

Japan's Embrace of Soccer: Mutable Ethnic Players and Flexible Soccer Citizenship in the New East Asian Sports Order

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Baseball and sumo were Japan's twentieth-century centre sports, but soccer is likely to replace them in the new century. This article outlines several reasons for Japan's embrace of the sport, focusing on how ethnicity and nationality are expressed and confirmed in the world of soccer. It proposes that the Japanese sports world has moved through three eras of 'sports citizenship' over the last century. The first four decades of the twentieth century constituted an era of 'imperial athletes', a coercively inclusive and hierarchical order of belonging as 'athletes of Greater Japan'. The post-World War II decades reconfigured sports citizenship around ethnic alterity, establishing a cultural-essentialist binary between Japanese 'athletes' and 'foreign athletes'. What we see now, in and through soccer, is an emerging third era of mobile athletes, mutable ethnicity and flexible sports citizenship, determined in the case of soccer by supra-governmental FIFA eligibility standards and sports federation rules rather than by nation-state laws. Soccer is demonstrating a broader sense of national belonging in and for twenty-first-century Japan than was the case with the more rigid distinctions that characterised the twentieth-century centre sports of baseball and soccer, and this has both domestic and regional consequences.

Keywords: Japan; ethnicity; soccer; citizenship; East Asia

Japan, along with Australia and the USA, was the rare major sporting power that effectively distanced itself from the global sport of soccer throughout the twentieth century. For several decades, however, soccer has been making inroads in all three societies, especially in Japan, and it is also assuming central importance in the ordering of sports across the East Asian region.¹ This article explores Japan's embrace of the sport and the implications of this embrace, both domestically and regionally. It focuses particularly on how soccer is transforming the links of ethnicity and citizenship that constituted twentieth-century Japanese nationalism and that defined Japan's place in East Asia.

Indeed, comparing the recent trends in Japanese baseball, sumo and soccer, the article proposes that while baseball and sumo were very much twentieth-century Japan's major sports, soccer is likely to replace them as the country's twenty-first-century central sport. Predictions are fraught with peril, but there are five reasons why soccer is well positioned to push to the fore.

First, soccer offers Japan a truly global playing field that neither baseball nor sumo had offered. Modern sumo, as it was reorganised in the Meiji period, defined itself as uniquely

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Japanese, with Shinto trappings and ritual paraphernalia, even as it created generic sporting features of regular competitive tournaments, rankings, ownership governance and training routines. Baseball, from its own Meiji origins to the present, has been framed primarily as a binary with American baseball, from friendly competition to ideological rival.²

By contrast, soccer is the only major team sport that is truly global in expanse and in governance,³ and it allows Japan to position itself in a far wider and more complex field of world sports competition. Unlike sumo and baseball, soccer around the world has evolved into a distinctive competitive grid of thousands of locality-based clubs (for instance, the 18 different clubs in J.League's Division 1, with often multinational player rosters) and more than 200 national teams, which periodically draw players from whatever clubs they play for, domestically or abroad. The result is an intricately overlapping, cross-cutting and shifting grid of rivalries and loyalties. The FIFA world is supranational rather than international in that most matters of jurisdiction, capital investment, intellectual property rights and (soccer) citizenship are adjudicated by national and transnational sports federations and not by nation-states.⁴

A second advantage of soccer for Japan is the opportunity it provides for a robust field of East Asian sports competition. With baseball, basketball and other major sports, the competitive imbalances among Japan, China, the Koreas and Taiwan cannot sustain rivalries of any nationalist fervour or commercial profit. By contrast, national team soccer over the past two decades has produced unpredictable swings in relative strength, passionate, even violent, encounters among the East Asian countries and a growing flow of players among the domestic leagues and the national teams. The World Cup qualifying structures and a 46-nation membership that stretches from Beirut to Tokyo have made the Asian Football Confederation the second largest regional federation in the FIFA world. Soccer is not only an avenue to globalise Japanese sports but also a way to Asianise Japanese sports.⁵

