

## **Kōshien Stadium: performing national virtues and regional rivalries in a ‘theatre of sport’**

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How do sports make memories for modern societies, and what memories do sports make? This article analyzes the most resonant sports place in all of Japan, Kōshien Stadium, a massive ivy-walled baseball field on the western edge of Osaka, Japan’s second city. Kōshien’s special place in the national sportscape comes from its unique double role. It is both the site of the annual summer national high school baseball tournament, the most popular amateur sports event in Japan, and it is the home ground of a passionately-followed professional team, the Hanshin Tigers, whose longstanding rivalry with the Tokyo-based Yomiuri Giants, has been a vehicle and an idiom of the key regional rivalry in modern Japan. For over 80 years, to much of the Japanese population, the single word, ‘Kōshien’, has stood for the poignant though flawed display of idealized virtues by the nation’s male adolescents and for the noble challenges but inevitable failure of the regions to contest the dominant power of the national center.

One of the most instantly recognizable and poignant scenes in Japanese sports occurs each August at the end of each game in the annual two-week national high school tournament. In front of tens of thousands of stadium spectators and millions of television viewers around the country, the losing players crouch down on the edge of the infield, sweating and crying, to scoop up handfuls of the sacred soil of Kōshien Stadium into small cloth sacks (Figure 1). They will bring this soil back to their own schools and spread it on their ball field to inspire future success. Tears, sweat and soil mix in this heart-breaking gesture to express pride and disappointment. The emotional poignancy is heightened by the realization that many of the players have been practising and playing baseball literally 350–60 days a year for 5 or 6 years – but from this moment on, most will never play organized baseball again for the rest of their lives.

Sports are among the most powerful and ubiquitous national memory makers of modern societies. Modern sports, especially spectator sports, have at least three distinctive features that make them such tempting instruments for a collective body like a national state for mobilizing people and shaping memories. First, although they are often seen as leisure, modern sports in fact are quintessential edu-tainment, in didactically teaching (values, techniques, dispositions, etc.) while simultaneously entertaining players and spectators alike. Moreover, sports are about combining and not separating body, mind and spirit in a modern epoch when reason and faith are divided into separate spheres of science and religion, and where work is dichotomized into manual and mental (blue-collar and white-collar). Sports are not, as often described, just bodies on display, but they are a unique and shifting conjunction of the body, the mind and spirit, and this opens them up to

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Figure 1. Players scooping up the ‘sacred soil’ to take home after suffering a tournament-ending defeat at the Kōshien summer baseball tournament. Photograph copyright by Projectile Arts, Inc. Used with permission.

conveying moral values through multisensory experience and inscribing those moral values on bodies and bodily dispositions.

Second, sports are rule-regulated contests that produce clear winners and losers. They engage and excite the bodies, minds and spirits of those who play and those who watch – and, in so doing, they connect players and spectators through the formation of fans and fandoms. Sports have the capacity to incite passionate solidarities and to collectivize loyalties. They can express dramatic conflicts and elicit binding loyalties. Spectator sports galvanize extensive commitments of time and energy, and vicarious investments of personal identity in individual performers, teams, leagues, nations and particular sports. At the same time, however, the repetitive regularity of league structures and annual tournaments and the ‘nationalization’ of such sports provide a frame for containing the disruptions that affiliation with teams and antagonism against rivals threaten (there’s always next season!).

A third quality of modern sports brings us directly to their power to create and sanctify sites of memory such as Kōshien Stadium. Sports may be highly standardized by codified rules of contests, but they are also strongly place-specific, and the association of sports actions and place specificity adds considerably to their power to generate collective memory. That is, sport venues have a distinctive combination of generic and unique qualities. Sports are played and watched in a vast range of spaces, artificial and natural, dedicated and borrowed – backyards, school yards, playgrounds, urban streets and mountain slopes – but the enclosed stadium is our preeminent ‘theatre of sport’. It is both the quintessentially modern monument to mass leisure and entertainment, and an enduring echo of the spectacular sports of the ancient world – the stadium at Olympus, the Coliseum in Rome, the royal ball courts of Mesoamerica, etc. It is this quality of sports that makes them such potent ‘sites of memory’ that, for decades, Japanese schoolboys have been scooping up the soil of Kōshien Stadium.

