

Topic-Setting Program to Advance Cutting-Edge

Humanities and Social Sciences Research

(Responding to Real Society)

Progress Report

(Summary of Final Report)

[Project Title]

Border Tourism: Local Initiatives and the Making of a Region

Core-Researcher: Akihiro Iwashita

Institution: Hokkaido University

Academic Unit: Slavic-Eurasian Research Center

Position: Professor

Research Period: FY2013 - FY2015

1. Basic information of research project

Research Area	Creation of the Regional Potential by the Enhancement of Humanities and Social Science for Tourism
Project Title	Border Tourism: Local Initiatives and the Making of a Region
Institution	Hokkaido University
Core-Researcher (Name, Academic Unit & Position)	Akihiro iwashita, Professor of Slavic-Eurasian Research Center
Project Period	FY2013 - FY2015
Appropriations Plan (¥)	FY2013 1,750,000 JPY
	FY2014 4,700,000 JPY
	FY2015 2,700,000 JPY

2. Purpose of research

In the island nation of Japan, no full-scale initiatives that make use of borders as a resource for tourism have been implemented. This project aims to promote Japan's border areas, often only known in the context of territorial disputes, and to contribute to the lives of people living there. Border & tourism experts from Hokkaido University have collaborated with researchers from Kyushu University and Chukyo University in developing the project. The initiative involves making social contributions in collaboration with commercial operators. Local governments and regional think-tanks engaged in the Japan International Border Studies Network now plan to launch major initiative in order to promote the project.

3. Outline of research (Including project members)

The project aims to contribute to the revitalization of border island communities in Japan through collaboration with local practitioners and border studies scholars. In recent years, the Japanese government has implemented various measures to become a “tourist nation”, however, the emphasis has been placed on attracting foreign tourists to the big cities, rather than on taking advantage of the untouched resources present in border regions. Taking advantage of such resources would also help improve the lives of the people living there. Border tourism aims to develop the foundations for peaceful and friendly relations and exchanges among people living in these border regions, and to develop “special zones” in which this occurs.

The Research Team is as follows:

Chief Organizer - Akihiro Iwashita

Members - Koji Furukawa (Chukyo University) and Kaoru Izumi (Kyushu University)

Practitioner members – Cities/Towns of Nemuro, Wakkanai, Tsushima, Goto, Taketomi and Yonagumi.

4. Research results and outcomes produced

There are several reasons why not much attention has been paid to borders in Japan. First,

there is a lack of understanding. After the Second World War, the academic significance of geopolitics has been downplayed, resulting in a centralized national land policy and territorial vision. Second, there are obstacles stemming from an absence of border recognition, the difficulty of implementing policy unilaterally, and the politicization of border issues at the local, national and international levels. In short, for a long time border regions were thought of as a “fortress” and a “dead end” instead of being utilized as a “gateway” or as “resources for tourism”. However, globally there are many cases of everyday cross-border interaction, and such regions have paid particular attention to tourism (i.e. Niagara Falls (Canada-US), Tijuana (Mexico-US), Johor Bahru (Singapore-Malaysia)).

Although such examples of border tourism remain at the level of individual case studies, there are some common themes available for the conceptualization of border tourism as an academic discipline, such as: (1) the revitalization of cross-border linkages among the population through leisure, shopping and visiting friends and tourist attractions, brought about by the collaboration of two regions near a national border; (2) the increase in study tours that focus on such border regions and related tourist attractions. There have been some practical case studies done of border tourism in Japan, such as Fukuoka and Wakkanai, but there the discussion has not gone beyond attracting tourists and international conventions.

As a result, even though there are regions such as Tsushima, which receives twice as many Korean tourists as local visitors, the knowledge able to be acquired from Tourism Studies has not been mobilized in the development of such regions. Therefore, there is great potential for border regions in Japan to contribute to the development of Tourism Studies. This program successfully mobilized general knowledge regarding border studies from both Japan and overseas and through our research proposed tourist models for borderland regions able to be utilized in the promotion of such regions. The project organized several tours with travel agencies and contributed to Tourism Studies by creating a new model to revitalize local regions.