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A Comparative Analysis of the Tourist Industry

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A Comparative Analysis of the Tourist Industry

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1. THE ERA OF THRIVING TOURISM

From 1965 until the present day (1991), Japan has been enjoying social and economic stability unprecedented in its history. A manifestation of this stability has been thriving tourism. For example, the number of travelers overseas reached more than ten million in fiscal year 1991 even before the end-of-the-year traveling season. Among them, 70 percent traveled mainly for recreational purposes. The number of tourists who go overseas will probably reach more than ten million in the near future. Thus, we are now in an era in which about one Japanese in ten go overseas as a tourist on an annual basis.

There has been other period in Japanese history which was equivalent to the present one of peace and stability: the middle Edo period when the so-called plebeian culture began to flourish. The development of travel by the masses was certainly a characteristic of plebeian culture. Pilgrimage to temples and shrines, in particular, was widely popular, the Ise pilgrimage being a typical example. I will discuss this point later in detail, but some claim that more than a million people annually went to Ise Shrine as pilgrims during the mid-Edo period.

One reliable source is the report of the magistrate of Ise-Yamada to the shogunate on the number of pilgrims in April 1718. According to this report, 427,500 pilgrims visited the shrine between the New Year's day and April 15th in 1718. In this case, the total number of pilgrims for that year would be at the most about 20 to 30 percent more, because the majority were farmers who traveled mainly between New Year's day and early spring, the agricultural off-season. Thus, one may assume that between 500,000 to 600,000 people visited Ise Shrine as pilgrims in the mid-Edo period. Furthermore, the so-called "sneak pilgrimage," where young men went to Ise without formally notifying the authorities, was very popular then, thus significantly increasing the number. When we assume the total population of

Japan was roughly fifteen million, it must be concluded that one person out of twenty visited Ise Shrine.

At that time, it took about ten days to travel from Edo to Ise and a return trip took about a month. In addition, most travelers visited Kyoto and Osaka as well, spending about ten more days. Thus, the total length of the journey would be around forty days. Of course, travelers from Kyoto and surrounding areas would spend only half that time, but some travel journals record that it took as many as sixty days to complete the pilgrimage from Edo. Therefore, the average length of a journey comes to about forty days, which, when multiplied by the 800,000 people who traveled annually, comes to thirty-two million person days.

At present, overseas travelers number around eight million, and their average length of travel is seven nights and eight days, according to *The White Paper on Tourism* for 1991, chalking up sixty-four million man days altogether. At the same time, the present population is about ten times more than that of the mid-Edo period. Thus, the actual figure for comparison should be only one tenth of that. Of course, these figures alone are not adequate to make a comparison between the present time and the mid-Edo period. However, it is a good indication of how popular and widespread travel was in the mid-Edo period.

Further evidence are the abundance of publications such as *meishozue* (illustrated scenic places), *yôjinshû* (collection of good counsel), and *ryoteihyô* (lists of itineraries), which were equivalent to present-day tourist guidebooks. Moreover, the fact that many travel journals have remained in many areas prove the popularity of travel beyond a doubt. The common people in the mid-Edo period were certainly on the go.

A desire to travel is common to all human beings, but travel thrives only because institutions and facilities for travel were well equipped and the society stable. Only when the safety and comfort of travel are secured, can 10 percent or more of the population go off on sight-seeing tours for a considerable period.

2. SERVICING TRAVEL FACILITIES

For example, transportation policies of the Edo government placed emphasis on the development of highways and post-towns, which made it easier to travel. Yet, this was certainly not the first transportation policy to be implemented. For example, long before, a post-relay system was established after the Taika Reform (645). In this system, stations were established in Yamato, Kawachi, Omi, Tanba, Mino and Ise. Each post-station was equipped with post-carriers and post-horses, and provided accommodation and transportation for the convenience of government bureaucrats. However, in reality, the system was not fully functional and disintegrated in the Heian period.

In the Kamakura period (1185-1336), highways to Kamakura were opened so that in an emergency, the military would be able to reach Kamakura quickly from major cities in eastern Japan. Laws on posts and highways were established, each

station was equipped with post-horses, and food was supplied regularly by the magistrate. Yet, these services were limited to the area around Kamakura and did not reach other areas of the country.

