Internationalising Japan

Discourse and practice

Edited by Jeremy Breaden, Stacey Steele and Carolyn S. Stevens

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9 Globalisation, soccer, and the sportsworlds of Japan, Australia and the United States

William W. Kelly

Globalising sports–society relationships

Sports are – or should be – as compelling for scholars as for spectators. Modern sports – soccer, rugby, rowing, baseball, cycling, athletics, and many more – began as organised activities in the mid-nineteenth century. Many were quickly commercialised, bureaucratised and 'educationalised', even as they diffused through imperial and mercantile circuits around the world. For over a century, sports – especially elite spectator sports – have become the world's widest sphere of mass distraction and entertainment, a consequential marker of race and ethnicity, a crucible of gender, a basis for local loyalties and nationalist pride, a focus of intense personal identity, memory, and family ties, one of the very largest sectors of the world economy, the largest content provider to global media, and the most elaborated form of transnational governance. They demand our attention.

The potency of sports – for those who play them, for those who watch them, for those who study them – inheres in the multiple ways in which they intersect and interpenetrate the fabric of society. Consider the following statements, each of which expresses a distinct relationship:

- sports can be refuges from everyday life – 'islands in society';
- sports can be reflections of social forms and forces – 'mirrors of society';
- sports can be sites for reproducing society – 'schools for socialisation';
- sports can be ways of resisting society – 'acts of rebellion'; and
- sports can be paths for changing society – 'agents of reform'.

Much of the significance of sports studies for social science is in demonstrating the conditions in which one or another such relationships obtain.

At the same time, their importance is multiplied by the fact that they not only have manifold relationships within societies but also between societies – and polities and economies. For a century and a half, the diffusions, impositions, adaptations, and usurpations of sports around the world have created chains of association, dynamics of struggle, and hierarchies of power that in one form or another engage virtually every nation. Since its founding in 1894, the International Olympic Committee, above all, has been the prime motive force for

sports globalisation, but many individual sports have travelled world circuits, changing societal practices, transforming inter-societal relations, and being changed themselves through their global histories. And of all such sports over the long modern century since the mid-1900s, none has had a broader reach and a more lasting impact than soccer, recognised by Foer (2004), Giulianotti (1999), Goldblatt (2006), and many others as the 'world's game'.

But for most of that time, there have been three glaring exceptions to soccer's global dominance – Japan, Australia, and the United States – the three major sporting powers that effectively distanced themselves from the sport throughout the twentieth century. Soccer arrived in all three countries by the 1860s and 1870s, even as it was being codified in England and separated from rugby codes, and it has had a minor presence since then, as it grew to be the world's most played and watched team sport almost everywhere else. But Japan chose baseball, both schoolboy and professional, as its centre sport, with traditional sumo wrestling, nationalised and sportified as a counterpoint. In Australia, soccer has languished in a marginal position as the fourth of four different football codes that dominate its national sportscape (the others being Australian Rules Football, Rugby League, and Rugby Union: Hay and Murray 2006). And in the US, soccer never found growing room in a sports year filled by three distinctly American centre sports – American football, basketball, and baseball (Hellerman and Markovits 2001). All three nations have thus been sporting exceptionalists to twentieth century trends.

For several decades, however, soccer has been making inroads in all three societies, especially in Japan, and in this chapter I want to explore Japan's embrace of the sport, particularly from the perspective of ethnicity and nationality. This is a development that I initially encountered quite unexpectedly, after spending ten years or so in the world of Japanese baseball and, to a lesser extent, sumo. Baseball and sumo, since the late 1950s, have been deeply implicated in a nationalised ethnicity of Japaneseness (Kelly 1998). Each in its own distinctive way has defined and defended connections between national character, playing style, social relations, and body form and comportment. The 'fighting spirit' (*konjō*) of Japanese baseball and Japanese baseball players was pitted, ideologically, against American baseball and the 'foreign players' who were reluctantly recruited as temporary mercenaries. Sumo was asserted to be the putative Japanese national sport, whose 'dignity' (*hinkaku*) could be properly displayed only by Japanese bodies and Japanese spirit.