More than many other public spaces of our cities and towns, the lifeless physical structures of sports stadiums regularly become animated spatial-temporal communities. A stadium at game time can attract tens of thousands of people, many of whom come regularly, a few continuously for years and years. It provides entertainment, food, shelter, clothing, law enforcement and ongoing social relations. Deep and diverse emotions are invested not only in the experiences of watching a team, but in the place where the

spectating takes place itself. Romance, domestic quarrels, parent–child bonding, friendships, work, weddings and fights – all take place in stadiums. It is a place of leisure and a place of labour, where many come to relax by watching the work of a few.

I know of no formal survey of the most popular sports venues in Japan, but I doubt there would be much disagreement among Japanese sports fans about the top five most resonant places in the world of Japanese sports:

- Hanshin Kōshien Stadium, which opened in 1924 and remains more or less the same today and is the focus of this article;
- Kōrakuen Baseball Stadium, which opened in Tokyo in 1937 as home to the then-founded Tokyo Yomiuri Giants professional team and was replaced by the indoor Tokyo ‘Big Egg’ Dome in 1988;
- Meiji Jingū Baseball Stadium, which opened on imperial park grounds in Tokyo in 1926, and became the most famous stadium for university baseball;
- Nippon Budōkan (Japan Marital Arts Arena), which opened in Tokyo for the 1964 Summer Olympics and is used notably for the championships of various schools of martial arts and also for professional wrestling matches and musical concerts; and
- Ryōgoku Kokugikan in Tokyo, which dates from 1985 and replaced two earlier arenas of the same name in Tokyo, the first of which was built in 1909. It is the arena where the three two-week Tokyo sumo tournaments are held each year, and it is also used for occasional pro wrestling and other events.<sup>1</sup>

Significantly, three of these are primarily baseball stadiums, which is explained by baseball’s status as Japan’s national pastime. And of these five, the most resonant sports place of all over the modern century is Kōshien Stadium on the western edge of Japan’s second city. I consider first some of the distinctive features of the stadium itself, whose image has shifted over its eight decades of existence, and then I propose that its special place in national sports memory is based on its unique double role. On the one hand, it is the site of the final rounds of the annual summer national high school baseball tournament; on the other hand, it is the home ground of the professional team, the Hanshin Tigers, whose longstanding rivalry with the Tokyo-based Yomiuri Giants has been a vehicle and an idiom of the key regional rivalry in modern Japan.

Kōshien is thus a unique showcase for both the amateur and the professional version of what has been Japan’s national sport for a century. It also dramatizes a contradiction at the heart of all modern spectator sports, a perduring tension between the need for neutral, standardized performance venues (the ‘level playing fields’ that insure sports as fair contests) and the equally strong tendency of partisan fans and familiar quirks of one’s usual playing field to create ‘home field advantage’. Holding the national high school tournament each year at Kōshien does indeed create a neutral venue for the teams which make it through; for the professional Hanshin team, Kōshien is indeed the Tiger’s den!

For decades, then, the single word, Kōshien, like Wembley, Lord’s, Wimbledon and Heysel, has called up in much of the national population the poignant display of idealized virtues by the nation’s male adolescents, and it signals the noble challenge but inevitable failure of the regions to contest the dominant power of the national centre.

### **The stadium itself over eight decades: from metropolitan modernism to sacred theatre**

Kōshien was built and opened in 1924 as Asia’s largest stadium, an iron-and-concrete and brick colossus that seated almost 50,000. It was a culmination of two decades of

metropolitan development in and around Osaka and Kobe – industrialization, urban migration, residential expansion – and the emergence of a new metropolitan mass leisure culture. Among the powerful interests that promoted and connected these dimensions of Japan’s new metropolitan modernism were the new urban railroad companies and the new national newspapers, and one of each (the *Asahi* Newspaper Company and the Hanshin Electric Railroad Company) were the motive forces for Kōshien.<sup>2</sup> For both industries, sports and physical recreation were central pillars of their growth and profitability.

Amid the much wider sports and recreation boom in the 1910s, a national middle school tournament had been initiated by *Asahi* newspaper and copied soon after by its arch rival *Mainichi*. The tournament effectively nationalized baseball, which was already a sports fixation. Baseball began in elite higher schools in the 1880s and 1890s, it spread upwards to the new universities at the turn of the twentieth century, and was then propagated in middle schools by the university graduates who took up teaching posts around the country and brought their love of the game, their knowledge of the rules and tactics, and the equipment.

