Tourism as a Process of Globalization

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I. Introduction:

1.1: Historical Overview of Tourism

> *'Tourism is an aspect of globalization[1]. There is nowhere on Earth that is not available to tourism. Garbage from tourists now exists at the South Pole. The seas of Southeast Asia are full of garbage and sewage, much of it coming from island resorts. The garbage from tourism can affect the local environment so strongly that food becomes hard to find'* (Fromm, 1999, p. 66).

Human beings have long been searching for food, clothing, and shelter, expanding their field of activities; that is, they have traveled to secure their livelihood, whether or not they have preferred to do so. If one observes the recent pattern of international migration, it shows that 120,000,000 people live away from their homelands due to lowered airfares, population pressure in developing nations, advanced technology of information and communication, and international economic activities (Kouno, 2000, p. 573). Accompanied by such mobility, cross-cultural encounters and exchanges have taken place, and humans have long learned to employ some of the foreign cultural resources on their own account. It is true that the forms of human travel have gradually shifted from survival (with mental and physical fatigue) to recreational (with secure, refreshing entertainment) along with the fact that the concept of 'leisure' has permeated in societies.

In addition, tourism is one of the fastest growing industries in our contemporary globalizing societies. According to the World Travel Organization (WTO) estimation of 2004, the annual population of international travelers that has already counted 702 million at present will reach 1 billion by the year 2010 (the Prime Minister's Office ed., *Kanko Hakusho—2004*). The total revenue of travel industries increased along with the travel population growth from 457 million dollars in 1999 to 474 million dollars in 2004 (ibid.). Along with this trend, the Construction and Transport Ministry of Japan, for example, is waging a campaign to double the number of foreign visitors to Japan from the current yearly figure of four million to eight million by 2007 (*The Daily Yomiuri*, January 10, 2001, p.1). A great number of people are moving on a global scale, and the number is increasing at a rapid rate. Therefore, studying tourism in itself holds a potential in drawing a guideline for cross-cultural transactions in ever-changing contemporary societies of ours. Also, it will possibly locate the significance of the

natural resources and various local cultural assets in the context of globalization.

Historically speaking, however, our previous societies did not necessarily allow much latitude in conduct of traveling, compared with our contemporary societies. In the later 17th and the early 18th centuries, for instance, the royalties and titled nobilities would often visit towns such as Bath (in the south-west of England) and Baden-Baden (Germany) for the purpose of balneology, or hot spring cures (Kitagawa, 1998, p. 63). Also, very often, many children of the English aristocrats were temporarily sent to schools in France in order to master French as their common aristocrat language—a tool for communication and socialization among them, and to master courtesy and mannerisms; these tours were, in a generic term, called 'the Grand Tour' (ibid., p. 64). On the other hand, the masses other than the aristocrats rarely traveled for such purposes. Their common recreational facilities were mostly pubs for drinking as a diversion (ibid.). In other words, tourism open to public or the popularization of tourism had remained unrealized until the early 19th century; international or border-crossing tourism had been restricted to the population of the upper classes.

The down-market tourism for commoners, or mass tourism, emerged after Thomas Cook had founded the first travel agency in 1845. He started mass excursions as recreations in place of the temperance movement of his time (Hashimoto, 1999, p. 35). He was not the first one to organize group excursions; however, his contribution to the development of present mass tourism should deserve special attention. It is a well-known fact that his agency alone sent 165,000 visitors to the Great Exhibition at Hyde Park, London in 1851 (Cook: http://www.spartacus.schoolnet.co.uk/BUcook.htm), which made excursions popular among commoners, and they have become part of everyday life for the residents in England ever since. In other words, he democratized mass tourism. Needless to say, the development of transport means, such as railways and steamboats, accelerated mass tourism (Eadington and Smith, 1992, p. 5). As stated above, the recent growth of tourism has been closely related to the globalizing phenomena of our contemporary societies. Therefore, it seems incomplete without positioning tourism in the context of globalism.

1.2: Globalism and Localism

'Globalization has two contrasting phases. On the one hand, it standardizes and homogenizes various cultures and institutions by crossing over the borders. On the other hand, exclusionist states and ethnic groups may well harden their identities by separating themselves from the others. Indeed,

these two conflictive vectors are interweaving on the tapestry of globalization' (translated: Nakamaki, 1999, p. 8).

