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The Early Practice of Home Tourism: Thomas Pennant's Voyage to the Hebrides in 1772

Tomoyuki HAYASHI

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Introduction

In the eighteenth century, travel writing was closely connected with new literary works, as we can see in, for example, Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726). In this era, there arose in Great Britain the practice of touring domestically. One common destination was Scotland, which since the Union in 1707, had become an attractive tourist spot. However, the Hebrides – Scotland's western islands – remained unknown, because of their lack of clear routes, until after the Jacobite rebellion in 1745-46. In the Hebrides, the government troops made a great mistake – they failed to capture the rebel leader, Charles Edward Stuart, “the Young Pretender,” there and he fled to France from the islands. From the 1760s the English began to obtain an accurate sense of Hebridean geography. In 1774, Dr Samuel Johnson traveled around the islands and published his travelogue in 1776.

However, Thomas Pennant (1726-98), a Welsh naturalist, preceded Johnson in the Hebrides; he published *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides 1772 Part I* in 1774.¹⁾ Pennant was born at Downing in Flintshire and earnestly studied natural science. In 1755, he began a correspondence with Linnaeus. He was famous for his *The British Zoology* (1766-68). Consequently, he was elected to the Royal Society in 1765. He was a celebrated member, well enough known to be engaged with James Cook's voyages. Pennant's important publication was his first *Tour in Scotland* published in 1771. In 1772, he made a second journey, this time traveling mostly by sea and visiting the western islands of

Scotland, chronicling it in the 1774 volume. In this paper, I will deal with the section "Voyage to the Hebrides" of this book.

It is important that Pennant's tour was made in the context of the overseas exploration voyages of the era. As Paul Smethurst says, "Pennant and Johnson were writing in the immediate aftermath of James Cook's Endeavour voyage (1768-71) and the cross-fertilization of scientific ideas and imaginative speculation is palpable" (Smethurst 14). The Hebrides was still an exotic place in the English imagination at this point, and hardships and danger were still inevitable for the Hebridean traveler. Pennant and Johnson, because they were fascinated with overseas exploration, had the energy to undertake their travels. Therefore, I will consider Pennant's domestic voyage to be a "home tour," under influence of the overseas voyages like those of Cook.

At that time, Pennant's travelogue was a greater success than Johnson's *Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland*. In reference to Johnson's *Journey*, the *Monthly Review* said thus in 1775: "Mr Pennant has led the way; Dr Johnson has followed.... Dr Johnson's book may be regarded as a valuable supplement to Mr Pennant's two accounts of his northern expeditions – the more properly supplemental " (*The Monthly Review* 57). We should note the fact that Johnson's book was described as "supplemental." Pennant's reputation as a travel writer was far greater than Johnson's, and even Johnson praised Pennant for his faculty of exact description. In 1778, according to James Boswell, he defended Pennant from the criticism; he said, "Pennant is the best traveler I ever read" for "I travelled after him" (Boswell 3: 274).

Pennant's revaluation has been done mostly among researchers of travel writing, for his *Voyages* are compared to Johnson's *Journeys*. However, these researchers overlook the fact that Pennant quoted the account of the "unknown" island of Staffa, by Joseph Banks, a prominent young naturalist in the Royal Society. During a voyage to Iceland in 1772, Banks "discovered" the island of Staffa, one of the Hebrides, which Pennant could not visit on his tour. Pennant included in his travelogue an account of Staffa which Banks gave Pennant in proof of friendship. That is why Pennant dedicated the book to Banks and thanked him for "the liberal

declaration...that the Hebrides were [Pennant's] ground".²⁾ Later, Banks was elected the president of the Royal Society, with Pennant's support, in 1778.

Banks was an ambitious researcher, whose major interest was in justifying his personal views. In contrast, Pennant did not talk about his personal views. His description of the Hebrides was exhaustive and encyclopedic. He even surveyed the history of the Hebrides, from Roman times to his contemporary times, referring extensively to classic literature. While, he was sometimes shocked at the misery of the place's inhabitants, he mostly concentrated on collecting the facts. However, at the end of his voyage, he used fiction to describe a future perspective. In this section, he dreams of the visit of the apparition of an ancient Highland chieftain, who asks him to inform the English of the state of the islands. We can see the distinction between Pennant as a traveler and as a narrator. As Smethurst says, "the cross-fertilization of scientific ideas and imaginative speculation is palpable"; in other words, we should pay attention to Pennant's literary imagination.