By the early 1920s, national middle school tournaments were drawing so many spectators, that the *Asahi* Newspaper Company saw the potential for a larger stadium, and the Hanshin Electric Railroad Company saw the opportunity to place it along its commuter rail line surrounded by recreational facilities like tennis courts and swimming pools to attract the burgeoning metropolitan population.

Kōshien became a key symbol and popular experience of metropolitan modernism in the Osaka–Kobe region.<sup>3</sup> One can well imagine the spectators arriving by bus or electric train at the stadium station on edge of the city and making the short walk to the massive ivy-covered walls of brick and concrete. They streamed through the portals and came out into the vast seating, the more expensive of which were covered by the imposing ‘iron umbrella’ awning that stretched out over the infield seats to shade them from the heat and rain (see Figure 2). The bleachers along the infield sides rose high up, and were quickly



Figure 2. Aerial view of Koshien Stadium in 1932. Photography by *Asahi* Newspapers. Used by permission.

nicknamed the ‘Alps’ sections by a newspaper journalist. This was not just because of their vertiginous pitch, but also because this was where the home and visiting team supporters were seated during school tournament games. To the journalist, the sea of white blouses worn by the girl students reminded him of the snowy upper slopes of the Matterhorn.

The stadium offered a number of new experiences for spectators. Its public flush toilets were still rare in the 1920s, and they impressed and scared spectators and players coming from all parts of the country. Visitors were also immediately taken by what the concession stands sold as Kōshien ‘coffee and curry rice’. Curry rice could be made at home by the 1920s, but its preparations were lengthy, and there was a boom in this menu at the stadium and in restaurants. During the school tournaments, upwards of 15,000 coffee and curry rice meals were sold daily. Japan’s first live radio broadcasts took place at Kōshien, and the broadcasts as well as the newspaper commentaries by several reporters and writers, notably Tobita Suishū, anointed Kōshien as a performance site of idealized amateur virtues of sportsmanship (really, sportsboy-ship).<sup>4</sup>

Even today, Kōshien remains little changed over seven decades of use from its opening in 1925. It is undergoing a renovation of some interior spaces (offices and locker rooms) and seating replacement, but all of this is done with a policy of restoration and renewal. The ivy-covered brick walls, the still natural grass outfield, the open wooden press box behind the home plate, and the modest locker rooms – which in the 1920s symbolized a new and glamorous urban leisure culture – now sustain an aura of timelessness and keep vivid the memories of past contests, amateur and professional.

Senses are associational, and baseball is about building affiliation and identity for players and spectators alike. Players and spectators enter the same stadium sights and smells day after day: the black–red dirt of the infield and the tightly mowed carpet of outfield grass, the grimy plastic seats and concrete corridors under the stadium. These and many other sensory elements mark Kōshien as a distinctive place, enhancing the pleasure and suspense of what is to come by evoking memories of the past. Even for those not physically present – listening by radio and watching on television – the crowd noise (carefully engineered with stadium microphones), the announcers’ voices and the omni-optical camera eye breed a sensual familiarity that is hard to withdraw from once drawn in.<sup>5</sup>

### **The Kōshien high school baseball tournament as national festival**

National sports championships are a very common and very modern technology of national memory, but they take a number of different forms and formats. US college national championships in football and baseball, the FIFA World Cup, Major League Baseball World Series, the American football Super Bowl, the Olympics and most other major sports championships are held at varying venues. Fewer are held in the same venue, year after year, such as the French Tennis Open at Roland de Garros, the Wimbledon tennis championship, the Kentucky Derby horse race and the FA Cup at Wembley. Kōshien is the perennial venue for the national schoolboy baseball championships, and every schoolboy player, every high school team, every high school and its supporters hope to make the pilgrimage at least once to play on the sacred ground in the national *matsuri* (festival) that is the summer or spring baseball tournament.<sup>6</sup>

The time and place are crucial to Kōshien site-making and marking because the national summer tournament is always held during the middle two weeks of August. This is the annual school holiday month, but more symbolically, it the time of Obon, the Buddhist festival equivalent to the Christian All Souls Day, when the family ancestors return and when city people revisit their own rural ancestral homes. All games are played

during the day, and the sweat pours profusely from the passion of the play and the thick, humid heat of Osaka.

