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Islands of “Dark” and “Light/Lite” Tourism: War-Related Contents Tourism around the Seto Inland Sea

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This article examines the phenomenon of war-related contents tourism on five small islands in the area of the Seto Inland Sea. While the majority of Japan’s densely populated metropolitan areas have complex war histories and networks of commemorative sites and/or tourist sites, small islands are associated with a singular war experience or memory that sustains a tourist attraction on the island. Focusing on such islands allows insights into the ways in which films, novels, games, and other forms of popular culture induce tourism to war-related sites. First, the concept of war-related contents tourism is defined via a critique of the in-vogue concept of dark tourism and its Japanese counterpart, *dāku tsūrizumu*. Then, the dynamics of war-related tourism are depicted in five island case studies: Ōkunoshima (Hiroshima prefecture, “Rabbit Island” and site of a poison gas factory), Shōdoshima (Kagawa prefecture, setting of the novel/film *Twenty-four Eyes*), Okinoshima (Wakayama prefecture, a coastal gun battery popular now as a site of cosplay), Ōzushima (Yamaguchi prefecture, a training base for *kaiten* suicide attack submarines), and Nōmishima (Hiroshima prefecture, site of the Etajima Naval Academy). These islands are also examples of media tourism or contents tourism, where the representation of the history in entertainment formats or the promotion of tourism for “leisure and pleasure” has made the war-related tourism seem more akin to “light/lite tourism” than “dark tourism.”

Keywords: war-related tourism, dark tourism, contents tourism, heritage tourism, popular culture, Japan, Seto Inland Sea, Asia-Pacific War, cosplay, cinema

Introduction

War is not simply a destructive form of mass organized violence for the pursuit of political, strategic, or other goals. It is a period of intense creativity during which new technologies, artistic expression, and social/political structures emerge. The tourism industry has been arguably one of the greatest beneficiaries of war’s creative forces. There are countless examples worldwide of battlefields, monuments, museums, fortresses, and other sites related

to war that have become important tourist resources. These sites may become key local attractions and sustain peaceful economic and cultural activity long after the bloodshed has ceased.

The temporal relationship of tourism to war develops through four main stages. The first stage is tourism to the warzone actually during the war. Such tourism is dangerous, but in the days of pitched battles between armies, war could even become a spectator event. For example, many non-combatants traveled to witness the Battle of Waterloo in 1815.¹ The second stage is tourism in the immediate aftermath of war. It can be sightseeing (whether triumphal or voyeuristic) to sites of recent combat and/or commemorative travel to mourn loved ones who perished.² The third stage is the touristification of war-related sites. Monuments, memorials, parks, and museums are created to commemorate events and attract visitors who learn of the events that happened there. The final stage usually occurs around a generational shift at significant temporal distance from the events. Representations of history in media and popular culture generate new meanings and patterns of tourism.

This article focuses on tourism in Japan relating to the Asia-Pacific War (1931–1945) during this fourth stage. Beyond the seventieth anniversary of the war's end, the postwar generations are the primary war-related tourist market. These generations lack personal experiences of war, so the transmission and guardianship of memories within families (Hirsch's notion of "postmemory") and media narratives in television, cinema, anime, and manga play leading roles in shaping their cultural memories.³ When media or popular culture representations induce tourism to war-related sites, war-related tourism overlaps with media tourism, film-induced tourism, or contents tourism.⁴

This article identifies examples of war-related contents tourism on islands around the Seto Inland Sea. Small islands are ideal sites for observing war-related contents tourism and the interactions between war history and local identity.⁵ In any location, war-related tourism may be quantified via visitor numbers to war-related sites. But small, clearly demarcated geographical areas containing a single prominent war narrative are the easiest places to draw reliable conclusions about the extent of tourism changes in response to a specific factor, such as a work of popular culture. By contrast, major urban areas and tourist destinations are

1 Seaton 1999.

2 For example, tourism by Japanese in the late 1930s to sites of recent fighting in China. Kushner 2006; Ruoff 2010; Ruoff 2014.

3 Hashimoto 2015; Hirsch 2012; Seaton 2007.

4 Media tourism is the broadest term and covers both creative works in any format (such as audiovisual, print, and digital) as well as news, current affairs, and social media (Reijnders 2011; Seaton et al. 2017). Beeton's definition of film-induced tourism covers the moving image across cinema, television and digital platforms (Beeton 2016). Contents tourism, *kontentsu tsūrizumu* コンテンツ ツーリズム, originated as a concept in Japan and eschews specification of the media format. Instead it focuses on "the contents," namely the narratives, characters, locations, and other creative elements of works of popular culture. The concept emerged out of the high levels of multiuse of sets of contents across media platforms, particularly in the anime and manga industries.

5 There have been significant studies of war memories on the large islands at Japan's peripheries of Hokkaido and Okinawa. However, these are complex regional case studies encompassing issues of colonial and war memories, histories of large-scale land/sea/air battles (Karafuto/Kurils and the Battle of Okinawa), center-periphery relations, ethnicity (Ainu and Ryūkyū narratives), and postwar territorial disputes (Northern Territories dispute, reversion of Okinawa, and the Senkaku Islands dispute). The islands chosen for this study, by contrast, are highly localized cases in Japan's geographical and cultural heartlands. For Hokkaido, see Seaton 2016; for Okinawa, particularly relating to tourism, see Figal 2012.



Figure 1. Map of the Seto Inland Sea and the five islands. Produced using Google Maps.

affected by too many variables for the impact of works of popular culture to be identifiable.⁶ The Inland Sea area, therefore, is an ideal cluster of sites for investigating war-related contents tourism. Using the principles of media content analysis (the parameters of the research area are set in advance, and data is then harvested within the parameters using a predetermined method), first I investigated remotely (online and using travel guidebooks) islands across the Inland Sea for 1) the presence of war-related sites that actively seek to attract visitors, and 2) evidence of contents tourism, namely visitation that is partially or fully motivated by the narratives, characters, locations, and other creative elements of mediatized popular culture. I identified five islands that met both criteria and then visited them during fieldwork in October 2016 for on-site observation and data collection (primarily tourism statistics both for individual tourist sites and municipal/regional data).

The islands (from east to west) are:

- 1) Okinoshima 沖ノ島: Part of the Tomogashima 友ヶ島 island group at the entrance to Osaka Bay. It has gun battery remains and became popular as a site of cosplay because of its resemblance to Laputa in the anime film *Tenkū no shiro Rapyuta* 天空の城ラピユタ (*Laputa: Castle in the Sky*; 1986).
- 2) Shōdoshima 小豆島: The second largest island in the Seto Inland Sea. It was the home of author Tsuboi Sakae 壺井栄 and the setting and shooting location for the novel/films/dramas *Nijūshi no hitomi* 二十四の瞳 (*Twenty-four Eyes*), her classic antiwar story of the 1950s.
- 3) Ōkunoshima 大久野島: The site of a poison gas factory during the war. It is now popularly known as “Rabbit Island” after social media users posted videos online of the hundreds of rabbits that roam the island.
- 4) Nōmishima 能美島: Site of Japan’s naval academy in Etajima 江田島. The academy has been used as a location for numerous scenes in naval films/dramas and contains the Naval History Museum.
- 5) Ōzushima 大津島: Also known as “Kaiten Island,” Ōzushima was a training base for Japan’s *tokkō* 特攻 (special attack, or kamikaze) submarine force. This history has

⁶ See Seaton 2015 (especially pp. 96–98) for discussion of this issue regarding data collection in Hakodate, Kōchi, Hino, and Kyoto in relation to Taiga Drama tourism.

been portrayed in various films, most recently *Deguchi no nai umi* 出口のない海 (*Sea Without Exit*; 2006), which has scenes shot on the island.