Third, at the domestic level, soccer has introduced several innovations that are challenging the baseball–sumo dominance.⁶ Its corporate–municipal–community hybrid ownership structure has not been seamlessly implemented, but it is much more attractive and much more flexible than the entrenched corporate control of professional baseball and the exclusive and inbred stock system of sumo. For instance, its local clubs are required to develop youth soccer programmes, and its supporter associations are more open than those of professional baseball teams.⁷ Faced with the determined resistance of Japanese professional baseball for access to major stadium venues and television and newspaper coverage, the J.League was forced to distribute many of its teams widely across a network of second-tier cities and turn to alternative advertising. This has actually proven to be an unexpected boon to spreading the popularity of soccer and, in effect, challenging baseball from below.

Fourth, in matters of gender, too, world soccer has both a men's game and women's game, unlike baseball (for which there is only the parallel and largely ignored sport of softball) and sumo. While the women's game still lacks equal resources and attention to the men's game, as women's elite sports participation and level of excellence have risen dramatically into the twenty-first century, soccer is far better positioned to attract women as players and fans. Certainly, the extraordinary success of the Japanese women's national team in Olympic and World Cup competitions (far beyond that of the national men's team) has generated broad excitement and support as well as considerable commercial rewards for the players themselves. The world of soccer, like the world of work, is still far from the 'gender-equal' societal norms professed in government policy and legislation,⁸ but the

prominent achievement of the women's team is a case in which sport (as baseball and sumo) no longer reflects Japan society's dominant gender ideology but rather (as soccer) is unsettling these norms as it demonstrates an alternative future.

A fifth set of factors concerns the ways in which ethnicity and nationality are expressed and confirmed in the world of soccer, and this is the primary focus of this article. It argues that soccer is demonstrating a broader sense of national belonging in and for twenty-first-century Japan than was the case with the more rigid distinctions that characterised the twentieth-century centre sports of baseball and soccer. Very broadly, the Japanese sports world has moved through three eras of 'sports citizenship' over the last century or so. The first four decades of the twentieth century constituted an era of 'imperial athletes', a coercively inclusive and hierarchical order of belonging as 'athletes of Greater Japan' or *Dai Nippon senshu*.⁹ The post-World War II decades of late *Shōwa* reconfigured sports citizenship around ethnic alterity, establishing a cultural-essentialist binary between Japanese 'athletes' (*senshu*) and 'foreign athletes' (*gaijin senshu*). What we see now, especially in and through soccer, is an emerging third era of mobile athletes, mutable ethnicity and flexible sports citizenship, determined in the case of soccer by supra-governmental FIFA eligibility standards and sports federation rules rather than by nation-state laws.

The following sections characterise these three eras of sports citizenship. They then trace the complex careers, shifting ethnic images and citizenship trajectories of the several dozen Japanese-Brazilians, Koreans officially resident in Japan ('*Zainichi*') and South Koreans who have played or are playing for Japanese school, company and professional teams, while also playing for the national teams of Japan, Brazil, South Korea and North Korea.

Imperial Japan: Sports and the 'Greater Japan athlete'

By the early twentieth century, both baseball and sumo had moved to centre of Japanese sports popularity, supported by national sports associations, state ministries, the school system and major commercial interests, including the new national press and metropolitan transportation and leisure industries. Baseball was very much the dominant sport, but sumo's ability to present itself as both commercialised entertainment and as Shinto-ised national ritual attracted popularity, prestige and patriotism.¹⁰

It was in 1936 that the first professional baseball league began play, sponsored by corporations and drawing on school and university graduates of the schoolboy game that was already Japan's most popular sport. The clubs cast a wide net, recruiting beyond Japan proper to mainland Japanese who had gone to the colonies, to Korean and Taiwanese players educated in Japanese colonial schools, to ethnic Japanese from Hawai'i and the American West Coast, like pitcher Henry 'Bozo' Wakabayashi and catcher Yoshio 'Kaiser' Tanaka, and to several non-ethnic Japanese who lived in Japan, most notably, the White Russian from Hokkaidō, Victor Starffin; Starffin, popularly known as the 'blue-eyed Japanese', was enshrined in the Hall of Fame as the first pitcher to win 300 games.¹¹ Looking back, what is remarkable from our perspective is how little attention was paid to ethnic backgrounds in administrative procedures, media commentary and fan support.¹² It remained a largely unmarked category.

