
1

Introduction

The Japanese at Play: A Little-Known Dimension of Japan

The Political Meaning of Leisure in Present-Day Japan

Innumerable books have been written in English and other Western languages on Japan, but only a few of these are concerned with Japanese leisure and entertainment. "The Japanese at play" is hardly a commonplace image or stereotype of this Far Eastern nation. Scholars of Japan world-wide have done a lot of research on various facets of Japanese culture such as the tea ceremony or *kabuki* theater, but they usually do not categorize such activities as belonging to the sphere of leisure or entertainment, rather treating them as forms of art. In other words, they do not consider the people involved in those activities—the participants, the spectators, and the performers—but try instead to analyze the activities from an aesthetic, religious, or folkloric perspective.

Why should leisure and entertainment have received so little attention in academic work on Japan? It may be that those of us involved in Japanese studies are too dependent on popular Japanese explanations when approaching our objects of research. When talking about Japan one still frequently hears the opinion that there is no such thing in Japan as "leisure." For many the Japanese unique-

ness manifests itself, among other ways, in an insistence that only those phenomena are Japanese and do really take place in Japan for which a genuine Japanese word exists. Hence they will argue that since the Japanese word for leisure is *rejā*, a loanword derived from English, there is no Japanese concept of leisure, and therefore the concept of leisure is more or less meaningless to the Japanese. Similarly, the Japanese word for leisure, *yoka*, is a Chinese compound, engendered at some time during the Meiji period or even later. Since it means *amaru hima* or “spare time left over,” people critical of the concept of leisure as opposed to work frequently employ this “negative” meaning of leisure—as being something left over and with no value of its own—to denounce leisure and anything related to it: vacations, leaving the workplace early (implying when the regular working hours are over) or making private use of one’s weekend.¹ It is evident that in such a climate, it has been neither easy nor encouraging to do work on leisure for many years. Sensitive Western researchers, when showing interest in leisure, could sometimes detect an implied criticism that this was not a suitable object of study and that the Westerners wanted to transform the Japanese into a people like themselves: lazy, hedonistic, avoiding hard work, suffering from the English (or French, German, American, or any advanced country’s) disease. As the Japanese regarded the concept of leisure critically and suspiciously, for many leisure constituted a problem—*rejā mondai* or *yoka mondai*. I think that this atmosphere prevalent among many middle-aged and older Japanese is responsible for our insufficient knowledge of the Japanese at play, rather than that all Japanese are so diligent that they make no use of their work-free time for recreational activities.²

It has to be added that for several years the leisure behavior of the Japanese has been a constant issue in the ongoing debate on trade imbalances between Japan and most Western nations. Western countries accuse the Japanese of “social dumping” in the realm of working hours and vacations. According to the Westerners they are paying insufficient attention to leisure and too much to work; that is, they are not behaving as the people of a developed, industrialized society, or a postindustrial society should. Rather, the Japanese attitude toward leisure is still one commonly found in an industrializing society. This neglect of leisure results in scant con-

sumption of leisure goods imported from the West, while the concentration on work results in an ever greater industrial output of cheap goods that must be sold in and outside of Japan, exhausting the market for Western products. Extreme psychological pressure on employees to behave according to this pattern leads to a “work-ing-bee” or “ant” society with very little free time and freedom.³

Within this political context, Western journalists, following their Japanese colleagues, periodically write sensational reports on tremendous changes in the leisure (and working) values and behavior of the Japanese, using catch phrases spawned by Japanese journalism. This began with the *rejā būmu* (leisure boom) around 1960 and *mai-hōmu-shugi* (my-home-ism) during the sixties. It found its continuation around 1970 with the Japanese hippies called *futen-zoku*, who were superseded by the *takenoko-zoku*, the “bamboo shoot” people of Harajuku and the *nyū famiri* (new family) of the seventies. The same set of values was again to be found among the *shinjinrui* (new mankind) of the late eighties, which was in turn quickly replaced by the *shin-shin-jinrui*, the “new new mankind”—thus illustrating how short-lived the trends discovered by journalists are. Recently, Karl Taro Greenfeld (1994), also a popular writer, spoke of “speed tribes” when discussing contemporary Japanese youth.