The narratives presented on these islands are diverse; one might even say disjointed. But this in itself is an important insight: even geographically similar localities at relatively close proximity to each other can acquire distinct localized cultural memories via divergent war experiences. Furthermore, the narratives at the sites visited depict Japanese alternatively as heroes, perpetrators, and victims, and may be categorized on an ideological spectrum from nationalism (Etajima) to progressivism (Ōkunoshima).⁷ Hence, the Inland Sea is an ideal “laboratory” for research into war-related contents tourism. The islands’ narratives collectively constitute a microcosm of Japan’s contested war memories, and as tourist sites they are ideal locations (small and isolated, each with a distinctive narrative) for observing the processes and levels of war-related contents tourism.

Before turning to these case studies, however, war-related contents tourism will be presented in more theoretical terms with reference to the in-vogue concept of “dark tourism,” defined by Richard Sharpley and Philip R. Stone as “the act of travel to sites associated with death, suffering and the seemingly macabre.”⁸ War-related tourism has often been discussed as a form of dark tourism and some publications addressing tourism and war in Japan have treated it and dark tourism as almost interchangeable terms.⁹ The case studies in this article, however, examine visitation at war-related sites where there is evidence that some tourists, and at some sites even a majority of tourists, have been motivated to visit by mediatized works of entertainment. The tourism, therefore, revolves more around “leisure and pleasure” (or at its most serious “education and remembrance”), rather than anything that might be convincingly termed “dark.” Dark’s antonym light implies brightness (inspiration) and enlightenment (education), and “lite” (used in this article as the antonym of heavy) implies entertaining and upbeat. The presence of “light/lite” war-related tourists, it will be argued, challenges simple assumptions that dark tourism is a useful framework for analyzing war-related tourism, and simultaneously indicates the increasingly important role that mediatized entertainment plays in sustaining visitation at war-related sites in Japan as the war slips ever further into the past.

“Dark/Light/Lite” Tourism: A Japan-Based Critique

The term “dark tourism” was coined in 1996 by Malcolm Foley and J. John Lennon.¹⁰ The back cover of their book *Dark Tourism* states: “A large number of sites associated with war, genocide, assassination and other tragic events have become significant tourist destinations. The authors of this volume call this phenomenon ‘dark tourism.’”¹¹ Defined in this way, war-related tourism is explicitly positioned as a form of dark tourism. But Lennon and Foley’s formulation does not simply make war-related tourism synonymous with dark

7 Nationalism and progressivism are used here as defined in Seaton 2007, pp. 20–28. Nationalism refers to a positive assessment of Japanese war aims and conduct, while progressivism refers to a critical assessment of both war aims and conduct.

8 Sharpley 2009, p. 10.

9 For example, Eades and Cooper 2013; Funck and Cooper 2013.

10 Foley and Lennon 1996.

11 Lennon and Foley 2010.

tourism. They identify three critical features of dark tourism: first, “global communication technologies play a major part in creating the initial interest”; second, “the objects of dark tourism themselves appear to introduce anxiety and doubt about the project of modernity”; and third, “the educative elements of sites are accompanied by elements of commodification and a commercial ethic.” There is also a temporal dimension. Dark tourism occurs in response to death and disaster within modern memory, and Lennon and Foley give a “relatively arbitrary” chronological starting point of such death and disaster with the sinking of the Titanic in 1912.¹²

Dark tourism is an alluring term, but theoretical and methodological problems emerged, particularly surrounding whether it was supply side factors (the type of site) or demand side factors (the tourists’ motivations) that made the tourism “dark.”¹³ In addressing criticisms of what constitutes a “dark” site, Sharpley and Stone’s 2009 edited volume *The Darker Side of Travel* moves away from solely “dark” tourism and presents a spectrum of dark to light tourism. Stone contrasts “sites of death and suffering” at the darker end with “sites associated with death and suffering” at the lighter end and presents a typography of seven “dark suppliers”: dark fun factories (horror attractions such as the London Dungeon), dark exhibitions (such as the Body Worlds exhibition of preserved corpses), dark dungeons (prisons and crime), dark resting places (cemeteries), dark shrines (memorials to the deceased), dark conflict sites (battlefields), and dark camps of genocide (particularly Holocaust-related).¹⁴ The result is a plethora of shades—darkest, light, pale, grey, “lighter form of dark tourism”—leading Bowman and Pezzullo to ask “What’s so ‘Dark’ about ‘Dark Tourism?’”¹⁵

Many scholars focusing on demand-side factors have preferred Tony Seaton’s term “thanatourism” to “dark tourism.” Thanatourism is defined as “travel to a location wholly, or partially, motivated by the desire for actual or symbolic encounters with death, particularly, but not exclusively, violent death, which may to a varying degree be activated by the person-specific features of those whose deaths are its focal objects.”¹⁶ In this formulation, thanatourism tends to be voyeuristic, and is a decidedly niche activity. More typically, the motivations of visitors at war-related sites are better categorized as forms of cultural or heritage tourism. Many heritage sites were sites of significant death and suffering, but even regarding visitation to Nazi death camps (one of the key case studies in the “dark tourism” literature), Biran, Porio, and Oren concluded that for most people “the motives for visiting Auschwitz are similar to those for visiting a ‘regular,’ not dark, heritage site.”¹⁷

War-related tourism is a diverse phenomenon when considered from supply side and demand side perspectives. On the supply side, war-related sites can fall into any of Stone’s categories of “dark suppliers,” although dark often seems an inappropriate term. There are many war-related sites that avoid representations of death and focus on “bright” themes such as victory, heroism, patriotism, and technological achievement. If death is represented, it is the positive virtues of dead soldiers as individuals rather than the grim details of their deaths

12 Lennon and Foley 2010, pp. 8–12.

13 See also the discussion in Andrea de Antoni’s article in this special edition.

14 Sharpley 2009, p. 21, citing Stone 2006.

15 Bowman and Pezzullo 2010.

16 Seaton 1996, p. 240.

17 Biran, Porio, and Oren 2011, p. 836.

that are displayed. Patriotic military museums and monuments often fall into this category. The Naval History Museum at Etajima and Kaiten Museum on Ōzushima both conform to this pattern. Other war-related sites, meanwhile, focus on everyday *life* under wartime conditions. Examples here include the sites relating to *Nijūshi no hitomi* and the numerous local history museums in Japan that depict life on the home front during the war years.

On the demand side, the harrowing images and displays of death that can exist in war-related exhibits (such as in the Poison Gas Museum (Ōkunoshima doku gasu shiryōkan 大久野島毒ガス資料館) on Ōkunoshima) may attract some voyeurs, but war-related sites clearly do not aim to encourage voyeuristic thanatourism in the way that “dark fun factories” (such as the London Dungeon) do. As Lennon and Foley’s original formulation of dark tourism makes clear, there is an important temporal aspect to dark tourism. An attraction containing waxwork figure reconstructions of medieval torture is far enough removed from the concerns of contemporary society to be socially acceptable. A waxwork figure reconstruction of torture scenes in a Nazi death camp packaged as “gruesome fun,” by contrast, crosses all boundaries of taste and decency. Ultimately, where the transition between “dark” and “lighter shade of dark” or “gruesome fun” and “grossly offensive” occurs depends on the nature of the deaths being portrayed and their historical and temporal relationships to contemporary society.