Compared to the transportation policies of the previous periods, the policies of the Edo period were more comprehensive. First of all, the Edo government designated the five main highways: Tōkaidō, Nakasendō, Nikkōkaidō, Kōshkaidō and Ōshūkaidō. The government repaired the highways and constructed mile posts. All five major highways started from somewhere in the capital of Edo and every *li* (approximately 4 kilometers), either pine or nettle trees were planted on both sides of the road. These mile posts not only provided a means to measure the distances between various towns, but also provided rest areas for travelers. Complementing to five major highways were the sub-major highways, such as the Mitokaidō, Minokaidō, Isekaidō and Chūgokukaidō.

Next, in order to fully utilize the highway, the post-relay system, the post-village system, and the express messenger system were implemented. People and goods were transported using the post relay system and it was centrally coordinated by the mediators who were called *ton'ya*. Carriers and horses were always ready for use at the mediators' yards and the fares were decided by weighing the goods. When labour and horses were in short supply, workers and horses were recruited from surrounding villages. This system was called the post-village system (*sukegō seido*).

In other words, the mediator acted as an agent between client and business supported by the post-village system. After those systems were implemented, the transportation of people and goods was carried out more smoothly and more safely. Yet, the most important element of the transportation policy of the Edo period was that the communities which were located at certain intervals along the highways not only functioned as a station but also provided lodging accommodations.

People who traveled on official business stayed either at the main lodge or the auxiliary lodge, which was reserved for the privileged. Ordinary travelers were not allowed to stay at the main or auxiliary lodges, but they could stay at inns and at tea houses. Thus, travelers' facilities gradually developed to meet the needs of their clients.

All of these transportation policies were implemented promptly in conjunction with the alternate attendance system (*sankin kōtai*). In other words, the frequent daimyō processions for the alternate attendance system brought about the development of highways and post-towns throughout the Edo period. In the alternate attendance system, lords of various fiefs (*han*) were obliged to reside at Edo every other year. Consequently, about three hundred lords traveled with their retainers between Edo and their fiefs every year. The three Tokugawa Successor Houses (*gosanke*) and lords of big fiefs, such as Kaga, Satsuma and Date had about 20,000 members in their retainers. Smaller fiefs, which were ranked at less than 10,000 *goku*, were required to have about fifty or sixty members, according to a record from the Kyōhō era (1716-1736). Thus, if the average number of travelers were

around two hundred and fifty per fief, then all in all, a considerable number of people traveled on major highways, such as the Tōkaidō.

The common people traveled a great deal as well. It is often claimed that in the Edo period the common people, a majority of whom were farmers, were underprivileged and suffered from acute poverty. This statement is partly true. The annual land tax was heavy and severe restrictions were placed on leaving the village. At the same time, the common people were energetic and resilient. Travel at the time was not easy, but the people could not help wanting to go on a trip when they saw lords and their retinues traveling frequently. Travelling symbolized the higher status of the individual.

For peasants, who were prevented by various restrictions from leaving their village communities, the most effective excuse to go on a trip was to visit temples and shrines in order to pray for national peace and a good harvest. It goes without saying that farmers traveled during the slack season of the agricultural calendar. Large groups of travelers from the same village were rare. Instead, smaller numbers traveled as representatives of their village communities or youth groups. An alternative was to participate in the *kō* (confraternity). They obtained permission to travel from the authorities on the grounds that they were going to worship for themselves and on behalf of others. The reality was that the *bakufu* and *daimyō* could not totally ban travel by the common people when they themselves traveled frequently.

In this way, pilgrimages to temples and shrines became popular. In particular, the pilgrimage to Ise Shrine was enormously popular as is shown in the expressions: "Everyone should make the Ise pilgrimage once in his life" and "Thanksgiving pilgrimage (*okage mairi*)". It was around this time that the so-called "sneak pilgrimage," in which young men visited Ise without permission, became a rite of passage among the youth in country villages.

The pilgrimage was a common reason for travel by the common people since the beginning of modern times, but people rarely traveled individually, as I have previously pointed out; rather they traveled in groups which were organized by the *kō*. In other words, it was a pilgrimage on behalf of others.