I finally started to pay attention to J.League soccer (and to its academic literature) in the mid-2000s, and I quickly sensed some palpable differences. The passionate and flamboyant expressions of the supporters, for instance, filled the stadiums with banners, chants, and songs. Samba rhythms, references to Japanese anime characters, and European pop lyrics were all drawn into a multilingual melange. Soccer cheering seemed only somewhat less orchestrated and co-ordinated than the baseball cheering groups I had studied at Kōshien, but the unrestrained and creolised exuberance of soccer cheering did contrast with the more mechanistic and repetitive styles of baseball. Certainly soccer has successfully cultivated an image of grass-roots concerns, youthful independence,

and cosmopolitanism, and I began to wonder if this might be a basis of new connections – or disconnections of – ethnicity and nationality.

My argument is quite straightforward: for 50 years or so, since the immediate post-Second World War decade, the dynamics of ethnicity and nationality in Japanese baseball and in Japanese sumo have been similar – despite great differences in the organisation of the two sports – and that in the recent emergence of soccer, the dynamics of ethnicity are operating rather differently. In this chapter, I ask what are the differences between the existing order of baseball and sumo and a possible new sporting order around soccer and why such a new order may emerge.

Thus, soccer raises some critical issues beyond the world of sports itself. Surely all of us who are students of contemporary Japan would agree that one of the most pressing issues facing Japanese society today is how and how quickly it will move in acknowledging and addressing its changing cultural and ethnic composition. Sports have been part of the problem because they have embodied dominant and essentialising images of nationalised ethnicity, but they – at least soccer – may also be part of the way forward in demonstrating a more flexible sports citizenship.

Far more than baseball or sumo, it is soccer that provides Japan with a public stage for reformulating notions of civic membership and ethnic nationalism because soccer is the most global sport in the world. Globalisation has spawned a huge literature, but I suggest that fundamentally it has three elements. A scholarly consensus refers to it firstly as a global interconnectivity under conditions of time-space compression. Secondly, this interconnectivity is not just of breadth but depth; the neologism 'glocalisation' is sometimes used to characterise the mutual conditioning of global and local forces but in fact there are far more intricate vertical chains of influence up and down multiple levels. Thirdly, globalisation refers to the doubled processes of standardising (but not erasing) local differences while relativising (but not eliminating) dominating forces. Soccer demonstrates all three elements of globality. The dense linkages and flows of players, capital, spectatorship, media images, merchandise; the multiple intersecting levels of local clubs, domestic leagues, national teams, and regional and world championships; and the transnational governance structure of the International Federation of Association Football (FIFA) itself – these and other features of soccer globality are forcing Japan to rethink sporting practices and sporting relationships within the society, among Asian nations, and in the world.

Soccer: Japan joins the global game

As I noted above, soccer has a long history but a low profile in Japan, languishing for much of the twentieth century as a minor school, company, and recreational sport. A league of company teams, the Japan Soccer League, was formed in 1965, but it attracted little public interest, and the national team fared poorly in international competition (Moffet 2002). In the late 1980s, the Japan Football Association (JFA), the sport's governing body in Japan, began a campaign to

convert this into a fully professional league, in order to make Japan more competitive in the FIFA soccer world and to challenge the then dominant domestic sports interests, especially baseball. The new 'J.League' began play in 1993 and brought several notable innovations to Japanese sports. It aligned Japanese soccer organisation with FIFA rules, but J.League clubs were deliberately structured as a combination of European club system and the American corporate model of ownership and operation. The league also was innovative in introducing a split season format (with the winners of each half-season meeting to determine the championship) and penalty-kick shoot-outs to decide matches that ended in a tie.

J.League also aimed to challenge the existing school/corporate nexus of sport by fostering sport as a public good. Each club is required to invest in regional sports facilities, community outreach, and local youth training. It has actually been successful with this; soccer is now the most played youth sport, and it is played outside schools more than within a school framework (Zen-kōtairen 2010). J.League also worked with the JFA to significantly upgrade the national teams, both men's and women's, although the relationship has been rocky at times and the JFA has been less helpful to the semi-pro J.League for women. Although the men's national team has struggled in World Cup competition, the J.League itself has proven to be among the savviest marketers of all FIFA countries. From the start, it engaged Sony Creative Products to design comprehensive image brands for each team and the league and to reinforce and manage this branding across merchandise and broadcasting.

