

A Geographical Study of Tourism's Impact on the Spatial Restructuring of Mount Hiei

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Abstract

This study clarified the process of the restructuring of sacred sites due to tourism by examining the activities of religious organizations that manage sacred sites. In concrete terms, this study tackled the case of the temple of Enryaku-ji on Mount Hiei, and investigated the relationship between Enryaku-ji's activities and tourism intermediaries, which were an important element in the connection between tourists and sacred sites.

Mount Hiei built a funicular during the prewar period and expressways during the postwar period. Due to its relationship with transportation, which shifted across these respective periods, Mount Hiei became a tourist attraction visited by large numbers of general visitors in addition to worshipers. In relation to the above sequence of changes, this study focused on Mount Hiei's relationship with tourism intermediaries, which are important for activities related to tourist sites. The study focused on “means of movement” and “tourism information,” examining the activities of the managers of sacred sites within each of these categories.

The temple of Enryaku-ji has possessed a strong reputation as a place of study and training for the monks of the Tendai since it was established, and had not always taken a great interest in attracting visitors. However, beginning around the mid-Taisho period, temple became aware of the importance of disseminating their ideology and accepting visitors. This awareness developed due to factors such as the fear that Saicho would fall into historical oblivion. Enryaku-ji therefore agreed to the construction of a funicular from Sakamoto, which was in the planning stages at that time.

After the war, when the Hieizan Expressway opened in 1958 against the background of a management policy of using visitors as an economic foundation, Enryaku-ji shifted its image from that of a place for study and training to that of a place for spreading the teachings of Saicho—a “place for expounding the Buddha's truth to the masses”—and conducted promotional activities targeting visitors, including worshipers. Other measures

were also carried out, such as the opening of the meditation hall called Kojirin, the establishment of a Buddhist culture course, the promotion of temple accommodations, and Buddhist sermons given by missionaries. Furthermore, with the opening of the second expressway, large-scale precinct maintenance was carried out across the three pagodas—To-do, Sai-to, and Yokawa—and attempts were made to enhance Enryaku-ji's readiness to accept visitors.

Furthermore, activities to attract visitors were initiated at Enryaku-ji based on the above-mentioned changes in its promotion strategy. Subsequently, a Worship Department specializing in “encouraging and attracting worship visits” was established, and incentives to attract general visitors (both individuals and groups) and school excursion groups, in addition to worshipers, were conducted in earnest. In addition to the provision of conventional tourism information through brochures and posters, activities that responded to the diverse needs of visitors were promoted through coordination with travel agents and local tourism associations, which had become important suppliers since the postwar period. Attempts were made to promote visits by worshipers and to attract general visitors; visits to Mount Hiei were combined with large-scale events and nearby tourist sites as travel packs, and the temple practiced event-style planning for its Buddhist memorial services.

Such activities, meant to attract diverse targets, were viewed as all the more important due to the changes in the temple's administrative structure from forest management to income from the temple buildings, against the backdrop of a weak relationship with worshippers (parishioners) and a vulnerable economic foundation. These activities were also repositioned as part of the movement to reorganize religious organizations, which was being actively promoted at that time.

The above series of processes clearly show that Enryaku-ji proactively utilized the tourism intermediaries known as “means of movement” and “tourism information” in order to promote its religious activities, and reorganized its promotion strategy and precinct spaces accordingly. Moreover, when these activities were repositioned as part of the

movement to reorganize religious organizations, they began to serve as a countermeasure to the decline of traditional Buddhism.

Mount Hiei, the area targeted by this research, possesses tendencies that became clear through the examination of the historical development of suburban sacred mountains and tourism. Furthermore, the vulnerability of its economic foundation and its weak connection with worshipers yielded opportunities for its religious organization to promote initiatives towards tourism intermediaries. Within the postwar changes to social structure, suburban sacred mountains that possessed these characteristics sought ways to manage their temples by constructing relationships with external parties, i.e. non-worshipers, and tended to proactively utilize tourism resources in a similar way to that of Enryaku-ji. The series of activities carried out by Enryaku-ji and elucidated by this study can therefore be positioned amidst the general tendencies of the managers of sacred sites. On the other hand, Enryaku-ji's activities were perceived as part of the movement to reorganize religious organizations, which was being actively promoted at the time, and a further intensification of activities was observed as time went on. This point demonstrates Enryaku-ji's unique identity as the head temple of the Tendai.

