

# Contesting the Myths of Samurai Baseball

## *Cultural Representations of Japan's National Pastime*

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Front image: The poet Masaoka Shiki in baseball uniform, March 1890. © Shiki Museum, Matsuyama, Japan. Background image: Harry Yazaki embodies Samurai baseball in *Vancouver Asahi: A Legend of Samurai Baseball*. Source: Hara Hidenori, *Bankūbā Asabigun: Legend of Samurai Baseball*, Vol. 1. Tokyo: Shogakkan, 2013. © Hidenori Hara 2013.

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## *Introduction: Myths of Japanese Baseball and the Game's Cultural Representations*

In the summer of 2015, 41 years old and several years removed from a professional career as a baseball player in which he had achieved success on the most celebrated teams in both the United States and Japan, Matsui Hideki found himself again on the baseball diamond in a tightly contested championship game. Matsui was leading his own team in the Nippon Club's fortieth annual President Cup Baseball Tournament, a tournament comprised of teams made up of bankers, engineers, and accountants of various ages and skill levels from Japanese businesses in the New York metropolitan area such as Kajima, Syscom, SMBC, and Mizuho. Matsui was feeling that same old itch to deliver in the clutch.

Matsui had agreed to compete on equal terms with the other players, with the sole exceptions of his batting from the right side rather than his natural left side and of his pitching for his squad. He cheered on his teammates during their at bats and provided advice to players who asked for it.<sup>1</sup> Although Matsui's team would go on to win the championship game 2–1, it was the team's relief pitcher rather than Matsui, a former World Series all-star, who was chosen as the series' all-star. Nevertheless, Matsui celebrated with the same unbridled enthusiasm as his teammates.

There was no really good reason for Matsui to have assembled a team for this tournament where he played under austere conditions that he had not experienced since high school, other than a burning desire to play the game that he so sorely missed. It was the pure, unselfish yearning to suit up and stand on the field shoulder-to-shoulder with teammates that inspired him to participate in that tournament. In the starkest cultural terms, Matsui was exhibiting a quality that is the hallmark and *sine qua non* for success in any field in Japan, *magokoro*.

*Magokoro* translates as “pure heart” or “sincere heart,” but perhaps is best rendered as “devotion.” The term is also related to the Buddhist concept of mindfulness, and the practitioner of a certain art or skill should aspire to cultivate *magokoro* while engaged in that craft, whether swordsmanship, baking, surgery or baseball. Matsui Hideki, at the edge of the dugout, cheering on his paunchy, balding teammates in this corporate

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1. Billy Witz, “Hideki Matsui and His Teammates Know Pinstriped Suits,” *New York Times* online, July 19, 2015, accessed September 5, 2015, <https://www.nytimes.com/2015/07/20/sports/baseball/hideki-matsui-suits-up-for-nippon-club-baseball-tournament-on-randalls-island.html>.

championship game with the same devotion with which he cheered on his teammates as a high school star at Koshien<sup>2</sup> or as a pivotal member of the Yomiuri Giants or the New York Yankees, was exhibiting that mythic quality of *magokoro*.

Similarly, Suzuki Ichirō who achieved superstardom in professional baseball in both Japan and the United States and continues in the 2016 Major League Baseball season to be a productive player with the Florida Marlins at age 42, exhibited another defining feature of Japanese baseball: the rise to greatness based on an adherence to values associated with Bushidō. The foundation of Ichirō's success is grounded in his relationship with his father. The story of Ichirō's rise to fame seems the very embodiment of Bushidō, in which a promising acolyte becomes great as the result of the singled-minded dedication to the teachings of a mentor.

Although Bushidō (way of the warrior) is a term associated with the samurai class that flourished in Japan from the twelfth through the nineteenth centuries, the actual providence of this three-character word does not precede the modern era. Following Japan's victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 and the publication in 1900 of Nitobe Inazo's *Bushidō: The Soul of Japan*, which was translated into Japanese the following year, Bushidō became an oft-used term. It began to appear on cigarette packages and picture postcards in the latter part of the Meiji period (1868–1912) but did not emerge in *kokugo* dictionaries prior to 1900.<sup>3</sup>

Ichirō's father, who was a factory manager in Aichi Prefecture, was steeped in the model of baseball as Bushidō and made untold sacrifices to foster the greatness that he recognized early in his son. From the time Ichirō first started playing organized baseball, his father would lead him through a punishing series of drills for three or four hours at a time before and after school throughout the year, even during cold winter months when Ichirō's hands were too numb to grip the bat.<sup>4</sup> "The only way to succeed," Ichirō's father would intone to his son, "is to suffer and persevere."<sup>5</sup> So assured was the elder Suzuki that his son would someday be a baseball superstar that he saved all of his toys, little league uniforms, even his retainer for a museum that he eventually intended to build to enshrine his son's achievements.<sup>6</sup>