The format of the Kōshien summer tournament has much to do with the ways in which it has become a site of national memory. It is organized as a multistage, national knockout tournament. Every one of the more than 4000 high schools in the country is eligible, and teams must compete at levels of play that move from the local to regional to national, so the initial inclusiveness presages a rigid unforgiving elimination. Teams come to Kōshien as prefectural representatives, not as league champions, and designation of eligibility marks membership in the national community. For example, over the decades, controversies over participation by teams from (then colonial) Taiwan, from Okinawa and from Korean-language schools in Japan have marked wider controversies of inclusiveness and citizenship. The tournament itself is tightly controlled by an organizational triumvirate of the National High School Baseball Association, the sponsoring *Asahi* Newspaper Company and NHK state television, which broadcasts the entire two weeks of the national finals. Like the Augusta National club's total control over its Masters Golf Tournament, they can and do dictate strict conditions of play, eligibility and decorum.

The values Kōshien has come to showcase are purity of motive, teamwork, obedience to authority and effort over talent.<sup>7</sup> These are dictated by the rules and regulations of the National High School Baseball Association, elaborated endlessly in newspaper and television commentary, and performed in an androcentric gender order. Girls of course are disallowed as players. For a number of years, girls have been able to serve as team managers for the boys' teams, but even so were disallowed from Kōshien rosters and prohibited from entering the dugouts or the field itself. Only recently, has the Association relaxed the rule.

From its very beginnings, the tournament was presented as a national narrative by the media – first, by the newspapers, then by radio, and finally, by television, and it was used prominently in promoting these media as they appeared and tried to gain prominence.<sup>8</sup> For most Japanese people, however, the history of the Kōshien tournament is not in knowing a long narrative of successive years and championships but rather in recalling and retelling a litany of stories, a gallery of special moments. In such a place of memory, certain events become stories, which become parables of moral force.<sup>9</sup> For example, Kōshien lore includes such 'highlights' as:

- In 1931, Kagi Nōrin Gakkō (Kagi Agricultural High School, or Kanō for short) won the Taiwan championship and became the first to qualify for Kōshien with Taiwanese players on roster – a tri-ethnic team of four aboriginal Taiwanese, two Han Taiwanese and three Japanese players (an indication that colonial policies were working) – and Kanō went through the rounds all the way to the finals, losing to powerhouse Chuyō Business School, 4–0.
- In 1941, Bessho Takehiko became a national hero for pitching his last game in the tournament with a broken left arm in a sling, fielding bare-handed with the catcher rolling the ball back to mound (and everyone knew that he was headed into the army soon afterwards).
- In 1957, the hero of that summer's tournament, Ō Sadaharu, pitched Waseda High School to the championship despite an infected blister on his pitching hand; the blood was dripping from his hand during the game but he hid this from his manager to stay in the game.
- In 1969, Ōta Kōji, a child of a Japanese–Russian marriage, led Misawa High School #9 into the finals by pitching four consecutive complete games. He pitched 18

scoreless innings in a game that was called on account of darkness – and the next day he finally lost 4–2 in the rematch.

- In 1992, Matsui Hideki, slugging star for Seiryō High School, was walked five times in his second-round game; after the final walk, spectators threw refuse on to the field and the opposing team's manager was bitterly criticized for his unsportsmanlike behaviour. Matsui went on to an All-Star career with the Yomiuri Giants and then a celebrated move to the New York Yankees.
- In 1998, the talk of the tournament was a game played during the regional rounds in the country's northeast, between Tōō Gijuku and Fukaura High Schools that ended in a historically lopsided 122–0 score. Tōō Gijuku scored 39 runs in the first inning, and kept scoring at will. In the seventh inning, down 93–0, the Fukaura manager suggested to his team that it call it quits, but the team refused, believing it more sportsmanly to finish the game.
- In 2000, Japan's first astronaut Wakata Kōichi, a former catcher for Urawa High School, brought a baseball and his high school baseball flag on his space mission and then had a nationally broadcast communication with the captain of that year's winning team from Miyake Island, which had been severely damaged by an volcanic eruption and whose team had to prepare for Kōshien in Tokyo.