Dāku Tsūrizumu in Japan

Despite various problems, the term “dark tourism” has made its way into Japanese. Japan was linked to dark tourism discourse from an early stage. Indeed, Lennon and Foley’s book *Dark Tourism* opens with descriptions of wartime Japanese sites in Indonesia, but dark tourism as a concept was first introduced in Japanese-language scholarship in 2008.¹⁸ It gained widespread attention after the 11 March 2011 Tōhoku earthquake, tsunami, and Fukushima nuclear power station disaster (hereafter “3/11”), and the prominence of natural disasters is a characteristic of dark tourism discourse in Japan. The main publications focusing on Japan are a set of “mooks” (magazine books) targeting a general readership. Ide Akira 井出明, the driving force behind the Dark Tourism Japan project, defines dark tourism as “travel related to memories of human sadness including war and disaster.”¹⁹ This diverges significantly from definitions in the English-language literature. The memories relate primarily to “sadness” (*kanashimi* 悲しみ) rather than death; and natural disaster features more prominently in the definition. Like many academic concepts originating outside Japan, dark tourism has been adopted as a katakana loan word: *dāku tsūrizumu* ダークツーリズム. Using the most common Japanese words for “dark” and “tourism” would give the somewhat contradictory term *kurai kankō* 暗い観光 (a term not used in practice) containing a juxtaposition of “暗” (dark) and “光” (light): the etymology of *kankō* is a phrase in *I Ching* (*The Book of Changes*) which means “Look at the light=glory of the kingdom.”²⁰

Dāku tsūrizumu discourse also assumes a progressive, polemical tone in Japan. Ide advocates dark tourism as beneficial because tourists engage with the “dark side” (*dāku saido* ダークサイド) of Japanese history. It presents dark tourism as educational and enlightening

18 Ide 2014, p. 217; according to Ide, the first article mentioning dark tourism was Funck 2008.

19 Ide 2015, p. 4.

20 Seaton et al. 2017, p.3.

rather than voyeuristic. Examples of dark tourism include industrial heritage sites tainted by histories of forced labor, political repression, or pollution; leper colonies; the graves of executed class A war criminals; and overseas sites such as Chernobyl.²¹ *Dāku tsūrizumu* feeds on the ideological assumptions of progressives that facing “dark history” is beneficial, while nationalists promoting a bright version of the nation’s history seem uninterested in the term.

In addition to these discrepancies between formulations of dark tourism in the Japanese- and English-language contexts, a critique of dark tourism in a Japanese context also reveals how the temporal context of dark tourism is culturally constructed. Lennon and Foley identify 1912 as an arbitrary starting point for world events triggering dark tourism, but this is Eurocentric. In Japan, modern history—the period for which there is “anxiety and doubt about the project of modernity”—typically refers to the Meiji period (1868–1912) onwards.²² In Ide’s Dark Tourism Japan project, therefore, sites depicting the convict labor used to build roads in Hokkaido in the 1880s fall within the scope of dark tourism. This temporal variable generates further levels of definitional subjectivity: in any culture, sites which are or have been “dark” metamorphose into “light/lite” as they slip further into the past, but the “anxiety” regarding what events from any given year in the past say about “modernity” varies greatly from culture to culture.

As in the English-language literature, *dāku tsūrizumu* has stirred controversy in Japan. Some have seen the benefit of the term. For example, following 3/11, the Dark Tourism Sendai project website (<http://dmp.co.jp/dark-tourism-sendai/>) was established. It takes site visitors on video tours around the tsunami-devastated zones. The website admits “*dāku tsūrizumu*” is used to attract interest. Others, meanwhile, have opposed the term. Ōmori Shinjirō 大森信次郎 cites six objections to using *dāku tsūrizumu* for tourism in Tōhoku post-3/11: the term’s negative image, diversity of interpretation, the objections of those traveling to disaster areas, objections of the destinations welcoming tourists, obstacles to researchers’ fieldwork, and the risk of inhibiting disaster zone recovery via tourism. Ōmori suggests alternatives such as *fukkō tsūrizumu* 復興ツーリズム (recovery tourism) or *inoru tabi* 祈る旅 (prayer tourism [sic]).²³ These alternative terms suggest that Ōmori’s opposition to *dāku tsūrizumu* is more on pragmatic grounds (namely how to encourage the right sort of tourism to help disaster zones) rather than theoretical or semantic grounds. Nevertheless, Ōmori’s critiques provoked a response from Ide via his ResearchMap (a researcher database) page, where he stated that such debates surrounding the term had already taken place in English, dark tourism was established terminology, and Ōmori’s alternatives were part of dark tourism theory and writing anyway.²⁴

Demand Side Factors of War-related Tourism

In short, war-related tourism is not synonymous with dark tourism, and dark tourism has come to mean slightly different things in its Japanese- and English-language contexts. The use of “dark” opens up various assumptions and subjectivities relating to how “dark” and/or “light/lite” the tourist sites, experiences, and motivations are. The result is a term that is

21 *Dark tourism Japan* 2015a; *Dark tourism Japan* 2015b.

22 Lennon and Foley 2010, p. 11.

23 Ōmori 2012, p. 30.

24 Ide 2012.

subjective regarding its ideological, cultural, and temporal dimensions, and that fudges the important distinction between supply-side (site type) and demand-side (visitor motivation) factors.²⁵ While recognizing the contribution that dark tourism discourse has made in illuminating many key issues within tourism studies, in the case studies that follow I largely eschew the terminology of “dark/light/lite tourism”. Instead, I use war-related tourism (a non-ideological, supply-side phenomenon stating simply that the site has a connection to the Asia-Pacific War) categorized according to three main demand-side factors:

- 1) Thanatourism: People search out voyeuristic or chilling tourism experiences connected to death, suffering, and the macabre (for example, the ghost tours and “experiential and affective aspects of places related to death” described by Andrea de Antoni in this special edition);
- 2) Heritage tourism: People visit sites for their historical, cultural, and educational value. However, there is an ideological dimension within heritage tourism. More nationalistic sites, visitors, and experiences focus on bright views of national history and inspirational stories that enhance national identity. More progressive sites, visitors, and experiences focus on enlightenment or education about the past, including the “dark sides” of history;
- 3) Contents tourism: People use war-related tourism to further an interest in consumed works of mediatized entertainment.²⁶

Five Islands of War-related Contents Tourism

In light of the above theoretical discussion, the five island case studies of war-related contents tourism will now be discussed. These days, the role of popular culture in triggering war-related tourism, particularly among the young (the second postwar generation and beyond), is attracting more attention among researchers and tourism practitioners.²⁷ The case studies here provide further evidence of this trend.

The islands are discussed in order from progressive to nationalist according to the historical narrative presented in the site. The first site is the poison gas factory on Ōkunoshima, which gives a progressive condemnation of Japanese chemical warfare. Next is the novel *Nijūshi no hitomi* and sites on Shōdoshima, which convey an antiwar message based on the suffering of Japanese civilians. The gun battery ruins and tourism triggered by an unrelated anime on Okinoshima are non-ideological and are therefore the middle case study. In its commemoration of the sacrifice of suicide submariners, the Kaiten Museum on

25 Such shortcomings of the term “dark tourism” are recognized even by its proponents. Sharpley and Stone, for example, finish their book with the conclusion that, “What has emerged from this book is the sense that, in some ways, ‘dark tourism’ is an unhelpful term.” Sharpley and Stone 2009, p. 249.