Seen in an historic perspective, it has to be said that the announced sensational changes never held true for the whole society nor for a whole generation. On the other hand, it has to be pointed out that leisure is certainly not unimportant for the whole of Japanese society, as Western critics, and some Japanese intellectuals, tend to claim. In order to demonstrate this I would like to make a historical *tour d'horizon* dealing with the most conspicuous trends and phenomena related to leisure and entertainment in Japan's past.

Leisure in Preindustrial Japan

With respect to the agrarian Japanese society, Japanese ethnologists usually divide time into three categories: *ke*, or normal working time, and special time, which is in turn divided into *hare*, sacred time for the veneration of gods, for example, the time of festivals,

and *kegare*, time of pollution, that is, menstruation, childbirth, or death.⁴ *Hare* is what comes closest to our understanding of leisure, but as it is time with a strong obligatory character it is fundamentally different from modern leisure. However, recent research has shown that at least from the last quarter of the Edo period onward, uninfluenced by the West, there developed in the villages a yearning for more days of rest and for more entertainment unrelated to religious life. In most cases this desideratum was expressed by the young men's groups (Furukawa 1986).

In the cities, with their luxurious licensed quarters (*yūkaku*), the adjacent theaters, and the dry riverbeds (*kawara*), with abundant places of entertainment that could be visited daily if one had the vigor and the money, the distinction between normal and special time with respect to leisure became meaningless. Furthermore, temples and shrines with their numerous *ennichi* (regular temple festivals with fairs) and *kaichō* (irregular exhibitions of temple or shrine treasures, usually accompanied by a big fair) provided ample opportunities for entertainment. Religion also provided the necessary excuse for traveling, traveling being rather popular during the latter part of the Edo period as Susanne Formanek reports in her contribution to this volume. Since the rigid class structure of the Edo period gave the citizens no possibility for social advancement, much of their energy was channeled into a world of pleasure seeking and entertainment, resulting in the well-known culture of the floating world (*ukiyo*): *kabuki* and *bunraku* (puppet) theater, light and humorous poetry and prose (*gesaku*), *shamisen* music, song and dance of differing styles, and woodblock prints. One of the most popular and, astoundingly, least reported forms of play in the floating world from the beginning of the eighteenth century, namely *ken*, and its decline into a children's game is described and explained in my own contribution to this volume. People who wanted to place emphasis on the moral value of their leisure pursuits did so by designating them a "Way" (*dō*), evident in such expressions as *sadō*, the Way of tea, *kadō*, the Way of flowers, or *kōdō*, the Way of scent.⁵ While many forms of entertainment can be identified with social classes—the peasants, the urbanites, the warrior class—there was one form of entertainment in which all Japan participated and indulged and still does: *hanami* or cherry blossom viewing, defined by Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney in her contribution to this volume as "a total social institution."

Development of Modern Patterns of Leisure

In the process of industrialization and Westernization since the second half of the nineteenth century, endogenous leisure activities, most of them still practiced today, albeit by decreasing numbers of people, increasingly coexisted with new activities introduced by the West. Members of the upper class, the people who had most contact with Westerners, often modeled their behavior on what they saw of them. To name only two conspicuous examples, at the beginning of this century they began to spend summer vacations in newly developed resorts like Hakone and Karuizawa and to play golf. One of the most popular forms of entertainment during the Edo period, *kabuki* theater, was reformed almost to the point of extinction. Politicians thought it necessary to “purify” and adapt it to Western standards with the ultimate goal of creating a Japanese national theater, as Annegret Bergmann reports in her chapter.

Great changes also took place in sports, which in the past had only been part of the samurai training in the form of martial arts (*budô*) or performed at village festivals (boat racing, wrestling, stone lifting, etc.). In his chapter, Inoue Shun, using the example of *jūdô*, shows how new traditions in *budô* were created. In its present form this sport goes back no further than the early Meiji period. The most important agents in introducing new concepts and forms of sport were the schools, a proud tradition still seen in various national school sports events, especially the national high school baseball championship at Kôshien stadium every summer.