A *kō* consisted of a group of people from various villages (occasionally it was formed within a village, but generally it had members from several villages in the area), and the members had a common goal (in this case worshipping at temples and shrines). Each member of the *kō* made a contribution towards traveling costs and representatives used the money for the pilgrimage. Since the members took turns as representatives, every member was guaranteed to have a chance to travel over a period of several years. This system manifested the practicality and acumen of the common people.

3. THE ARRANGEMENT OF TRAVEL BY THE *OSHI*

Travel arranged by the *kō* was, in effect, a group tour, or in more modern ter-

minology, a package tour. In the tourist industry of today, the group tour and the package tour are considered to be two different traveling styles. In a group tour, participants assemble at a certain place and travel together on the same itinerary from beginning to end. On the other hand, a package tour is offered for participants who start their journey from various points of departure and eventually follow the main itinerary. So-called optional tours also belong to this category. A group tour is organized for a group of people who know each other in the community, work place or school. By contrast, the participants of a package tour need to introduce themselves to other members at the beginning of the tour. Thus, the latter provides a chance to meet new people.

Both types of tour were arranged for *kô* unit groups for visiting temples and shrines. Yet, the package tour style was more common because two or three people per village joined and traveled together with people from other villages of the same area. Either way, historically speaking, the Japanese seem to have liked traveling in groups.

According to *The White Paper on Tourism*, 80 percent of overseas tourist travel and 60 percent of domestic tourist travel was undertaken in group tours including package tours. A certain major travel agency organized more than 4,000 package tours to overseas destinations and more than 30,000 in Japan. These figures indicate Japanese dependence on travel agencies.

I would like to propose here that the origin of this tendency can be found in the *kô* system of the Edo period. In addition, the *oshi*, also known as *shishoku*—contributed greatly to the establishment of the system of group tours. In fact, the *oshi* were the original travel agencies in Japan. In this article, I will discuss the *oshi* in Ise who built up their power in the Edo period and examine their business practices.

The following description appears in the 33rd Miscellaneous Chapter of *Dai-Jingû Koji Ruisan* (The Collection of Historical Incidents on the Great Shrine):

Thus, those holding the holy profession of praying on behalf of others were called *gokitôshi* or *shishoku* and the term *gokitôshi* is found in *Azuma Kagami* for the first time [JINGÛ SHICHÔ 1973].

Ise Shrine became prosperous because of its close relations with the authority of the ancient state. The lands owned by the shrine and its branches spread across the nation. Therefore, Shintô priests and people who worked in the shrine led an affluent life.

However, under the Kamakura government, the shrine and the priests could no longer expect protection from the authorities. The court and shrines did not have much influence on the rising samurai class and their power base started to erode. The priests, especially, had to face serious problems in sustaining their livelihood.

In spite of this political background, the belief in the spiritual significance of Ise Shrine spread not only among the imperial families, but also among aristocrats and samurai. As the power of the samurai increased, the country began to ex-

perience social turmoil and the priests were frequently requested to pray for peace in the nation. Subsequently, some priests started to accept private requests for prayers, although Ise Shrine had only performed official prayers for peace and stability of the court until that time and was prohibited from performing private prayers.

For example, according to the *Azuma Kagami*, a Shintô priest (*gonnégî*) by the name of Kôrin, went to Kamakura and received a prayer request from Minamoto no Yoritomo in 1181. Kôrin's official name was Dokai Kôrinsô Shikajirô Tayû and he was a *gonnégî* of the Outer Shrine according to Onishi Gen'ichi's book, *Dai-Jingû Shiryô* (History of the Great Shrine). At that time, the *gonnégî* class possessed the fifth rank and was given the title of tayû. This title continued to be used as the title for *oshi* until later years. They probably originated around that time. The *oshi* were, in other words, mediators between the shrine and the people.

Gradually, the belief system of the noble and powerful began to spread among the common people. Similarly, the pool of the *oshi*'s clientele shifted from the elite to the ordinary folk. This transition occurred between the Muromachi period (1336-1603) and the Edo period.