26 “War-related tourism” is the term used by Butler and Suntikul. They largely side-step discussion of dark tourism in an implicit rather than explicit critique, although they do note that “studies on ‘dark tourism’ generally do not focus on the relationships between war and tourism but primarily on the aftermath of war and conflict, along with the appeal of death sites and other examples of tragedies and brutality.” Butler and Suntikul 2013, p. 4.

27 For a full discussion, see the special edition of the *Journal of War & Culture Studies*, “War, Popular Culture, and Contents Tourism in East Asia.” Seaton 2018a. A particularly clear example is the role of popular culture in sustaining tourism at sites related to the kamikaze as discussed in Seaton 2018b. On this topic, see also the article by Fukuma in this special edition.



Figure 2. A group of school children walk past the Poison Gas Museum on Ōkunoshima. Photograph by author.

Ōzushima leans towards conservatism. Most nationalistic, and also most commercialized in terms of using mediatized popular culture to attract visitors, is the final island, Nōmishima (Etajima).

Ōkunoshima

At first glance, Ōkunoshima fits the image of a “dark site.” During the war, it was the site of a poison gas factory. The chemical weapons made on Ōkunoshima killed thousands in China during the war and took a terrible health toll on local people who worked in the factory. The ruins of the military facilities are scattered around the island, including the power plant, storage areas, and gun batteries, and there are memorials to the workers who were injured or killed. A museum narrating the factory’s history displays artifacts such as workers’ clothing and harrowing pictures of people killed and injured by chemical weapons, not only during World War II but also conflicts such as the Iran-Iraq War. Of all the sites, Ōkunoshima provides the most explicit encounter with death and suffering.

After the war, the island underwent a major transformation from top-secret military facility to holiday resort. In 1963, Kyūkamura Ōkunoshima opened as part of a nationwide network of *kyūkamura* 休暇村 (holiday villages). The paths connecting the military installations became hiking courses; the spaces cleared by the military made way for tennis courts; and the port facilities provided access for visitors. The addition of a visitor center describing nature in the Setonaikai National Park and accommodation facilities completed the island’s makeover from military site to tourist site. On the day that I visited there was a large school group. The island is a compact site for *shūgaku ryokō* 修学旅行 (school trips) with opportunities for history, nature, and physical education all within the one site.

In recent years Ōkunoshima has also attracted inbound tourists. There are around seven hundred rabbits roaming free on the island. The rabbits are not connected to the poison gas factory (rabbits used for testing were killed after the war), and it is not known exactly where they all came from. But, with few natural predators and many tourists keen



Figure 3. Dark and lite. A rabbit poses in front of the memorial to people who died while working at the poison gas factory. Photograph by author.

to feed them, rabbit numbers have grown since the 1970s. Recently, videos posted on social media sites like YouTube have spread the word about Ōkunoshima internationally. International visitor numbers shot up from 378 people in 2013, to 5,564 people in 2014, and 17,215 people in 2015.²⁸ The ferry terminal at Tadanoumi 忠海 and Hiroshima prefecture’s tourism literature promotes Ōkunoshima as “Rabbit Island” (figure 4) rather than “Poison Gas Island.” The result is an intriguing juxtaposition of somber and fluffy, dark and lite.

The island’s rebranding and rebirth as “Rabbit Island” has changed the nature of the war-related tourism on Ōkunoshima. The museum opened in 1988, and in the 1990s it had 55,000–65,000 visitors a year. Into the early 2000s, the numbers had dropped to 20,000–30,000. In pre-“Rabbit Island” days, these visitors were more likely to be

purposeful war-related tourists seeking to learn about the island’s history or those on memorial pilgrimages. Then came the boom fueled by images of the rabbits on social media. By 2014 the total number of visitors to the island increased to 186,000 from around 152,000 in 2010. Visitors to the Poison Gas Museum also recovered to 49,490.²⁹ It can be assumed many of these tourists are primarily on Ōkunoshima for the rabbits, and visit the museum as “sightseeing tourists” (just doing the sights), “casual tourists” (visiting with little specific interest), or “serendipitous tourists” (largely unaware of the island’s history, but interested when they are confronted with it).³⁰

Ōkunoshima, therefore, has seen a rapid rise in war-related tourism at the museum and more generally the ruins of the wartime poison gas factory. Examining demand side factors reveals this is largely a by-product of a rabbit-related social media boom. The museum has graphic depictions of death, but there is no obvious evidence of thanatouristic motivations among visitors. Most appear to be “incidental” or “sightseeing” heritage tourists. Furthermore, while there is clear evidence of increased war-related tourism induced by social media, there is no specific evidence of war-related contents tourism because the tourism is not triggered by a mediated work of popular culture entertainment, such as an anime. Indeed, sites like Ōkunoshima pose challenging questions about whether any progressive war-related sites with graphic images of death and/or atrocity could ever actively seek to

28 *Chūgoku shinbun* 2016.

29 *Chūgoku shinbun* 2015.

30 Purposeful, incidental, sightseeing, and serendipitous tourists are categories proposed by McKercher and du Cros in relation to cultural tourism. McKercher and du Cros 2009, pp. 140, 144.



Figure 4. The ferry terminal for “Rabbit Island.” Photograph by author.

benefit from contents tourism without completely sacrificing their hard-hitting educational messages in favor of a voyeuristic experience marketed at the thanatourist.

Ultimately, Ōkunoshima defies simple categorization as a “dark,” “light,” or “lite” tourist site. The current international appeal of Ōkunoshima complicates the discussion even further as international visitors (particularly Chinese and Koreans) may view a site that depicts a “dark side” of Japanese war history as a bright, positive thing. What constitutes dark and light is subjective and culturally constructed. Ultimately, Ōkunoshima is a clear example of a modern tourist site made possible by war: the military infrastructure is an attraction in itself, and also enables travel to and around the island. Tourism on Ōkunoshima is also emblematic of a postwar generational shift, whereby war-related sites are assigned new meanings by new generations of tourists that are shared via new technologies to create new patterns of tourism. Nevertheless, while its tourism boom is better categorized as “media tourism” than contents tourism, Ōkunoshima encapsulates the phenomenon that interests tourism practitioners regarding contents tourism: mediated culture can suddenly trigger an unexpected boom and open up new markets for existing destinations.

Shōdoshima

Whereas Ōkunoshima does not, strictly speaking, have contents tourism, the second case study is an archetypal success story of contents tourism. Shōdoshima is the second largest island in the Seto Inland Sea with a population of just under thirty thousand in 2016. It is famous for its olive groves and soy sauce production. During the war, Shōdoshima hosted a midget submarine training base, and some infrastructure (jetties) and commemorative sites (memorial stones) remain today. However, these sites have not undergone touristification and function primarily as memorial sites. The most famous war story on Shōdoshima, which generated its major war-related tourist attraction, is fictional: the novel *Nijūshi no hitomi* (1952) by Tsuboi Sakae.