These two baseball greats, Matsui and Suzuki, embody two myths at the heart of cultural representations of baseball in Japan: a devotion to the game summed up in the term *magokoro* and an adherence to the values of Bushidō in which greatness is achieved through hard work and the tutelage of a master, often cast as a father or father-like figure. From the early modern period, when vernacular literature, cinema, anime,

2. In rendering Koshien, referring to both the stadium and the annual national high school tournament, I will follow the typical English translation convention and eschew the macron over the letter "o" even though the vowel sound is a long one, except when transliterating titles from Japanese containing the word.

3. Sakaue Yasuhiro, *Nippon yakyū no keifugaku* [A genealogy of Japanese baseball] (Tokyo: Seikyusha, 2001), 96.

4. "In the Time of Ichiro," in *Baseball: The Tenth Inning*, directed by Ken Burns and Lynn Novick. PBS, pbs.org, 2010.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.* Ichirō's father did indeed go on to build that museum, which is located in Suzuki's hometown in Aichi Prefecture and tells the story of Ichirō's path from humble beginnings to baseball greatness.

and manga were introduced to Japan and coexisted alongside the recently introduced game of baseball, writers, artists, and filmmakers have negotiated those central myths of Japanese baseball, alternately affirming those myths or debunking them in a canon of baseball-inspired literature, film, and manga. Even now, works spanning these genres and interrogating the central myths of Bushidō constitute an important dimension of Japanese culture.

Many observers of Japanese baseball insist that it is the resolute devotion and pure love for the game in Japan that transcends the passion for the game in the United States. The term *yakyūkyō* or “baseball mania” has been used to characterize this sheer addiction to the sport since the game’s introduction to Japan in the late nineteenth century. Writing and mythmaking about Japanese baseball often parallels the body of theoretical writing in Japan known as *Nihonjinron*, and some of the features said to define Japanese baseball, such as this single-minded devotion articulated as *magokoro* and the demonstration of loyalty to the group associated with the values of the samurai class, are important elements of *Nihonjinron* rhetoric.

*Nihonjinron* refers to the theoretical body of writing that attempts to define what is distinctive and even unique about the Japanese people. This discourse covers a broad range of writing, but can be defined as any writing that attempts “to demonstrate unique qualities of Japanese culture, Japanese society, and the Japanese people.”<sup>7</sup> *Nihonjinron* discourse has its origins in the nation-building project in the Meiji period and developed in the early modern period before being coopted by the militarists in the war era. It was revived yet again in the postwar period to describe the characteristics of the Japanese people that made the Economic Miracle possible. In writing about Japan’s national pastime, commentators on baseball have borrowed liberally from *Nihonjinron* discourse.

Recent works in the *Nihonjinron* tradition alternately contest or reassert the essentialist assumptions that have historically defined this discourse. From early in its history in Japan, baseball has been appropriated periodically by cultural commentators in service of some of the major *Nihonjinron* claims. Among recent works attempting to assess the meaning of *Nihonjinron* discourse in contemporary Japan are some that focus on those elements of Japanese culture that influence Japan’s international standing and identity. In the 2012 work *Nihonjin and Nihonjinron*, Nishibe Susumu and Sataka Makoto address the call for innovation among Japanese political leaders and cultural commentators. They reflect on what real innovation would mean for Japan and how innovation would alter the Japanese perception of Japan as a nation possessing unique characteristics.<sup>8</sup> Specifically, the authors cite the absence of a “venture

7. Harumi Befu, *Hegemony of Homogeneity: An Anthropological Analysis of Nihonjinron* (Melbourne: Trans Pacific Press, 2001), 4.

