
Performing Leaf Viewing: A Study on Practices of Viewing Nature in Asuke, Aichi Prefecture, Japan

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Abstract

Nature viewing is a popular tourist activity in contemporary Japan, resulting in natural tourist landscape development. This paper examines the practice of leaf viewing as a leisure activity that forms an integral part of current Japanese domestic tourism. I begin this study by reviewing a call to study non-Western tourism and by discussing the significance and usefulness of concepts of tourist practices and performances. I then go on to consider pre-modern traveling practices in relation to nature viewing and their relationship with urban demands. Based on a case study in Asuke, a popular one-day destination in central Japan, focus is then shifted to the development of Asuke's natural landscapes through the promotion of tourism. Finally, using visual ethnography, I explore diverse practices of viewing nature through photography in the context of modern Japanese tourism. The empirical findings in the paper suggest that there are various practices of perceiving nature undertaken in contemporary tourist space. This analysis suggests the limitation of theoretical assumptions built on the Western experience and histories of travel/tourism in exploring the practice of tourism and industries in contemporary Asian society. I argue that a clear understanding of contemporary non-Western tourism requires a careful consideration of the historical and social contexts and conditions that underlie the practices of tourism.

1. Introduction

Within the field of tourism, there is a growing call to go beyond “Anglo-Western centric” analyses in order to consider the increasing non-Western forms of travel, most notably in Asia (Winter *et al.* 2008b, Winter 2009: 21, Minca and Oakes 2012). Some scholars have already turned their attention to non-Western practices and industries in Asian tourism (Edensor 1998, Daniels 2001a, Gladstone 2005). For instance, recent work has demonstrated that there are several analogies and differences in the practices and meanings of modern tourism between “West” and “Non-West” societies (Edensor 1998, Daniels 2001a). In this context, I argue that Western tourism theories could be problematized in view of the emerging critique of Western-centric assumptions that have shaped modern tourism theories and academic practices. Winter (2009: 317) suggests that “the history of ‘modern tourism’ has been written from a Eurocentric perspective.” I support this view and argue that it is imperative to rethink these theoretical insights as they derive solely from the history and experience of Western modern tourism (Winter *et al.* 2008b). Existing theories on tourism have overlooked the complexities of today's global tourism, resulting in an over-generalization of practices and experiences of modern Western tourism.

It is important to bear in mind that modern tourism practices within the Japanese context may generate alternate interpretations and understandings of the globalizing tourism culture and its practice. Asuke, a characteristically popular destination among the Japanese, has been chosen as my case study in an attempt to gain a better understanding of Japanese domestic tourism and, thus, of non-Western practices and industries in Asian tourism. Yasue and Murakami have written previously about the reproduction process of tourist landscapes at Asuke, highlighting tourist photography of the dogtooth violet (Yasue and Murakami 2012). Contemporary tourists' practices play an impor-

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tant role in reproducing tourist landscapes in the context of Japanese modern tourism. While the previous findings are helpful, it is imperative to explore realities and practices of contemporary non-Western tourism by conducting more detailed analysis on current tourism practices.

Increasing attention is paid to the discussion of “what tourists do and experience” at these destinations, including how tourists relate to their travel experiences (Crouch 2002, 2004). Crouch defines the concept of practice and performance in modern tourism as follows:

“Practice” refers to the encounters tourists have with their surrounding material space, metaphor, and imagination and a complexity of contexts. “Performance,” as used in this chapter, concerns the tourist-in-action rather than the staged events and displays that resemble the tableaux of representations familiar in terms of brochures and televisual and filmic contexts through which places may be experienced by the tourists.

(Crouch 2004: 86)

Such understanding in relation to “practice” and “performance” in tourism studies foregrounds complex relations between tourists, images, places, and experiences. It focuses on “the bodily character of the ways in which individuals encounter tourism experiences, events, and spaces and their potential connections with the figuring of their own lives” (Crouch 2004: 85). Bodily experiences through the practices of listening, walking, eating, touching, and smelling are constitutive parts of the production of tourist experiences, meanings, and places.

Photography plays an important role in shaping tourists’ movements and activities by indicating where to see and how to capture sights. Importantly, the act of photography produces a variety of performances in and with tourist landscapes. In this paper, tourist performances of photography refer not only to taking pictures but also to walking, gazing, chatting, and smiling.