Originally, the *oshi* belonged to the shrine and worked as missionaries spreading the Ise belief. However, by the Edo period, the *oshi* were no longer affiliated with Ise Shrine and worked independently as mediating priests, devoting their energy to their business activities. Thus, the activities of the *oshi* were more that of merchants than of priests.

As mentioned above, the *oshi* had been given the title of tayû and in the Edo period, this was regarded as a type of professional title. This meant that the title was a valuable property and was frequently traded or pawned. Thus, a certain title was sometimes owned by series of people. One who bought a title was not allowed to assume a different title and was requested to keep it. This regulation was enforced to prevent a drastic increase in this profession, and after the Kan'en era (1748-51), the government put a moratorium on the creation of new *oshi* positions. In addition, surveys were made every five years in order to check the number of professional positions of *oshi* so that the number would stay fixed.

For example, there were 145 families in Yamada with the title *oshi* in 1595, according to the *Shishoku-chô* (Records of the *Oshi* Profession). There were more *oshi* in Yamada than in Uji. In 1689, there were 440 families according to the *Yamada sôshi shokunin shûtô-chô* (Register of professionals and tradesmen in Yamada) and, in 1755, there were 573 families according to the *Shishoku meichô* (Name register of *oshi*). With the addition of several *oshi* who lived near the Inner shrine, the total number in Ise in the middle Edo period is estimated to be between six hundred and seven hundred.

By the middle Edo period, each *oshi* had established his own territory. These territories were called *kasumi* or *dan'naba*. Each household in a territory was called a *danka* (parishioners) or *danna*. The 1777 version of *Shi Kitô Danka Chô* (Private Prayer Household Records) shows the number of affiliated households in

each country totaling 4.19 million households. This information was collected by *oshi*, so it might have been exaggerated slightly. Even so, it is an amazing number, equivalent to about seventy to 80 percent of the total households in Japan.

The available sources are not clear as to how a *danka* was acquired. However, it is quite certain that the *oshi* actively sought out new households who would join their territories. The territory of each *oshi* was normally arranged geographically. For example, a particular *oshi* had the majority of his *danka* in the Tōhoku district (northern Honshū) another in Kyūshū and yet another in Kanto. Nevertheless, particular *oshi* did not have exclusive control over a particular town or a village. It was quite common to have several *oshi* sharing a town or a village in their territories.

In principle, an *oshi* should not invade another's territory, but in reality, there were often conflicts over territorial claims. In the Edo period, conflicts were usually limited to territorial disputes on the individual level. However, in earlier times, such as the Muromachi period, larger scale conflicts between groups occurred. Often such conflicts were between the traditional *gon'negi* group and a new *oshi* group. Some records even mention the occurrence of armed conflicts.

As a result, seventeen provisions of the *Oshi Shoku Shikimoku* (Regulations on the *Oshi* Profession) were written down in Yamada in 1605. According to these regulations, the relationship between the *oshi* and the *danka* should be perpetual and should not terminate even if there were generational or residential changes in the household. Next, the regulations stated that a member of a *danka* was required to stay at the house of the affiliated *oshi* when visiting Ise Shrine. Furthermore, the regulations emphasized that unaffiliated *oshi* should not help other *danka* members even if they were experiencing hardship. Lastly, one who moved to Yamada from somewhere else could not acquire the *oshi* title in his generation.

The fact that these regulations were laid down clearly indicated that the relationship between the *oshi* and the *danka* involved significant rights and authority on the part of the *oshi*. Thereafter, the rights and authority of the *oshi* were protected by these regulations.

4. THE OSHI AS THE ORIGINAL TRAVEL AGENTS

The most important business activity of the *oshi* was the annual distribution among the *danka* of shrine charms on which appear the characters of the word *Dai-Jingū* (the great shrine). These charms were also called *Jingū taima* (shrine talismans). The distribution activity offered a chance to acquire new *danka*. The *taima* was a seal which proved that the *oshi* had prayed at Ise Shrine on behalf of the *danka* for the public peace, safety among family members and abundance of the harvest. This seal provided a clever symbolic link between Ise Shrine and the common people.

