

Comparison of natural landscape appreciation between Russia and Japan: landscape exoticism evaluation

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People belonging to different cultures differ by their landscape preferences due to a number of ethno-cultural features as well as historical, social, and environmental factors. It is very important to reveal and consider these differences. The purpose of this study is to compare perception, visual and emotional evaluation of natural landscapes in Russia and Japan, that are situated so close to each other and share a common border, but differ so greatly in cultural aspects, while both have deep-rooted traditions of landscape appreciation. We have interviewed respondents in university centres of Russia (Moscow in Central Russia, Irkutsk in East Siberia, and Petropavlovsk-Kamchatsky in Far East) and Japan (Sapporo, Chiba, and Miyazaki); metropolitan areas of both countries and two outermost areas, which differ most strongly in their natural environment, were represented. Young respondents (17 to 30 years old men and women) have taken part in the survey. During the interview, each respondent received the same set of 70 photos of natural landscape. For evaluating the exoticism, we asked respondents to use the 3-point scale, on which exotic landscape got a mark "+1" and usual landscape - "-1". When respondents could not decide between these categories, they were suggested to use an average value "0". Data obtained were analyzed using elementary and multivariate statistical methods.

Exoticism is very important parameter in landscape appreciation and evaluation. As we have learned during the interview, respondents consider attractive landscape as beautiful and comfortable not only for a long-term stay, but for living in. Exotic landscape is "unfamiliar" to respondents; even if it were unsightly, it would be interesting to look at, at least once. Therefore, when assessing attractiveness of landscape, respondents focus primarily on their aesthetic feelings, but in the evaluation of exoticism dominates their educational interest to an unknown. As we revealed, practically no correlation exists between Russian and Japanese respondents to evaluate exotic landscapes ($R = 0.26$). The majority of Russian respondents evaluate mountain landscapes, waterfalls, and sea coasts as the most exotic, but forests, rivers, and treeless plains as the most usual. At the same time, coastal areas are usual and treeless plains are exotic for the Japanese. All the other types of landscapes vary considerably in their exoticism degree for Japanese respondents. All groups of Japanese respondents assess the exoticism of landscapes virtually identical (the correlation coefficients between their scores are: $R = 0.90-0.96$), while the groups of Russian respondents show some differences.

To discover the ethno-cultural aspect, we compare the survey data from Kamchatka to that from Hokkaido, which are similar in terms of natural conditions. In their assessments of the exotic landscapes residents of Kamchatka are closer to the representatives of their culture, living in fundamentally different environmental conditions, than to the representatives of the Japanese culture, living in a similar environment. At the same time, Kamchatka respondents evaluate some of exotic landscapes virtually identical to the estimates of Japanese respondents and very different to those of Russian respondents from other regions. This applies to seacoasts and mountain landscapes that are both the most remarkable and most similar elements of natural environment of Kamchatka and Japan. Thus, if all respondents evaluate the attractiveness of landscapes almost equally, which may indicate the existence of universal human concepts of their aesthetics, then when assessing the exoticism, important role play both ethno-cultural differences and features of natural environment where the respondents live or that they have experience to communicate with. For Russian respondents the most exotic landscapes are also the most attractive, although we cannot see such a tendency for Japanese respondents.

Keywords: landscape appreciation comparison between Russia and Japan, visual and emotional evaluation of natural landscapes, exotic landscape, attractive landscape, ethno-cultural differences, features of natural environment