The greatest changes in leisure behavior occurred, however, with the introduction of mass leisure, first in the twenties⁶ and subsequently after World War II. Peter Ackermann's chapter tries to elucidate the leisure activities of people from an old middle-class district of Tokyo, his research based on transcribed recollections from the first two decades of the twentieth century. His most significant observation is that their concepts of leisure, expressed in the words *tanoshimi* (pleasure) and *asobi* (play), are different from the modern concepts of *rejâ* or *yoka*. Katarzyna Cwiertka's and Sabine Frühstück's contributions to this volume, dealing with activities so everyday as to be overlooked in most studies of leisure, namely cooking and sex, are also concerned largely with the first two or three decades of the twentieth century. Although cooking and eating had

already become a hobby among the better-off townspeople and richer peasants during the Edo period, as Harada (1989, 1995) has convincingly shown, it was at that time a hobby predominantly of men when not at home. During the late Meiji and Taishô periods, housewives of the urban middle class, their ideology influenced by Western thinking, developed a new cooking culture for the family at home, resulting in a new style of family life and leisure. Sex, on the other hand, also came under a strong Western influence when Western medical and sexological knowledge diffused throughout Japan. Sexological journals, booming during the twenties and early thirties, pandered undoubtedly also to the voyeuristic interests of many and thus provided a particular aspect of leisure, but when reading Sabine Frühstück's account one gets the impression that the transformation from traditional sexual behavior to Western-influenced sexual behavior took the pleasure out of sex, which, especially during the war, was supposed to serve only limited national goals.

Two chapters in this book are devoted to the Takarazuka theater, for some Westerners a curious female musical troupe. However, as Roland Domenig convincingly demonstrates, behind the Takarazuka theater lay Kobayashi Ichizô's ideas of a theater for all Japanese—for rich and poor, for man and woman. This theater swiftly became a vehicle for propagating nationalistic and militaristic ideas among the people of Japan, especially after the outbreak of the war with China in 1937, as Jennifer Robertson's chapter demonstrates.

From 1937 to 1945 leisure had solely to serve two purposes: the recovery from physical fatigue and the strengthening of patriotic spirit. This tradition is still alive in a similar form in many big firms that stress the necessity to spend one's leisure time with colleagues from work within the leisure and sports facilities provided by the company, either for physical recuperation or work-related education, not to forget how such leisure activities are said to strengthen the team spirit (Linhart 1976:256–65).

The Present Pattern of Leisure

Looking at the present pattern of leisure it has to be noted that, according to various opinion surveys, the Japanese desire for more

leisure has been steadily increasing,⁷ a desire not compromised by reduced working hours until 1990. On the other hand, in a period of labor shortage, an atmosphere within the firm that permits one to take one's vacations has become an important precondition for many young people when accepting a position. The right to make use of one's vacations is especially pronounced among young females who do not opt for a career within the firm but tend to leave the firm to get married or have a child.

When describing the leisure pattern of the Japanese it is best first to consider differences between sexes and age groups, but of course class differences are also important.⁸ Starting with the youngest, it must be noted that most play in the kindergartens is purposeful preparatory education and not carefree enjoyment for its own sake. Kindergarten teachers are under constant pressure from ambitious mothers who demand that their children be taught useful things and not be spoiled with idle play. As regards children below the age of fifteen it has to be mentioned that the severe demands of schools and private evening classes (*juku*) leave little free time for play. Their favorite leisure activities are video games, watching TV, and looking at comic books. The favorite sport among boys is baseball, the Japanese variation of which is so aptly described by William W. Kelly in this volume, whereas girls prefer softball. Conspicuous is the trend among children of this age to spend most of their leisure time alone with the TV or comic book fantasy heroes. The fact that the most popular comic magazine among the dozens of weekly comics for children, *Shōnen Janpu* (Young Jump), has a weekly circulation of more than four million shows how well the publishers have established their position and are able to defend it against the new media.