Thus, I will analyze Pennant's *Voyage* in relation to four figures: Thomas Pennant, Samuel Johnson, Joseph Banks and the fictional Highland chieftain. In chapter 1, I will examine critical currents on Johnson and Pennant, and consider the similarity of two travelers in the context of domestic voyages. In chapter 2, I will examine Pennant's description of the vanishing customs on the Isle of Skye. This was indeed one of the best scenes in his *Voyage to the Hebrides*. In chapter 3, we move on to Joseph Banks's account of Staffa, which was included in Pennant's book. It is useful to consider the differences between two naturalists. My purpose is to prove the superiority of Pennant's description to Banks's. In chapter 4, we will consider Pennant's imagination. Talented as a writer, he created the apparition of the Highland chieftain to complete his account. Why did he use this literary device? In this paper, I will consider how literary and scientific imagination contributed to exploration in the eighteenth century and clarify its connection with travel writing, putatively a factual record.

I . Home Tour: Pennant as a “Predecessor” to Samuel Johnson

Pennant, on the ship, *Lady Frederick Campbell*, visited the island of Iona in the early stage of his journey, which was also a destination of Johnson's pilgrimage in the Hebrides. The island is a sacred place, for it was the center of the earliest Christian mission to Scotland. Johnson, who was deeply impressed by the sights in Iona, said, “That man is little to be envied... whose piety would not grow warmer among the ruins of Iona!” (Johnson 124). However, Johnson, who visited the ruins of the famous Iona Abbey, did not describe the length of the site and depended instead, on Pennant's description:

The churches of the two convents are both standing, though unroofed. They were built of unhewn stone, but solid, and not so inelegant. I brought away rude measures of the buildings, such as I cannot much trust myself, inaccurately taken, and obscurely noted. Mr Pennant's delineations, which are doubtless exact, have made my unskillful descriptions less necessary. (Johnson 124; my underlines)

Apparently, Johnson was well aware of his rival traveler. For Johnson, however, the feeling of the site was more important than the exact data. However, Pennant, who considered facts important, measured the building and recorded it as “fifty-eight feet by twenty.” And he added, “the roof of the east end is entire, is a pretty vault made of very thin stones bound together by four ribs meeting in the centre” (282). Here we can see the difference between the two authors clearly. Johnson described the church as “unroofed,” but Pennant keenly pointed out that some of the parts were intact, and described its vault as if he were an architect.

In short, Pennant had so much concern with detail that even Johnson depended on his accuracy and scope, as we can see above. Ralph Jenkins has asserted that Johnson tried “to avoid repetition of Pennant when he had to cover the same ground” (Jenkins 262). Pennant traveled northwards in the Hebrides while Johnson went southwards. Jenkins was the first to assert the idea that Pennant was a “predecessor” of Samuel

Johnson. Thomas Jemielity, a famous Johnsonian, opposed this notion by stating that Jenkins overvalued Pennant's influence on Johnson, because Jenkins dismissed "the broader context of Johnson's lifelong interest in travel and travel literature, his desire almost from childhood to visit the Hebrides" (Jemielity 314). Yet, critics have continued to discuss Pennant as a "predecessor" in his travel to Johnson.

Recently, as the study of travel literature has developed, these kinds of travels within the British Isles have been categorized as "home tours." Paul Smethurst has connected them to overseas exploration voyages as performances of nation building. Smethurst said, "Thomas Pennant used the home tour in the eighteenth century to incorporate Scotland, politically, economically, and imaginatively into the island of Great Britain" (Smethurst13). However, I disagree that Pennant contributed to the incorporation of these peripheries into the nation-state. In this thesis, I would like to prove that Pennant was rooted in the local culture and had a local rather than a national perspective. His network was also important: He was a friend of the famous Joseph Banks, and acquaintance of Horace Walpole. In a word, he was the center point of the intellectual life of both literature and science in eighteenth century. In this paper, with reference to the contemporary discussion on Pennant's work, I will examine how he works for the local benefit, not for Great Britain's.