These, then, were the overt agendas of the public and private interests which brought J.League soccer into being and which are now the subject of a small but insightful academic literature (e.g. Arimoto and Ogasawara 2005; Birchall 2001; Edwards 2007; Hirose 2004; Horne 2007; Horne and Manzenreiter 2008; Manzenreiter and Horne 2004; Moffett 2002; Perryman 2002; Takahashi 1994). J.League popularity and financial health wavered precariously for a decade, but the recruitment of several Japanese stars by European clubs and Japan's co-hosting of the 2002 World Cup with Korea have placed the sport on a firmer footing a decade into the new century. It has been more nimble than either baseball or sumo in addressing its financial problems and fine-tuning its organisation. By quickly suspending its season and arranging charity matches, professional soccer responded far more admirably to the Great Eastern earthquake and tsunami on 11 March 2011 than the confused and divided responses of baseball and sumo. Despite the troubled national economy, soccer continues to grow.

Indeed, comparing the recent trends in baseball, sumo, and soccer, I am led to speculate that while baseball and sumo were very much Japan's twentieth-century centre sports, soccer is likely to replace them as the country's twenty-first century centre sport. Predictions are fraught with peril, but I think there are four reasons why soccer is well-positioned to push to the fore.

The first is that 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 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 (Guthrie-Shimizu 2012).

By contrast, soccer is the only major team sport that is truly global in expanse and in governance (Kelly 2007), and it allows Japan to position itself in a far wider and more complex field of sporting internationalism. 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.

A second advantage of soccer 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 has made the Asian Football Confederation the 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.

A third set of factors that favour soccer's growing importance in Japan are the several innovations by which it is challenging the baseball-sumo dominance. 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. Its local clubs are required to develop youth soccer programs; its supporter associations have proved to be more open than those of professional baseball teams. 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 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.

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 soccer team in Olympic, Algarve Cup, and World Cup tournaments (far beyond that of the national men's team) has generated a 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 (Osawa 2011), 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 final set of factors concern the ways in which ethnicity and nationality are expressed and confirmed in the world of soccer. Here too, it is entirely possible 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, I propose that the Japanese sports world has moved through three orders of 'sports citizenship' over the last century or so. The first four decades of the twentieth century constituted an order of 'imperial athletes', a coercively inclusive and hierarchical order of belonging as 'athletes of Greater Japan' or *Dai Nippon Senshu*. The post-Second World War decades of late Showa 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 order of mobile athletes, mutable ethnicity, and flexible sports citizenship, determined in the case of soccer by supra-governmental FIFA norms rather than by nation-state laws. This is the topic that I turn to the next sections.

Imperial Japan: sports and the 'Greater Japan athlete'

By the early twentieth century, both baseball and sumo had moved to the 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 (Tierney 2007).

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

Hokkaido, 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 (Guthrie-Shimizu 2012). 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. 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 Sohn Kee-chung, winner of the 1936 gold medal at the Berlin Olympics. Sohn was a Korean runner who set several marathon records but who was forced to compete as a member of the Japan delegation under his Japanised 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 (Guttmann and Thompson 2001: 124–5). 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 'Japaneseness' 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 pro 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. 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 US, 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. 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 (Kelly 1998). 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 per cent 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 1,000 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 (Kelly 1998).

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, and a roster would include such stars as:

- Kinugasa Sachio, the Hiroshima Carp third-baseman whose 2,215 consecutive games played broke Lou Gehrig's seemingly untouchable record. Given Gehrig's nickname, 'Iron Man', Kinugasa was born to a Japanese mother and an African-American G.I. father.
- Kaneda Masaichi, a Korean resident of Japan who leads the pitchers' record book with 400 career pitching victories and 4,490 career strikeouts. 'Golden Arm' Kaneda played 15 years with the Kokutetsu Swallows, but announced he would no longer pitch on less than three-day rest. He was traded to the Yomiuri Giants, who accepted that and other conditions. His ability to dictate such personal conditions led to his later nickname, 'Emperor' Kaneda.
- Harimoto Isao, another Korean resident of Japan, was a long time star outfielder for the Tōei Flyers, setting the single-season and lifetime records for batting average. His antics and independence earned the nickname, the 'Wild Man of Tōei'. Harimoto too was traded to the Giants late in his career.

