He suggests that “further research is needed” to discover the answers to these questions (*To Pray, Pay and Play* 64–5).

White points up the independence of many young Japanese, who, during high school or even junior high school, frequently may take overnight trips with friends. “High schoolers,” she notes, “customarily go with their close friends on such trips, and after they graduate from high school, and as resources permit, may take longer trips overseas, ... unchaperoned by adults” (White 143). She does not, however, tell much about the circumstances of these trips, such as the degree of structure built into them or the persistence of *senbetsulomiyage* practices among these travelers. Again, close observation of the practices of young travelers would likely offer much information about current attitudes.

While there is clearly much research to be done on contemporary Japanese attitudes toward tourism and the extent of change in the tourism patterns of today’s Japanese, a few examples of tourism practices may shed light on the direction of such change. Featherstone suggests that one strategy that can be employed in an attempt to “read” local cultural activities is to look for “absorption/assimilation/resistance strategies” that local communities employ to maintain their autonomy from the “mass and consumer culture images” they receive from the cultural center (Featherstone 62). A study by Martinez of the fishing village of Kuzaki, known for its women pearl divers, is instructive in this regard. Martinez sets herself the task of “exploring the reactions and attitudes of the ‘natives’ when they find themselves to be the object of domestic tourism” (Martinez 97), and she finds both self-interested utilization of the pressures of tourism and various strategies of resistance to them. The village has a long-standing relationship with the nearby Ise Shrine, and although the rituals shared with the shrine would potentially be tourist events of great money-earning power, “religious tradition and tourism are kept separate” (Martinez 106). The villagers effectively set the limits on the exploitation of the village’s tourist potential, “accept[ing] parts of the touristic image about sexy women and us[ing] it in order to keep up the very religious traditions which they keep separate from tourism” (Martinez 110).

Stewart's discussion of the cultural dynamics of nostalgia suggests another, related realm in which local autonomy can be demonstrated as a part of the provision of tourism facilities. Taking as her example a home-decorating fashion in her study area in West Virginia, she notes that "the 'country decor' in the cottage ... is not meant to *reproduce* country life 'as it really was' but to *produce* a world made out of signs" (Stewart 233; emphasis as in the original). The practice, she continues, may be seen as empowering: "the decoration calls attention to the status of these 'country' objects as signs and the point is not just to 'decorate' in itself but to signify the production, or at least the possibility, of meaning" (Stewart 233). A similar activity may be seen in Japan in local responses to the 1988 initiative of the Takeshita government, which gave a one-time grant of 100 million yen to every village and town to use as they thought would best serve the interests of their community (McCormack 101–4; see also Takamatsu). The responses to the initiative covered an impossibly wide range, from construction of the longest stone stairway in the country, to the purchase of a 63-kilo lump of gold, to restoration of a village's natural environment to attract fireflies. Many of the projects shared an intention to "capitaliz[e] on their exotic, almost foreign quality in relation to urban Japan" (McCormack 103), attempting to recreate themselves as versions of the ultimate *furusato* — manipulations of the constellation of signs that makes up the concept of the *furusato* — and at the same time distanced from the "vain and extravagant world" of the bubble economy that provided the financing for the projects themselves (McCormack 103).

A third example provides yet another glimpse into possible scenarios of change in Japanese tourist habits. In contrast to Graburn's sense that a "reaffirmation of Japaneseness" is at the heart of Japanese tourist travel, there is a growing tendency toward creation and exploitation of the "exotic" in tourism activities. This exoticization can take two forms, each with very different implications for our discussion. The first is the "self-exoticization" identified by Ivy in her analysis of the "*Ekizochikku* (Exotic) Japan" tourism campaign of the 1980s (Ivy, *Discourses of the Vanishing* 48–54). As Ivy demonstrates, this campaign successfully presented *furusato* Japan to a Japanese audience as an Other, at the same time playing with the symbols that locate the observer in such a way that no clear position could be ascertained. Ivy concludes that the "savvy rhetorical and textual strategies" of the campaign encouraged a "distancing," an "ironic detachment," that "encourage[d] Japanese to play with all differentiations without guilt or concern" (Ivy, "Tradition and Difference" 26–7). The exoticization, in

the end, was “presented as a matter of style”: “we are led to believe that what is really exotic is a Japan that can montage such disparities [as between high fashion and the sumptuous gowns of Buddhist monks] with such exciting aplomb” (Ivy, “Tradition and Difference” 27).