This inclusiveness, however, was coercive and hierarchical. Among the most prominent and tragic examples of its imperial dynamics was the case of marathoner Son Gi-jeong, winner of the 1936 gold medal at the Berlin Olympics. Son was a Korean runner who set several marathon records but who was forced to compete as a member of the Japan

delegation under his Japanese name, Son Kitei. He refused to use this name as a signature and to sing the Japanese anthem, he tried to hide the Japanese emblem on his uniform on the victory stand, and he and his supporters and the Korean press suffered for this resistance.¹³ In these and other sports of imperial Japan, differential political standing was more critical than differentiated ethnic status, and the common subjecthood of athletes and teams was a paramount expectation of the state.

Liminal Athletes: Rikidōzan and Wally Yonamine

It was only after Japan's defeat in the Pacific War that 'Japanese-ness' as ethnicity came to serve such a crucial role as a basis for post-war national identity, and the cline of imperial citizenship became the binary of ethnic citizenship. Spectator sports were an important venue that made evident the contortions of this cultural nationalism as they came to occupy an even more central place in the emerging mass culture. The revival of a vibrant and rambunctious mass culture in the post-war 1950s was led by the new medium of television, which began with NHK (state television) broadcasts in February of 1953, immediately followed by the private Nihon Television (NTV) network. Much of the early programming – certainly the most popular programming – was of sports, especially professional wrestling, boxing and professional baseball. Two of the biggest stars of this post-war mass culture were the professional wrestler Rikidōzan and the baseball player Wally Yonamine. Rikidōzan was a young sumo wrestler who quit the sport and moved to professional wrestling in 1950.¹⁴ He garnered an immediate national following for a series of matches against visiting American opponents, which were staged as moralistic battles between the heavy foreign 'heels' and the protectors of Japanese virtue. Hundreds of thousands of Japanese watched open-air televisions set up by corporate sponsors in urban parks in February 1954, for instance, to follow a three-day series of tag-team matches against the American world champions, the Sharpe brothers. Rikidōzan and his partner endured endless painful dirty tricks and cheap shots from the Americans over and over, until finally, Rikidōzan could stand it no longer and let loose with his most famous move, a so-called karate chop that brought victory (and justice) to the country. It was Japan versus the USA, Asia versus the West, and Japan, in the body of Rikidōzan, outlasted the brute strength and underhanded tactics of the foreign intruders.

Rikidōzan, however, was a curious embodiment of Japanese honour. Born in Korea and recruited to the mainland for sumo, he was caught in the limbo of second-class permanent resident status shared by hundreds of thousands of other Koreans. Officially, his Korean background was never acknowledged and the media steered clear of mentioning it, although it was still widely known among wrestling's fan communities.

Baseball presented its own drama in an effort to make the transition from imperial defeat. It was quickly restarted in the aftermath of defeat, in part through the encouragement of General MacArthur, who thought it a properly American sport, appropriate for a new 'democratic' Japan. The first such player was actually a liminal figure: the Hawaiian-born Japanese-American *nisei* (second generation) Wally Yonamine.¹⁵ Yonamine was signed by the Yomiuri Giants in 1951 with the encouragement of the American Occupation authorities, who were generally interested in promoting baseball as yet another democratic American practice. They thought that his Japanese descent would ease his acceptance, but in fact it was often an obstacle to his popularity. He was heckled by fans and criticised by commentators who found American *nisei* like Yonamine to be the worst of both sides – neither trusted by fellow Americans nor accepted as Japanese for having been a traitor on the enemy side of the war.¹⁶ Nonetheless, Yonamine had a very successful career. He became the best lead-off hitter in

the league and was known for his aggressive base-sliding, which had not been a tactic used in the Japanese majors before. However, his relations with the Giants club remained troubled, and he was dismissed abruptly in 1960, after the legendary manager, Kawakami Tetsuharu, declared that the Giants would be '100% pure Japanese'. (Yonamine went on to take revenge on the Giants, as player and manager of the Chūnichi Dragons.)

