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Shimoi Harukichi and the Fascination of Fascism in Interwar Japan

Abstract:

This paper examines the transformation of the Japanese knowledge of Italy in the 1920s and 1930s. It focuses on the role of Shimoi Harukichi, the main promoter of Italian fascism in Japan, in popularizing Mussolini and his politics among a wide audience of educators, politicians, and ordinary Japanese. In so doing, it highlights the emergence of a new discourse on “italianness” in which the image of Italy coincided with the ideology of Fascism. Ultimately, the paper suggests that the Japanese meeting with Italy was, in many ways, an encounter with fascism.