It is true that globalization is one of the key concepts to understand contemporary society. Some may regard it as social phenomena such as political asylum, refugee problems, and labour migrants. Others may associate it with cultural phenomena such as ethnic food, fashion, and music that can be experienced in their local communities. Still others refer to capitalism permeating globally in the age of information technology. In either case, globalization has brought about rapid, drastic changes in our lives; also, these changes have been occurring in a global scale while embrangling debates on economic and environmental issues such as the North-South problems. However, its term should be differentiated from 'internationalization' because the latter refers to the relations among the nation states while the former refers to borderless phenomena that have had impact on relations among the societies and their people (Nakamaki ed., 1999, p. 8). Unlike internationalization, in other words, the term cultural globalization has been employed to describe debatable, controversial, and complicated relationships among cultures. It may be appropriate to reappraise the process of globalization a little more circumstantially at this point.

First of all, globalization is an *'ordinary'* (Tomlinson, in Thompson ed., 1997, p. 118) cultural process, which means that we humans experience globalization in our daily lives:

> *'Electronic technology, sophisticated transport systems and the ease with which foreign currencies can be exchanged has enabled a (British) product ... to be consumed (received, used, bought) in Japan. At the same time, in London and other large cities in Britain, it is now possible to sample Japanese cuisine in sushi bars, whilst karaoke, has become universally popular throughout the UK'* (Giles, 1998, UNIT 3).

This ordinariness of globalization is parallel to that of culture defined by Williams. If he is right in saying that, *'the making of society is the finding of common meanings and experience, contact and discovery...'* (Williams, in Ann Gray, Jim McGuigan, 1993, p. 6), then, it is indeed true that we live in societies that have been rapidly globalizing.

Secondly, what responses to globalization is *'cultural imperialism'* (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 118). The terms such as 'Americanization', 'westernization', and 'cultural homogenization' represent a convenient and temptingly simple way of grasping what is going on in the globalization process (ibid. p. 119). In this argument, globalization, as they claim, is a western project. That is, cultural imperialists point out that

globalization standardizes and homogenizes cultural forms, causing convergence in world culture that results in *'an inferior, mass-produced culture that stifles the authentic and indigenous cultures of particular localities and regions'* (Giles, 1998, p. 4). Popularity of mass cultural forms from the USA, for example, has often been criticized for this reason. This argument is particularly important to discuss, for it brings up the discussion of localism with regional identities and tourism due to the unequal nature of the process of globalization; Massey calls it the *'power geometry'*:

> *'Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movements, others don't; some are more on the receiving end of it than other's; some are effectively imprisoned by it. In a sense at the end of all the spectra are those...who are in a position of control in relation to it – the jet setter, the ones sending and receiving the faxes and the e-mail... But there are also groups who are doing a lot of physical moving, but who are not in charge of the process.... The ways in which people are placed within 'time-space-compression' are highly complicated and extremely varied'* (Massey, in Gray and McGuigan eds, 1993, pp. 234-235).

It is obvious that Massey attempted contrasting the elites mostly in the First World and the people who are not in control of globalization, including labor migrants in the Third World (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 144). It is worthwhile considering to what extent uneven distribution of benefit from globalization may have had negative effects on marginalized societies, for which establishing their local identities is indispensable to survive culturally and economically.

It is hardly possible to conclude, however, that globalization is the installation of western cultural reality as cultural imperialists maintain. According to Giddens, the western grip over the rest of the world has been on decline:

> *'Globalization is more than a diffusion of western institutions across the world in which other cultures are crushed. ...We are speaking here of emergent forms of world interdependence and planetary consciousness [and] the way in which these issues are approached and coped with ... will inevitably involve conceptions and strategies derived from non-western setting.'* (Giddens, 1990, p. 173)

Similarly, as Giles writes, *'It raises the possibility that rather than a continuing project of dominance by the West, the complexities of global interconnections may shift dominance away from the West'* (Giles, 1998, p. 11), though the uneven distribution of

wealth among regions still remains.

In addition, Tomlinson illustrates his view with an example of success of the Third World within the framework of global capitalism. That is, the nations in 'Asian Tigers' such as South Korea, Taiwan, Singapore, and Hong Kong have rapidly and successfully developed their economies: *'they do represent evidence of shifting patterns of economic power which cannot be ignored'* (Tomlinson, 1997, p. 141). Furthermore, it is of great importance to note that these nations similarly see tourism as the key strategic industry for their economies; they all are member states of the WTO (Sumino, 1998, p. 13). For example, Korea has been attempting to actively promote tourism since the country established the National Tourism Organization and the Ministry of Culture and Tourism (*The Mainichi Newspaper*, December 25, 2000, p. 11). Also, Costa Rica's eco-tourism is said to function perfectly in the framework of global capitalism. It is misleading to argue that globalization is a unilateral cultural compulsion from the Advanced West to the underdeveloped.