Post-war Japan: Ethnic Alterity and the 'Foreign Player' (Gaijin Senshu)

After Yonamine, a contractual and conceptual divide was drawn between regular players (*senshu*) and foreign players (*gaijin senshu*), the latter held apart by quotas, special contracts, different training and distinct expectations. From early 1950s to the present, almost 1000 foreign baseball players have been hired by the 12 Japanese professional baseball teams, and more than half have lasted but a single season. The players hired from American professional ranks were largely White, sometimes African-American – like one of the best-known from the 1980s, Warren Cromartie – and occasionally Caribbean.

They were and remain very well remunerated (much above Japanese standard salaries), and they are the subject of extensive news coverage and commentary, which often follows a predictable messiah–scapegoat cycle. All too often, they are hired and introduced as team saviours, they then meet with mixed success as the season wears on, and are eventually dismissed with loud public criticism of their laziness, selfishness and lack of proper (which is to say, Japanese) fighting spirit.¹⁷

The other side of the divide – the pure Japanese player – proved equally problematical because, as any fan knows, Yonamine was not the last of the liminal figures. Consider Oh Sadaharu, the legendary power hitter of the Yomiuri Giants and holder of the world record for career home runs. He was born and raised in Japan to a Chinese father and Japanese mother. He retained his Taiwanese citizenship and remained immensely popular in Taiwan and among Taiwanese residents of Japan.

Indeed, some of the greatest 'Japanese' players of his generation were of mixed parentage, including stars such as 'Iron Man' Kinugasa Sachio, the Hiroshima Carp third baseman who was born to a Japanese mother and an African-American G.I. father; 'Golden Arm' 'Emperor' Kaneda Masaichi, a Korean resident of Japan who leads the pitchers' record book with 400 career pitching victories and 4490 career strikeouts; and Harimoto Isao, another Korean resident of Japan, was a long-time star outfielder for the Tōei Flyers.¹⁸

This in fact was baseball's contribution to Nihonjinron, the post-war public doctrine of cultural nationalism, shaped around claims of Japanese ethnic uniqueness and nativism. It posited a clear conceptual dichotomy of indigenous versus foreign, and therein lay a problem: categorical opposition allows no anomalies. Oh, Kaneda and others could be – had to be – elided into the Japanese category, however uncomfortably, and these mixed Japanese heroes were kept on a very short ideological leash by their clubs and the media. In public, they were 'Japanese', and this was done by insisting that whatever their blood-ethnic backgrounds they all shared the experience of coming up through baseball in the Japanese school system.

This is the most telling point. The great secret of Nihonjinron was not that the false belief that the nation was built on a 'mono'-ethnicity, a putative ethnic purity, and that baseball was complicit in this mystification. Most fans were not duped by that. It was not their naive misrecognition but rather their willingness to suspend disbelief that allowed them to see Oh as Japanese and the string of American players as the foreign other!

Baseball thus revealed the fundamental contradiction at the heart of Nihonjinron claims of ethnic singularity and cultural uniqueness. The central tenet of this cultural

nationalism was about being Japanese but in fact it was much more about doing Japanese, about performing Japanese.¹⁹ The status of players such as Oh and Kinugasa – being ‘partially’ Japanese but having to perform as ‘wholly’ Japanese – probably explains their fascination and their popularity for so many fans: the ambivalences of their identity were experienced by many in the larger post-war society. Japaneseness as a tenet of national civil religion may be held to be a natural consequence of birth and blood, the intuitive expression of a homogeneous population. However, becoming this kind of Japanese for most Japanese – women, regionals, lower classes, and stigmatised minorities – has always been learned, incomplete, painful and vulnerable. It was precisely such mutual resonance that rendered compelling figures such as Oh and Kaneda. The premise of purity required the pathos of performance.