In sum, over eight decades, the place, the season, the annual happenings and adolescent heroics have combined to memorialize Kōshien baseball as a continuing series of standout events by instant star players in a backdrop of constant, anonymous all-out effort by the supporting teams. It is indeed one of the 'traditional national rites of the Japanese people'.

Nonetheless, we might still wonder why baseball has been so enshrined at Kōshien as Japan's most emblematic youth sport, when sumo and martial arts like jūdō and kendō are so much more Japanese in origin. This has not been much discussed by scholars, but I suspect there are several factors that favoured baseball. It was played in schools and indeed spread quickly across the school system in the early twentieth century, unlike sumo, which is rarely a school sport. And it is a team sport, unlike martial arts, highlighting the importance of team play and hierarchical group organization. After the Second World War, baseball gained the approval of the American Occupation, whereas the martial arts were banned for some time.

But why then was it high school baseball that came to such national prominence after the Second World War and continues to dominate Japanese celebration of school sports? In the USA, by contrast, more is made of Little League baseball for younger players, and far more media and popular attention is paid to university-level spectator sports than sports at the high school level. In Japan, however, I believe it was certain circumstances of the 1950s, during a resurgence of mass culture after two decades of authoritarian government, war, defeat and rebuilding, that led to powerful associations of notions of purity, effort, locality and high school. The 1950s was a decade in which high school-aged youth were innocent of Japan's long and discredited wartime decades. Effort, elicited and shaped by adult authority, was the basis of disciplined national recovery, especially through dedication to corporate goals and enterprise citizenship.<sup>10</sup> The locality of school teams and the provincial basis of representation were counterweight to the wartime and post-war dislocation and the then ongoing waves of urban migration. This was also a decade when public education itself underwent expansion, especially a 'massification' of high school as the new expectation and as the pinnacle of a standard, national, public and exam-meritocratic education system. A final factor were two heated commercial rivalries of the decade – between the three newspaper corporate giants (*Asahi*, *Mainichi* and *Yomiuri*),

which were now competing with rival sports dailies, weekly magazines, radio and manga, and other media, and between NHK state television and the Yomiuri network NTV, which pushed professional baseball and professional wrestling.

But, of course, memory-making is to a significant degree myth-making, and there are the unspoken and perhaps not always acknowledged ironies of Kōshien baseball. That is, behind, or at least beside, key assertions and ideals of Kōshien baseball are conditions that would undermine them if they were fully acknowledged. For example, the parents, teachers and national adult viewing audience who so nostalgically celebrate the efforts of the teenage players do this in an age of enormous gulfs between generational experiences and frictions between the generations in their own lives. And behind the veneer of purity and sportsmanship and the notion that any player and any school that tries hard enough can succeed are the realities of certain powerful 'baseball schools' (which scout and recruit middle school players, pay scholarships, finance special facilities, arrange for easy courses, etc.), the occasional accounts of bullying and violence that surface in the media (and the many that do not), and the making of celebrities of individual players, the best of which, after all, are also playing for the attention that will enable a future career. Kōshien stars are inevitably high picks in the professional draft.

Kōshien baseball also requires a curious inversion of school status in the normal educational hierarchy. As with American university sports (especially basketball and football), the prominent baseball teams are not the top academic schools, but rather the commercial or technical high schools or the private high schools at the bottom of the normal school status hierarchy. Thus, a further irony of Kōshien baseball is that fans across the country are cheering madly for schools that in their everyday life and work they look down upon.

It is intriguing, too, that the high school tournament has become such an expression of regional identity (the teams are prefectural representatives) when in fact, apart from some of the support groups, most of the fans who so enthusiastically cheer on their 'hometown' team left their prefecture long ago, now live in Tokyo or Nagoya or Osaka, and rarely, if ever, return or want to return. But like the ancestor spirits who return home at Obon, they seek a sentimental identity with their roots through support of a team on the hot August playing field of Kōshien.