8. Nishibe Susumu and Sataka Makoto, *Nihon oyobi Nihonjinron* [Nihon and Nihonjinron] (Tokyo: Nanatsumori shokan, 2012), 177.

spirit” in contemporary Japan as a crisis that essentially paralyzes Japanese society and prevents substantive change.<sup>9</sup>

In terms of the self-reflective discourse of *Nihonjinron*, works treating what are deemed uniquely Japanese traits as obstacles to progress or to genuine self-reflection are rare. Contemporary *Nihonjinron* discourse has tended to reassert and celebrate those cultural qualities such as *magokoro* that are purported to define the Japanese character. The writing of the cultural critic Funabiki Takeo reflects the pervasiveness of the normative discourse of *Nihonjinron* thought. In his book *A Reconsideration of “Nihonjinron,”* Funabiki highlights the importance of *Nihonjinron* discourse at three critical junctures in Japan’s modern history: the Meiji period, the militarist period of the 1930s and early 1940s, and the postwar period. Interestingly, for the purpose of this study, these three eras coincide with those moments in Japan’s modern history in which baseball-themed cultural production was particularly dynamic. Funabiki contends that it was precisely the self-reflective discourse, played out through popular media, which helped the Japanese to define and redefine themselves at moments of upheaval and soul-searching.<sup>10</sup> Funabiki interprets this tendency on the part of the Japanese to define cultural values in terms of uniqueness as a product of Japan’s intense engagement with the West after a long period of isolation.<sup>11</sup> In his analysis of the lineage of the *Nihonjinron* discourse, Funabiki contends that the continuous self-reflection on what it means to be Japanese vis-à-vis the other is neither narcissistic nor unhealthy; it is an important therapeutic tool for easing uncertainties about identity that arose as a product of Japan’s collision with Western values, and this self-reflective discourse remains as relevant today as it was for the Japanese of the Meiji period.

Funabiki moreover argues that in what is noteworthy in surveying the history of *Nihonjinron* discourse is precisely how few *Nihonjinron* works are informed by specific disciplinary perspectives and how many of these works, starting with Okakura Tenshin’s *Book of Tea*, are directed at a mass audience. Nitobe Inazo’s *Bushidō*, like Okakura’s work, was an attempt to respond to the “mass consumerism” of culture in the Meiji period.<sup>12</sup> Similarly, like *Book of Tea*, *Bushidō* was originally written in English for a non-Japanese audience while Nitobe was living in the United States in 1899 and was published there the following year before being translated into Japanese upon his return to Japan.<sup>13</sup> It is not surprising then that the values of the samurai class articulated in Nitobe’s runaway bestseller were seized upon by early baseball apologists in Japan. Baseball commentators were merely using the Japanese values defined for a Western audience and the language of *Nihonjinron* discourse to describe the special features of this most American game appropriated and refashioned by the Japanese.

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9. Ibid., 192.

10. Funabiki Takeo, *Nihonjinron saikō* [A reconsideration of *Nihonjinron*] (Tokyo: Kōdansha Gakujutsu Bunko, 2010), 256.

11. Ibid., 256.

12. Ibid., 269.

13. Ibid., 65.

At the heart of baseball writing Japan is an exploration of a set of myths pertaining to a game that is based on the American pastime yet qualitatively different. This vision of Japanese baseball—often summed up in the term “Samurai baseball”—hearkens back to the very early days of baseball in Japan. The association of baseball in Japan with the *magokoro* sense of steadfast devotion to a goal is accompanied by a merging of the sport of baseball with the values of the samurai class embodied in the code of Bushidō, particularly the willingness to sacrifice all for victory and for the good of the team, as well as the strict adherence to hierarchy and success based on the tutelage of a selfless master.

Central to the construct of Samurai baseball is the Japanese concept of *gattsu supōtsu* and the related idea of *konjō*, which implies toughness, tenacity, courage against adversity, and enduring hardships for the good of the team.<sup>14</sup> The central position accorded the concept of *konjō* in the Japanese ideal of sport is closely related to virtues associated with Japanese martial arts. For example, Miyamoto Musashi’s famous work, *The Book of Rings*, emphasizes mental preparation and self-cultivation as the necessary preparation for battle.<sup>15</sup>

Although the *kanji* (Chinese character) combination *konjō* has long existed in Japanese, its application to sports to describe the *gattsu supōtsu* model seems to have begun to appear in the postwar period. According to Adachi Kan’ichi, an editor at various sports newspapers in the postwar period, *konjō* as a popular buzzword applied to baseball is of fairly recent vintage, and he cites an article in *Nikkan supōtsu* (Daily Sports) from 1964 about a particularly spirited game between the Hankyū Braves and the Nankai Hawks in which the term *konjō* may have been used for the first time.<sup>16</sup> Having entered the baseball lexicon, the term has been an important identifier of the Japanese brand of Samurai baseball ever since.