Although it is often heard that Japanese teenagers are generally overburdened with preparatory work for entrance examinations to high schools and universities, it ought to be pointed out that this is only true for maximally one third of this age group.⁹ The majority has no great ambitions for higher education and participates fully in the youth culture with its many colorful temptations in the consumer world. As in the West there is a strong tendency among boys and girls to consume music both actively and passively. The expressive creativity of girls often finds outlet in drawing comics or writing diaries and literature. The enormous success in 1987 of

Tawara Machiko's collection of poems in the classical *waka* style with a modern content, *Sarada kinenbi* (Salad Memorial Day), can only be explained upon this background. Group sports like basketball and volleyball for both sexes, as well as soccer for boys, are very popular and are played predominantly by this age group, which can be conceived as expressing a longing for activities with the peer group. To cater to these wishes, high schools and universities offer a wide range of cultural and sports clubs, the popularity of which is also grounded in the fact that they help establish contact with the opposite sex. After the difficult entrance examinations many university students see the years at the university as leisure time. Before entering the strenuous world of work they try to play to the full. Things forbidden up to this age like alcohol, sex, and gambling hold a particular fascination and, together with sports and music, constitute the typical university student's leisure. Sports especially are typical leisure activities of young people. Apart from fishing and golf, favorite pastimes of the older generations, practically all sports are practiced by two or three times as many people in their teens and twenties than by those in the older age brackets.

While university students participate in university sports clubs, the majority that ends education at the age of eighteen often continue with sports in company sports clubs. Young women also tend to acquire traditional Japanese aesthetic skills by learning flower arrangement, tea ceremony, calligraphy, or a Japanese musical instrument, preferably the *koto*, activities also often provided by company clubs. But on the whole these activities, frequently summed up as "bridal training" (*hanayome shûgyô*), have a decreasing popularity and participation rate among young people. Young working women who live with their parents until they marry and therefore need only little money for their daily life, enjoy purchasing relatively luxurious articles both in Japan and abroad. They are also one of the main targets of Japan's tourist industry.

While young and unmarried working women form the group of women for which leisure is most important, young mothers are usually so busy caring for their children and the household that little free time is left them. If they return to work when their youngest child has entered school they have even less free time. On the other hand, housewives whose children are at school usually have considerable free time, which they spend together with female friends

from the neighborhood, the PTA, or from their own school days. These women also constitute the bulk of the visitors to the numerous cultural centers (*bunka sentâ*) of which there has been a nationwide boom since the seventies. These women can pursue numerous hobbies, from learning foreign languages and composing poetry to handicrafts. Calling them "nice middies," the Japanese tourist industry has, since the eighties, increasingly courted middle-aged women, who do not travel with their busy husbands but with their female friends.

Japanese working men come nearest to our working-bee image of the Japanese, and the many reports about *karôshi*, death from exhaustive overwork, reinforce this image. But not every salaried man is 100 percent organization man, and even if he should be, he takes various measures to reduce the work stress by leisure activities. Drinking, chatting and singing in bars, playing mah-jong, gambling on the machines in special *pachinko* parlors, gambling at horse races and other racing events, and playing golf are the main leisure activities of adult males. Wolfram Manzenreiter and Nagashima Nobuhiro deal with *pachinko* and other forms of gambling in this book, and both stress the enormous importance of gambling in contemporary society. Another common leisure activity among men is "family service" (*katei sâbisu*), as spending free time with the family is called, for which many men use their free Sundays. The larger firms usually have a variety of leisure and sports facilities and urge their employees to spend their free time together. This is thought to promote the company spirit. Equally, drinking with the office group after work has a strong obligatory character and is therefore sometimes not counted as a leisure activity but rather as a prolongation of work. The leisure behavior of white- and blue-collar workers is rather different, despite the notion that Japan is a big middle-class society without clearly visible class differences. Whereas playing golf (not only in Japan but also in foreign countries such as Singapore, as Eyal Ben-Ari tells us in his vivid description of golfing among expatriates) and mah-jong are activities performed mainly by male office employees, *pachinko* and betting at horse and other races belong to the leisure culture of lower-class men. One possible interpretation is that mah-jong with its complicated estimating and counting is similar to white-collar work, while monotonous *pachinko* resembles blue- or grey-collar

work. It is perhaps worth noting that *pachinko* alone makes up about 20 percent of the total Japanese expenditure on leisure, a larger sum than the combined expenditure in Japanese domestic and foreign tourism. Another leisure activity examined in this volume by Eckhart Derschmidt, listening to jazz music, can also be said to be participated in more by males than females and appears to be on the decline.

