Random Thoughts 4

# Changing Times

Today I read a news article on @niftynews[[1]](#endnote-1) about a new phenomenon referred to as “tourism pollution”.[[2]](#endnote-2) It seems that the recent increase in foreign tourists to areas such as Shinjuku’s Golden Town have had a negative impact on them. The behavior of the foreign tourists is the problem. They behave in ways that are not acceptable according to Japanese customs and manners. For example, littering, drinking alcoholic beverages on the street, smoking, talking loudly or acting rowdy. One resident near Meiji Shrine was shocked to see foreigners dressed in costumes visiting the shrine and others kissing in the shrine precincts. Others lament how their favorite local bars have changed from cozy places where they could go for a drink among other regulars to places now too crowded with foreigners for them even to enter.

Bob Dylan wrote a classic song in 1964 called *The Times They Are A Changin’*.[[3]](#endnote-3) I was still in high school when the song was released and it made a powerful impression upon me. As with most youth, I was eager for change and many of the songs of that era likewise made us think about the current situation. At that time the Vietnam War was just beginning to expand with greater American involvement being required. This in turn meant conscription – drafting young men into the military. At the same time anti-war sentiment and movements also began to grow in size and to become more vocal. American society became split between those who supported the war and those who were against it. Also at this time there were many civil rights movements, so the sixties were indeed a time of great change. Looking back now America seems like a very different country than it was when I was young. The same is true for Japan.

History shows us that change is inevitable. It is possible to maintain a status quo for a while, but in the end, it is changed and a different situation arises. Now we are seeing that happen in Japan. This process appears to be speeding up by the increasing number of foreign visitors who come to Japan. Most are ignorant of Japanese customs and sensitivities, so their behavior is offensive or annoying. Yet, the government, and those businesses that profit from this increase in tourism, is eager to further increase it. Recently I heard that by the time of the Olympics 40 million foreign visitors are expected to come to Japan each year. I shudder to think about the changes this will cause.

1. https://news.nifty.com/article/magazine/12193-169938/2 [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. 観光公害 [↑](#endnote-ref-2)
3. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e7qQ6\_RV4VQ [↑](#endnote-ref-3)