Nijūshi no hitomi is a classic antiwar novel depicting the tragedy of war. In 1928, a young teacher, Miss Oishi, is posted to the small branch school in the southeast of the

island. She teaches twelve elementary school children (the twenty-four eyes) and forms a strong bond with them, despite having to leave soon after arriving because of a leg injury sustained during a prank by the children. The story ends after the war with a reunion between the surviving children and teacher. All have experienced hardship and bereavement of some form. The novel does not engage with larger questions about the war but presents the themes of “victim’s history” or “sentimental humanism.”³¹ The preface to the English translation argues: “[Tsuboi’s] may be a rather naive kind of pacifism based simply on hatred of war and love of humanity, but precisely for that reason she succeeded in making *Nijūshi no hitomi* a touching and convincing novel.”³²

Tsuboi (1899–1967) grew up on Shōdoshima. The novel has been filmed twice (1954 and 1987), and adapted for television, manga, and other formats. This multiuse of the contents has contributed to the novel’s enduring appeal. The major tourist sight is the Twenty-four Eyes Movie Studio (*Nijūshi no hitomi eiga mura* 二十四の瞳映画村), which contains the sets and locations for the 1987 film (figures 5 and 6) and the Tsuboi Sakae Memorial Museum (Tsuboi Sakae Bungakukan 壺井栄文学館).³³ Other smaller sites include the original branch school (Misaki no Bunkyojō 岬の分教場, a location for the 1954 film), the Tsuboi Sakae birthplace garden, and literary monuments with inscriptions from Tsuboi’s works. The story has come to represent not only Shōdoshima town (where the movie studio is) but also Shōdoshima Island as a whole: a monument welcomes visitors off the ferry at the island’s main port in Tonoshō 土庄 town on the other side of the island (figure 7).

The importance of the movie studio within Shōdoshima’s tourism sector is evident in figure 8. The movie studio is one of the island’s two main attractions, along with the Kankakei 寒霞溪 ropeway. Together they account for just under half of the 1.1–1.2 million visitors at Shōdoshima’s main sites. War-related contents tourism, therefore, is either the main motivation for visiting Shōdoshima (“purposeful contents tourism”), or it is a major component of the standard sightseeing itinerary (“sightseeing contents tourism”). The aggregate visitor numbers strongly suggest that there was a contents tourism boom in 1988–1989, the year after the 1987 film was released. However, tourism in the Seto Inland Sea area cannot be understood without reference to the Honshū-Shikoku Bridge Project: the Seto Ōhashi 瀬戸大橋 (Great Seto Bridge, Okayama to Kagawa) opened in 1988, the Akashi Kaikyō Ōhashi 明石海峡大橋 (Akashi Straits Bridge, Hyogo to Awaji Island) opened in 1998, and the Shimanami Kaidō しまなみ海道 (Nishiseto Expressway, Hiroshima to Ehime) opened in 1999. While there are no bridges to Shōdoshima, the 1988–1989 boom could also be linked to the large number of extra visitors to Kagawa prefecture following the opening of the Seto Ōhashi. Thereafter, there is no evidence of booms as a result of the television drama adaptations of *Nijūshi no hitomi* in 2005 and 2013. The spikes in total visitor numbers in 2010 and 2013 are a result of the Setouchi Triennale, an art festival held on islands across the Inland Sea area.

The remarkable feature of the Twenty Four Eyes Movie Studio is its consistency and longevity. Its visitor numbers fluctuate in the 190,000–230,000 people per year range.

31 Orr 2001, pp. 109–16.

32 Miura 1983, p. iv.

33 Twenty-four Eyes Movie Studio Website: <http://24hitomi.or.jp/en/>



Figure 5. The branch school set in the Twenty-four Eyes Movie Studio. Photograph by author.



Figure 6. The various cinematic and literary displays within the Movie Studio clearly identify the attraction as a site of contents tourism. Photograph by author.



Figure 7. The Twenty-four Eyes monument at Tonoshō Port. Photograph by author.

There are countless examples of open set attractions in Japan that have floundered after a few years when interest in the film/drama has waned.³⁴ The quality of the contents—namely the enduring appeal of Tsuboi's novel, the resonance of its antiwar message, and the periodic screen adaptations—are part of the explanation for the site's sustainability. But, it seems most likely that the secret of the movie studio's success is its situation on a little island. Access to Shōdoshima is only by ferry. Tourists are naturally restricted within the area of the island until their return journey. Many spend at least one night there, leaving a whole day or more to see the major sights. The movie studio is one of the major sights. In other words, there are many "sightseeing contents tourists" who visit primarily because it is on the standard itinerary in Shōdoshima. From the island's point of view, *Nijūshi no hitomi* has transformed from "local contents" to "local heritage." It is an indispensable and proud part of the island's history and identity. It may be war-related and the story may recount tales of death and tragedy, but it defies categorization as dark.

Okinoshima

The third case study, Okinoshima, has many similarities with the first case study, Ōkunoshima, in that it was an island with military facilities during the war, which converted into a tourist site in the postwar. However, the cases differ in two important regards: first, the wartime ruins on Okinoshima have no connection to death, and therefore do not meet the qualifications of a dark tourism site; and second, the recent tourism boom on Okinoshima was triggered by an anime, and therefore constitutes a clear example of contents tourism.

In the straits between the Kii Peninsula and Awaji Island is the Tomogashima Island group. It comprises four small islands: Okinoshima, Jinoshima 地ノ島, Torajima 虎島, and Kamijima 神島. Okinoshima, the largest island, occupies a strategic location guarding the entrance to Osaka Bay. During the Meiji period, observation posts and gun batteries were built on the island, and it was off limits to civilians until the end of the World War II. The fortress never fired its guns in anger and was dismantled after Japan's defeat, leaving only a network of trails between the ruins of the various military installations.

After the war, the islands were incorporated into the Setonaikai National Park (one of Japan's first national parks established in 1934). Okinoshima was developed as a resort by the Nankai Railways group, which ran a small *ryokan* and ferry service with the mainland. Visitors enjoyed sea bathing, fishing, and hiking. These were the days before ordinary Japanese citizens could travel overseas for leisure, and at its peak in 1964—the year in which postwar overseas leisure travel became possible—the island had 96,000 visitors a year (figure 9). The dramatic decline in visitor numbers that occurred between 1974 and 1976 coincides with the appreciation of the yen following the decision to let its value be determined in international currency markets, and therefore the greater affordability of overseas destinations. Thereafter, Okinoshima went into decline. In 2002, the year Nankai Railways pulled out of Okinoshima, visitor numbers were 16,526, under a fifth of the peak years. Today the abandoned huts and ryokan near the jetty remind visitors of this second chapter in Okinoshima's history, before the hike up to the summit takes them to the first chapter: the military installations.

34 Seaton et al. 2017.

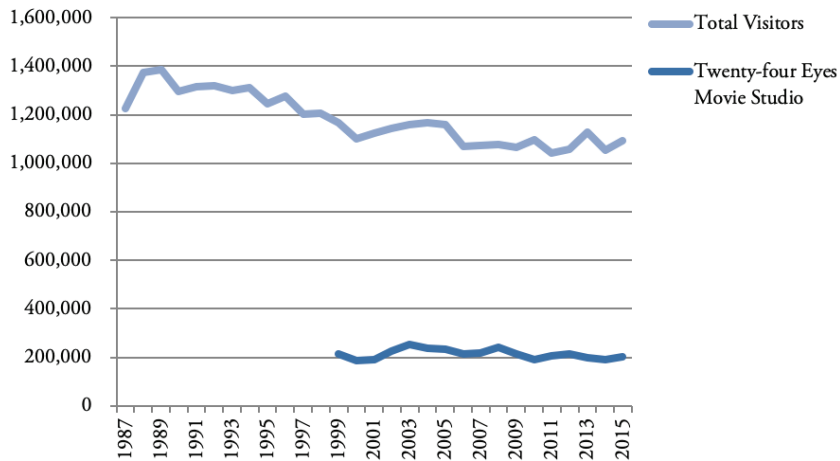


Figure 8. Total visitors to the main tourist sites in Shōdoshima (1987–2015) and the Twenty-four Eyes Movie Studio (1999–2015). Compiled by the author from multiple tourism reports available on the websites of Kagawa prefecture Tourism and Shikoku Transportation & Tourism Bureau.