Since the years of rapid economic growth the elderly have been discarding their traditional role of staying at home in relative inactivity, aside from helping the younger generation with the children and household work. Naturally this is a result of an increasing number of elderly people living in separate households without their children. Old people's clubs and old people's universities, providing both recreation and education, have been booming since the sixties (Linhart 1983). *Karaoke* singing and dancing are popular indoor activities and gateball, a modified Japanese version of croquet, has, since the end of the seventies, become the favorite outdoor game (Iwamoto 1984). More and more Japanese companies try to prepare their older employees for life after retirement by teaching them meaningful hobbies, which they never had time to develop during their company life due to an overdevotion to firm and job.

Other leisure activities, such as watching TV, show little differentiation with regard to age and social class, and among the various TV programs, sports programs, especially during the Olympics or other great international events, seem to be especially attractive. T. J. Pempel's chapter in this volume reminds us that watching international sports events is not always a harmless leisure activity and does not *per se* contribute to an internationalization of society.

Finally we have to consider one more distinction, that made between the urban and the rural "halves" of society. While the ample provisions for leisure in the big cities has been one of the principle motives for generations of Japanese to leave their rural homes, today the countryside has an increasingly important role to fulfill in the leisure context, namely to satisfy the leisure needs of the city dwellers, as Nelson H. H. Graburn explains in his contribution to this volume. As the various rural leisure opportunities offered to the city dwellers provide work for the locals, work available in the leisure industry might provide a motive to remain in the

countryside. In her discussion of leisure parks in Japan, Angelika Hamilton-Oehrl is concerned with one of the major facets of this rural leisure industry.

Classification of the Leisure Activities

The well-known study of games by the French philosopher Roger Caillois (1961) partitions games into *agon* (competition), *alea* (chance), *mimicry* (simulation), and *ilinx* (vertigo). When the Japanese cultural historian Yoshida Mitsukuni tried to apply this scheme to the Japanese *asobi* (play), he added a fifth category not on Caillois's list: the cult of the seasons. Although Caillois's scheme is still very helpful as an analytical tool, one must take care not to stretch its applicability, as most leisure activities cannot be classified as belonging to a single one of these five forms of play. Nevertheless, for a brief overview of Japanese leisure activities Caillois's scheme is quite useful.

Agon comprises all kinds of sports, but there is a very important distinction between active and passive participation. Of the "Japanese" sports, only *sumô* wrestling enjoys a huge (TV) audience, while the many sports labeled as "martial arts" (*bujutsu*) are mainly sports for active practitioners. Other sports passively enjoyed and highly popular with the Japanese are baseball and, more recently, soccer, golf, and marathon. If in a big international competition, like a world championship, a Japanese participant is performing well, it makes little difference what kind of sport it is. Apart from sports, *go* and *shôgi* (Japanese chess) are probably among the most widely practiced competitive activities. More traditional ones, like *hyakunin issshu* ("A hundred poems from a hundred poets"), a kind of Japanese memory game requiring a good classical education and formerly an obligatory training for every bride from middle-class standing upward, are now vanishing; albeit societies have been founded to preserve them, as they have, for example, for *tôsenkyô*, a fan-throwing competition. One might cynically say that the creation of such a society means that a form of play is no longer really alive. In this volume the chapters by Eyal Ben-Ari, Inoue Shun, William B. Kelly, T. J. Pempel, and myself concentrate more or less on competitive play.

Games of chance are dealt with in the contributions of Nagashima Nobuhiro and Wolfram Manzenreiter. They deal with the most important forms of gambling, officially licensed gambling and *pachinko*, a game which today is played solely for monetary profit but which is still not officially regarded as gambling. Alongside a rich official gambling culture, illegal gambling involving dice and the card game *hanafuda* seems to be on the decline.