A team does not win because its players are bigger or stronger or faster, but rather because it has trained harder than its opponents and exhibits the dedication to work together as a team. As Japan adopted the Western concept of sport in the Meiji period, it naturally adapted the philosophy of training, practice, and sportsmanship from its martial past. When baseball and other Western sports were introduced to Japan at the beginning of the twentieth century, the function of sport in society was not to provide leisure and exercise but “to provide mental discipline to create a strong character.”<sup>17</sup> More than other sports, baseball seemed to these early commentators the very epitome of these martial qualities.

By the end of the Meiji period, baseball had already taken hold in Japan. Meiji-period baseball was closely tied to social class, and it was with the privileged classes

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14. Stephanie Hanrahan and Robert Schinke, *Cultural Sport Psychology*, 1st ed. (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics, 2008), 208.

15. *Ibid.*, 209.

16. Quoted in Sakaue, *Genealogy of Japanese Baseball*, 218.

17. Allen Guttmann and Lee Thompson, *Japanese Sports: A History* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2001), 36.

and sons of former samurai families that the Japanese game was originally shaped. The earliest educational institutions in Meiji Japan had limited space for students, and only about 20 percent of those who took the middle school entrance examinations passed and proceeded to high school and continued on to the few imperial and private universities that were then being established.

Those who passed the examinations and received an education inordinately came from former samurai and wealthy provincial families. Those students who became obsessed with baseball and established the early character of Japanese baseball were thus sons of former samurai, provincial aristocrats, and successful captains of the new industries that had survived the rigorous examinations and whose families now constituted Meiji Japan's new elite. These students naturally conceived of themselves as winners and as leaders. Even those boys from modest backgrounds who had managed to pass the exams and go on to higher education adopted the values of this new privileged class. Thus, these student players were naturally drawn to a game that demanded absolute discipline, allegiance, and *esprit de corps*, a consciousness that set them apart from those not fortunate enough to have received this special dispensation. That first generation of players became eager disciples of and passionate evangelists for Samurai baseball.

According to the anthropologist Shimizu Satoshi, the myths of Samurai baseball are no more evident than in *Kōshien yakyū*, the term that he uses to refer to the annual National High School Baseball Tournament that culminates in the championship series played at Koshien Stadium in the Kansai region.<sup>18</sup> Shimizu traces the development of the cultural values associated with Samurai baseball embodied in the tournament to its origins in the inspired play of the high school teams of the Meiji period, including the great Ichikō teams of the 1890s, to show the development of these myths.<sup>19</sup>

Since the Meiji period, as Shimizu convincingly demonstrates, Japanese society and its values have been thoroughly informed by the ethos of sporting culture as manifested in baseball-themed literature, film, and art which, as a body of work, constitute “cultural symbolic acts” that articulate a story that conveys something that cannot be felt in everyday life outside of sport.<sup>20</sup> Cultural myths played out in rituals and shared stories or *monogatari*, Shimizu continues, help societies define their most basic values, and sporting performances are therefore never mere venues for entertainment—they are the realization of these myths.<sup>21</sup> The myths of Samurai baseball and of the *seinen* (youth) who embody those values have been institutionalized not only in the High School Baseball Tournament in Japan but in the education system itself and in popular culture. It was the burgeoning mass media of the Meiji period that helped to create and promote the story of Samurai baseball in which the values of

18. Shimizu Satoshi, *Kōshien yakyū on arukeoroji* [The archeology of Koshien baseball] (Tokyo: Shinhyōron, 2012), 6.

19. Ibid. More will be said about Ichikō and its achievements in Chapter 1.

20. Satoshi, *Kōshien yakyū on arukeoroji*, 3.

21. Ibid., 4.

old Japan—Japan’s true values—were embedded. Cultural myths, by their very nature, eventually become part of the fabric of society itself, and once established are difficult to alter or even challenge.<sup>22</sup>

There is a long history of cultural production about baseball in Japan dating back to the Meiji period, and scores of baseball-themed novels, films, manga, anime, and even songs can be cited, including the representative works treated in this study. Moreover, starting with Masaoka Shiki’s treatises about baseball in the late nineteenth century, a substantial body of writing about baseball began to emerge that explained and defined the game and the unique qualities of Japanese baseball. The corpus of works about baseball in Japan and its impact on society is substantial and has continued unabated to the present day.