Thus, there is a fair amount of hypocrisy, misrecognition and rank cynicism in Kōshien baseball – which means that it is like organized sports everywhere. And yet, its aura remains. An important reason for this is that Kōshien is not entirely an inversion of the post-war educational hierarchy. Indeed, in many respects, the Kōshien tournament is a very public metaphor for the educational meritocracy that Japan imagined itself to be for a number of decades since the 1950s.<sup>11</sup>

Kōshien 'models' standards of success and venues for performance. It mimics the university entrance exams – objective, one-time, based on performance under incredible, visible pressure that pits the individual not against his classmates but against national competition. Like the entrance exams, within the standardizing and open rules, every team is supposed to have an equal chance; but also like the exams, as *tatemaie* is to *honne*, certain schools have gained an edge through illegal recruiting and support and other behind-the-scenes manoeuvring for special advantage. Even the media's frenzy of post-game interviewing of winners and losers reminds one of the emotional scenes at the board postings of entrance examination results. In this and other respects, Kōshien and high school baseball are not a distortion of the standards of the educational system but an important demonstration of its features on a national stage. Both summer baseball and

winter exams highlight a national fascination with the struggles of youth, both within and against the regimentation of competition.

### **Hanshin Tigers baseball: regional sentiment and the shifting national balance of power**

The same urban train company that built Kōshien Stadium in 1924 later joined with other newspaper and transport corporations a dozen years later in 1936 to found Japan's first professional league and sponsor one of the teams, the Hanshin Tigers. This first league of eight teams initially played round-robin tournaments at a number of stadiums, but their sole identity was as a representative of the sponsoring corporation, and there was apparently little territorial affiliation or home ground attachment.

Professional baseball was shut down as the war intensified in the early 1940s, but together with school baseball was allowed to restart after the war by the American Occupation. In 1950, professional baseball reorganized itself into two leagues of six teams each, playing long seasons of 130 games from April into October, with the winners of the two league seasons meeting in a Japan Series championship. Televising games began with the Yomiuri's new national network broadcasting of its team's schedule, and it was in the 1950s that teams became associated with home stadiums. The Hanshin Tigers continued to play some 'home' games at other area stadiums, but Kōshien became its stadium at this time.

In the succeeding decades, then, Kōshien developed powerful dual symbolism in the world of school baseball and the professional leagues. The high school tournaments are only 10 days in the spring and 12 days in August, but for the rest of the year, Kōshien is the venue for the Tigers. The offices of the National High School Baseball Association are elsewhere, but the Tiger front office is located at the stadium (in rooms below the outfield bleachers), and the stadium, especially those outfield bleachers, have become home of the fervent Tiger fan clubs, who literally sit on top of the Tiger executives as they fill the bleachers for each game!

Kōshien's national prominence has been enhanced by the Tigers' rivalry with the Tokyo Yomiuri Giants, which for four decades, has been the most followed rivalry in all of Japanese professional sports. Playing together in the Central League and meeting 27 times a year, the series always gains the highest attendance, the highest broadcast rights and television audience, and most print media attention of any other rivalry.

This national attention is in spite of – or rather, because of – the lopsided nature of the competitive balance. Over the span of six decades, the Giants have dominated professional baseball, in titles, in organizational clout and in national prestige. The Tigers, by contrast, are known regionally and nationally as noble failures and lovable losers. In many respects, the inevitability and nobility of their failure is rooted in distinctive features of the club that are opposite those of Yomiuri.<sup>12</sup> The Hanshin parent company, for example, remains a small transport corporation, while Yomiuri is one of the largest media conglomerates in the world. Yomiuri thus can carefully control the news about and image of the Giants, while Hanshin is at the mercy of a prying, independent Kansai media. Yomiuri also sponsors fan supporter associations and manages their behaviour, while the Hanshin fan associations, the largest in Japan, have been resolutely independent and often fiercely critical of the Hanshin club. Yomiuri has always enjoyed the financial resources to sign anyone, while the Hanshin club lacks the funds and league influence to attract the best rookies and to bend the rules. For these and other factors, this Giants–Tigers rivalry evolved into a rivalry between 'Japan's team' and 'Kansai's team'.