Among the prior research related to sacred sites and tourism, few studies have focused on the activities of the religious organizations that manage sacred sites. In this context, by using multiple internal materials held by religious organizations, this study clarified that religious organizations have proactively utilized means of movement and tourism information and have taken the initiative in reorganizing sacred sites for the purpose of promoting religious activities. The above point has significance as a new finding in relation to prior research.

Key words: sacred mountains, tourism intermediaries, tourist sites, impact, precinct,
Enryaku-ji, Mount Hiei

Contents

Abstract	i
Contents	iv
List of tables	viii
List of figures	x
List of photos	xiii
Chapter I Introduction	1
1. Research Background	1
2. Categorization of Prior Research	3
3. Research Method	9
4. Study Object and Procedure	10
Chapter II The Relationship between Suburban Sacred Sites and Tourism in Modern Japan	14
1. The Development of Tourism and Sacred Mountains	14
1) Stage I: Meiji to Early Taisho Period	14
2) Stage II: Mid-Taisho to Showa Prewar Period	19
3) Stage III: Postwar Period	25
4) Brief Summary	31
2. Study Area	33
1) Selection of the Study Area	33
2) Contrasts with Prior Research	37

Chapter III Transit Development and the Temple of Enryakuji

During the Prewar to Postwar Periods	40
1. The Railroad to Mount Hiei and the Temple's Response in the	
Prewar Period.....	40
1) Dengyo-daishi Memorial Service and Enryaku-ji.....	40
(1) Transport Measures for the Memorial Service.....	40
(2) Events Before and After the Dengyo-daishi Memorial Service.....	45
2) Construction of the Railway from Kyoto to Mount Hiei.....	47
(1) The Plan for a Funicular to Mount Hiei.....	47
(2) The Opening of the Railway.....	49
3) The Railway from Otsu to Mount Hiei.....	51
(1) The Sakamoto Funicular Plan.....	51
(2) Precinct Development Plan for the Enryaku-ji 1150th founding	
Memorial Service.....	53
(3) Opening of the Funicular and Execution of the Precincts	
Development Plan.....	58
2. The Postwar Construction of the Expressway to Mount Hiei.....	60
1) The Plan for the Hieizan Expressway and Its Relationship with	
Enryaku-ji.....	60
(1) The Expressway Plan.....	60
(2) Enryaku-ji and the Expressway Plan.....	64
2) The Opening of the Hieizan Expressway.....	68
3. Enryaku-ji and the Construction of the Second Expressway.....	69
1) The Hieizan Expressway and the Transformation of the Mountain.....	69

2) The Second Expressway and Its Impact on the Memorial Services·····	71
(1) Supporting Enryaku-ji with the Second Expressway Plan·····	71
(2) The Oku-hiei Expressway and the Memorial Service Commemoration Project·····	78
3) The Opening of the Oku-hiei Expressway and the Memorial Services···	83
(1) Implementation of the Mountain Consolidation Plan·····	83
(2) The Impact of Oku-hiei Expressway on the Memorial Services·····	87

Chapter IV Activities Designed to Attract Worshipers to

Enryaku-ji ·····	90
1. Invitations Before the Establishment of the Worship Department·····	91
2. Establishment and Activities of the Worship Department·····	95
1) Background of the Worship Department·····	95
2) The Activities and Characteristics of the Worship Department·····	103
(1) Regular Activities·····	103
① Visitors·····	103
(a) General Visitors·····	103
(b) School Excursions·····	111
② Believers·····	117
(2) Activities at the Time of the Memorial Services·····	121
3. Joint Invitations with Related Enterprises·····	121
1) The Tripartite Council·····	121
2) Characteristics of the Tripartite Council·····	123
(1) Regular Activities·····	124
(2) Activities at the Time of the Memorial Services·····	128

Chapter V Tourism and the Restructuring of Mount Hiei ·····	132
1. The Relationship between Enryaku-ji and Tourism·····	132
2. Characteristics of Suburban Sacred Mountains and Tourism·····	135
 Chapter VI Conclusion ·····	140
 Acknowledgements·····	147
Notes·····	148
References·····	151
Appendices Enryaku-ji Temple Archives collection Related materials List·····	176