

Japan Society for the Promotion of Science Grant-in-Aid
Border Tourism: Border Studies for the Community Building Project

Project Leader:

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In cooperation with:

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Aim of the Project:

This project was adopted as a grant-in-aid project by the Japan Society for the Promotion of Science. The project aims to contribute to the community building of border islands in Japan by collaborating with local practitioners and border studies scholars. In recent years, the Japanese government has implemented various measures to become a “tourism nation”, however, the emphasis is placed on attracting foreign tourists to the big cities, rather than taking advantage of the untouched resources in the border regions thereby improving the lives of the people living in such regions. Border tourism itself aims to build the foundation for peaceful and friendly relations and exchange among those people who live in the border regions, and to develop “special zones” based on such foundation.

There are several reasons why not much attention has been paid to the borders in Japan. First, it is the lack of understanding. After the Second World War, the academic significance of geopolitics has been downplayed which resulted in a centralized territorial and land policy. Second, there are obstacles in terms of the gap of border recognition, difficulty of a unilateral operation of policy and the politicization of issues in the local, national and international level. In short, border regions were thought of as a “fortress” and a “dead end” instead of being utilized as a “gateway” or “resources for tourism” for a long time. However, there are several cases of daily exchange transcending over borders in the world and many of these regions have paid particular attention to tourism (i.e. Niagara Falls (Canada-US), Tijuana (Mexico-US), Johor Bahru (Singapore-Malaysia)). Such cases of border tourism still remain as individual case studies, however, there are some common themes for the conceptualization of border tourism as an academic discipline such as: (1) revitalization of mutual fluid population through leisure, shopping and visiting of friends and tourist attractions through the

collaboration of two regions near a national border; (2) increasing domestic inbound study tours by utilizing the border regions and related tourist attractions. On the other hand, there are some practical case studies of border tourism, such as Fukuoka and Wakkanai in Japan, however, the discussion has not gone beyond attracting tourists and international conventions. As a result, even though there are regions such as Tsushima where Korean tourists twice the number of the population of local people visit the region, the knowledge of Tourism Studies have not contributed to the development of such regions. Therefore, border regions in Japan have a great potential to contribute to the development of Tourism Studies. This program will mobilize the general knowledge of border studies from both Japan and overseas and will aim to propose policies for the promotion of regions through our research. The other aim is to contribute to Tourism Studies by creating a new model to revitalize local regions.

Research Method:

In order to revitalize the local border regions in Japan, we will collaborate with academics (in border studies and tourism studies) as well as practitioners (such as local administrative officers and think-tanks) to establish an academic framework for Tourism Studies that can be applied to Japan, and aim to propose policies to related local governments.

Research Team:

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