

## 12 The Russo-Japanese War and (contents) tourism

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The Russo-Japanese War exemplifies the phases that war history goes through before becoming a 'usable narrative world' (Figure 1.3) for the entertainment and leisure industries. Defeating a European power propelled Japan to great power status. Consequently, the Russo-Japanese War generated many positive conditions for inducing tourism activity (Figure 1.4). However, defeat in 1945 deprived Japan of its 1905 spoils of victory, such as Karafuto (now southern Sakhalin island), domination over the Korean peninsula, and control of the Kuriles (the southern portion of which is now controlled by Russia but claimed by Japan as its Northern Territories). Defeat in 1945 also discredited the Japanese empire, generating contested memories rather than a heroic, unifying narrative about the empire's 'finest hour'. But with the war now over a century into the past, the Russo-Japanese War has largely 'become history' and war-related contents tourism can flourish, albeit still with the power to divide.

In the aftermath of Japan's victory, there were large-scale public celebrations and military reviews. Millions visited exhibitions of the spoils of war in Yūshūkan Museum at Yasukuni Shrine (Chapter 15) or displayed in front of the Imperial Palace (Dickinson 2005: 525–528). Public interest in Russo-Japanese War films and domestic events quickly dwindled (Chiba 2007: 358–363), but victory triggered the first overseas tours in newly acquired spheres of influence after 1906. Battlefield tours (particularly of Hill 203 outside Port Arthur) and visits by schoolchildren were at the forefront of early post-victory tourism (Soyama 2019: 47; McDonald 2019). By 1918 there was an imperial travel industry as 'the empire's major transportation institutions joined with the Japan Tourist Bureau (JTB) to begin services for domestic travelers' (McDonald 2017: 57). In the aftermath of the First World War, attitudes towards war became more sombre. But in the 1930s Japan stopped observing Armistice Day (Dickinson 2005: 543) and 'memory of the Russo-Japanese War was

purposely rekindled' ahead of the outbreak of the Second World War (Chiba 2007: 363). From the late 1920s, and particularly for the 25th and 30th anniversaries of victory, there were many exhibitions featuring the Russo-Japanese War. Exhibitions were a popular cultural activity of the era and could attract a million visitors or more (Shimazu 2009: 241–248). During 1940, when there were many events celebrating the empire's 2,600th anniversary, Port Arthur was a 'holy' destination and there were daily bus tours in which the war-related sites were the 'primary tourist attraction' (Ruoff 2010: 131). All these tourism patterns fit the mould of war-related tourism as a patriotic act – imaginaries of (subjective) war experiences (Figure 1.3) – although the extensive popular culture relating to the war at the time could also have been triggering something akin to contents tourism. However, it would not be until well after the Second World War that Russo-Japanese War tourism unambiguously assumed a contents tourism element.

During the early period of tourism to 1940, the sites visited were primarily overseas battlefields (such as Port Arthur) or domestic commemorative sites including Yasukuni Shrine/Yūshūkan Museum, Nōgi Shrine (honouring Nōgi Maresuke, consecrated in 1923), Tōgō Shrine (honouring Tōgō Heihachirō, consecrated in 1940), and the battleship *Mikasa* (Tōgō's flagship at the Battle of Tsushima Straits). *HIJMS Mikasa* was decommissioned under the terms of the 1922 Washington Naval Conference and became a memorial ship in 1926 in a dry dock in the naval city of Yokosuka (Mikasa Preservation Society n.d.: 20). However, from 1942 until the 1960s, war and defeat effectively shut down Russo-Japanese War tourism. Japanese could not travel overseas for leisure until 1964 (making battlefield tours impossible); Yūshūkan was closed from 1945 to 1986; and *HIJMS Mikasa* was stripped of its guns and masts during the occupation before restoration work allowed it to reopen in 1961 (ibid.). Only the shrines remained accessible to the general public during this period.

Works of popular culture depicting the war underpinned the post-1945 recovery of Russo-Japanese War tourism. The first Russo-Japanese War film of the postwar era was *The Emperor Meiji and the Great Russo-Japanese War* (1957), which was also notable as the first film to feature an emperor as the leading character. This film was nationalistic, due to both the director's own right-wing views and the need to avoid the risks of *lèse-majesté* and violent backlash by right-wingers (Chiba 2007: 371–372). This film set the patriotic tone of post-1945 films about the Russo-Japanese War, in contrast to the prewar era, in which films about the Russo-Japanese War ranged from 'left-leaning films' to 'period dramas' to prowar 'commemoration films' (Shimazu 2009: 249–251). This

range of political ideologies would be replicated in postwar films about the Asia-Pacific War. But after 1945 the Russo-Japanese War, as Japan's last great victory of the imperial era, gained a particular place in the hearts of conservative and nationalist filmmakers.