Post-war sumo followed the same course as post-war baseball, from inclusive to exclusive sports citizenship. The foreign wrestler became a marked import category in the 1960s. The first such sumo wrestler was the Hawaiian-American Jesse Kuhlua, who wrestled as Takamiyama, gained Japanese citizenship in 1980 and retired to become a stable master in 1984. He has been followed by more than 180 foreigners, from Hawai’i, Tonga, Samoa, Brazil, eastern Europe, Russia and central and east Asia. Their receptions and success have been quite mixed. Some Sumo Association officials and conservative commentators decry their presence and foreign wrestlers have come in for an inordinate amount of (even racist) criticism, not unlike that directed at baseball players. Still, over the last two decades or so, foreign wrestlers have remained at about 10% of the 600–700 or so registered wrestlers (roughly the same numbers as in professional wrestling), drawing now especially from Mongolia. As of December 2012, there were 69 foreign wrestlers registered in all 6 divisions, of whom 27 were from Mongolia. Foreign wrestlers dominate the upper divisions, occupying fully 27 of the 42 wrestlers in the top Makunouchi Division; 8 of these 27 are from Mongolia, foremost being the current yokozuna (Grand Champion) Hakuho, who was recently joined at this highest rank by fellow Mongolian Harumafuji.²⁰

Sumo remains mired in scandals of bout fixing and hazing, but most of the principals in this corruption are Japanese wrestlers and stable masters. Some commentators and many fans are of the view that the sport would be in even worse shape without the foreigners, and the record-setting accomplishments and generally dignified comportment of Hakuho are at the centre of these assessments. And ‘dignity’ (*hinkaku*) is the term for dignified bearing that has long been used by the Sumo Association as its core criterion for elevation to Grand Champion. It is highly significant that the most ‘national’ of Japanese sports should not only embrace a foreign-born champion but also do so in the rhetoric of the most Japanese of wrestling ideals. In large part, this is rationalised by the forced socialisation of sumo wrestlers through the wrestling stable system. The 620 (in 2012) wrestlers live and train in 58 stables; Japanese and foreigners alike are recruited from the bottom-up as apprentices and must endure and share the same hierarchical internal relations, the same cloistered and communal dorm living and the same daily training routines. They *become* sumo wrestlers and a few *become* yokozuna champions, and there is but a single ideological standard, whose qualities – physical, psychological and spiritual – are coded as Japanese.

Soccer in Twenty-First-Century Japan: Mobile Athletes and Flexible Sports Citizenship

In the new century, the rigid binaries of baseball and sumo are proving to be problematic, and both sports are trying, as they did after World War II, to make a transition.

Like sumo's treatment of Hakuho, baseball has shed some of its ethnic nationalism, especially through the influence of Bobby Valentine, the former American major league player and manager who managed the Chiba Lotte Marines, in 1995 and then in 2004–2009.²¹

In 2005, he took a team of unseasoned rookies and aging veterans to the club's first Japan championship in 31 years. A month later, the club won the Asia Championship over teams from South Korea, Taiwan and China. He was the most popular manager in Japan, living near the ballpark, riding his bike to work, giving interviews in Japanese and appearing on a wide range of TV shows from the serious to the silly. He was embraced by the club's fans, who built a shrine to him at the stadium entrance, lined 'Valentine Way' with huge murals and showed up every Saturday evening to take Latin dance lessons with him before the game. He was embraced by leading Japanese corporate sponsors, voted young people's ideal boss in a national poll. All of this was not only for a charismatic personality (and some real baseball smarts) but also for espousing and succeeding with a hybrid training philosophy, managing style and merchant strategy that unabashedly mixed Japanese and American elements. He was finally released in 2009 by the club's (Korean-Japanese!) corporate owner, but he has had a continuing impact in decentring the USA–Japan alterity that had been conventionalised in the previous four decades.