Mimicry, simulational play, is also of enormous importance. This is evident in *karaoke*, singing with the “empty orchestra,” now spreading all over the world but as yet without reaching the popularity anywhere that it has in Japan. We must not forget that imitating the master to the nearest possible degree is the ideal of many Japanese art-related leisure activities, and it is surely not far fetched if we interpret the craze for *karaoke* in a similar way. The wish to become a star for a few minutes has, of course, to be seen in relation to everyday societal pressure to conform and behave in a proper, normative way and is thus an important outlet for one’s individuality. Another highly important example of *mimicry* is the theme parks discussed in Angelika Hamilton-Oehrl’s chapter, and other aspects of mimicry are also dealt with in the contributions by Annegret Bergman, Katarzyna Cwiertka, Eckhart Derschmidt, Roland Domenig, Susanne Formanek, and Jennifer Robertson.

Ilinx, vertigo, is perhaps less apparent in contemporary Japan than it was in earlier periods. It is limited to certain age groups and social outsiders, for example the notorious *bôsô-zoku*, the motorcycle gangs, or the *takenoko-zoku*, the Harajuku people, who perform a kind of carnival every weekend. In this book, the people treating sex as leisure, as discussed by Sabine Frühstück, might best be said to conform to this category of Caillois. In earlier periods, people participating in festivals (*matsuri*), especially those carrying the portable shrine, also exhibited the typical traits ascribed to *ilinx*, but the festivals have since undergone a significant transformation, and most are held only as tourist attractions or as attempts to preserve the past.

Most of the festivals date back at least to the Edo period, but some are recently instituted like the Snow Festival (*yuki matsuri*) of Sapporo. While every community holds one or two small *matsuri* every year, since the 1950s some festivals have become big national events and attract tourists from all over the country, like the “three

great festivals of Tōhoku," Nebuta, Kantō, and Tanabata, at the beginning of August. A typical *matsuri* entails a colorful procession, dances, and sportive competitions. Most festivals have religious origins but some older ones, as well as some of the most recent ones, are of a purely secular nature, like the Kobe festival held every summer.

Even though there have been numerous efforts to create modern *matsuri*, the most conspicuous attractions for the modern Japanese citizen are the big sporting events held frequently since the Tokyo Olympics in 1964 and the great expositions, which became common after the successful World Exposition in Osaka in 1970. The latter half of the eighties saw a particularly large number of expositions that, on the whole, boasted a high number of visitors. By entertaining the whole family, they can be compared to the Edo period *kaichō*, special exhibitions in shrines and temples.

The cult of the seasons must take place in natural surroundings, or at least involve viewing nature. The best-known examples are viewing various blossoms and flowers, from the early plum and cherry blossoms, treated in this book by Emiko Ohnuki-Tierney, to the chrysanthemums and red maple leaves, as well as moon viewing in autumn, and, finally, snow viewing in winter. Eating dishes associated with a specific season is another form of enjoyment, often going hand in hand with one of these viewing activities. It goes without saying that there are especially famous places for viewing natural phenomena, both locally and nationally, the logical consequence being a lot of traveling.

Times for Leisure

For many Japanese daily leisure begins rather late. The male office workers have practically no guaranteed maximum of working hours and often stay at the office until late into the night. Only female office workers may frequently leave their working place in accordance with the working-hour regulations, which makes them the object of envy among their male colleagues. Blue-collar workers usually work a fixed amount of overtime, hence their daily free time is also limited. The conditions for weekly leisure have improved greatly since many firms introduced the five-day working week in the 1970s in response to criticism from abroad, but this system is still

not universal. For instance, there are many firms who summon their employees to work every other Saturday or ask them to participate "voluntarily" in educational programs on their free Saturdays. But the modifications of the Labour Standard Law in 1987 and 1993, introducing the forty-hour working week as the model to be attained by most firms by 1996, together with the recession starting in 1991, resulted in conspicuously less working time, if we are to believe official working-time statistics. The Japanese average yearly working time is now quickly approaching that of the United States and Great Britain but is still far behind France and Germany.