A different sort of exoticization is seen in the construction of certain forms of tourist destinations. McCormack (1996) argues that theme parks, while a ubiquitous symptom of 1980s greed and corruption, may also in some cases be a genuine, lasting, and strikingly new version of culture fundamentally different from the *furusato* ideal. Nagasaki’s Huis ten Bosch, apparently just another theme park devoted to recreating (in this case) medieval Dutch life, is both sturdily constructed and carefully planned (as is seen, for example, in an elaborate system to recycle the town’s water). Presented by its founder as “a merger of the economic and the environmental,” it is said to be “the first of a new type of postindustrial development” (McCormack 98–9). “What the whole project represents,” McCormack writes, “is still hard to say,” but the developer’s assertion that the project represents “pioneering ecological town planning” is “not easily dismissed” (McCormack 99).

Similar to Huis ten Bosch but on a much smaller scale are the many Swiss-style penshon that have recently appeared in established hot springs (*onsen*) communities. Knight traces their development to a choice, made in the context of the rural revival initiatives of the 1980s, between “revaloris[ing] the Japanese village and its mountainous landscape” and using foreign elements to serve as the basis of local tourism industries (Knight 211). Making use of foreign elements, he says, much of the countryside “in the 1980s began to remake itself as an ‘exotic’, exciting and often conspicuously *foreign* rural space for contemporary urban Japanese, including younger people” (Knight 208; emphasis as in the original). A stay in a *penshon* is “suggestive of an alternative lifestyle” but is distinguished from the *furusato* by the absence of ties to the rural scene. The *penshon* is “an oasis of rurality, next to nature yet insulated from rural society” (Knight 212). It is, moreover, known as the perfect setting for a young woman’s holiday, in contrast to the ryokan and *minshuku* that have long been fixtures of the onsen holiday and continue to attract older guests (Knight 213).

## Conclusions

Much of the discussion presented here has focused on recent developments in the ways Japanese localities have “marketed” themselves as desirable

tourist destinations. In the terms used by Graburn, who relies on a model that describes recreation and tourism activity as a “ritual of reversal” in which people seek out “relief or liminal compensation” to offset unpleasant factors encountered in contemporary life (“Work and Play” 204), this approach emphasizes the “pull factors” that draw tourists toward sites, rather than the “push factors” that inspire travel in the first place. Although many surveys in recent years have established that domestic tourist travel, after eating out in restaurants, is for the Japanese their second most popular leisure activity (Graburn, “Work and Play” 207), developed expressions of the attitudes and desires that Japanese bring to domestic tourism are less easily explored.

The attitudes individuals bring to choices like those involved in choosing tourism destinations, however, do not exist in a vacuum. Urry sees in tourism an industry that is “centrally important to the very nature of modern societies” and maintains that “consumption of tourist services cannot be separated off from the social relations in which they are embedded” (Urry 164 [emphasis as in original], 129). The topics touched on here, particularly the discursive strategies invoking an idealized *furusato*, expressions of a tension surrounding Westernization and internationalization, and the long-established social goal of replacing formerly dominant rural industries with tourist activities to maintain the economic viability of rural Japan, today form much of the context in which Japanese make their travel decisions.

In his introduction to the 1989 edition of *The Tourist*, MacCannell takes issue with the primary theorists of postmodernity on a number of grounds. His first concern is methodological: to prove or disprove the predictions of postmodernism, he says, we should ensure that “observation be detailed and based on living with the people we write about, ... that descriptions are perspicacious from the double perspective of objective specialists ... and those whose lives are touched by the conditions described, ... and finally that concern for observation of real people in real situations always precede the development of socio-cultural theory” (MacCannell xi). Equally important, he also presents a critique of *postmodernism* for its rhetorical position of mourning for modernism. “The need to be postmodern,” he says, “can thus be read as the same as the desire to be a tourist: both seek to empower *modern* culture and its conscience by neutralizing everything that might destroy it from within” (MacCannell xiii; emphasis as in original).