Okinoshima’s five decades as a small island resort were made possible by war. Until the Imperial Japanese Army turned the island into a fortress, Okinoshima was an uninhabited and largely unusable island, except for religious pilgrimage. It had insufficient open land and water supply to sustain civilian communities. However, the military prized Okinoshima’s vantage points. It cut paths connecting the various gun batteries and observation points, and built port and jetty facilities to connect Okinoshima to the mainland. When the military vacated the island after the war, the tourism industry took over this infrastructure. The views prized in war by artillery spotters were enjoyed in peace by hikers. The ruins of the fortress themselves became an attraction, too, as a set of points to aim for on a hike around the island on the paths created by the military to connect the installations. At the highest point on the island, visitors today typically stop for a rest at the lookout point. They gaze out north over a spectacular 180 degree view from Awaji Island on their left (figure 10), across Osaka Bay towards Kobe and Osaka and the Kii Peninsula on their right.

In the decade following the closure of the Nankai Electric Railway resort, visitor numbers fluctuated in the 16,000 to 20,000 range. Then from 2012 to 2015 there was a remarkable and unexpected recovery to levels not seen since the early 1980s. The boom was triggered by contents tourism. Fans of director Miyazaki Hayao noticed similarities between the ruins on Okinoshima, particularly the ruins of the third battery (figure 11), and Laputa from *Tenkū no shiro Rapyuta*. The combination of the red brick arches, thick undergrowth, and ocean vistas made Okinoshima popular with people cosplaying as characters Pazu and Sheeta. Wakayama prefecture started promoting the island as a site of cosplay on its official tourism website, and even listed cosplay rules.³⁵ Cosplay as an activity is centered

35 Wakayama Prefectural Tourism Association website: <https://www.wakayama-kanko.or.jp/marutabi/anime/osusume.html>

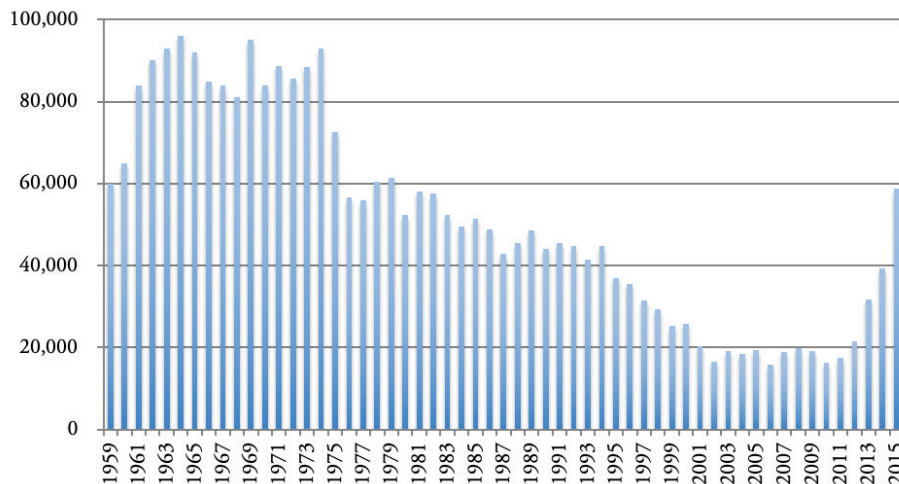


Figure 9. Visitors to Tomogashima, 1959–2015. Wakayama Prefectural Tourism Association.

around the taking and sharing of posed photographs. Cosplayers, therefore, seek out appropriate “stages,” which both provide suitable backdrops for the scenes being recreated and (equally importantly) welcome people to cosplay there.³⁶ Okinoshima had an evocative “retro” atmosphere, and was isolated and spacious enough for cosplayers to indulge in their activities without inconveniencing others.

In reality, only a small proportion of the extra tourists during the boom were cosplayers, but many were fans of the anime. (On the sunny October day in 2016 when I visited, despite boatloads of visitors I did not see a single cosplayer.) The Tomogashima Kisen company, which runs the ferry service to the island, has a blog.³⁷ They publish photos from visitors, and a number of them mention Laputa as the reason they visited the island. Media attention about the contents tourism also generated a knock-on effect of broader media tourism. Tomogashima featured in local news and travel programs, which boosted visitation among people who were not fans or cosplayers.

The contents tourism boom is the third and current chapter in Okinoshima’s history following its fortress and resort eras. Okinoshima defies categorization as a site of dark tourism: the fort never engaged in battle so it is simply a set of military ruins, not a site of death and suffering. It could count as a “dark” site in Jung-Sun Han’s formulation of “dark heritage,” in which “dark” refers both to a “heritage of resentment and shame” and to the dark (namely “unlit”) underground tunnels of abandoned military installations that may still be visited today.³⁸ More appropriately, visitation to Okinoshima is war-related tourism with an important contents tourism element. In motivational terms, the war sites

36 Seaton et al. 2017, 56.

37 Tomogashima Kisen blog: http://tomogashimakisen.com/blog_tomogashima/.

38 Han 2017.



Figure 10. The view to Awaji Island from Okinoshima. The fort's guns protected this channel and the approach to Osaka Bay. Photograph by author.



Figure 11. The Third Gun Battery on Okinoshima. This has become a site of cosplay, particularly for fans of *Tenkū no shiro Rapyuta*. Photograph by author.

are probably of secondary importance: people go for the hiking rather than the heritage. But opening up the hiking trails, viewpoints, and islands to tourists was financially viable because the military had paid for the most expensive infrastructure during its development of the island as a fortress. And in the 2010s, visitation to Okinoshima has been given new meanings by anime fans, who see in Okinoshima's military-created landscapes a real-world equivalent of a fantasy location in an anime, thereby triggering new waves of tourism to this war-related site.

Ōzushima

The final two examples of war-related tourist sites are primarily sites commemorating Japanese navy personnel. The sites themselves, therefore, assume a more conservative or nationalistic tone.

On the island of Ōzushima in Yamaguchi prefecture there was a training base for *kaiten* 回天 submariners involved in *tokkō* (special attack, or kamikaze) operations. At first glance, this fourth case study again seems to fit the profile of a so-called “dark” site. A museum commemorating suicide attack submariners inevitably confronts the visitor with death. This confrontation is not graphic in the manner of the progressive Ōkunoshima Poison Gas Museum, with its pictures of corpses contorted in the agony of death by chemical weapons. Like other sites related to the kamikaze, such as those in Yūshūkan 遊就館 (Yasukuni Shrine's museum) and Chiran 知覧 (in southern Kyushu), visitors are encouraged to think of the fallen as noble, heroic individuals. Their names, photographs, and final letters home are on display alongside equipment, artifacts, panels outlining the history, and archival material. Visitors can look into the eyes of those who carried out suicide attacks and wonder what they thought as they went to certain death (figure 13). However, even as a site that forces all visitors to consider the meanings of these young men's deaths, the site defies easy categorization as dark or thanatouristic.