Nonetheless, it is too simple to claim that this unbalanced rivalry of Tokyo as national centre and Osaka as subordinate region underpins the symbolic potency of Kōshien because it would occlude the twentieth-century history that began with a rough equality between the two cities and their regions and which only after the Second World War developed into a strong, national centralization around Tokyo. It is this dynamic, from two strong regions, Kantō (Tokyo–Yokohama–Kawasaki) and Kansai (Osaka–Kobe–Kyoto) to a single national centre in Kantō, that has brought such intense, complex passions to the Giants–Tigers rivalry, played out at the twin stadiums of Kōshien and Kōrakuen (and now the Giants’ Tokyo Dome).

Tokyo, of course, has been the national capital of modern Japan since 1868, but by many measures, it was not the national centre for many decades after. Well into the twentieth century, Osaka was more prominent in the development of metropolitan leisure, media and entertainment (for example, the two national newspapers were first based in Osaka), and the city was the corporate headquarters and production and shipping base for many sectors of the economy. Although baseball got its start in Tokyo and Tokyo’s universities dominated play in the early twentieth century, the National Middle School Tournament and the many sports promotions by the *Asahi* and *Mainichi* newspapers shifted the locus of sports to Osaka by the second decade. By the late 1920s, when the opening of Kōshien was followed immediately by the construction of Kōrakuen Stadium and Meiji Jingū Stadium in Tokyo, there was a balance of spectator sports power and enthusiasm between the two metropolises.

Of course, the American Occupation, based in Tokyo, went a long way to centralizing many resources and functions in Tokyo, to the detriment of possible competitors like Osaka. Baseball was revived quickly, and Shōriki Matsutarō of Yomiuri evaded his wartime record and used his news sports daily and TV network to build up the Giants through the 1950s into a powerhouse. Still in the first 20 years, the balance of baseball power remained with Kansai teams.

What was decisive in realigning the baseball order and creating a new significance for Kōshien was an organizational revision in 1950 that expanded the single eight-team professional league into a Central League and a Pacific League of six teams each. Hanshin alone of the Kansai-based teams chose to join the Central League with Yomiuri (drawing sharp criticism as a ‘collaborator’ from the other Kansai teams, who saw themselves as resisting Yomiuri efforts to dictate the new structure). Throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, Pacific League teams were at least as powerful as Central League teams, and even Hanshin could match Yomiuri in many years. Osaka Stadium in south downtown was as much a centre of Osaka sports culture as Kōshien.

It was only in the mid-1960s that the balance of power tipped irrevocably to Tokyo. Kansai teams’ baseball dominance waned, as did the Pacific League, and Kōshien and the Tigers–Giants series became baseball’s ‘golden box office’. Yomiuri used its national newspaper and sports daily, and its national television and radio networks to shape the Giants as Japan’s only ‘national’ team, and the Kansai regional media gradually responded with more and more attention to the Tigers and less to the region’s Pacific League teams. The realignment of the baseball order in the 1960s expressed realignments in politics and the economy. The 1964 Olympics in Tokyo accelerated a national transportation grid that emanated from Tokyo, increasing the importance of national subsidies of regional and local government, and the movement of corporate headquarters to Tokyo. Japan itself was emerging as a world economic powerhouse, and the unprecedented run of nine straight Japan Series championships by the ‘V-9’ Giants from 1965 to 1971 crowned their place at

the pinnacle of Japanese professional baseball – and consolidated the national prestige of baseball.

Thus, the rivalry that is played out 13 or so times a season on the field of Kōshien (and an equal number of times in Tokyo) is not just a metonymic struggle of Tokyo versus Osaka as Japan's first city versus its second city. More broadly, it is the uneven struggle of the national centre and the region whose position most reminds everyone of the reshaping of the Japanese political–economic landscape that has occurred in the past half century. That Kōshien Stadium remains as it always has been, while Kōrakuen disappeared in the 1980s Bubble economy for the Big Egg of Tokyo Dome, is a fitting architectural expression of that relationship.

### **Conclusion: what is the future of Kōshien as stadium and as memory?**

The striking modernity of the stadium in the 1920s and its immediate association with popular schoolboy baseball brought national attention to Kōshien. In the eight decades since, it has steadily accumulated the patina of tradition as a physical repository of well-publicized sporting moments. Since the first post-Second World War decade, the summer tournament has assumed even greater significance for a new public education system that was central to the post-war societal order of mainstream meritocracy.