Visits to each *danka* were mainly carried out by the *oshi*'s assistants who were welcomed and received cordially by the *danka* members. For example, the follow-

ing message can be found in the *Negi Yamabushi*:

I am an *oshi* from Ise. I always visit gentlemen in various countries around this time of the year. I plan to visit them this year as well. There is nothing more auspicious than the appearance of the deity of Ise Shrine. When I visit various households in different parts of the country, every house serves delicious food.

An *oshi* was called "Mr. Ise," but their activity no longer had anything to do with Ise Shrine itself. In their cleverly delivered oral messages, they might have said, "I came from Ise," or "I am *tayû* from Ise," but they would have never said "I came from Ise Shrine." Nevertheless, in communities in the countryside, people doubtless believed that they could obtain the deity's grace from the *oshi*. One could argue that the *oshi* were deceiving the public. Yet, the popularization of a certain belief often involves a more or less similar practice.

Other than the *taima*, the second commodity the *oshi* dealt in was local products from Ise. Most of the items were light and portable, such as paper, charcoal, sashes, combs, dried sea weed, tea, cosmetic powder and the Ise calendars. An example of this practice can be found in Ihara *Saikaku's* *Seken Munazanyô* (Worldly Mental Calculations):

Every year, when the agent from Ise brings the box of talismans, he gives me a string of dried bonito, a box of calomel, a folding calendar, and five packets of genuine green laver. When each little item is priced and tallied, they amount to two *momme* eight *fun*; so if I make an offering of three *momme*, throwing in an extra two *fun*, it won't exactly be a losing deal for the Ise Shrine either. That's how I handled things for thirty years. But ever since I put you in charge, you've been giving a whole piece of silver! It may be out of your devotion to the gods, but it's senseless nonetheless. Reckless spenders never make the Sun Goddess happy. Even the offering coins they use at the Grand Shrine prove this . . . [IHARA 1976: 45].

Originally, these souvenir items were not sold; rather they were given as return gifts for those who donated a considerable amount of money in prayer fees. But, in later days, they were sold as commodities.

Thus, the *oshi* traveled around the country in order to increase their number of *danka*, receive money as prayer fees by distributing prayer seals, and earn income by selling Ise produce. For example, in the *Dansho Shintoku Kanjô no Koto* (Accounting book of the deity's virtue among the followers) of 1813, there were thirty-seven villages and 2,162 households in Tokumori of the Ôsu region in Iyo province. The amount received as prayer fees was 48 *ryô* and 2 *bu*, the expense to earn that amount was 29 *ryô* and 3 *bu*; thus the profit was 18 *ryô* and 3 *bu*. These figures show that the *oshi* could expect a reasonable income when he had about 2,000 households of *danka*. According to the *Gegû Shishoku Shokoku Dankasû Oboe*

(Notes on the Number of *Danka* of *Oshi* in the Outer Shrine Area), some powerful *oshi* actually had more than 100,000 households of *danka* each and the income from them must have been significant.

The income sources of the *oshi* were not just limited to money they earned from visiting *danka*. They also generated income by providing accommodation to those *danka* members who visited Ise Shrine. As I have discussed above, *kô* were organized among *danka* in various regions, and the members of a *kô* usually traveled to Ise not individually, but in a group as representatives of their *kô*. Thus, they did not take individual tours, but group tours. Therefore, the number of pilgrims who stayed at their *oshi*'s residence was no doubt considerable.

It was the custom for *danka* members to pay *oshi gokû-ryô* (contributions for the sacred rice), *kagura-ryô* (contributions for the sacred dance) and *shinba-ryô* (contributions for the sacred horses). All these payments were regarded as prayer fees and the *oshi* did not have to share the payments with Ise Shrine because these prayers were performed at the *oshi*'s residence. Naturally, the contributions for sacred horses should have been sent to Ise Shrine, but there was no record that any *oshi* actually did so. The specific name of the contribution was only a formality, and in reality, it was regarded as another source of income for the *oshi*.