The Kaiten Kinenkan 回天記念館 (Kaiten Memorial Museum) on Ōzushima is run by the municipal government of Shūnan 周南. It opened in 1968, and the present building was opened in 1998. Its primary function is to be a quiet commemorative site to the 106 men who died and the 1,375 men who trained as *kaiten* pilots. While there has been touristification, there is little commercialization. The museum attracts around 15,000 visitors a year who pay a nominal fee of ¥300; children enter free. There is no gift shop and no restaurant. The museum is subsidized by public money in a conscious decision to preserve the contemplative atmosphere. The lack of commercialization means that the museum does not exhibit the “commodification” and “commercial ethic” that Lennon and Foley considered to be “critical features” of dark tourism.

However, visitation at the museum provides clear evidence of film-induced tourism. Figure 12 indicates a conspicuous spike in visitor numbers in 2006, the year *Deguchi no nai umi* was released. The film was based on the story of *kaiten* pilot Wada Minoru 和田稔, who died when his submarine sank during training.³⁹ His fate was confirmed when his submarine was washed ashore during a typhoon after Japan's surrender. The cinematic version contains scenes during which the *kaiten* pilots contemplate their impending deaths, and their despair

39 Some of Wada's writings are featured in *In the Faraway Mountains and Rivers*, a compilation of writings by University of Tokyo students drafted to fight after 1943. Quinn and Yamanouchi 2005.

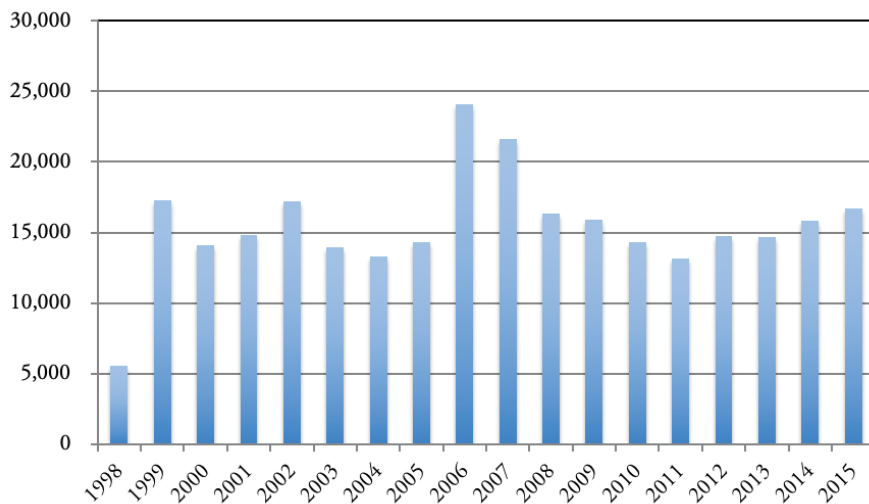


Figure 12. Visitor numbers to the Kaiten Memorial Museum. Kaiten Memorial Museum documents.

when missions are aborted because of technical failure. Namaki (the character based on Wada) is also a winning pitcher at the high school baseball championships, a fact which renders the pathos of his wasted life even more acute.

Compared to many other cinematic and museum depictions of the special attack operations, both *Deguchi no nai umi* and the Kaiten Kinenkan are more reflective regarding lives cut tragically short than laudatory of self-sacrifice for the nation. The film matches the atmosphere of the museum. This arose out of the island’s collaboration in production. The final scenes were shot on the jetty from which training missions were launched; the reconstruction of a *kaiten* cockpit used during filming is on display in the museum (figure 13); and a life-size replica of a *kaiten* used during filming is displayed at the ferry terminal where visitors catch the boat to Ōzushima (figure 14).

The avoidance of jingoistic nationalism in favor of quiet dignified commemoration helps the town to embrace its *kaiten* history. On alighting from the ferry to the island, visitors are welcomed with a large sign saying “Welcome to Kaiten Island, Ōzushima” (*Yōkoso, kaiten no shima, Ōzushima e* ようこそ、回天の島、大津島へ). As with the town of Chiran, the island’s identity is closely linked to its *tokkō* history.⁴⁰ To label the island a site of “dark tourism” would not necessarily be welcomed by islanders, and would run counter to the conservative narrative that sees the kamikaze as selfless young men who sacrificed themselves for their country. Quite apart from the potential backlash against being labeled “dark,” for islanders their war heritage is an indispensable modern lifeline. While the museum needs support from the municipal government to survive, locals I spoke to commented that the museum’s 15,000 visitors a year make an important contribution to the regularity and affordability of the ferry that connects the local population with the mainland. The island’s population has fallen from a few thousand to a few hundred in

⁴⁰ See the article by Fukuma Yoshiaki in this special.



Figure 13. Exhibits in the Kaiten Kinenkan. Photograph by author, used with permission.



Figure 14. The replica *kaiten* by the ferry terminal on the mainland. Photograph by author.

recent decades, and the remaining population is mostly of retirement age. Life on Ōzushima would be even more cut off without its wartime history.

In 2006, the *Deguchi no nai umi* boom boosted visitation by over 60 percent. Like many such booms, it was short-lived and afterwards visitor levels returned to their pre-boom levels. But from a contents tourism research perspective, this indicates why small islands such as Ōzushima are ideal case studies. On a small island with no other tourist sites (beyond fishing areas, local shrines, and a small campground), and with no other macro factors or trends that could explain such a marked spike in visitors in 2006, the evidence for the film being the cause of the boom, and thereby the existence of contents tourism, is clear.

Etajima

The final case study is Etajima, a city on Nōmishima island in Hiroshima prefecture. Its name is known nationwide as the site of Japan’s Imperial Naval Academy (1888–1945) and Marine Self Defense Force Academy (1956–present). The academy provides guided tours for visitors, which includes entry to the Museum of Naval History (Kyōiku Sankō Kan 教育参考館).⁴¹ This government-funded war museum provides primarily a military history up to the end of the World War II, including extensive exhibits on the navy’s kamikaze operations. According to online sources, the museum has approximately 70,000 visitors per year.⁴²

The exhibits present a patriotic eulogy to Japan’s navy past and present. They are intended to instill pride in serving members of the Maritime Self Defense Force, and to inspire feelings of respect and thanks towards Japan’s military among civilians. Such military museums, and this is not just the case in Japan, are by definition nationalistic. The “bright” exhibits in the Museum of Naval History—“bright” in the sense that they present an honorable, patriotic, and heroic version of Japanese naval history, albeit tempered by the “dark valley” of total defeat in 1945—are particularly suited to visitation by people whose motivation to visit war-related sites comes from the consumption of upbeat or moving war-related entertainment in which Japanese naval characters are the heroes. The use of the navy in popular entertainment, meanwhile, is helped by two factors: the reputation of the Imperial Japanese Navy as relatively chivalrous in combat in comparison to the atrocity-soaked image of the Japanese Imperial Army; and the technological appeal of naval weaponry that lends itself well to entertainment with a technophile element.

Etajima and the neighboring city of Kure 呉市 (on Honshū) have become “sacred sites” of naval contents tourism, along with other important naval bases like Yokosuka.⁴³ The academy in Etajima has been the setting or shooting location for numerous naval films and dramas—for example, our tour guide pointed out a corridor where scenes for the NHK drama *Saka no ue no kumo* 坂の上の雲 (*Clouds Above the Hill*; 2009–2011) were shot. In 2005, the Yamato Myūjiamu: Kure-shi Kaiji Rekishi Kagakukan 大和ミュージアム: 呉市海事歴史科学館 (Yamato Museum) opened, the same year as the blockbuster film *Otokotachi*

41 Kyōiku Sankō Kan 教育参考館 translates literally as “Education Reference Hall” in Japanese. The activities of the MSDF are the subject of a separate museum, the JMSDF Kure Museum: <https://www.jmsdf-kure-museum.go.jp/en/>.