This in fact was baseball's version of *Nihonjinron*, the late Shōwa civil religion of ethnic nationalism, shaped around claims of Japanese exclusivity and nativism. However, a conceptual dichotomy like indigenous-foreign is just that – a categorical opposition. It allows few anomalies. Kaneda, Oh, and others could be – had to be – elided, however uncomfortably, into the Japanese category, and these mixed Japanese heroes were kept on a very short ideological leash by their clubs and the media. 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 for me is the most telling point. The great secret of *Nihonjinron* was not 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 that duped. It was a suspension of disbelief rather than naive misrecognition that allowed them to see Oh as Japanese and the string of American players as the foreign other.

Rather, the deeper myth was the contradiction at the heart of such ethnic claims. The Japaneseness that was the central tenet of cultural nationalism seemed to be about being Japanese but in fact it was much more about doing Japanese, about performing Japanese. The status of such players as Oh and Kinugasa – being 'partially' Japanese but being seen as performing Japanese – explains, I believe, 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, I think, that rendered compelling such figures 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 Kuhalua, 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 ten per cent of the 600–700 or so registered wrestlers (roughly the same numbers as in pro baseball), drawing now especially from Mongolia. As of March 2012, 22 of the 38 registered foreign wrestlers are from Mongolia, foremost of course being the current lone *yokozuna* (Grand Champion) Hakuhō (Lédeczi 2012).

Sumo remains mired in yet another – and perhaps fatal – scandal, this time over bout fixing, but most of the principals in this corruption are Japanese wrestlers and stable masters. Not a few commentators (and 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 Hakuhō is at the centre of these assessments. It is curious perhaps that the most 'national' of Japanese sports should not only embrace a foreign-born champion but do so in the rhetoric of the most Japanese of wrestling ideals, but this is in large part a measure of 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 routinised practices of small set of drills. 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 the Second World War, to

make a transition. Like sumo's treatment of Hakuhō, 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 2004–9. In 2005, he took a team of unseasoned rookies and ageing 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, 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 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 US–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. 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 – and 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 US, but the differences are striking. As

against the highly constraining stipulations of bi-national 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. Fully half of the Japanese men's team are playing for European 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* (Japanese-resident) 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 (Wikipedia 2012). 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 on 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 *Zainichi* Korean players (Chapman 2004). 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 (Shin 2010: 25–68). 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 effect 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 is playing with a second German club.

Lee Tadanari is another popular *Zainichi* player, but he has taken a very different course (Shin 2010: 277–318). 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.

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 Hiroki Ogasawara (2004) put it, 'the significance of being a member of a nation is now replaced by the possibility of becoming a member' – and, we might add, of choosing and moving among these possibilities.

There are a number of reasons for 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 ten 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. 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 much more difficult under these conditions to maintain hard and fast sporting ethnic verities.

Soccer's prospects in Australia and the United States

And what of the prospects of the sport in those other two twentieth-century soccer recalcitrant nations? I have focused here on Japan, and the question deserves a far

more rigorous comparative inquiry than I can give here, but one can say the following briefly.

Soccer in Australia has struggled to gain traction and find an identity as the fourth and least popular of its four football codes, behind Australian Rules Football, the most powerful in revenues and spectatorship, as well as Australian Rugby Union and the National Rugby League. It is hard to imagine an early diminution of passion for such an exciting sport as the Australian Football League. Nonetheless, soccer has growing rates of youth participation, and, ironically, its future potential may lie more in its new Asian connections rather than its English origins. The Australian economy is now oriented towards and integrated into the Asian regional economy, but Australian society seems much less willing to embrace the importance of Asia for itself. It was thus significant that Football Federation Australia in 2006 voted to move from the Oceania Football Confederation to the Asian Football Confederation. Australia is now an Asian soccer nation – indeed, both its Socceroos' men's team and Matildas' women's team are Asian soccer powers, and it is likely that this reorientation will have reverberations beyond soccer passions and affiliations (Hallinan, Hughson and Burke 2007).