Moreover, while globalization is still limited by the power of national governments, it is obvious that the decline of the nation-state and its national identity is also a characteristic of globalization as postmodern theorists argue:

> *'The way in which the world economy operates today (and there is today a genuine world economy), as well as the extraterritorial economic elites who operate it, favour state organisms that cannot effectively impose conditions under which the economy is run, let alone impose restraints one the way in which those who run the economy would like it to be run...'* (Bauman, 1993, p. 231)

Therefore, it is possible to generalize that our contemporary societies have become more individualized; *'the meaning of identity...refers to persons and to things. Both have lost their solidity in modern society, their definiteness and continuity'* (Bauman, 1997, 88), clarifying the division between the winner and the loser, or the *'tourist'* and the *'vagabond'*, to quote Bauman (ibid. p. 93). As a result, mobility comes up to the social front. *'Not to get tied to one place, however pleasurable the present stopover may feel'* (ibid. p. 89).

Consequently, whether one sees globalization as a western project or not, in reality, it is a hard fact that there will be winners and losers, haves and have-nots, and the dynamics of various local-global relationships. Therefore, tensions between globalizing phenomena and local cultural, social, and economic constrictions will long last; in other words, regional identity politics may well become a key issue in our contemporary societies: *'local should be seen...as a relational, and a relative term...*

being recast in relation to the global' (Robins, in Du Gay ed., 1997, p. 28). The industry of tourism, which brings about human mobility and stimulates economic activities, then, may well be a key area to bridge these contrasting forces. The World Tourism Organization (WTO), founded in 1975, has objectives to promote economic development and cross-cultural understandings among the member states:

> *'...The objectives of promoting tourism are to further economic development, promote international understanding and realise world peace and prosperity as well as to ensure the observation of human rights and liberty to all individuals, regardless of differences in race, sex, language and religion'* (Sumino, 1998, p. 13).

Moreover, Kahn, an American futurologist, predicts that tourism will be one of the key industries in the 21st century (Kahn, et al., 1976), for it compasses diversified businesses, not only culture, education, and sports but also ecological issues, financial businesses, fashion, and many others that relate to our lives (Horikawa, 2000, p. 17).

> In the following chapter, several definitions of tourism and their social contexts are first examined. Then, types of tourism are analyzed.

II: Focus on Tourism

2.1: Global-Local Nexus[2] of Tourism

It is difficult, though important, to reexamine what the term 'tourism' suggests and to recognize its significance, since the definition of tourism varies, depending on how one perceives its role in the context of globalization. While tourism may promote economic activities, it has been accused of exploitation of the West. Even eco-tourism, which attempts to pursue benefits for both hosting localities and visitors, came under attack by cultural imperialists. For example, Crosby argues that eco-tourism is a cultural version of Europeanization of the Nature. That is, Europeans have changed various parts of the Earth into new Europe by bringing animals and plants originating from the Old World into occupied colonies, and Europeans have also collected seeds of plants and domesticated them for transplanting in various places in the world (Crosby, in Ikeda, M. 1998: http://www.let.kumamoto-u.ac.jp/cs/cu/eco-tur-CR.htm). Similarly, Nash argues that according to those developing countries, eco-tourism can be an extension of imperialism or a sign of neo-colonialism, so that the boom in eco-tourism reflects the fact that imperialism has penetrated the most remote areas of the Earth while the nature of imperialism leads local people in those remote places to respond

spontaneously to its imperialistic activities (Nash, in Smith ed., 1989, pp. 38-40).

Nevertheless, it is also true that eco-tourism has been employed not only in developing countries but also in developed countries such as the UK, Germany, and Japan. One reason for this paradox must have come from issues related to forming identities not at national levels but at local/regional levels. That is, tourism (whatever form it may take) has been employed by certain communities to assert their differences, to ascertain their identities so as to compete with the tide of globalization. Let us review several aspects of tourism, while taking local identities into account.

2.2: Features of Tourism as a Commercial Behavior

To begin with, in a rather narrow sense, tourism is a commercial process in which the temporal act of buying and selling of familiarity as a pleasure takes place in a distant land (Hashimoto, 1999, p. 13). In order to fully grasp Hashimoto's definition of tourism, one should analyze three key words: (1) temporality, (2) familiarity as a pleasure, and (3) distant land.