The special seasonal times of leisure are New Year, when all firms and offices are closed for at least three days; the so-called Golden Week at the end of April and beginning of May, a cluster of national holidays; and the time around the *bon* festival in the middle of August. Many firms have introduced a summer vacation, when they close their doors and force their employees into holiday. Although the legally guaranteed amount of paid vacations was raised to a minimum of ten days in 1987, the Japanese still make comparatively little use of their vacations. The average has been eight or nine days per employee in a year. Female employees tend to make more use of their vacations than male employees. The common pattern is to take a long weekend for a short journey. The Western pattern of taking one or several weeks off and of spending longer vacations with the family is virtually unknown. School vacations are also rather short and, moreover, often used for studying in private schools. In order to counterbalance the unwillingness of Japanese workers to go on holiday the government has tried to create more national holidays in order to preclude foreign criticism of the "working-bee society." In 1995 Japan had fourteen national holidays and was leading the international national holiday table.

What might change the Japanese leisure pattern are the many resorts being constructed. The Resort Law of 1987 gave big capital the possibility to invest large sums in resort areas. More than two hundred resorts from Hokkaidô to Okinawa are said to be under construction. Yet filling all those new resorts with guests, when trips abroad attract more people every year (more than ten million for the first time in 1990 and, after a setback in 1991 and 1992, already more than fifteen million in 1995) will be possible only if the Japanese make more use of their vacations.

An Overview of Leisure Studies on Japan

As stated at the beginning of this introduction, leisure is a rather neglected field in Western Japanese studies. The first full-fledged book on the subject was published by David W. Plath in 1964 in the wake of what the Japanese call the "first leisure boom" around 1960. But after this most promising start, the "economic miracle of Japan" seems to have concentrated most research by sociologists and anthropologists into fields related to Japan's industry and to have hampered further studies on leisure. My own book (1976) on the lifestyles of blue- and white-collar workers, as expressed in their working and leisure behavior, was an attempt to understand the actual meaning of *mai-hômu-shugi* (my-home-ism) among the Japanese employed in big companies at the beginning of the 1970s. In another monograph I dealt with the leisure patterns of the elderly (Linhart 1983).

Other studies on Japan, like Okpyo Moon's (1989) on a skiing resort, Eyal Ben-Ari's (1990) on two suburban neighborhoods, or Michael Ashkenazi's (1993) on the festivals of one town deal partially with leisure without giving it too much prominence. French sociologists like Joffre Dumazedier and Roger Caillois played a pioneering role in developing the sociology of leisure, and their representative works were soon translated, hence their fame in Japan. Given this prominence in leisure studies, it is no wonder then, that the first Western collection of papers on leisure in Japan was edited by Christine Condominas and published in France in 1993. This collection of seventeen papers is based on two French-Japanese colloquia, where the Japanese primarily discussed Japan and the French, with a few exceptions, France. It is evident that in such meetings explanations of one's own society form a major part of the discussion, and therefore many of the papers in that book have a very introductory nature. Similarly, Umesao Tadao, Kumakura Isao, and Brian Powell (1995) edited a volume on amusement in Japan, based on a symposium held at the National Museum of Ethnology in Osaka. The same organizers had previously issued a similar volume on tourism (Umesao, Befu, and Ishimori 1995), one of the better researched fields of leisure studies in Japan. Apart from the books already mentioned, there are a number of articles in academic books and journals, but, as a glance at a recently published

annotated bibliography (Manzenreiter 1995), including Japanese as well as Western studies on leisure in Japan, shows, these too are relatively few in number. Often they present nothing more than introductory overviews of Japanese scholars in the form of articles contributed upon invitation to special issues of journals or to symposia, which are later published as books, such as, for instance, that by Koseki Sampei (1989).

The output in the field of mass or popular culture, a related field, is a little more impressive but also far from satisfactory. After the ground-breaking books by Kato Hidetoshi (1959), Donald Richie (1981), Frederick L. Schodt (1983), and Ian Buruma (1984) there followed collections like *The electric geisha* (Ueda 1994) and *Asian popular culture* (Lent 1995), but, like Schodt and Buruma's texts they cater rather to the general reader than to an academic audience. The most recent collection, *Contemporary Japan and popular culture* (Treat 1996), is the most promising one. The *Handbook of Japanese popular culture* (Powers and Katô 1989) is a useful overview of several fields.