The defining moment in Russo-Japanese War tourism came in 1968–1972 with the publication of Shiba Ryōtarō's serialized novel *Clouds Above the Hill* in the *Sankei shinbun* newspaper. Shiba's novel 'established the orthodoxy for the post-1945 reconstruction of the 1904–5 war in popular cultural memory' (Shimazu 2009: 273). Shiba's 'view of history' (known as the *Shiba shikan*) was not explicitly 'nationalist' in that his positive assessment of the Meiji period co-existed with criticism of Japan's actions during the Second World War. Nevertheless, he does present the Russo-Japanese War as Japan pursuing its legitimate national interests, regardless of the consequences for Korea (Seaton 2021: 51, 54). This uplifting interpretation created a 'usable narrative world' (Figure 1.3) at the intersection of subjective patriotic history, heritage tourism, and Shiba fandom.

Most significantly, Shiba created a new 'sacred site' for Russo-Japanese War tourism: Matsuyama in Ehime prefecture. This was the hometown



Figure 12.1 The Akiyama Brothers' Birthplace Museum, Matsuyama. Shiba Ryōtarō's novel turned the brothers from little-known military men into iconic figures within Japanese memories of the Russo-Japanese War. Author's photo.

of the three main protagonists: Akiyama Yoshifuru, Akiyama Saneyuki, and poet Masaoka Shiki. From the early 2000s, the city has had a *machi-zukuri* (community building) project centred on Shiba's novel that has yielded clear tourism benefits to the city (Seaton 2021: 56). The Clouds Above the Hill Museum and the Akiyama Brothers' Birthplace Museum were built, and other sites were designated as part of the *Clouds Above the Hill* tourism itinerary. These sites were all opened in time to benefit from a tourism boom generated by NHK's dramatization of Shiba's novel in 2009–2011. This touristification process has not been uncontested at the local level, with concerns voiced about the ideologies behind the novel and drama (Seaton 2021). From a contents tourism perspective, however, the drama boosted visitation to heritage sites and also added shooting locations to the Russo-Japanese War tourism itinerary, in particular a bridge evocative of the Meiji period in Uchiko town (30 kilometres south of Matsuyama) and the Etajima Naval Academy in Hiroshima prefecture. Japanese visitation to Lushun (Port Arthur) also boomed as a result of the drama (McDonald 2019: 77). What might be termed the 'second phase' of Japanese tourism to battlefield sites in China, therefore, is largely underpinned by popular culture.

Whereas these historically based representations of the war induce contents tourism, another notable characteristic of Russo-Japanese War tourism is that forms are diversifying as the war recedes into the past. The manga/anime *Golden Kamuy* (Chapter 11) has generated war-related tourism to sites such as the Hokuchin Memorial Museum in Asahikawa. The manga/anime's opening sequence is the assault on Hill 203 and fans visit the museum, which has exhibits about Hill 203 given its significance within Imperial Army Seventh Division history. Furthermore, the decks of *HIJMS Mikasa* have become popular with cosplayer fans of the online game and anime *Kantai Collection* (Chapter 20), even though the game/anime is war fantasy rather than in a Russo-Japanese War scenario (Sugawa-Shimada 2019). And whereas Russo-Japanese War contents tourism is now primarily related to works that are conservative/nationalist eulogies to a Japanese victory, more critical works can generate tourism, too. Yosano Akiko's poem *Kimi shinitamō koto nakare* (Brother, do not give your life), published to much controversy in 1904, has been canonized as a classic work of Japanese anti-war poetry (Rabson 1991). Fans of Yosano, and more generally Japanese poetry, make pilgrimages to the Yosano Akiko Museum in her hometown of Sakai and other sites related to arguably Japan's most celebrated female poet.

In short, despite a 'chronological distance' (Chapter 1) of over 100 years removed from the present, the Russo-Japanese War has not yet completed its shift to a tourism imaginary of war-related entertainment.

Instead, the shifting patterns of tourism since 1905 demonstrate neatly how it is not only the nature of the war being depicted in works of entertainment that matters. It is also the social, cultural, and political milieu of the postwar, pre-next-war, and post-next-war that shape the tourism flows generated by war.

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