

Foreign country theme parks: A new theme or an old Japanese pattern?

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Abstrak

This paper addresses the subject of Japanese tema paku, or 'theme parks', which represent foreign countries, but it argues from the outset that these gaikoku mura ('foreign villages') are a more sophisticated form of cultural display than the English title would suggest. Drawing on a somewhat experimental anthropological approach, which is explained in the body of the paper, it seeks to identify common features in a variety of examples, and these are then examined both in a global perspective and in the context of local Japanese historical and cultural influences. It is argued that the parks are more comparable with museums and world fairs than with post-modern interpretations of Disneyland, but there are also precursors in Japanese gardens and other arts that make them an especially interesting site for further serious anthropological analysis.