First, the paper discusses the usefulness of the concepts of tourist performances in exploring contemporary tourism cultures and practices in Japan. Second, by analyzing texts and images in visual promotional mediums, such as official pamphlets and posters, we shift focus to contemporary inscribing and staging of tourist spaces as a natural landscape in Asuke. Finally, through an analysis of tourist performances at research sites, I emphasize the activities at landscaped sites and how tourist-centric “natural” landscapes are enacted by Japanese tourists’ photographic performances. By looking at these findings in combination, I garner that activities in natural landscapes continuously shape and re-shape tourist spaces, imaginaries, and experiences through corporeal movements in tourist places in ways that differ from modern Western tourism.

2. The Making of Natural Tourist Landscapes in Asuke

Extensive research on domestic tourism in post-war Japan has focused on the countryside/rural areas that developed as tourist places as a result of modernization (Martinez 1990, Creighton 1995, Moon 1997, 2002, Graburn 1998, 2008, Daniels 2001a, Guichard-Anguis and Moon 2008). Nature and culture in these rural areas are influential factors that attract the contemporary urban population of Japan as visitors (Graburn 2008). In fact, visiting popular destinations on the outskirts of cities to view nature is a common leisure activity. Small modern destinations are located in mountainous areas and/or on the periphery of major cities. Tourist spaces in rural villages and towns are shaped and re-shaped by urban demand.

It is important to note a strong similarity between traveling practices as a religious pilgrimage in the Edo period and the practices of contemporary Japanese tourism. Formanek (1998), in her discussion of pilgrimage in the Edo period, highlights that one of the strongest analogies between Edo period pilgrimage and modern-day tourism is their recreational character (p.185). In addition, the increasing interest in seasonal festivals among the middle class, such as merchants and military officers, can be considered as a strong influence on the development of recreational places and pilgrimages on the periphery of Edo (Waley 1996). Their mobility seems to have prompted the development of cultural landscapes in Edo, inscribed with ritual meaning and an appreciation of seasonality.

Beginning with the Edo period (Waley 1996), urban residents gained increasing awareness of seasonal fes-

tivals centered either on some striking natural event (blossoms, autumn leaves) or a customary ritual (New Year celebrations). Such cultural practices remain popular even in Japan's contemporary domestic tourism scenarios. Because religious travels became a mass phenomenon during the Edo period (Ishimori 1989, Waley 1996, Oedewald 2009), the idea of traveling to destinations away from the everyday-life world, such as a city, continued to be a common pleasure activity for the Japanese¹.

As previously mentioned, seasonal events such as nature viewing were a popular leisure activity in the Edo period. There are several popular destinations for red autumn leaf viewing in Edo, such as Takenogawa at Ōji and Kaianji temple at Shinagawa² (Miyachi 2000, Kawazoe 1993, Higuchi 2000). Miyachi (2000) mentions how people in the Edo and Meiji period enjoyed red autumn leaf viewing by citing *Tokyo Fūzoku-shi*³ published in 1899–1902. The book speaks highly of the color of red autumn leaves illuminated by the evening sunshine and describes people composing poems and viewing red autumn leaves in a café selling local specialties such as rice crackers and Japanese pepper. Miyachi also highlighted that newer popular destinations for red autumn leaf viewing in the Meiji period were developed on the outskirts of the city as part of the urbanization of Tokyo.

Asuke is a small destination with distinctive natural landscapes in a mountainous area and has belonged to Toyota city since 2006. Contemporary tourist pamphlets of Asuke with colorful images and texts introduce the town as “Asuke, a town with history, tradition, and creativity.” This caption, printed on a recent tourist pamphlet produced by the Asuke Tourism Association (ATA), characterizes Asuke as a mountainous town that is, nevertheless, a modern destination. However, given that the pamphlet's cover page depicts Mt. Iimori and the Tomoe River in their entirety, I garner that the main attraction in Asuke is its natural beauty especially linked to the Kōrankei valley:

Kōrankei has a variety of features emerging through four seasons. Dogtooth violet heralding spring, early summer with bright fresh green, and seeking cool air in a shady nook of maple trees in summer, the joyful cheers of children playing in the water are echoed across Tomoe River. In autumn, maple trees turn to absolutely gorgeous red leaves. The vividly coloured surface of the river depicts beautiful scenery like a *nishiki* picture⁴.

(From the official pamphlet produced by the ATA)

The above statement shows that the diversity of natural landscapes at Kōrankei is a major appealing aspect. It focuses on Kōrankei's natural surroundings to attract visitors. The picturesque natural landscape, resembling a “*nishiki* picture” associated with all seasons, and the nature viewing activities that can take place there dominate Asuke's contemporary tourism.

Kōrankei is the central and most popular attraction in Asuke's tourism, with particular emphasis on the seasonal viewing of nature it offers to tourists. Its uniqueness attracts a large number of tourists, especially in November and December, the two busiest months in Asuke. For instance, annual tourist arrivals in Kōrankei exceeded 1,200,000 persons in 2007, more than half of whom visited in November (Tourism and Recreation Statistics in Aichi 2007). The changing color of the maple leaves has attracted numerous tourists to Kōrankei, resulting in large profits for Asuke's tourism.