II . Records of the Local Culture: Pennant as an Antiquarian

Pennant showed readers the Hebrides as a land of classical literature. For example, he presented the history of the islands in the Roman era, quoting from Strabo and Pliny. In this way, he could easily cause readers to feel familiar with these islands. In addition, Pennant had three travel companions with particular skills: a botanist, a Gaelic scholar, and an artist. In particular, the artist and servant, Moses Griffith, played an important role, producing many sketches of the terrain they traveled through, complementing Pennant's writings. First, we will examine Pennant's description of Skye, one of the highlights of the voyage.

Pennant recorded the traditional local custom of "fulling clothes." The word "full" or "waulk" means "to beat or press the woolen cloth

in order to cause felting of the fibres and consequent shrinkage and thickening.” They are vividly described in Pennant’s text and Griffith’s picture.

On my return am entertained with a rehearsal of the *Luagh*, or *walking of cloth*, a substitute for the fulling mill: twelve or fourteen women divided into two equal numbers, sit down on each side of a long board, ribbed length ways, placing the cloth on it...singing at the same time as the *Quern*.... The subject of the songs...are sometimes love, sometimes panegyric, and often a rehearsal of the deeds of antient heroes, but commonly all the tunes slow and melancholy. (327-28; my underlines)

Here we soon notice that Pennant omits the first person “I.” This is log book style, and it is likely that he wrote down this curious custom as soon as possible without much concern for composition. Next, we should pay attention to his usage of the Gaelic language. He calls “wa[u]lking” by its Gaelic name “Luagh” or “Luaghad.” His Gaelic scholar likely translated the word into English for him. Pennant did not need to use the Gaelic name here, but he felt familiar with local terms as well as its habits. Finally, Pennant made precious records of “wa[u]lking songs,” in which a group of women sing by turns, improvising during work.

We should note that it was in a transition of society that Pennant visited the Hebrides. After the rebellion of 1745, there arose a wave of modernization in the Hebrides. Under English influence, the traditional ways of life were abolished. For example, the quern was no longer used for the introduction of water-mills. Pennant recorded the song to prevent it from extinction. In the next page, I have inserted Moses Griffith’s sketch of the “Luaghad” scene. At left, two women are grinding at the Quern. At right, many women are walking the cloth, singing songs. Griffith made the sketches under Pennant’s direction, and gave an accurate visual record to the text. We, the readers, get both literal allusion and visual image.

After this picture, Pennant proceeds: “Singing at the *Quern* is now almost out of date since the introduction of water-mills. The laird can



Fig. 1 Sketch of “Luaghad” by Moses Griffith

oblige his tenants, as in England to make use of this more expeditious kind of grinding”(328). Pennant would have supported the introduction of water-mills to do the work more efficiently, as discussed below. Yet, he still felt nostalgia for the world recalled in the waulking songs, comparing them to pastoral songs in Greek: They “join in chorus, keeping time to the sound of a bagpipe, as the *Grecian* lasses were wont to do to that of a lyre during vintage in the days of *Homer*”(328). Here Pennant intentionally depicts pastoral scenes, analogous with a past Golden Age. He uses classical literature to emphasize the significance of traditional local customs.

Actually, Pennant was an enlightened naturalist, eager to promote prosperity for the future, and often talked about “improvement” of the agricultural methods he saw in his journey. He was delighted at the abolition of the feudal system of Highland clanship, which had prevented these improvements, after the Jacobite Rebellion of 1745. However, at the same time, he noticed the new problems of the landowners, who were the former feudal chieftains. He implied that misery on the land often occurred because of these landowners’ greed.