It is in contrast to these strenuous efforts to sustain substantive claims and fixed equivalences of ethnicity and nationality in the twentieth-century sporting order that emerging patterns in Japanese soccer are so intriguing. It is not that ethnicity and nationality are disappearing as markers of difference, but that their substance and their relationship to one another are mutating and their grounding in citizenship is unmoored. There are three particularly significant manifestations of these developments.

The first is how willing and able the J.League has been in accommodating non-Japanese national players and coaches inclusively (although not seamlessly). Indeed, bringing in foreign stars was part of the original strategy to attract fans, to raise the level of play and to gain the attention of foreigners and FIFA. Dozens of well-known players from Europe and South America have played for J.League teams.²² In the last two decades, the Japan national team has had a succession of coaches from Germany, France, Brazil, Bosnia and now Italy as well as a Japanese ex-player. Some of the foreign stars do receive higher salaries and special subsidised benefits like their baseball foreign player counterparts. However, unlike the baseball world, many others are signed to regular contracts with little or no special treatment; unlike sumo, they are not stripped of their ethnic and racial identities and disciplined into a uniform Japanese mould. The media presentations and the real engagement of many of these players with teammates and fans convey a cosmopolitan conviviality that contrasts sharply with the image (and often reality) of baseball and sumo.

A second channel of transnational flows has been the recruitment and play of Japanese players for clubs abroad in Europe and in South America. Of course, here too one is reminded of the signing of major Japanese baseball players to Major League Baseball teams in the USA, but the differences are striking. As against the highly constraining stipulations of binational agreements between the two professional baseball leagues, Japanese soccer players move through a much more fluid transfer and loan structure. More than 120 Japanese soccer athletes have played for teams in 30 countries. Of the current (March 2013) 24-player roster of the Japanese men's team, 14 are playing for European league clubs, and beginning with Nakata Hidetoshi, Japan's first global soccer celebrity, several have attained prominence beyond narrow labels of the 'Japanese player'.

Finally, between the high-profile European stars coming in and the Japanese players going abroad, there is a third significant category of those who are moving across citizenship and nationality lines within Japan and across the East Asia region. For the last two decades, the J.League and the Japan national team have been vivid platforms for Japan's engagement with South Korean players, with Nikkeijin and others from Brazil and with its own Zainichi Korean players, who often come out of Korean-language high schools in Japan that have long-faced significant barriers in sports participation.

A total of 390 non-Japanese have played in the J.League between 1993 and 2011, and the largest contingent (86) have come from South Korea, Japan's arch regional soccer rival during those years.²³ They often circulate among J.League and (South Korean) K-League contracts and appearances on the South Korean national team, garnering followings for their play with local J.League teams that is suspended when they turn up on the opposite side in international team matches. Another 48 of the 390 foreign nationals have come from Brazil, and a number of these have become Japanese nationals and members of the national team. Wagner Lopez, for example, came to Japan in 1987 when he was recruited to play for the Nissan Motors corporate team, and he moved into the J.League upon its formation. He obtained Japanese citizenship just before the 1998 World Cup qualification rounds and played in the national team and in J.League for several years. After retiring, he moved back to Brazil and now manages a club in Sao Paolo that actively seeks Japanese-Brazilian players who might be sent to Japan.

Alessandro dos Santos is another well-known player from Brazil who began with the youth team of the Brazilian club Gremio. He was recruited to Japan at the age of 16 with a high school scholarship and joined the J.League in 1994. He was J.League player of the year in 1999. He became a Japanese citizen in 2001, adopting the playing name of 'Santos'. He was selected for the national team in 2002 and appeared for Japan for four years, while continuing to star in J.League.

