

Revisiting described landscape in Japan III

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After the long closed the country of Edo Era, many people visited Japan and found beautiful landscapes written in their travel notes (Table 1). Most famous notes were known as the "Unbeaten Tracks in Japan" (Bird, 1880) and the "Satow Papers PRO 30/33" (Satow, 1872-82). The long exclusion of foreigners made people curious in Japanese landscape. They had made hard trip to the inland of Japan and found the different landscape features to their native one. Bird wrote many letters to her sister in England and Satow (1884) made the first travel guidebook in English for central and northern Japan.

Both of them are interesting for Japanese to know the beautiful landscape ever existed in their own land. After the Second World War, the unbelievable recovery of economic activity and rapid immigration to urban area made confusion in the harmonious landscape. Most of those landscape were changed by the development for not only national projects and but also local constructions. The mature vegetation were cut down and besides the topography was reformed and new landscapes would be disturbed by eyesore of signboards constructed by the economic investment. Recently it is difficult for Japanese to find those landscapes described in the travel notes.

Then the travel notes had become precious data of beautiful landscape of Japan. For the hundred years, Japanese could not understand what they had written about because they had devoted to understand the technological development of western countries and their way of thinking. They had worked hard and raised the level of scientific knowledge and the technological advancement as to the same level of western countries. But they never paid their attention to the environment i.e. landscape. If they knew the value of the landscape like as European countries, they never lost their beautiful landscape described by the western travelers.

This paper also is intending to examine the value of the landscape descriptions. Landscape is not exactly same as neither a picture nor a video image but is an actual feature of environment at a local site. And the appreciation of the landscape is not a mere description of the physical features of the environment but the impression arisen by the personal experience through their perceptions at the site. Then the appreciation of the landscape was depended on the stochastic process of their psychological responses aggregated and accumulated in their brain. Although the personal experiences differ among the people at the site, some part of experience will show similar impression among the people there.

Their similarities were depended on the probability which was given by both the similarity of the personal preference and the intensity of the stimuli of landscape. If the intense stimuli provided the strong impression on the traveler in ancient, we might find their impression described or we must probe the evidence of their impression even now. Therefore the experience of landscape is the most reliable and exact way to understand their description. So, we had made a trip to some areas described by the travelogues which were written by the western visitors to Japan until the end of 19 century.

We should say that we could have the coherent landscape experience with ancient travelers beyond both the time and the human race. This type of experience sometimes provides interesting scientific knowledge on the landscape evaluation, because a personal landscape experience provides a sentimental preference but the coherent experience of people provides the common appreciation of landscape through human being. In this case, people of today could find the similar impression on the landscape to the ancient travelers, so the landscape preferred by them might show the common preferable landscape to people of today. We would like to conclude that the landscape admired by the foreign visitors in old days might yet show the guideline to the landscape preservation policy of nowadays in Japan.

Keywords: western visitors, appreciation of Japanese landscapes, travelogue