After a decline in popularity during the war period, it did not take long until Asuke became a popular destination again. In 1947, the ATA reorganized to enhance Asuke's tourism development. In order to promote Asuke as a destination, the ATA carried out several promotional activities in the 1950s with the assistance of both the mass media and several grassroots campaigns. For instance, colored posters were distributed in Nagoya Tetsudō trains (a private railway company in the Tōkai metropolis), and Asuke was promoted over the radio. At the same time, *geiko*

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1. However, it should be noted that the traveling practice in Japan is not limited to urban residents. Not only urban residents traveled outside cities, but also people already living outside urban areas.
 2. Also, Kaneiji temple, Tennoji temple, Tokaiji temple, Kohoji temple, Shotoji temple, and Nezugongen (Nezu shrine) are cited as *meisho* places for red autumn leaf viewing in the Edo period (Miyachi 2000, Kawazoe 1993, Higuchi 2000).
 3. The book was about the way of the people of Meiji-era Tokyo, written by a Japanese historian, Kojirou Hirade.
 4. Multi-colored woodblock printing was invented in the 1760s. The beauty of its multi-colored pictures popularized *ukiyo-e* (woodblock printing) among the Edo Japanese.

dancers from Asuke performed at major stations in Nagoya city wearing kimonos patterned with red autumn leaves and rivers (Asuke Tourism Association 2005: 14).

Various promotion mediums to attract tourists were also produced. My archival work at the Asuke Museum revealed that after its 1947 reorganization, the ATA produced posters with colorful photographs and illustrations. The posters were produced between the 1950s and 1970s to promote the Red Autumn Festival, celebrated during the peak season since 1950. The main components of these posters are red autumn leaves, a red bridge, the Tomoe River, pictures of tourists and place names, and practical travel information. However, although the major elements comprising the images of the later posters remain the same as those of the images produced between the 1950s and 1970s, there is also difference between the posters printed before the war and those printed after the war. What changes in the later depictions are the composition and the angle of the camera when taking the photographs. For example, one of the salient features in the posters created during the 1950s and 1970s is the red bridge across the river, with tourists walking and viewing the scenery from it. The red bridge is centered in the picture, and a close-up of the bridge and river allows the red bridge to become the most salient feature in the poster. Seemingly, people are depicted clearly enough to provide the viewers with a sense of how to perform “red autumn leaf viewing” at Kōrankei. Interestingly, such features are still seen in a recent tourism poster for the Red Autumn Leaves Festival. For instance, the poster in Figure 1 printed in 2006, shows similar elements being employed to create contemporary images of Kōrankei in autumn.

The red bridge across the Tomoe River, called Taigetsu-kyō Bridge, was re-built in 1961 to replace the former Taigetsu-kyō wooden bridge. The wooden bridge was seriously damaged in 1959 by the biggest typhoon in post-war Japan (Isewan-Taifū). The red, slightly curved bridge built in 1961 became firmly associated with Kōrankei’s landscape, and “the Bridge across the River” continues to be the best known image linked to the red autumn leaves of the Kōrankei landscapes.

The bridge as a material element has played an important role as a view-producing object at Kōrankei. While landscapes are cultural images, material objects and buildings are also indispensable for constructing cultural and visual images. The formation of tourist landscapes is partially conditioned by material objects that constitute the principal elements of symbolic images. In addition, the material object not only helps construct the symbolic images but also offers concrete spaces where people can practice certain kinds of performances at and with tourist landscapes. For instance, the physical presence of the bridge provides a concrete stage for performing tourist photography.

Another consideration with regard to the formation of the modern tourist landscape of red autumn leaf viewing is the “historical origin” of Kōrankei. Historical origin in general has been vital in the development of the popularity of modern destinations. Historical values played an important role in the formation of *meisho* in the Edo period. As MacCannell states, “For moderns, reality and authenticity are thought to be elsewhere: in other historical periods and other cultures, in purer, simple lifestyles” (MacCannell 1976 [1999]: 3). Most of the contemporary tourist pamphlets/brochures about Asuke introduce Kōrankei as a “famous place (*meisho*).” The popularity and historical connections with sites are instrumental in increasing a destination’s popularity (Daniels 2001a).