42 Information about the Museum of Naval History can be found on the Dai 1 Jukka Gakkō 第1術科学校 website: <http://www.mod.go.jp/msdf/onemss/about/facility/index.html>.

43 See Sugawa-Shimada 2018. See Uesugi article on Maizuru for more on naval contents tourism.

no Yamato 男たちの大和 (*Yamato*) was released. Other sets of contents include *Kantai korekushon* 艦隊コレクション (*Kantai Collection*, also called *Kankore*; online game, anime, 2013–), and *Kono sekai no katasumi ni* この世界の片隅に (*In this Corner of the World*; manga, television drama, cinema anime, 2007–). In Kure and Etajima, military history and pop culture converge to create arguably Japan’s greatest concentration of war-related contents tourism.

Etajima’s naval heritage, therefore, has become the city’s brand and prime tourism resource. In 2016, the Tourism Promotion Division of Etajima City ran a campaign that built on its military and pop culture connections. The *Heiki Sutoraiku* 兵姫ストライク (*Heiki Strike*) stamp rally invited visitors to collect images of characters called “weapon princesses” (figure 16) on their smart phones by pointing the camera at a color-coded matrix placed on bus stops or in buses (figure 17), which suggests that the aim was to encourage people to navigate around the island on public transport. There were stamps to collect near war-related sites, such as the naval academy and the Tone Memorial Museum (Gunkan Tone shiryōkan 軍艦利根資料館) (commemorating the heavy cruiser *Tone*, which was sunk while moored just off the island in July 1945), but most stamps were at ordinary bus stops. There were courses of varying lengths and people who completed the course could enter a prize draw. According to the Etajima Tourism Promotion Division, 855 people took part in the stamp rally and a participant survey indicated per capita spending of ¥1,400 on tourism (transport, entry fees, and so on). Participant numbers were lower than anticipated, but the campaign was considered a success because data gained from participants provided useful insights into visitors’ movements, which will be used to improve future tourism campaigns.⁴⁴

The use of characters and anime contents to promote war-related sites is an example of what might be called “lite tourism” at war-related sites. This is the realm of *kawaii* (cute) and *kakkoii* (cool), rather than *kurai* (dark). There are many philosophical, historical, and gender issues to debate regarding the use of sexualized and militarized female characters in anime, military recruitment, and tourism campaigns.⁴⁵ But militarized cute is a widespread genre with many sets of contents.⁴⁶ The genre’s appeal goes beyond its obvious target of (male) anime fans and *gunji* 軍事 (military) otaku. For example, at pop culture events this author has seen women cosplaying as *kanmusu* 艦娘 (ship girls) from *Kantai Collection*. A further, often unmentioned, aspect of military pop culture is the extent to which it popularizes serious history. The *Nihon kaigun “Kankore” kōshiki sakusen kiroku* 日本海軍「艦これ」公式作戦記録 (Official *Kankore* Operations Guide), for example, pairs the ship girls from *Kantai Collection* with the real battle histories (including archive photographs and maps) of their wartime namesakes.⁴⁷

The Heiki Strike campaign was an imitation of *Kantai Collection*. Etajima is a “sacred site” for *Kantai Collection* fans, but when contents reach the level of popularity achieved by

44 Etajima Tourism Promotion Division (江田市観光振興課), by email, 25 January 2017.

45 These issues are beyond the scope of this article. See Frühstück 2007 for an introduction and Sugawa-Shimada 2018 for further examples.

46 Another well-known example is the 2012 anime, *Girls und Panzer* ガールズ&パンツァー, which generated a war-related contents tourism boom in Ōarai-machi 大洗町, Ibaraki prefecture. See Yamamura 2017.

47 *Kankore* 2014. For further discussion of *Kantai Collection*-related contents tourism, including the utilization of war history, see Uesugi in this special.



Figure 15. Visitors taking the guided tour of the Etajima Naval Academy stop in front of the Red Brick Students' Hall, which has featured in many naval films, dramas, and anime. Photograph by author.

Kantai Collection, negotiating licenses, copyrights, and terms of use becomes big business. The City of Etajima also felt that they would retain more control over future commercial usage by commissioning their own set of characters. In this regard, *Heiki Strike* comes more within the scope of “character business” and “tourism promotion” than contents tourism, which, strictly speaking, is tourism generated as an unintended consequence of a creative work’s popularity. However, the *Heiki Strike* campaign illustrates that war-related tourism in Japan’s naval heartland is well into the fourth stage outlined at the beginning of this article. The stages of postwar commemorative travel and touristification (commercialization) are still in evidence, but new works of popular culture are now generating new meanings and travel motivations for visitors who have little personal connection to and/or prior interest in the wartime events depicted in the naval sites they visit.

Conclusions

This article has presented a critique of the concept of “dark tourism” via discussion of the term’s adoption in Japan and its inappropriateness for the analysis of war-related tourism in the area of the Seto Inland Sea. Instead, the supply-side phenomenon of war-related tourism—tourism at a site related to the Asia-Pacific War—has been used in conjunction with three demand-side phenomena—thanatourism, heritage tourism, and contents tourism—to discuss examples in the Seto Inland Sea area. Small islands were chosen because they allow the clearest conclusions to be drawn between the release of mediatized works of entertainment and changes in visitation levels, and therefore offer the clearest picture of the nature and extent of contents tourism.

The case studies suggest that for contents tourism to exist at a sufficient volume to become visible in tourism statistics, it must be triggered either by “light/lite” works of entertainment (as seen at Etajima or Okinoshima) or moving works depicting Japanese victimhood (as seen on Shōdoshima or Ōzushima). The sites receiving visitors tend to be



Figure 16. Heiki Strike publicity materials at the Koyō 小用 ferry terminal, Etajima. Photograph by author.



Figure 17. The author captures a “weapon princess” (*heiki* 兵姫). Photograph by author.

either promoting nationalistic narratives of Japanese wartime conduct, or emotive sites commemorating Japanese victimhood and sacrifice. Both typically have only non-graphic representations of death and therefore fit poorly the profile of “dark tourism.” By contrast, at the war-related site presenting harrowing images of death (the Poison Gas Museum), there is no evidence of thanatourism, and visitation is best categorized as cultural or heritage tourism (which can be further sub-categorized according to motivations as “purposeful,” “sightseeing,” and so on). On Ōkunoshima, despite a clear “media tourism” effect caused by the popularity of its rabbits on social media, there is no conclusive evidence of contents tourism, either.

On this evidence, ultimately heritage tourism rather than dark tourism remains the most useful lens through which to view and understand war-related tourism in Japan. Dark tourism as a field of inquiry has helped illuminate many issues within war-related tourism, but the term is unhelpful and in Japan there is little evidence of voyeuristic thanatourism at war-related sites. By contrast, the case studies indicate why tourism practitioners are increasingly looking towards contents tourism. There is significant statistical evidence in the case studies of the power of mediatized culture to generate temporary booms or even sustain demand at war-related sites. In this respect, the results of this study are compatible with other studies of war and contents tourism.⁴⁸ For example, this phenomenon is conspicuous at sites relating to the kamikaze in Kyushu, where contents tourism has emerged as a considerable factor since the 1990s.⁴⁹ As the war slips further into the past and the generations with personal experience of the war pass, we can expect the role of mediatized popular culture to play an ever greater role not only in the evolution of memories of the Asia-Pacific War, but also the nature and numbers of travel experiences at war-related sites.

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⁴⁸ Seaton 2018a.

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