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A Study on Impact of Anime on Tourism in Japan : A Case of "Anime Pilgrimage"

Takeshi Okamoto¹

ABSTRACT

Recently, in Japan, some of anime fans make "Anime Pilgrimage" which is a kind of tourist behavior. People making an "Anime Pilgrimage" are called "Anime Pilgrims". Some cases of "Anime Pilgrimage" evolve into movement of regional development. In these cases "Anime Pilgrims" collaborate with local residents spontaneously, hold an event and make souvenir or goods. The objective of this paper is to clarify characteristics of "Anime Pilgrim" using questionnaire survey and face-to-face interviews.

Key Words: Anime Pilgrimage, Anime Pilgrim, Mecca for Anime Fans, Lucky Star, Tourist Behavior

INTRODUCTION

Recently, in Japan, some of anime fans make "Anime Pilgrimage" which is a kind of tourist behavior. People making an "Anime Pilgrimage" are called "Anime Pilgrims". They make a pilgrimage to "Mecca for Anime Fans". This is tourism destination for "Anime Pilgrim". "Mecca for Anime Fans" is location for anime and being accepted as valiant place by anime Fans (Yamamura 2008). Today, "Mecca for Anime Fans" scatters around the country (Okamoto 2009). Figure.1 indicates places of some of the most popular Mecca for Anime Fans.

One of the main intensions of "Anime Pilgrimage" is to shoot the scenic photos of "Mecca for Anime Fans". In many cases "Mecca for Anime Fans" is detected by anime lovers although anime production does not specify the precise location being used for background of anime. Pioneering "Anime Pilgrim" put out the information of "Mecca for Anime Fans" on the Internet. Follower "Anime Pilgrim" gets these information and makes a pilgrimage to Mecca (Okamoto 2008). Photo1 shows examples of "Mecca for Anime Fans".

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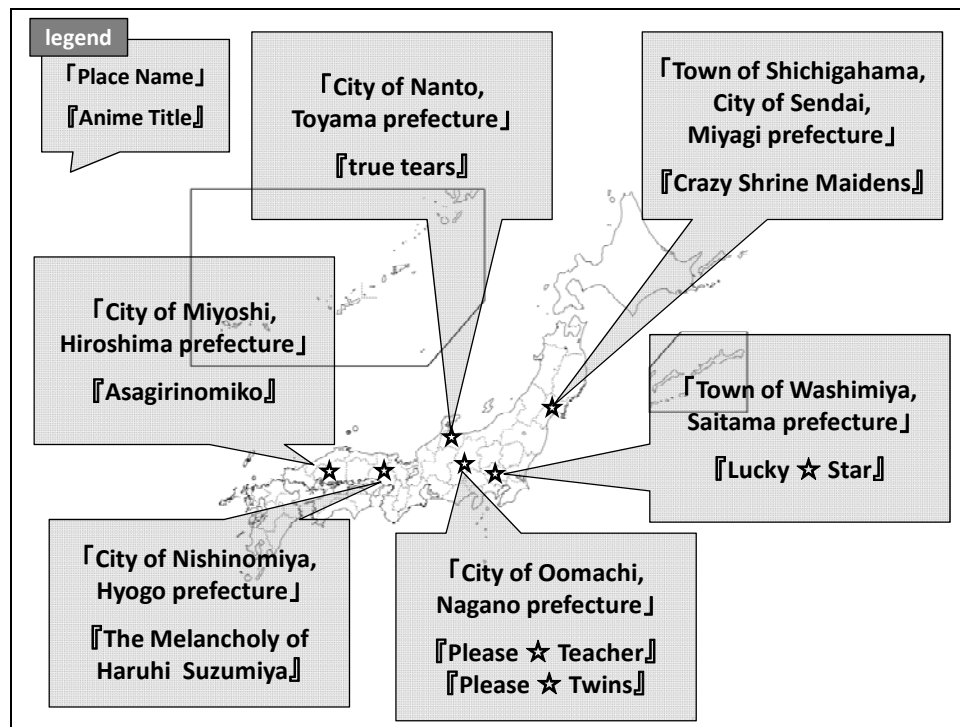


Figure 1
 Locations of "Mecca for Anime Fans" in JAPAN



Photo 1
 Examples of "Mecca for Anime Fans"
 (Source: Photograph courtesy of the author, 2008)

It would appear that "Anime Pilgrim" has no interest in communicating with others or knowing various things about regional culture because his focus of interest is location of anime. But some cases of "Anime Pilgrimage" evolve into movement of regional development. In these cases "Anime Pilgrims" collaborate with local residents spontaneously, hold an event and make souvenir or goods (Yamamura 2008; Okamoto 2009; Yamamura, Okamoto, Matsumoto and Sakata 2008).

As mentioned above, "Anime Pilgrimage" seems to be a case that tourist and local residents develop a collaborative relationship. There is possibility that analysis of these cases clarify some conditions for developing a good relationship between tourists and local residents. This paper examines "Anime Pilgrimage" especially focus on "Anime Pilgrim". The principal objective of this paper is to clarify characteristics of "Anime Pilgrim" in Washimiya.

METHODOLOGY

This research adopts the following two methods in order to accomplish the above mentioned objective. One is questionnaire survey at *Otori-chaya* Teahouse in front of the gate of Washimiya Shrine recognized as "Mecca for Anime Fans" by fans (from August 3, 2008 to August 10, 2008 without 5). Another is face-to-face interviews. Interviewees are the Washimiya Town Commerce and Association, local community and Anime Pilgrim anytime between April 2008 and January 2009.

RESULTS

Results of two surveys are displayed in the following.