A final category, small in number but equally significant for its ramifications for citizenship and nationality, has been the dozen Japan-resident (Zainichi) Korean players.²⁴ Their roots and their backgrounds in Japan vary widely. Some have come through the regular Japanese school system while others went through the special schools operated by Chongryon, the North Korean resident association. Most well known of the latter players is Jong Tae-se, a star in Japan and a star for North Korea.²⁵ Jong was born in Nagoya, Japan to second-generation Japan-resident Koreans. His father retained South Korean citizenship though his mother affiliated herself with Chongryon. Jong was signed to the J. League club Kawasaki Frontale after graduating from Korea University in Tokyo in 2005. He had an immediate impact in the league as a striker and his stylish play and exuberant persona off the field made him a fan favourite especially among Japanese and Korean youth. As the 2010 World Cup qualifying rounds approached, he was courted by Japan, South Korea and North Korea. Through his father, he held South Korean citizenship (and Japan residency), but he eventually decided to play for North Korea. Because South Korea does not allow dual citizenship, North Korea issued him a travel passport, which satisfied FIFA rules for soccer citizenship, so he was simultaneously a South Korean citizen, a North Korean passport holder and a Japan permanent resident permittee! After the 2010 World Cup, he signed with a German club and in 2012 he was playing with a second German club.

Lee Tadanari is another popular Zainichi player, but he has taken a very different course.²⁶ Born in 1985 in Tokyo to third-generation Japan-resident parents (his father had played in the Japan corporate soccer league), Lee went to regular Japanese schools and joined a J.League team in 2004 after high school. He also trained with South Korean junior

national teams but he was frustrated at being teased as half-Japanese. He uses a Japanese name and in 2007, he decided to take Japanese citizenship, immediately being selected for the U-23 national team. In 2011, playing for Japan's main national team, Lee scored the dramatic overtime goal against Australia to win the Asian Cup for Japan. From 2012, he moved to the English club Southampton, which had just gained promotion to the Premier League.

These and others are examples of how soccer's flexible sports citizenship is upending the earlier notion that wherever one plays as a club player, he returns 'home' to play for his country. As Ogasawara put it, 'the significance of being a member of a nation is now replaced by the possibility of becoming a member [of a nation]'.²⁷ To which I would add the possibility of choosing and moving among these possibilities that are themselves adjudicated by FIFA eligibility rules and not by nation-state citizenship law.

There are a number of reasons why soccer is producing this flexible soccer citizenship and what we can term a mutable soccer ethnicity. For instance, the global dynamics of FIFA have created a rather free-floating grammar of national playing styles, often characterised through bundles of adjectives: organised, improvised, cunning, quick, methodical, dribbling, passing, physical, creative, cautious, and so on. And like many national teams, Japan's has had a series of foreign coaches – five in the last 10 years: a Frenchman, a Brazilian, a Bosnian, a Japanese and now an Italian. Each has had his own international playing experience, and each has articulated a distinct training and playing philosophy claimed to be distinctive to Japanese strengths.²⁸ The result has been a revolving gallery of 'national team styles'. This has not discouraged incessant commentary on what is felt to be Japanese-style soccer – just as talk continues about national styles of baseball, golf and other sports. But with soccer, it is far more difficult under these conditions to maintain hard and fast sporting ethnic verities, as *hinkaku* (dignity) has been a long-standing measure of sumo champions and 'samurai spirit' remains an insistent theme of Japanese baseball.

Destabilising the Ethnicity/Citizenship Nexus in Twenty-First-Century Japan

In conclusion, it may be possible, though unlikely, that baseball and/or sumo can reform themselves with sufficient effect to retain their twentieth-century dominance in Japan much longer. I think it is more likely that we are seeing a displacement, by soccer and by other developments, of a sports order that has been relatively stable for six decades. If so, it will have a number of implications for Japanese sporting experience, for Japanese society and for a realignment of East Asian sports, and I have focused on one of them here.