By an unnatural force some of the rents are now doubled and trebled. People, long out of habit of industry, and used to the convivial tables of their chieftain, were unable instantly to support so new a burden: in time not preceding that, they felt the return of their rents: they were enabled to keep the hospitality...they felt from them [chieftains] the first act of oppression. (354; my underlines)

Pennant criticized the landowners for accumulating capital under the name of modernization. For Pennant, the process of social change should be in harmony with the life of the common people. If landowners taxed their tenants more than they could bear, this was no more than an act of oppression. It would only lead to the collapse of the traditional community, as we see in the “Luaghad” scene.

Thus, Pennant describes some failures in the introduction of the new economic systems in the Hebrides. Feeling nostalgia for traditional life, he said, “The chieftain should not lose, with the power of doing harm, the disposition of doing good” (338). Although he supported the abolishment of clanship, he still considered the former chieftain to be a leader responsible to his people. Here, we can see that Pennant’s travelogue maintains a delicate balance of past and present. However, I must conclude that Pennant emphasized the traditional local culture more than his moral arguments for the future of the Hebrides. To clarify this issue, in chapter 3, I will compare Pennant’s description of the islands with that of Joseph Banks’s.

III . Banks’s “Account of Staffa”: *Ossian*’s Ground Visited

As I have said before, Pennant printed passages from Joseph Banks’s “Account of Staffa,” which covered 10 pages in Pennant’s work. Banks, on an exploration voyage to Iceland in 1772, accidentally “discovered” Staffa, which was not on the map, and gave his notes to Pennant after he came home. Horace Walpole, one of Pennant’s acquaintances, wrote to a friend about this part of Pennant’s travelogue on May 28, 1774.

Mr Pennant has published a new tour to Scotland and Hebrides,

and though, he has endeavoured to paint their dismal isles and rocks in glowing colours, they will not be satisfied, for he seems no bigot about Ossian.... The most amusing part was communicated to him by Mr Banks, who found whole islands that bear nothing but columns.... There is a beautiful cave called Fingal's which proves that nature loves Gothic architecture. (Walpole "To William Cole" 2; my underlines)

We can hear Walpole's ironic tone in this letter, but he had his reasons. First, Walpole was annoyed because Pennant seemed "no bigot about Ossian." *Ossian* is a cycle of epic poems that James Macpherson published in the 1760s. The poet asserted that he had "translated" them from ancient Gaelic manuscripts found in the Hebrides, and an authenticity debate emerged. Samuel Johnson, for one, insisted that the poems were forgeries. By his travel in the Hebrides, Johnson concluded that Macpherson had found fragments of oral legends and then woven them into poems of his own composition. Therefore, in Walpole's allusion, Pennant's traveling to the Hebrides should involve examining the poem's authenticity.

Joseph Banks's description in "the Account of Staffa," begins with the "discovery" of the new island, and ends with the discussion on the islands' relation to the legend of *Ossian*. Banks was delighted to find supposed evidence in the cave on Staffa, and named it after "Fingal," Ossian's father. On the other hand, Pennant quotes Macpherson's poems at times but skillfully avoids the authenticity question. In fact, L. F. Powell said, "He avoids controversial subjects, such as religion or politics.... Ossian is not mentioned" (Powell 141). It is a curious problem for us to know whether Pennant really believed in *Ossian* or not. Pennant only says in his footnotes, "I take the liberty of saying... that Staffa is genuine mass of basalts" (309) and does not refer to Banks's dubious proof of *Ossian*. Walpole was not pleased at the tactics Pennant used to avoid this issue, but, at the same time, lightly mocked Banks as a person who labored under a "most amusing" delusion, for Walpole did not believe in the existence of *Ossian* at all. Then, Walpole described the Fingal's Cave as "beautiful" to connect it with his affection for Gothic architecture. His

having received the account of Staffa from his friend Banks, may be one element in his decision to reserve judgment. It was wise of Pennant to tactfully distance himself from the *Ossian* controversy.

Now, we move to Banks's "Account of Staffa." I will quote the connective sections in which both authors' texts collide; here we can compare Pennant's style with that of Banks.