Several Western observers of Japanese baseball have emerged in recent years and in acclaimed works have attempted to describe and interpret the Japanese game for a Western audience. Robert Whiting in *The Chrysanthemum and the Bat* (1983) and in his classic *You Gotta Have Wa* (1989) introduced Japanese baseball to Western readers and set the standard for writing about Japanese baseball in the West. Whiting contextualizes differences in Japanese baseball and American baseball in the same way that Japanese commentators on the game had by using the discourse of Nihonjinron and by focusing on those elements of the Japanese game (including the propensity to strive for team harmony, to sacrifice for the good of the team, and to endure untold suffering toward reaching a goal) that align the *michi* (way) of baseball with the ideals of Bushidō. Brian Maitland’s *Japanese Baseball* (1991) and Whiting’s *The Samurai Way of Baseball* (2005) are also aligned with the interpretive discourse established in Whiting’s earlier work that reinforces the association of Japanese baseball with those ideals.

The myth of Japanese baseball as the repository of core Japanese values and as the heir to values of Bushidō is contested by the anthropologist William W. Kelly in his essays and in his highly anticipated upcoming book entitled *The Hanshin Tigers and the Practices of Professional Baseball in Modern Japan*. In Kelly’s 2009 essay, “Samurai Baseball: The Vicissitudes of a National Sporting Style,” he challenges the myths associated with Japanese baseball as an “illusory appeal to national character stereotypes” and traces the complex origins in the modern era of ideals related to sport.<sup>23</sup> Kelly’s skepticism about Japanese sport in general and baseball in particular as the repositories of the values of Bushidō is warranted.

Many of the works of literature, film, and manga about baseball in Japan celebrate the myths of Japanese baseball articulated in the complementary concepts of Samurai baseball and *magokoro* total devotion to the game. Kelly’s counterargument parallels a body of cultural production in Japan about baseball represented by the film *Anata o kaimasu* (I Will Buy You) that challenges these received notions of Japanese baseball

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22. *Ibid.*, 266.

23. William W. Kelly, “Samurai Baseball: The Vicissitudes of National Sporting Style,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* 26, no. 3 (2009): 429–41.

as an expression of Nihonjinron principles. It is important to note that these two ideological strains, one that celebrates the myths of Japanese baseball and one that contests it, have existed side-by-side from the immediate postwar period onward.

Tellingly, in spite of the high status that baseball enjoys in Japan, and despite the surfeit of cultural products treating baseball in Japan—the abundance of which is clearly demonstrated in this study—and although there exist a great number of books in Japan about baseball geared toward a popular audience, there is a paucity of academic writing about baseball in Japan. Unlike the United States, which boasts academic societies, journals, and conferences devoted entirely to baseball, there does not exist in Japan a sustained academic tradition surrounding Japan's national pastime. As a result, academic works about baseball tend to be produced in disciplinary isolation, unconnected to one another, to a central intellectual tradition, or to ongoing academic questions.

A survey of recent writing about the cultural significance of baseball in Japan and its status in Japanese society suggests the persistence of the central myths surrounding Samurai baseball. While a small number of works challenge the validity of those myths, the majority of writing about Japanese baseball simply serves to reify the connections between baseball and values associated with Bushidō. Despite the dearth of serious disciplinary-based writing about baseball in Japan, a small body of work addresses baseball's status and significance in modern Japan.

Some of the central questions examined here about the validity of the model of Samurai baseball were raised as early as 1992 in Sugimoto Hisatsugu's comparative study of the relationship between baseball and society in the United States and Japan. Sugimoto posits American baseball as a highly competitive sport that showcases individual achievement as opposed to the carefully framed "management style" of Japanese baseball. As in Robert Whiting's books about the defining qualities of Japanese baseball, Sugimoto attributes differences in baseball style primarily to differences in culture. In both the United States and Japan, Sugimoto envisions the baseball stadium itself as the "festival space" where the cultural values of the respective society are enacted.<sup>24</sup>

In a work also dating from the 1990s, the sociologist Ariyama Teruo examines the Japanese media's framing of the annual high school baseball as a "moving drama of sweat and tears" and how the coverage of this national event over its eighty-year history as the playing out on the diamond of Bushidō values has come to elevate student baseball to its status as the repository of traditional values in the national consciousness.<sup>25</sup> Ariyama further contemplates from the perspective of late 1990s Japan what role these Bushidō values associated with baseball and sports in general have to play in a Japan that is rapidly changing and in which the association of this martial

24. Sugimoto Hisatsugu, *Sutajiamu wa moete iru: Nichibei yakyū bunkaron* [The stadium is on fire: A cultural theory of Japanese and American baseball] (Tokyo: NHK Books, 1992).