For decades in the US, soccer has faced just as uphill a battle in gaining exposure and prominence. It is foolish to suggest that it will soon break the hold that American football, basketball, and baseball have on media, spectatorship, and corporate sponsorship, but as in Australia, its youth participation rates are rising noticeably and television interest in the European leagues and World Cup is growing. In addition, there are two other factors to consider. For the United States, Latin America is analogous to Australia's Asia – vitally important and increasingly interconnected. Spanish is the US's unofficial second language (already a first language in some parts of the country), and soccer is a means of assimilation for two language communities.

A second factor is gender. Baseball and American football remain male bastions, and elite women's basketball is thriving at the university level but is stymied at the professional level. Soccer may prove a more successful instrument towards gender parity (Edwards 2007; Kietlinski 2011). Certainly the sport's prospects in the US depend equally on women – not soccer moms but soccer players. There are already far more female soccer players than male players in the US, and it has been the sport most affected by the Title IX revolution in women's sports participation. It is a symbol of hope for those seeking gender sports equity that the women's national teams of all three countries – Japan, the US, and Australia – have dominated international competitions in recent years, with Japan and the US regularly vying in the finals of the Women's World Cup, the Olympics, and the Algarve Cup.

Globalising Japan through soccer

In conclusion, it may be possible, though I think 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 and for Japanese society, and I have focused on one of them here.

My claim is not that soccer is a panacea for a Japan that is struggling to re-imagine the parameters of its national community (Morris-Suzuki 2010). But more so than baseball and sumo, soccer is broadening the realm of the possible and extending the horizon of expectations, and I have suggested a few of the reasons for why this is so. Internally, it is providing an arena for a more inclusive and creatively expressed multi-ethnicity 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 bi-national 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 multi-ethnic 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.

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10 Internationalising sumo

From viewing to doing Japan's national sport

Howard Gilbert and Katrina Watts

Introduction: four phases of the internationalisation of sumo

This chapter argues that sumo, in both its professional and amateur forms, is a practical example through which the more general discourse of internationalisation may be understood. The internationalisation of sumo has taken place in four overlapping phases, which reflect the subtle interplay of Japan as both an object and subject of internationalisation. The first phase focused on the arrival of Western discourses about sport and the athletic male form in the late nineteenth century and changed the way sumo was viewed in Japan, necessitating a reinterpretation of sumo as an indigenous way to train the male body: from local practices to a 'national sport'. The second phase was characterised by increasing Japanese migration at the turn of the twentieth century and led to amateur sumo being performed by Japanese immigrants in parts of North and South America; a cultural link to their national homeland that gave sumo a place outside of Japan. During a third stage, from the mid-1960s to the early 1990s, non-Japanese competitors began to appear in the ranks of professional sumo in Japan: the sumo world began to exhibit an international feel, alongside a general wave of internationalisation (*kokusaika*) in Japanese society. The final phase began in the early 1990s, when there arose a growing worldwide interest in participating in amateur sumo, mirroring the established presence of foreign athletes in professional sumo.

In particular, the fourth phase of internationalisation demonstrates that sumo is not a monolithic entity. The authors draw upon their experience with the International Sumo Federation (IFS) to show that the professional and amateur sectors of sumo have responded to internationalisation in markedly different ways. Professional sumo (*ōzumō*) has negotiated the increasing presence of foreign athletes by making them adhere to Japanese cultural traditions and in essence trying to 'Japanise' them. While large numbers of foreign-born sumo wrestlers (*rikishi*)[1] have entered professional sumo, the sport still retains an aura of stoic Japanese masculinity.[2] Nevertheless, the presence of foreigners has caused changes within the traditional structure and workings of the Japan Sumo Association (*Nihon Sumō Kyōkai*) and influenced the attitudes of Japanese fans of