I [Pennant] wished to make a nearer approach [to Staffa], but the prudence of *Mr Thompson* [his guide]... prevented my farther search of this wondrous isle.... But it is a consolation to me, that I am able to lay before the public a most accurate account communicated to me through the friendships of Mr Banks.

ACCOUNT of STAFFA
BY
JOSEPH BANKS, Esq;

"In the sound of Mull we [Banks and other researchers] came to anchor on the *Morvern* side opposite to a gentleman's house...[W]e met an *English* Gentleman Mr *Leach*, who no sooner saw us than he told us, that about nine leagues from us was an island[Staffa] where he believed no one even in the highlands have been...." (298-99; my underlines)

By comparing the two parts, we can easily see that Pennant uses "I," and Banks "we." The latter refers to Banks's research group, but also implies that they were representatives of the British people as a whole. In addition, borrowing Mr Leach's words, Banks emphasizes the fact that he is landing on an unexplored island. In short, Banks wanted to say that he was a leading naturalist and explorer in Great Britain.

On Staffa, Banks discovered the cave of basalt pillars. He described it as one of "[nature's] wonderful works" (301). The sketch is in the next page. It was made by Joseph Banks's artist, not Moses Griffith. In the foreground, there are little figures and a boat to emphasize the size of the cave.

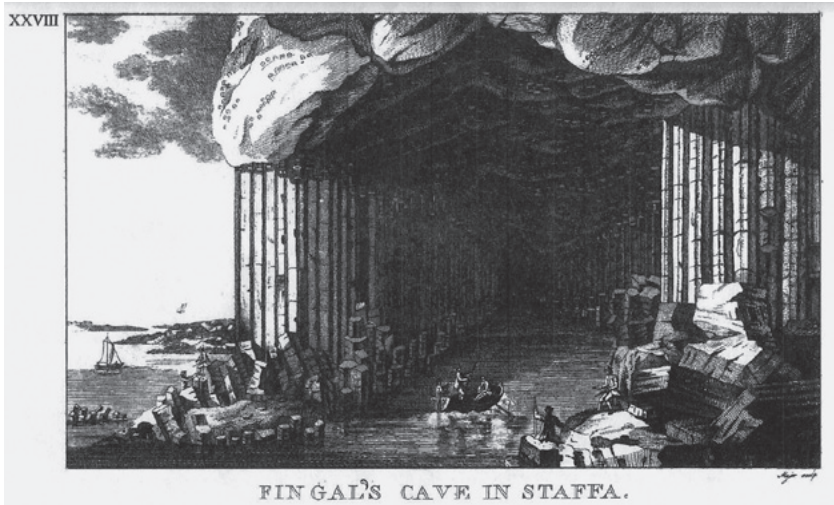


Fig. 2 Banks's "Fingal's Cave"

Banks was excited at the scenes of the cave and said thus: "[W]e arrived at the mouth of a cave, the most magnificent, I suppose, that has ever been described by travelers. The mind can hardly form an idea more magnificent than such a space, supported on each side by ranges of columns"(301). We see that Banks repeats the word "magnificent." He asked his guide about the name of the cave, and associated it with Fingal in Macpherson's poems.

"We asked the name of it [the cave]. Said our guide, the cave of *Fhinn*; what is *Fhinn*? said we. *Fhinn Mac Coul*, whom the translator of *Ossian*'s works has called *Fingal*. How fortunate that in this cave we should meet with the remembrance of that chief, whose existence as well as that of the whole *Epic* poem is almost doubted in *England*.(302)

The story was too good to be true. Banks might have misheard his guide, for in Gaelic, the cave was actually named "An Uaimh Bhinn" meaning "the melodious cave." Banks mistook "Bhinn" for "Fhinn." That is the

key difference between Banks and Pennant. Banks could not restrain himself from jumping at the opportunity to gain the fame of being able to give “testimony” of *Ossian*. In this case, Pennant would have reserved decisive judgment until he could collect enough facts. We can therefore say that Pennant was a scientist in the true sense, and that Banks, who later became the president of the Royal Society, was temperamentally a politician.