First, tourism is fundamentally a temporal behavior. That is, any tourism is destined to have its limited duration of time. Taiwan's 'night tour', for example, is packaged with a ten-minute observation of Beijing Opera—one of the Chinese classical theater arts, a short visit to a native's village of Taiwan and a souvenir shop adjacent to it, and a Chinese style grill dinner at a local restaurant (ibid. p. 14). Each experience consumed during this tour is too short to be complete, even to the point of *indigestive*; also, the tour involves tourists' 'intervention' as consumers, which is characteristic of tourism. Moreover, according to Hashimoto, tourism should be differentiated from other travel forms such as pilgrimages, which require religious purposes and sacredness, though such distinction between tourism and pilgrimage still remains amorphous because these two forms are often combined when sold as a commercial product. For example, at a temple in Japan, it is impossible to distinguish between those who go on a pilgrimage and those who do not because even bourbons are available at souvenir shops and imarets[3] can be ordinary business hotels nowadays. Nevertheless, it is possible to conclude that any form of tourism, including pilgrimages, will eventually come to an end in a certain period of time.

Furthermore, the temporality in tourism can be applied not only to the duration of time but also to the consumed quantity. If one stays at traditional Japanese inns (ryokan), dinner will be served with a variety of local food products, each in a small quantity *a little bit of everything* (ibid.). This *a little bit of everything* (translated:

ibid.) also extends to the cultural learning experience of tourists as consumers. That is, the participants of a tour will learn no more than what a brochure/pamphlet offers. As a result, 'temporality' is one of the significant factors when one defines tourism; it signifies that the visitor does not belong to the local community.

The second significant factor in tourism is 'pleasure'. *'Tourism as a collection of little bits is characteristic of postmodernism,'* Hashimoto argues, for tourism is largely eclectic and simply streamlined to the interests of tourists/visitors (ibid. p. 15). Indeed, tourism postulates dissolution of borders that divide various cultural genres such as music, food, historical sites, and so on; tourists experience all these different cultural assets in a short period of time. Hashimoto maintains: *'a sightseer wishes to persuade himself that he is observing and experiencing something well known in a given culture. He goes pursue fame, so to speak'* (translated: ibid.). In other words, the degree of renown or publicity becomes one of the primary criteria of a tour. Therefore, any tour that stimulates one's inquisitive mind is a pleasure of great value. Becoming familiar with well-known objects and getting in close proximity to them become a pleasure in tourism.

Finally, tourism is always carried out away from one's home; therefore, scarcity value also characterizes tourism. Hashimoto argues that one expects to stay away from 'mundane', and tries to cross out everyday life while traveling (ibid. p. 16). Furthermore, a pursuit of pleasure, in the context of tourism, depends heavily on what is called, *'the tourist gaze'* (Urry, 1990, translated by Kata, 1995, p. 5). The gaze in tourism can be interpreted as the degree of remark, attention, and interest that attract tourists, and it is influenced by the tourist's usual social surroundings because he attempts to escape from routine work and everyday affairs that involve him/her when traveling. Possible objects for the gaze are, for example, *'scenery (landscape), ethnic groups, modes of living, historic sites, recreation facilities, sandy shore, the sun, and the oceans'* (translated: Hashimoto, 1999, p. 41). Therefore, when a tourist crosses over the borders, whether national, cultural, or linguistic, the value of his tour will be enhanced. Consequently, the farther the distance becomes, the higher is the travel rated. A tourist finds excitement in cultural gaps and even cultural shocks, so to speak (Nash, 1981, p. 467). However, as I have stated above, Hashimoto's definition of tourism should be regarded as narrow because it doesn't clarify the relationship between the tourists and those who accept them. In other words, it lacks sufficient account for the significance of the hosting community that facilitates tourism.

2.3: Leisure and Tourists

The Japanese Tourism Policy Council defines tourism as *'various activities conducted by individuals in their leisure time outside the sphere of their working lives for the purposes of feeling, learning and enjoying'* (Sumino, 1998, p. 3). Here, the concept of leisure is incorporated in the definition; so further analysis for tourism will be necessary. In addition, one should see the correlativity between tourism and the social permeation of leisure.

First of all, the most important is the reduction of work time. It is said that the Industrial Revolution in the UK in the 19th century contributed to the birth of leisure since it separated the work from the play; then in 1919, the ILO (International Labor Organization), at the Washington Convention, adopted the labor time of eight hours per day/48 hours per week (Kitagawa, 1998, p. 10).

