

'By other means': Tourism and leisure as politics in pre-war japan

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Deskripsi Lengkap: <https://lib.ui.ac.id/detail?id=9999920567482&lokasi=lokal>

Abstrak

Although leisure and tourism may seem at first blush to be anything but political, states generally create and maintain policies that deal with the recreation of citizens. The Japanese government's active post-war approach to leisure is unusual and distinctive, owing its shape to pre-war policy decisions privileging for strategic purposes American and European conceptions of proper recreation, leisure and travel. Tracing the evolution of Japan's pre-war tourism and leisure policies, this paper argues that Japanese efforts to use international tourism as an instrument for economic growth forced the government to confront the question of what constitutes proper recreation. These debates remained unsettled in the pre-war period, in part because of the turn toward militant nationalism in the 1930s, which mandated the valorization of an idealized Japanese culture. Yet the emphasis on Western styles of leisure and tourism found important policy homes in the pre-war era, laying the foundation for the post-war institutionalization of efforts to make Japanese leisure lives conform to those witnessed in North America and Western Europe.