At the same time, the potency of Kōshien as a crucible of Japanese collective memory was further enhanced by its additional post-war role as the home ground for professional baseball's 'second team' and sentimental regional favourite, the Hanshin Tigers. Given this double significance, it is tempting to see the two sides of Kōshien baseball as diametrically opposed, constituting a force field of polar opposites. High school baseball at Kōshien displays the best of the amateur spirit by innocent youth, offering didactic lessons in personal character in a knockout tournament-style competition with a national spread of teams. The Hanshin Tigers are professional athletes, providing commercial entertainment in a league format (in which winning more games rather than every game is the goal), and sustaining a fan base that is rooted in the immediate region with decidedly non-national passions. A striking set of contrast pairs, although as I have suggested, these oppositions are themselves something of an exaggeration. Both forms of Kōshien baseball, for example, offer versions of edu-tainment, and both incite regional as well as national loyalties. Thus, it is their polarities as well as their overlapping dynamics and qualities that have deepened the thickness of memory at and of the stadium.

Memory often carries the illusion of fixity and permanence. Nowadays Kōshien baseball is emphasized as the idealization (mystification) of high school education and adolescent character, and we emphasize Tigers baseball as the nobility found in regional subordination. But memory is a moving horizon, and both of these are really images rooted in Japan's experience after the Second World War and in the nation's needs, that memory – sports memories – were mobilized to bear in those decades.

Having stood for eight decades as Japan's foremost site of sports memory, the future of Kōshien baseball, both school and pro, is now in doubt. The stadium itself, aging and decrepit, is now undergoing a careful restoration, although the schedule has been slowed by the strained finances of the Hanshin corporation – and the Hankyu Holding Company that bought it out several years ago. Nonetheless, it will be completed, and it will remain as a place of layered memories. More problematic, however, are the ideals of education and the relations of centre and region that have been played out on the Kōshien field over these years.

Japanese education is in crisis, and the entrance-exam-based meritocratic ideals that the population subscribed to for so long are badly frayed. Fair play, teamwork and supreme effort were always seen as ideal values, representing the best but not all of Kōshien high school baseball, but the erosion of faith in the wider school system exposes more and more of the gaps between the ideals and more tawdry realities.

Many Japanese remain passionate followers of baseball, but interest in the domestic professional game is falling. The global game, soccer, is drawing youth away from baseball, and both schoolboy and professional baseball is drawing an older demographic at Kōshien. Attendance at the stadium remains strong, but the wider population, in Kansai and nationally, is often more focused on Japanese players in the United States professional Major League Baseball than on professional teams in Japan. Television viewership is declining rapidly, advertising and broadcast revenues have fallen, and the National Professional Baseball organization that runs the leagues in Japan has been unable to mount any effective counter-strategies.

As long as the stadium itself stands, it will condense and convey a modern century of powerful memory of the national sporting pastime. But if present trends continue in wider society, its educational system and its mass culture preferences, this site of memory will be less and less a theatre of continuing performances and more an archive of an era that is passing.

## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Two studies of modern stadiums in modern Japan are Abe, *Sutajiamu no sengoshi*, and Sano, *Ano koro konna kyūjō ga atta*.
- <sup>2</sup> Ogawa, 'Hanshin Denki Tetsudō'.
- <sup>3</sup> Tamaki, *Ichioku hachiman nin no Kōshien*.
- <sup>4</sup> Ariyama, *Kōshien to Nihonjin*; Sawada, 'Manuaru kyōiku to shite no Kōshien'.
- <sup>5</sup> Kiku, 'Butteki bunka sōchi to shite no Kōshien sutajiamu'; Sugimoto, 'Gekijo to shite no Kōshien'.
- <sup>6</sup> Eng, *Kokoyakyū*; Gordon, 'Japan'.
- <sup>7</sup> Moeran, 'Individual, Group and Seishin'; Sakuta, 'Kōkō yakyū to seishin shugi'.
- <sup>8</sup> Ariyama, *Kōshien to Nihonjin*.
- <sup>9</sup> Shimizu, *Kōshien yakyū no arukeorōjii*.
- <sup>10</sup> Sakuta, 'Kōkō yakyū to seishin shugi'.
- <sup>11</sup> Sawada, 'Manuaru kyōiku to shite no Kōshien'.
- <sup>12</sup> Kelly, 'Japan'.

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