The historical origin of Kōrankei as a popular destination for viewing autumn leaves dates back to more than 350

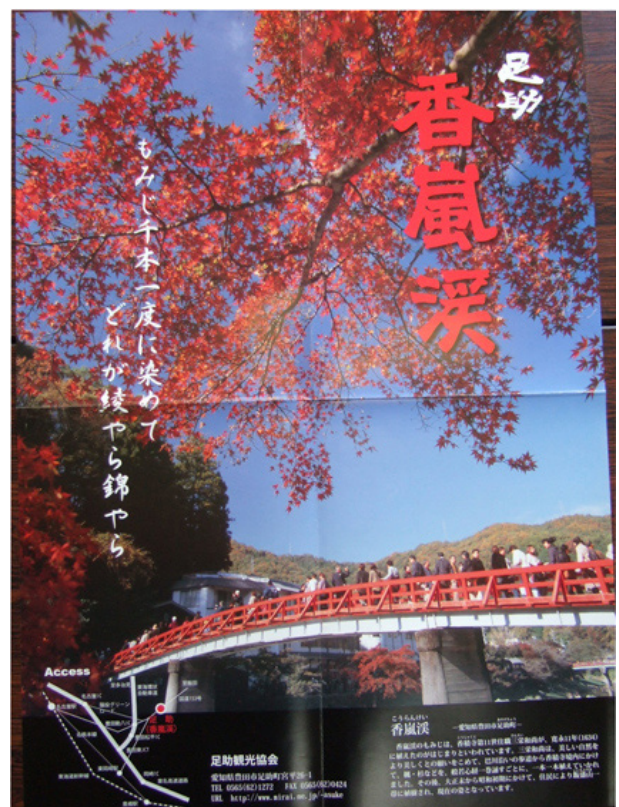


Figure 1. Poster produced in 2006 (reproduced with the permission of the ATA).

years ago. It is said that the foundation of Kōrankei as a place to view nature was constructed in 1634 by Sanei-Oshō, the resident priest at the Kōjakuji temple at the time. He is said to have planted seedlings of maple trees, pines, and Japanese cedars on the side of a 400–500m path leading to the Kōjakuji temple when he became the resident priest at the temple. According to available information, he visited the Eigenji temple at Ōumi (currently Shiga prefecture) in his middle age; the beautiful scenery of red autumn leaves inspired him to create similar scenery at the Kōjakuji temple. Until 1930, when the valley alongside the Kōjakuji temple was named “Kōrankei,” the scenery of red autumn leaves in Asume was called “red autumn leaves at Kōjakuji temple.”⁵ Thus, Kōrankei’s scenery was established by linking it to a historical figure who accomplished a “great achievement” more than 350 years ago. The Kōjakuji temple itself is characterized as a place where red autumn leaf viewing was performed by the people.

Sanei-Oshō played an important role in popularizing Asume and granting it credibility as a “modern *meisho* of red autumn leaves.” Adding historical value is regarded as one of the ways of increasing the credibility and authenticity of a place. Various tourism promotion mediums (tourist pamphlets, travel guide books, and the ATA website) explain the authenticity of Kōrankei as a “famous place” by associating it with Sanei-Oshō and his achievement. It can be concluded that historical figures are often utilized to authorize and approve Kōrankei as a “famous place.”

3. Performance and Experience in Kōrankei

This section discusses a variety of performances and experiences in the practice of leaf viewing at Asume. The study was conducted during the peak season of red autumn leaf viewing—in autumn of 2009. My ethnographic research produced about 700 photographs, and I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews with “tourist photographers” at several places in Kōrankei to explore why and how they photographed⁶. Additionally, I conducted an intensive visual ethnography of photographic performances at Kōrankei, Asume, observing and recording via film the tourist performances enacted at the research sites⁷.

An official B4-size pamphlet introducing the details of red autumn leaf viewing at Kōrankei, produced by the ATA, was distributed at several places, including public parking spaces and tourist facilities, during autumn (November and early December), the season of red autumn leaves (Figure 2). While the back of the pamphlet/map introduced Asume’s other tourist attractions (historical townscapes and a flower garden with dogtooth violets in spring), its front page featured activities related to red autumn leaf viewing. The pamphlet proposes seven viewing points worth visiting, each of which is briefly described. In total, 13 images with short descriptions suggest to the prospective tourists “where to see” and “how to enjoy” red autumn leaves. Viewing nature on foot in Kōrankei is strongly recommended by the ATA as the main tourist practice in Asume. Tourists are invited to engage in various activities while walking around Kōrankei. The map shows tourists where to look and take photographs, and how to behave during their leisure walks in Kōrankei.

The text and photographs of the map describe the beauty of different red autumn leaves at Kōrankei, with information on the best time to see them. For example, one description stresses the beauty of red leaves on a path called the “tunnel of red autumn leaves” when the leaves are exposed to the afternoon sun. Special attention is given to a maple tree, a delight to tourists’ eyes, with a gradual change in the color of its leaves.