Regardless of the error, the spot was surely associated with the legends of *Ossian*. The description of Fingal’s Cave certainly stimulated readers’ imagination, and this island soon gained fame as a picturesque spot. Charlotte Klonk said, “After Pennant’s publication of Banks’s account, Staffa became well known and was the only location in the Western Isles to be included in picturesque travel literature” (Klonk 80). The picture of Fingal’s Cave was copied many times and the site became well known throughout Europe. Banks thus made the previously unknown island of Staffa famous for its picturesque spots. Pennant’s contribution to the life and “geographical imaginary” of the nation was not really his own, but came from Banks’s “Account of Staffa”. It was Banks, not Pennant, who had the national perspective.

IV . Pennant’s Fiction: A Vision of a Highland Chieftain

Pennant’s *Voyage* ends with his dream of the visit of the ancient Highland chieftain. Here Pennant described the fiction thus:

My[Pennant’s] busy fancy was worked into a species of enthusiasm,

and for a time it

Bodied forth

The forms of things unknown;

Turned them to shape, gave to airy nothing

A local habitation and a name

A figure, dressed in the garb of an antient warrior, floated in the air before me: his target and his clwy-more seemed of no common size, and spoke the former strength of the hero. (442; my underlines)

Pennant, who did not believe in superstition, explained that his fancy took the shape of an ancient Highlander, adapting lines from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* (5:1: 15-18). The point was to substitute the original phrase "the poet's eye" for "my busy fancy." Pennant, as a naturalist, asserts that he had the same inspiration as a poet did. Concentrating on facts so far, he, at last, released his imagination. This change surprises us because of the sudden intrusion of fiction into the travelogue, a book of facts.

Still, Pennant emphasizes the significance of facts, recognizing the "figure" as a Highland chieftain by his garb of an ancient warrior, shield and large claymore. Here we see the strange mixture of the facts and Pennant's imagination. First, I will pay attention to his interest in the claymore. In Skye, Pennant first examined this large sword and said, "See here a *Cly-more*, or great two-handed sword, probably of the same kind with the *ingentes gladii* of the *Caledonians*, mentioned by *Tacitus*; an unwieldy weapon, two inches broad, doubly edged"(332). The former part is in the *Oxford English Dictionary* as the earliest usage of the word "claymore." In addition, Pennant quotes Tacitus's *Agricola* to show the long history of the sword. He wondered how the ancient Caledonians used the sword on the battlefield. The size of the claymore implies the strength of the warrior, and that was why he could guess the figure was a chieftain, with his claymore "of no common size."

Therefore, we should move to the next question. Why did Pennant use the literary device of the ghost? The Highland chieftain, the "Stranger," speaks thus:

Stranger [said,]: "Thy[Pennant's] purpose is not unknown to me; I have attended thee (invisible) in all thy voyage; have sympathised with thee in the rising tear at the misery of my-once-loved country and sighs, such as a spirit can emit, have been faithful echoes to those of thy corporeal frame.

Know, that in the days of my existence on earth, I possessed an ample portion of the tract thou seest to the North. I was dread of the neighboring chieftains; the delight of my people, their protector, their friend, their father. (421-22; my underlines)

This chieftain described himself producing “faithful echoes” of Pennant. In fact, he is not a “stranger” to Pennant. He is a native mediator of Pennant’s personal opinions. For example, the “stranger” said, “The mighty Chieftains... by a most violent and surprising transformation, at once sunk into the rapacious landlords; determined to compensate the loss of power with the increase of revenue” (424). This redoubles his severe criticism against the landlords of Skye, as we have seen in chapter 2. Here we notice his double role as traveler and narrator, and fiction is used to bring out the latter.

The chieftain speaks further: “What then... are the fruits of your travels? What arts have you brought home, that will serve to bring subsistence to your people?... Return to your country; inform them with your presence” (425-26). He asked Pennant, “What are the fruits of your travels?” This is the most fundamental question of all travel literature. It is wise of Pennant to impose the question on himself and his readers from without, by using the native chieftain. The words “home” and “your country” mean England and Pennant, a member of the Royal Society, implied the question “what knowledge do you bring back?” The word “they” implied Highlanders, who have been deprived of their traditional culture, which Pennant wishes to preserve. By using literary imagination and creating this spirit-conscience, Pennant appeals to readers to value these traditional customs of the people, whose way of living was disappearing. This literary device of the ghost was effectively reinforced by his travel experiences and it proves Pennant’s excellence as a traveler and writer.