(1) Results in the questionnaire survey (see Table.1 & Table.2)

1. About Gender, male makes up 87.3%.
2. About Age, person between 10 and 39 years of age makes up 86.8%.
3. About District of residence, persons who live in Kanto district make 58.0%. Remaining 52% persons live various districts including foreign country.
4. About Traveling Companion, 30.7% of "Anime Pilgrims" travel without traveling companion. 66.5% of them travel with friends, family and relatives.
5. About Duration of travel, 72.2% of "Anime Pilgrims" took a day trip.
6. About Number of times visiting Washimiya, 57.1% of "Anime Pilgrims" visited Washimiya for the first time. 39.6% of them visited Washimiya more than once.
7. About Usage of Service offered by travel agency, most of them (96.7%) did not use a service provided by travel agency.
8. About Method of transport (outward), 45.3% of them visited Washimiya by train. 34.4% of them use private car. 20.3% of them use other transportation.

Table.1 Results in questionnaire survey 1

	n = 212
	(%)
Gender	
Male	185(87.3)
Female	19(9.0)
No answer	8(3.8)
Age	
10-19 years	54(25.5)
20-29 years	88(41.5)
30-39 years	42(19.8)
40-49 years	17(8.0)
50-59 years	2(0.9)
60-69 years	1(0.5)
No answer	8(3.8)
District of residence	
Hokkaido	2(0.9)
Tohoku	10(4.7)
Hokuriku	1(0.5)
Koshinetsu	8(3.8)
Kanto	144(58.0)
Tokai	22(10.4)
Kinki	9(4.2)
Chugoku	4(1.9)
Shikoku	0(0.0)
Kyushu	1(0.5)
Okinawa	1(0.5)
Hong Kong	1(0.5)
No answer	9(4.2)

Table.2 Results in questionnaire survey 2

n = 212

Traveling Companion	
Travelling alone	65(30.7%)
Friends	113(53.3%)
Family or relatives	28(13.2%)
No answer	6(2.8)
Duration of travel	
Day's trip	153(72.2)
Staying over night	53(25.0)
Local Residents	2(0.9)
No answer	4(1.9)
Number of times visiting washimiya	
First time	121(57.1)
Second time	21(9.9)
Third time	11(5.2)
More than three time	52(24.5)
Local residents	6(2.8)
No answer	1(0.5)
Service offered by travel agency	
Use	5(2.4)
Not use	205(96.7)
No answer	2(0.9)
Methods of transport (outward)	
Train	96(45.3)
Private car	73(34.4)
Others (containing bicycle, bike, on foot, etc.)	43(20.3)

(2) Results in the face-to-face interview survey

a) Guidebook, Votive wooden tablets, and Black Board Art

One "Anime Pilgrim" made and published guidebook at one's own expense (see Figure.2). He said that he made and published guidebook for Washimiya and Lucky☆Star. He had a lot of anxiety about fear of "Anime Pilgrims" causing annoyance to the general public living in the vicinity. He published guidebook in order to encourage "Anime Pilgrims" to make smooth pilgrimage for "Anime Pilgrims" because he thought in case "Anime Pilgrims"

hang around residential area, local residence lead to insecurity.

Another "Anime Pilgrim" put up votive wooden tablets drawn picture of anime characters (see Figure.2). "Anime Pilgrims", other tourist and local residents enjoy seeing this work. In addition there is also an "Anime Pilgrim" drawing anime character on blackboard in front of *Otori-chaya* Teahouse(see Figure.2).



Figure.2
 Various works by fans in Washimiya
 (Source: Photograph courtesy of the author, 2008-2009)

b) Communicating with local residents, other pilgrim and Commerce and Industry Association

"Anime Pilgrim" communicates with local residents, other "Anime Pilgrim" and Commerce and Industry Association. Some of local retail store keepers said that "Anime Pilgrims" are very good-mannered young man.

3. Various volunteer works

"Anime Pilgrims" worked as volunteers. Photo.2 shows the "Lucky Star Palanquin". Two local residents built frame and two "Anime Pilgrims" drew and painted the picture without charge. One of two "Anime Pilgrims" often drew votive wooden plates. One local resident said that they seemed to enjoy creating palanquin very much.



Photo.2
The "Lucky Star Palanquin" (left: overview / right: parts)
(Source: Photograph courtesy of the author, September 2008)

Photo.3 shows "Paulownia-Made Votive Tablet-Style Mobile Phone Strap". Some of "Anime Pilgrims" provide a flow of ideas to Commerce and Industry Association again and again. It's sold a total of 12,500 copies from December 2007 to March 2008.



Photo.3
Paulownia-Made Votive Tablet-Style Mobile Phone Strap
(Source: Photograph courtesy of the author, September 2008)

CONCLUSION

Considering the results of questionnaire survey, it means that most of "Anime Pilgrims" in Washimiya are young male. They come from all over the country and they travel alone or with few companions without using service of travel agency. In addition to "Anime Pilgrims" use different modes of transportation.

Considering the results of face-to-face interviews, "Anime Pilgrims" in Washimiya has three characteristics as shown below.

1. Showing Creativity
2. Communicating with local residents or others

3. Collaboration with local residents or others

"Anime Pilgrims" are keen to play an active role of volunteer staff for making the event a success or making better souvenir or character goods. They are lavish with help. In fact they seem to enjoy these activities.

Here, this paper clarified "Anime Pilgrims" in Washimiya. But there is possibility that "Anime Pilgrims" in Washimiya are special pilgrims. Therefore being required further investigation by analyzing "Anime Pilgrims" in other "Mecca for Anime Fans".

In addition, the problem is that "Anime Pilgrims" in Washimiya get what type of psychological rewards by making pilgrimage or communicating with others. This problem should be clarified by deeply analyzing "Anime Pilgrims" in Washimiya.

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