Multiple other activities that involve corporeal movements and practices are introduced in the pamphlet’s texts and images. For instance, the map proposes looking at the red autumn leaves on the riverside, having lunch on a bench, and viewing the red autumn leaves and water surface of the Tomoe River while sitting along the riverside. Tourists are invited to enjoy a variety of activities that include not only walking through the maple trees on a path, but also tasting local foods and having lunch at the riverside while enjoying Kōrankei’s natural environment. The freely distributed

5. The name “Kōrankei” was given by Hikoichi Motoyama, President of the Osaka Mainichi Shinbun (present-day Mainichi Daily News in Osaka) when he visited Asume in 1930.

6. The interview list is attached at the end of the article. The interviews were conducted with tourists who had cameras, including those at a sitting area inside the tourist information building as well as those who were at the outdoor benches in a small open space alongside Tomoe River.

7. These research methods have been inspired by recent research on photographic performances, such as Edensor 1998, Larsen 2004, Bærenholdt *et al.* 2004, and Minca 2004. See also Yasue and Murakami 2012.



Figure 2. Official map of red autumn leaf viewing (reproduced with the permission of the ATA)

official pamphlet shows that nature viewing activities at Kōrankei are more than merely a “viewing of nature” as the object of tourist gaze. It is also a set of performances linked to red autumn leaf viewing. The map provides imaginative walking experiences and views through photography and descriptions. Thus, it can be concluded that Kōrankei’s red autumn leaf viewing is a multifaceted embodied practice within a natural setting. Together with walking and viewing red autumn leaves, various other activities are encouraged by the local tourism organization.

Most tourists visiting Asuke begin their walk towards the Taigetsu-kyō Bridge and the inner side of the Kōrankei valley by strolling along a narrow street where several small food stands and souvenir shops are located. Actually, the first view when arriving in Kōrankei is this crowded street, rather than the natural mountainous scenery with its colorful autumn leaves. Mt. Iimori covered in a vast expanse of red autumn leaves appears only after one passes the street. It takes around one and a half hours to walk along the main paths in order to arrive at the viewing spots recommended by the official pamphlet.

Several types of tourists visit Kōrankei in autumn: family tourists (especially young families with babies and/or small children), young and elderly couples, young and elderly groups, tour-bus tourists (most of whom are elderly people), and solo tourists. Groups or family tourists constitute the dominant tourist type; few single tourists with no travel companions can also be seen. Most family tourists arrive at the site during the weekend, whereas most young couples visit Kōrankei in the evening, when outdoor illumination for red autumn viewing takes place.⁸ Most tourists have at least one camera; very few couples or groups tour the site without holding cameras. A variety of cameras such as handy digital cameras, mobile phones, and single-lens reflex cameras with small or big tripods are observed. It seems that the camera is the primary tool in experiencing Kōrankei.

My research results indicate that there are two dominant objects to be viewed by tourists at Kōrankei: a) red autumn leaves and b) tourists themselves. According to interview results, each interviewee took between 5 and 30 photographs depicting either the red autumn leaves or themselves with red autumn leaves in the background. Therefore, Kōrankei can be considered as a place where one can perform and produce different gazes, experiences, and imaginative geographies through the simultaneous act of viewing and photographing. In the remainder of the paper, I discuss how two different views are enacted at Kōrankei.

The bridge is the first photographed site that the official pamphlet suggests tourists visit. Many tourists pose

8. Outdoor illumination at Kōrankei has been installed between the 1st and the 30th of November since 1988.

for their perfect pictures between red autumn leaves, the bridge parapet, and the Tomoe River with the mountains in the background. As I have discussed earlier, the bridge is an important symbol of Kōrankei and Asuke and a powerful view-making device of Asuke's tourist landscapes. In fact, it is the most crowded place at Kōrankei during autumn (Figure 3). The 3.5 m wide bridge is packed with tourists, who are often stuck in the middle. My research supports the observation that the bridge is powerful in immobilizing tourist flows. Tourist experiences at Kōrankei in autumn are partially shaped by not only the act of photography but also the material designs of the space. I partially agree with Jorn Urry's statement, "Photography gives shape to travel" (Urry 2002: 129), with regard to tourist practices in Kōrankei. Tourist movements and experiences are regulated by their photographic performances and the materiality of the site.

Many tourists attempt to take photographs on or/and near the bridge (Figures 4 and 5). Irrespective of how busy and crowded the bridge is, tourists nimbly find the space and time to capture shots on the bridge in front of the red autumn leaves covering the mountains. People often stop briefly in order to photograph not only the beautiful scenery that Kōrankei valley offers but also their travel companions. It seems that tourists sense the bridge is the right place for photographs, especially of the mountains covered with colorful leaves (Minca 2007).