MacCannell’s critiques of postmodern theory share important elements with the globalism theory put forth by Appadurai, Wilson, and Dissanayake, among others. In his work on the “global cultural economy,” Appadurai,

like MacCannell, argues for the usefulness of a program of carefully focused ethnographic work. That focus, moreover, is presented by Appadurai as part of a repudiation of the passivity of much postmodernist theory. In Appadurai's view, we have a choice: "if you follow Baudrillard or Lyotard into a world of signs wholly unmoored from their social signifiers ... all the world's a Disneyland" and links between events are arbitrary and not meaningful (Appadurai 4). Instead, Appadurai suggests that scholars address their efforts to better understanding the discursive and tangible contexts in which beliefs and practices are formed and maintained. Treatment of the "imagination as a social practice," as "a form of work ... and a form of negotiation between sites of agency ... and globally defined fields of possibility," may "link the play of pastiche [identified by postmodern theory] ... to the terror and coercion of states and their competitors." The theory he puts forth attempts to support a "global analysis" of cultural flows that may serve as the precursor to a "social theory of postmodernity" to counter the cultural "chaos" often invoked as the character of the current era (Appadurai 5).

The present work has attempted to highlight certain areas in which further works of ethnography and cultural studies might bear fruit. The unique perspectives which Japanese women and young people bring to travel remain to be explored, as does the extent to which new patterns of travel in Japan diverge from well-established practices that stress the connection between the traveler and his or her home community. As we have seen, much nuanced information is captured in a close reading of the ways in which local communities demonstrate their own autonomy in the presentation of their touristic attractiveness, but more work along that line surely needs to be undertaken.

Most difficult of all these questions to bring to a conclusion may well be those that concern the extent and nature of foreign, and specifically Western, influence in the development of new forms of touristic activity. Huis ten Bosch and the *penshon* may well appear to be Western forms unnaturally grafted onto the Japanese cultural landscape. They may also, however, equally well serve as the sites for re-scriptings of the essential plot identified by Graburn nearly two decades ago: of Japanese domestic tourism as a search for an experience of the national character itself. If the central social practices of Japanese tourism remain largely unchanged — the persistence of the traveler's connections to home, the inevitability of a linkage between a valorized countryside and the enjoyment of individual pleasurable activity — visits to new sites may maintain a fundamental continuity with long-standing patterns. If in visits to *penshon* patterns of *senbetsul*

*omiyage* and a reverence for rural places retain paramount importance, replacement of the decadent with the exotic — whether or not the exotic is tinged with a foreign flavor — may represent no new form of tourism at all but merely repetitions of patterns well documented by earlier observers.

Such a conclusion has not yet been firmly established by observers of Japanese life. In concluding his discussion of the global cultural economy, Appadurai brings his attention to “a classic human problem,” how small groups such as the family “deal with” new global realities as they seek to pass on cultural forms and cultural values to the younger members of the group. The problem of “enculturation” involves a number of the issues already raised here, including the roles of women and the younger generation in the process, and may be instrumental in any attempt to track Western influence over Japanese culture (Appadurai 17–18). Careful observation of seemingly new patterns of tourism, such as visits by young Japanese women to *penshon*, may reflect the play of the imagination in the “globally defined fields of possibility” Appadurai identifies, and thus may provide a glimpse of the forms of imaginative “work” and “negotiation” he suggests are the result of recent and profound changes in global cultural flows.

Japan is a particularly fruitful site for the exploration of the issues Graburn, MacCannell, and Appadurai identify. Termed “a postmodern society ... or even ... the postmodern society par excellence” (Clammer 13), it offers many examples of the elaboration of the play of signs and the construction of pastiche that are at the heart of postmodern theory. It has access to and seems to make use of influences from around the world. More, and more focused, ethnographic and other analytical work on Japanese tourism would add greatly to our understanding of Japanese society, and so help to clarify its placement in the global cultural system that Appadurai identifies and presents to us for study.

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