> *'This (Washington Convention) attempted to enforce that standard as an entitlement to free time against the downward pressures of market competition.... the eight-hour day was both a legitimate fruit of mass productivity and a guarantor of optimal use of labour power in a mechanical age.'* (Cross, 1993, p. 77)

Similarly, the labor hours have been reduced to a great extent in Japan, according to the Ministry of Labor. That is, the Japan's average work hours per year used to be the longest among the OECD member states in the 70s and 80s; nevertheless, along with the amendment of Labor Standard Law, the total hours of actual work reduced to 1,801 hours of 1997 from 2,432 hours of 1990 (Honkawa Data Tribune: http://www2.ttcn.ne.jp/~honkawa/index.html). Deep-structurally, however, it seems that problems have remained in Japan in terms of how to implement the five-day-work week and the full use of paid vacations, due to the Japanese traditional work ethics and the peer pressures at work.

Secondly, the awareness in leisure has risen at a rapid rate since working hours started decreasing. Leisure, basically, is an autonomous, self-rewarding activity. The reason that such a leisure activity provides pleasure is that it contains factors such as relaxation, some risk, luck, problem-solving skills and creativity (Caillois, 1958). In addition, etymologically, 'leisure' and 'school' share the same semantic origin, which means that one should spend free time in order to broaden his/her mind through education. In other words, leisure has been reserved for one's education, speculation, and meditation. *'Apart from working hours and physiological period'*, according to Kitagawa, *'leisure time has three functions: (1) rest, (2) pastime, and (3) self-enlightenment and development.*

Tourism fulfills all of these three' (translated: Kitagawa, 1998, p.17). Tourism may well meet the needs of the times. Moreover, statistically, according to the public opinion polls conducted by the Prime Minister's Office in Japan since 1958, the priority has been given to 'leisure time' when asked how to improve one's lifestyle (the Prime Minister's Office: Japan, 1998, p.24). It should also be noted that leisure has bridged the social class gaps that have existed among individuals:

> *'Mass-produced clothing reduced caste distinctions especially after work: the reduction of worktime had created a widening of choice of the majority and a greater tendency to make experiments.... in leisure it is difficult to distinguish the factory worker from the doctor's daughter'* (Cross, 1993, p. 64-65).

Therefore, leisure has been democratized along with advanced technology and with the reduction of labor time. In other words,

> *'the verge between high culture and popular culture has become more precarious and obscure than ever as the societies have been better educated, highly industrialized, highly consumption-oriented, and more globalized'* (Nakamoto, 2000, p. 139).

In postmodern societies, then, it is difficult to define the boundaries between elitist cultures and secular cultures since the categories of genres and discourses have been fading away (Jameson, 1983, pp. 111-125).

Consequently, then, one can summarize that tourism is a temporal act of buying and selling pleasure that takes place in a distant land as a form of leisure. Those who intervene between tourists and their destinations are the businesses to facilitate tourism such as travel agencies, transport systems, accommodations, and so on. In other words, tourism networks in commercialism.

However, as mentioned above, one should admit that both of the definitions provided by Hashimoto and the Japanese Tourism Policy Council are still narrow and even jug-handled because they both focus too heavily on tourists, but do not state an equal involvement of their counterparts who accept tourists. That is, in the process of globalization, one should also pay closer attention to the relationship between the guests and the hosts, since not only tourists but also local residents experience cross-cultural encounters which, to some extent, may well influence the visitors' ways of living. Of course, it is true that those who engage in tourist industries are not necessarily the local residents because large-scale capital investment is often the key to straighten facilities and stimulate affluence of tourists in order to foster the local tourism. In fact, many of the postcolonial nation states regard tourism as their primary industry, so that foreign

investment is indispensable for these developing nations.

However, various forms of tourism have recently emerged, and many of them reflect upon localism. At the same time, tourists' expectations and attitudes toward the local residents seemed to have changed. Nevertheless, as the tourist resources and attractions vary, their situations and problems also vary. To put it more simply, various tourist resources have shaped diverse forms of tourism that represent localism (Smith, 1989, pp. 2-3). In the next chapter, various forms of alternative[4] tourism are illustrated with examples and some reasons for mass tourism criticism are discussed. (To be continued)

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[1] 'Globalism' and 'Globalization' are interchangeable in this article.

[2] The term is taken from Kevin Robins, 1991, 'Tradition and translation: national culture in its global context' in Corner, J., and Harvey, S. eds., *Enterprise and Heritage: crosscurrents of national culture*, London: Routledge. It indicates the dynamics between global trends and processes and local contexts.

[3] The term refers to accommodation facilities specially prepared for pilgrimages.

[4] 'alternative' is often interchangeable for 'responsible' and 'appropriate' in the context of tourism (see Ishihara, 2000).

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