Specifically, tourists choose to take photographs on the bridge or sometimes on its edge. Figures 4 and 5 show how typical photographic performances take place on the bridge. Tourist photographs are usually composed of several elements: the bridge, trees with colorful leaves in the background, the sky, and often the tourists themselves. Some tourists prefer to photograph themselves in the middle of the bridge with the mountains in the backdrop (Figure 5). Others stand in the middle of the bridge and use it as a place from which they capture natural views. Interestingly, most tourists who photograph near the bridge try to include at least one part of the red bridge in their photographs. No matter where they stand to capture their shots, the bridge or at least a part of it is an essential element of every tourist photograph taken in Kōrankei. Interview results reveal that the bridge is the most popular component in every picture. Most interviewees stated that their pictures included red autumn leaves and the bridge. This supports the key role that the bridge, as the symbol of Kōrankei, plays in tourists' photographs during red autumn leaf viewing.

In addition to the bridge and the viewing spots suggested by the walking map, tourists are actively involved in photographic performances at several places within Kōrankei. The wide riverside of Tomoe River is a principal stage of photographic performances for many tourists. The main performance is well-organized bus-tour photography operating repeatedly throughout the day. After waiting on the path, bus-tour tourists are guided to a photography



Figure 3. Taigetsu-kyō Bridge at Kōrankei (photograph by the author).



Figure 4. Photographing at the bridge (photograph by the author).



Figure 5. Photographing red autumn leaves with the Bridge on the Bridge (photograph by the author).

platform on the riverside by professional photographers who shout “Mind your step!” Led by photographers, people line up, smile, and are photographed with a sign that reads “Kōrankei.” This is enacted in the middle of the riverside. This can be understood as a “team performance” that Edensor describes as follows:

As a highly directed operation, with guides and tour managers acting as choreographers and directors, the performance is repetitive, specifiable in movement, and highly constrained by time. Besides acting out their own part in the drama by photographing, gazing and moving en masse according to well-worn precedent the group also absorb the soliloquies of the central actors, the guides, who enact the same script at each performance.

(Edensor 1998: 65)

Here, professional photographers who guide bus-tour tourists to the photography platform act as “directors.” They repeatedly shout the same lines: “Mind your step,” “Smile,” and “Move your hat up.” Although the photographers follow and repeat the same scripts, tourists are not allowed to perform different scripts. Their performances are strongly regulated in time and space in the enactment of bus-tour photography.

Similarly, individual tourists actively enact their photographic performances at the riverside. In such a wide open space, tourists have a distanced view and choose their favorite camera angle and position (Figures 6 and 7). Liberated from the busy and crowded bridge, tourists invest time in taking pleasing photographs with the symbolic bridge or the mountains in the background. They look for places to capture their best images or simply to stand and pose for photographs. By selecting the locations and compositions of their shots, individual tourists produce their personalized images of Kōrankei landscapes.

During my fieldwork, I noticed that many tourists attempted to photograph themselves near the photography platform (Figure 7). For instance, after the bus-tour photography was done, some of the tourists in the bus tour attempted to take their own pictures on the platform. Other individual tourists stood on the platform to capture themselves with the platform empty. Although the platform has been placed there for the benefit of bus-tour tourists, it often provides individual tourists with a stage to produce their own pictures of Kōrankei. Individual tourists are aware that the riverside and platform provides the ideal location to produce the best images with the bridge in the background.

Another observation of my fieldwork is that tourists in Kōrankei have a strong desire to capture a beautiful moment involving red autumn leaves. Photographing red autumn leaves is a conspicuous and common act observed in Kōrankei, as revealed by my observations and interviews. Shots are, of course, taken in various places on the bridges across the Tomoe River, paths, the riverside, and restaurants/



Figure 6. Individual tourist photographic performance 1 (photograph by the author).



Figure 7. Individual tourist photographic performance 2 (photograph by the author).

cafes. Tourists seem keen to photograph nice moments of red autumn leaves in Kōrankei. While most of them take photographs of their travel companions, it appears that photographing red autumn leaves is their main priority.

The act of framing red autumn leaf viewing is the most conspicuous performance at Kōrankei (Figures 8 and 9). Larsen argues that “romantic gazing” performances are often enacted in solitude even when sightseeing with “significant others” (Larsen 2004: 128). As written by Urry, the act of gazing at nature for Western tourists is understood as “the semi-spiritual relationship with the object of the gaze” (Urry 2002: 150). For instance, citing British tourists’ interview data regarding their visits to the Taj Mahal, Edensor described the desire to look at “picturesque” and “sublime” objects and scenes in solitude (Edensor 1998: 122). The interviewees complained about the “tourist rush” at the Taj Mahal and felt disappointed by the large number of other tourists.