Conclusion

Samuel Johnson said, “Pennant has a greater variety of inquiry than almost any man, and has told us more than perhaps one in ten thousand could have done, in the time he took” (Boswell 5: 221). Johnson here acknowledges Pennant’s exhaustive research in the Hebrides. While James Cook voyaged to the opposite side of the globe, Pennant chose a voyage to an unexplored yet domestic place. Still, Pennant was certainly inspired by overseas exploration – his Hebridean voyage was

unquestionably inspired by Cook.

Pennant's travelogue was long forgotten, but recently, it has been re-evaluated in the context of "home tour." We have looked at the critical discourse surrounding him, but it is ultimately useless to consider how much Johnson depended on Pennant in describing his *Journey* than to simply appreciate their similarity as travelers. As we have seen, Pennant was fascinated by the local culture of the Hebrides. Although he often talked of "improvement," he actually loved the traditional community and deplored its collapse as a result of modernization. In our look at Banks's "Account of Staffa," Pennant had the skill and outlook to accurately record the local tradition, while Banks may not have.

Pennant's usage of fiction was very interesting, considering his adherence to the facts. He knew how crucial literary imagination and technique were to bring out the meaning of his travelogue. In this sense, he was a writer of fiction as well as a naturalist. He had both a strong imagination and the capacity to accurately record the facts. If we paid attention only to the fictionalized end of the *Voyage*, we would consider him primarily as a literary figure. His *Voyage* has the compelling nature and depth of first-rate travel writing.

Notes

- 1) The titles are abbreviated as follows: *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides 1772, Part I*, by Thomas Pennant as *Voyage*; *A Journey to the Western Island of Scotland*, by Samuel Johnson as *Journey*.
- 2) Thomas Pennant. *A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides 1772, Part I*. 1774. 2nd ed. London, 1776. p.i. All references to this book are to this edition and page numbers are shown within parentheses hereafter.

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(Graduate Student)

SUMMARY

The Early Practice of Home Tourism:

Thomas Pennant's Voyage to the Hebrides in 1772

Tomoyuki HAYASHI

A Welsh naturalist, Thomas Pennant (1726-98) traveled around the Hebrides in 1772. His journey preceded Samuel Johnson's tour in 1774. Paul Smethurst has recently pointed out, "Pennant and Johnson were writing in the immediate aftermath of James Cook's Endeavour voyage (1768-71)" (Smethurst 14). Surely, Pennant, as a member of the Royal Society, was deeply influenced by Cook's explorations.

However, I disagree with Smethurst's argument that Pennant brought national perspective to his trip in order to connect the islands to Great Britain. Pennant, who was fascinated with the culture of the Hebrides, had a more local viewpoint. For example, he considered the problem of modernization and the threat to the traditional culture, as well as the unnatural rise in rents as land practices were reorganized. Looking at the text and sketches, I will show that Pennant had a local view and considered the local traditions as important.

To understand Pennant's view, I will compare him with Joseph Banks, his fellow in the Royal Society. Pennant, who did not have the chance to visit Staffa, one of the Hebridean islands, received an "Account" by Banks, who "discovered" it on his trip. This was included in Pennant's account. I will show that Pennant was superior to Banks as an explorer and travel writer, since he adhered to the facts.

Thus, I will look at the connections between Pennant, Samuel Johnson, and Joseph Banks. Finally, I will analyze Pennant's fictional ending to the voyage. He dreamt of a visit from an ancient Highland chieftain. Why did he incorporate fiction into his travelogue? I will show that Pennant's literary imagination inspired him to set his feelings in the mouth of the fictional native chieftain. My conclusion is that this travelogue is an exemplary piece of travel writing because of its use of literary technique and mix of fact and fiction.