It is critical not only for Japan but also for the emerging shape of Asia in the twenty-first century to gauge how quickly Japan will move in acknowledging and addressing its changing cultural and ethnic composition and how it will rethink its place in a rapidly changing Asia. Since World War II, sports have been part of the problem for Japan because they have embodied dominant and essentialising images of nationalised ethnicity. Now in the new century, they – at least soccer – may also be part of the way forward in demonstrating a more flexible sports citizenship.

The claim here is not that soccer is a panacea for a Japan that is struggling to reimagine the parameters of its national community.²⁹ However, more so than baseball and sumo, soccer is broadening the realm of the possible and extending the horizon of expectations, and the article has suggested a few of the reasons for why this is so. Internally, it is providing an arena for a more inclusive and creatively expressed multiethnicity evident in team life, in stadium behaviour, in supporter association organisation and in league

promotion. Regionally, it is proving to be, for better or worse, the sports medium that most intensely and most equally engages Japan and its East Asia rivals (and perhaps expanding to a larger notion of Asia) in highly public international competition. The mobility of players and the competitive and flexible sports citizenship of national teams in the Asian arena are decoupling the governance of citizenship from the nation-state.

And most broadly, the global scale of FIFA soccer offers Japan a compelling future beyond the US-dominated binational frame of baseball and the even more closed and troubled world of sumo. Soccer at any level and certainly not among the FIFA pros has never presented an ideal world of multiethnic equality, but it may well provide for Japan an instructive venue for the fundamental rethinking of its national community that so many Japanese want and that the country so needs.

Notes on Contributor

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Notes

1. Manzenreiter and Horne, *Football Goes East*; Manzenreiter and Horne, "Playing the Post-Fordist Game."
2. Guthrie-Shimizu, *Transpacific Field of Dreams*.
3. Kelly, "Is Baseball a Global Sport?"
4. Weinberg, "'The Future is Asia'?"
5. Of course the multi-sport Asia Games have brought the regional nations together every four years since 1950, but they do not provide as regular and as elite a venue as these single-sport competitions. See Hong, *Sport, Nationalism and Orientalism*.
6. Horne, "The J.League, Japanese Society"; Horne and Manzenreiter, "Football, Komyuniti and the Japanese."
7. Hirose, *J-riigu no manejimento*.
8. Kietlinski, *Japanese Women and Sport*; Osawa, *Social Security in Contemporary Japan*.
9. Askew, "The Debate on the 'Japanese' Race."
10. Tierney, "From Popular Performance to National Sport."
11. Guthrie-Shimizu, *Transpacific Field of Dreams*.
12. This is not to argue that sports were not deeply nationalised for patriotic purposes during the 15-year Pacific War period; for example, Frost, *Seeing Stars*, 151–89. However, many sports continued to draw heavily from conquered Asian countries and from Americans of Japanese descent.
13. Guttman and Thompson, *Japanese Sport*, 124–25; Ok, *The Transformation of Modern Korean Sport*, 235–37.
14. Thompson, "The Professional Wrestler Rikidōzan."
15. Fitts, *Wally Yonamine*.
16. *Ibid.*, 98–116.
17. Kelly, "Blood and Guts."
18. *Ibid.*, 101.
19. Kelly, "Japanology Bashing."
20. Nihon Sumō Kyōkai, "Ozumō meikan."
21. Ballard, "Bobby Valentine's Super Terrific Happy Hour."
22. Exceptionally valuable is Takahashi and Horne, "Japanese Football Players."
23. Wikipedia, "J.League Players and Managers."
24. Chapman, "The Third Way and Beyond."
25. Shin, *Sokoku to bokoku to futtoobōru*, 25–68.
26. *Ibid.*, 277–318.
27. Ogasawara, "Back to the Pitch."
28. Duerden, "Behind Japan's Soccer Cup Victory."
29. Chapman, "The Third Way and Beyond"; Morris-Suzuki, *Borderline Japan*.

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