Yet, while Western tourists have the desire to feel a sense of detachment and experience time for being contemplative, tourists in Kōrankei express different views and opinions. It can be said that capturing the desired images of red autumn leaves follows a different pattern from Western “gazing” practices. As all the figures in this section show, tourists in Kōrankei are surrounded by other tourists to an extent that it is almost impossible to find a place where no tourist is present, especially during autumn. Observations show that the performance of gazing at red autumn leaves is actually enacted in noisy, lively, and hectic environments on the bridge or near the busy narrow street. As a consequence, photographic performances in Kōrankei are never enacted in solitude.

Interestingly, my interviews reveal that the Kōrankei tourists are not annoyed by the presence of other tourists. Some very patiently wait for others to pass between their cameras and their photographic objects. No interviewees complained that their photographic practices were disturbed by other tourists; some even mentioned that they tried not to include other tourists in their shots. An elderly tourist said that the photographic performances of others were useful in finding nice locations and moments: “Almost everybody took pictures in similar places, and then, I noticed, oh, this place must be the best location for photography. There are such places, aren’t there? ... Then, I thought, ok, I’ll take mine here, too” (elderly male traveling with his partner, Interview 1).

Moreover, the performance of gazing at red autumn leaves produces certain postures, of which “looking up” is the most common. Figure 10 illustrates some of tourist-photographers’ physical actions when capturing the red autumn leaves in photographs. Sunlight is essential in produc-



Figure 8. Framing red autumn leaves 1
(photograph by the author).

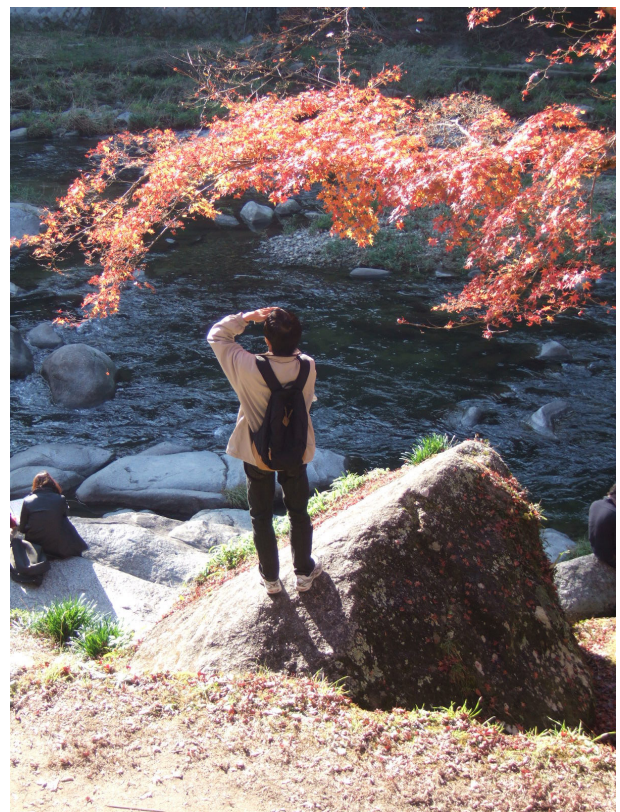


Figure 9. Framing red autumn leaves 2
(photograph by the author).

ing beautiful images. Lifting their arms to focus on shining leaves illuminated by the sunlight, people try to capture beautiful shots composed of these two features. The similarities in postures exhibited by different tourists are clear. They focus on the same object: red autumn leaves illuminated by sunshine.

The “looking up” posture is linked to the perception of the red autumn leaves’ beauty illuminated by the afternoon sunshine, when the sun comes out. Interviews reveal tourists’ strong desire to create beautiful images of this theme. As one elderly couple said, “Yes, I wanted to capture the beautiful river, riverside, and autumn leaves... The color of the red leaves is so vivid here” (male interviewee, Interview 3) and “Well, [the leaves are] illuminated by the afternoon sun; the sun is streaming through the leaves... though the weather today is not so good” (female interviewee, Interview 3). Another female tourist said, “[I wanted to take pictures of] beautiful luminous colors of red autumn leaves that sunlight generates” (Interview 9). Although the tourists themselves seemed to be aware of the beauty of this theme, it is worth noting that the beauty of the leaves “stroked” by sunlight is also highlighted in the official map.