The situation in Japan has been quite different. Empirical research on leisure as a means to influence and control the free time of factory workers goes back as far as the 1910s. This did not change until the end of the Pacific War. The aforementioned leisure boom around 1960 provided a great impetus to leisure studies in fields such as sociology. A great number of monographs and series on leisure, amusement (*gôraku*), and recreation (*rekuriêshon*) were published, as were collections of prewar writers (Gonda 1974–1975) and studies (Ishikawa 1989–1990). During the affluent seventies and eighties, *asobi* (play) became more important than ever, and not only for the young. From that time onward books on *asobi*, ranging from very popular to rather academic, streamed into circulation,¹⁰ indicating that this concept holds more interest than the related concepts of *yoka* or *rejâ*, even though, for the scholar, *asobi* is nothing else but a leisure activity. As for empirical research, the Leisure Development Center (*Yoka kaihatsu sentâ*), a semiofficial institution under the sway of the Ministry of Trade and Industry with the function of promoting the leisure industry, has been doing hundreds of empirical studies since it was founded in 1973. One of its results is the yearly issuance of a Whitebook on Leisure (*Rejâ hakusho*). The periodical surveys by the NHK Research Institute on how people

spend their time (*Kokumin seikatsu jikan chôsa*) provide detailed figures that can now be compared over five decades (Nihon Hôshô Bunka Kenkyûsho).¹¹ Many governmental and other survey agencies also include items on the use and view of leisure in their periodical opinion polls. Seen from an academic point of view, however, it must be said that on the whole very little basic research on the leisure life of the Japanese, with carefully designed surveys of a quantitative or qualitative nature, has been carried out up to now.

Notes

1. Compare also the remarks of Ackermann in his contribution to this volume.

2. To cite just one example: In 1987 Toyama Shigeru, a former manager of the Bank of Japan and various other important economic institutions, when seventy-six years old, published *The Japanese view of diligence and thrift*, as he was of the opinion that the Japanese spirit of diligence and thrift had to prevail (Toyama 1987:216). He devoted a chapter to "The advanced countries' sickness and Japan," and another one to "The problem of leisure in the present age."

3. The most prominent statement accusing the Japanese of being working bees was made by the French ex-prime minister Edith Cresson in July 1991. The same accusations can frequently be found in the writings of the so-called revisionists, a group of Western journalists, the most prominent of which is Karel van Wolferen. They never tire of accusing Japan of unfair trade practices. For a critical academic view of the Japanese leisure society, see McCormack (1991). Cole (1992:53) has pointed out, however, that in official talks the Americans never pressed the Japanese to reduce their working hours.

4. The Japanese anthropologist who did most to clarify these concepts, nowadays standard terminology, is Namihira Emiko (1974 and several later articles and books). For a short discussion of those concepts in English see Linhart (1984).

5. In an earlier article I tried to delineate the main factors as to why there is only limited Japanese research on entertainment in preindustrial society. The places of entertainment, licensed quarters as well as the theaters, were classified during the Edo period as *akusho*, "evil places"; the

people providing entertainment belonged to the outcast class; much entertainment, such as traveling, was disguised as religious activity; and attempts were made to give other forms of entertainment, which clearly had no connection with religion, a quasi religious-philosophical significance (Linhart 1990a).

6. Steiner (1943) devotes one chapter to "The changing world of leisure," which is an excellent description of the gradual replacement during the twenties and thirties of traditional Japanese leisure habits by leisure habits imitating those of the West (Steiner 1943:89–104).

7. Some, but nowhere near all, of the results of the opinion polls are in Kolatek (1991).

8. A more extensive discussion of the leisure habits of various strata of Japanese society is contained in Linhart (1990b).

9. Rohlen (1983) has given a very good description of the discrepancies between the various types of high schools, ranging from those whose graduates have the best chances to enter Tokyo University to those whose graduates can at best be called semiliterate.

10. An impressive list of more than four hundred titles of such books published until 1993 is contained in number 11 of the journal *Rekuriêshon* (Anon. 1994).

11. These surveys were held in the years 1941, 1960, 1965, 1970, 1973, 1975, 1980, 1985, 1990, and 1995. The reports on the first three surveys (1941, 1960, and 1965) were reprinted by Ôsorasha in 1990–91.

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