5. THE PRODUCTION OF *HARE* (SACREDNESS) AS TOURIST ADVERTISEMENT

The *oshi* were very shrewd professionals. Their cordial reception of *danka* members was for them merely a part of their business. The style of reception was described by Inoue Zekan of Kyoto in 1785 in his *Ise Sangû Kikô* (Records of Pilgrimage to Ise Shrine) as follows:

We were guided to the residence of the *tayû* and after a courteous greeting, we were led to the study and drawing room. In the alcove of the room hung a scroll of Moritake calligraphy and in the vase were arranged rabbit-ear irises. In this room, we were served with delicacies caught in the river, fished from the sea and hunted in the mountains. We slept in silk bedding. When we protested to the master that his hospitality exceeded what we actually deserved, he answered that he treated us as guests from god; we felt awed by his answer. Everything happened as if we were in a dream, and we were able to rest and recover from the fatigue of the journey. The next day, the sacred dance was performed. . . . After the ritual dancing, we visited Uji Bridge, the Inner Shrine and the Outer Shrine again, accompanied by house servants. After peaceful prayers at a series of subsidiary shrines, we went to Ayabe *tayû* at the Outer Shrine and asked if we could contribute towards the prayer fees. Then, the master came to greet us and guided us. We were let to the drawing room and served delicious food and drinks. The banquet was highly enjoyable and relaxing. We got into a palanquin to return to the Hôrai residence again. . . . Later, we received the divine blessings and collected some products for

souvenirs. The next day, we thanked the master courteously. We rode on a bamboo litter which took us to Nakagawara by courtesy of the residence, accompanied by the house servants. Here, too, they served us sweets in a bowl which they brought with them. From beginning to end, the hospitality the master offered was overwhelming. We bid farewell to the servants and departed for Kyoto with reluctance. I left for Myôjin in Obarasu [1785, quoted in Onishi 1956].

This account clearly shows the level of hospitality provided by the *oshi*.

The banquet menu at the residence of the *oshi* named Zenku Tayû during this visit was extravagant. It consisted of three trays of many kinds of sea food, vegetables, mushrooms, soups, pickles, and rice. Duck, prawns and abalone were also served on a large platter. The *sake* was a freshly pressed one from Nada. As we see, the menu was composed of the finest foods.

In earlier times, the main task of the *oshi* was to facilitate the prayer of emperors, aristocrats and samurai who visited the shrine. Therefore, the *hôteishi* (a representative of the person who wanted to worship) had to be treated cordially. Thus, the menus must have come from that original tradition.

The same style of entertainment continued after the *oshi* became independent from the shrine and started to do business with ordinary people, in the Edo period, but underneath the hospitality lay a cunning business spirit. What they intended was advertisement with maximum effect. Guests who visited the *oshi* would talk about the luxury they enjoyed in Ise after returning to their village in the *oshi*'s territory. Then, the recruitment of the next group would proceed without any problem. Business would not prosper unless the clients raved about their experiences in Ise. In order to achieve this goal, the *oshi* would prepare *habutae* silk bedding and provide souvenirs besides *taima*.

Business activities of the *oshi*, with their modern counterparts in parentheses, may be listed as follows:

- 1) Management of the territory (in modern terms, client management)
- 2) Organizing *kô* (organizing package tours)
- 3) Management of the *kô* fund (management of lay-away plans for travel)
- 4) Dispatching helpers for the journey (accompaniment by the tour guide)
- 5) Welcoming (meeting service)
- 6) Prayer
- 7) Guiding the shrine visits (arranging guides)
- 8) Entertaining at banquets (setting up banquets)
- 9) Looking after accommodation (arranging accommodation)
- 10) Arranging souvenirs (recommending souvenir items; presenting memorial gifts)
- 11) Escorted introduction to the market (introduction of the local night life)

Thus, the basic business practices of the present-day travel agency were already being implemented by the *oshi*. Furthermore, the *oshi* actually provided more com-

prehensive business services than modern agencies because they provided accommodation and souvenirs. After the Meiji Restoration, the system which the *oshi* created disintegrated and the system of Western tourist agencies was introduced. The two sectors of the agents (travel agents) and the recipients (inns and souvenir shops) became more separate and specialized. In this line of development, the *oshi* may be regarded as the originators of the tourist industry in Japan.

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