This finding highlighted the fact that tourists give credence to the beauty of red autumn leaves accentuated by the afternoon sunshine through their photographic practices. Tourists produce and reproduce images of the “sun-kissed” leaves similar to those proposed by the ATA. It should be noted that the tourists themselves popularize the “proper” moment of red autumn leaves in Kōrankei. They learn how, when, and where to capture their desired shots by observing other tourists’ photographic performances while walking on a path, chatting with their friends/families, and viewing nature. Larsen argues that romantic gazing practices and their photography by individual tourists constitute parts of a “hermeneutic circle” (Larsen 2004: 129). Tourist-photographers in Kōrankei accentuate the image of the “sun-kissed” leaves by ritually seeing and photographing them. They view and photograph landscapes in a determined way. As Osborne explains, “The repetition of the same gesture—photographing the photographed—forms part of the ritual behaviour of tourism, a choreography of mostly foreknown movements and encounters” (Osborne 2000: 85).

In red autumn leaf viewing at Kōrankei, different forms of gazing, posing, and framing are simultaneously enacted in the same place (Figure 11). Tourists appear obsessed with producing beautiful and pleasing images of the red autumn leaves while busy posing, smiling, and framing their travel companions. I conclude that the constructed visibility and materiality at Kōrankei produces multiple enactments of the two different gazes and performances where tourists, images, cameras, and attitudes toward nature and friends/families intimately intersect.

The diversity of landscape experiences is regulated by a constructed visibility that allows particular places, objects, and moments to be seen and performed by tourists in determined ways. Tourist experiences at Kōrankei are composed of corporeal movements and enactments of different kinds of gazing performances. The landscape experiences of Japanese tourists are composed of progressive performances of different gazes. In her research on the material culture of the Japanese household and changing familial relationships, and by drawing on Moeran’s work, Daniels concludes that “the Japanese... are very aware of the ways in which each frame functions to affect their social behaviour... they consciously mould both space and time to fit in with these frames” (Daniels 2001b: 225-



Figure 10. “Looking up” to frame red autumn leaves (photograph by the author).



Figure 11. Intersections of different gazes and performances (photograph by the author).

226). Japanese tourists are perhaps more conscious about being playful and adapting their behavior within changing landscapes, thereby manipulating and performing different gazes accordingly.

4. Conclusion

My analysis of Asuke's official map of red autumn leaf viewing showed that nature viewing is more than just "seeing nature"; it involves a diverse and complex collection of practices. In particular, I concentrated on the ways that photographic performances regarding red autumn leaf viewing are enacted by Japanese tourists. My visual ethnography revealed that red autumn leaf viewing produces a place where multiple performances are enacted intimately.

My study concludes that there is an imperative need to gain new insights to understand the complexities of non-Western tourism practices in the globalizing world. I have demonstrated that the act of viewing nature and its experiences in Asuke is strongly connected to the way in which the pre-modern Japanese consume nature, that is, visiting holy places and/or *meisho* (famous places) with a distinctive natural environment. It is important to discern how pre-modern landscape practices are entwined with the production of tourist spaces and the ways in which tourists use nature at sites.

The results of the study suggest that the materiality of space, such as the Bridge in Kōrankei, serves as a platform for nature-viewing practices. The enactment of nature gazing often immobilizes tourist flows on the Bridge. I have written previously about the link between material designs and tourist performances (Yasue and Murakami 2012). The material elements partially condition photographic performances undertaken by individual tourists. It can be argued that the material elements of places can help generate not only individual tourist performances but also the production of tourist spaces where distinct kinds of performances are enacted. Edensor denotes, "in theatrical terms, tourism encourages the production of distinct kinds of stage and is an activity which sustains a host of competing performative norms" (Edensor 2002:84). Tourism involves various cultural and historical practices that allow us to gain richer understandings of the globalizing tourism culture. I argue that understanding the practices of modern tourism and their relationship with the production of tourist spaces in non-Western countries brings us to an analysis of broader cultural practices.

This research highlighted various tourist performances through the practice of photography. The empirical findings suggest that there seem to be different stories told with regard to practices of perceiving nature undertaken in regions outside Europe and North America. I partially provided evidence for this assertion by closely observing Japanese photographic performances in natural tourist spaces in Asuke. However, more detailed analysis should be conducted to gain insights into the theoretical assumptions on the current tourism practices and industries in contemporary Asian society.

Interviewee list

1. Elderly couple
2. Three elderly females
3. Elderly couple
4. Four elderly females
5. A young daughter in her 20s with her parents and grandmother
6. Elderly couple
7. Two elderly females
8. Young couple
9. A female with her baby and baby's grandmother
10. A middle-aged female travelling with her partner

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