Tokyo as a Tourist City

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This paper addresses sightseeing in Tokyo and excursions by the people of Tokyo in the Meiji and Taisho periods. From the time Tokyo was known as Edo right up to the present, the city has always had a role as a tourist city and has attracted many visitors. In conducting a study on this subject, this paper used as its main source material guidebooks of Tokyo.

In the Meiji period, there were several peaks in the publication of Tokyo guidebooks. The major peaks were in 1871 and 1878 when there were changes in administrative districts, in 1889 when the Japan National Railroad’s Tokaido line went into full service, and the following year 1890 when the Third National Industrial Exhibition was held in Tokyo. Not too many guidebooks were published in 1907 when the Tokyo Industrial Exhibition was held, but the city of Tokyo published its “Tokyo Annai (Tokyo guidebook)” in two volumes and the portable “Tokyo Yuuran Annai (Tokyo sightseeing guidebook)”.

The publication of guidebooks due to changes in administrative districts was not related to an increase in tourists; guidebooks were published at the time of industrial exhibitions in anticipation of a temporary influx of tourists. Although the number of tourists visiting Tokyo would have increased yearly if there had not been any special event, these exhibitions provided publicity as to the actual state of Tokyo to wide areas and promoted an increase in tourists during normal times. In addition, it is thought that the start of service of the Tokaido line led to the increase in tourists from areas west of Tokyo.

Towards the end of the Meiji period, there also seems to be an increase in tourists who stayed in Tokyo for about a week. This was because tourists could by then stay with relatives who had moved to Tokyo from the provinces and had settled down there or with children who lived and studied in Tokyo.

Starting around the early 1900s, guidebooks on places to visit for people living in Tokyo were also published. Locations for excursions dating back to the Edo period continued to be used in modern times, but their number decreased as some disappeared or lost their value as places to visit due to urban development. People who had come from the provinces and settled in Tokyo also used the traditional excursion spots from the Edo period, but started also to look for new places to visit. It was during these times that KUNIKIDA Doppo’s “Musashino” was published and OMACHI Keigetsu wrote his “Tokyo Yagyo” (Record of travels in Tokyo)”.

In the Taisho period, TAYAMA Katal published “Tokyo no Kinko (Suburbs of Tokyo)” and “Ichinichi no Koraku (One-day excursion),” and the area around the western part of Tokyo came to be well known as “Musashino” and
developed into a place to visit on excursions. As if to compete against the sightseeing spots created by the writers and artists (intellectuals) of the Edo period, the new generation of intellectuals created in their turn new places to visit.