25. Ariyama Teruo, *Kōshien yakyū to Nihonjin: media no tsukutta ibento* [Kōshien baseball and the Japanese: An event produced by the media] (Tokyo: Yoshikawa Kō Bunkan, 1997), 12.

model with such social problems as corporal punishment in schools has largely discredited those values.<sup>26</sup>

More recent works reflecting on those qualities of baseball have generally fallen into the two camps alluded to earlier: those works that strongly affirm the alignment of Japanese baseball with the intrinsic expectations of Samurai baseball and those that challenge that characterization and its underlying assumptions. Among the former is Sayama Kazuo's 2007 book, *Why Has Japanese Yakyū Overtaken Baseball?*, which returns to an essentialist argument that in the special "soil" in which Japanese baseball took root, it was inevitable that the characteristics of Japanese baseball would differ markedly from those of its American predecessor game.

Tezuka Jin, on the other hand, in another work from 2007, *Youth Baseball and Kōshien*, argues that from a societal perspective, baseball is not taken very seriously in Japan. In this work, which treats Japanese youth baseball, Tezuka argues that despite the widespread appeal of baseball in Japan, the ideal of participatory sports for children has never been accorded the respect it has in other countries and that a "sports consciousness" is lacking.<sup>27</sup> He cites as an example of this cultural deficiency the scarcity of public spaces for children to gather to have a pickup game of baseball or even to have a catch, and references the work of nonprofit organizations (NPOs) supporting sporting culture to create public parks where having a baseball catch is not prohibited as is the case in many Japanese parks today.<sup>28</sup>

A recent 2016 study of Japanese baseball as the storehouse of values associated with Bushidō, Takahata Yoshihide's *A Theory of Guts Baseball for the Twenty-first Century*, brings the argument embracing the myths of a distinctly Japanese "Samurai baseball" model right back to its starting point and reasserts the essentialist myths of that model. Takahata suggests that in the headlong quest to discredit the entire model of Samurai baseball in the 1990s, much of what defines Japanese baseball as a game unique from the American version of the sport was lost, and he advocates a reconsideration of the timely relevance of the Samurai baseball model. Specifically, as the title suggests, Takahata wonders if Japan has not lost something by abandoning the traditional appreciation of *konjō* as it relates to *gattsu supōtsu*. *Konjō*, by Takahata's reckoning, was the quality embodied by the great student teams at the turn of the last century and still defines Japanese Samurai baseball today. According to Takahata, the virtue of *konjō* that is at the heart of *yakyū* itself is suffering, and the Samurai baseball model valorizes a vision of baseball as something to be endured rather than enjoyed.<sup>29</sup>

Takahata's assertions revolve around the pragmatic argument that physical training divorced from the concept of *konjō*, which he equates with the Nihonjinron ideal

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26. Ibid., 26.

27. Tezuka Jin, *Shōnen yakyū to Kōshien: chūgaku yakyū no soshiki to genba* [Youth baseball and Kōshien: The sites and organizations of junior high school baseball] (Tokyo: Sanshūsha, 2007), 75.

28. Ibid.

29. Takahata Yoshihide, *Yakyū 21 seiki konjōron* [A theory of guts baseball for the twenty-first century] (Tokyo: Ikeda Shoten, 2016), 32.

of *gaman* or forbearance in the face of pain or loss, is ineffective. Not only in baseball in Japan, but in sports in general and indeed in a variety of other undertakings, *konjō* is the predisposition required to find the inner strength to carry on to achieve a goal. The specific examples Takahata cites include both those teams that advance each year to the national high school baseball tournament at Koshien and professional players who would never have accomplished what they did were it not for the guts that they exhibited to reach those heights. The appearance of this book and its essentialist argument of the special character of Samurai baseball demonstrate the persistent appeal of the central myths of Japanese baseball and their capacity to strike a national chord at those moments when Japanese baseball seems in danger of losing its defining characteristics or its relevance.

Similarly, Kobayashi Nobuya, in his 2016 *The Essence of Baseball*, argues that despite fluctuating interest in the game among Japanese, baseball still continues to occupy a prominent position in Japanese society. He portrays the diminution of interest in baseball in terms of a loss of faith in the ability of the baseball establishment to make the Japanese, especially Japanese youth, excited about baseball. An increasing number of Japanese have no real connection to the game.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, while cataloging the nostalgia for the game as it dominated the Shōwa period (1926–1989) when baseball's position in Japan was essentially unchallenged, Kobayashi also analyzes prominent moments in baseball in the last twenty-five years in order to explain why baseball continues to exert a strong appeal in Japan.

Moreover, a magazine has appeared recently called *Okujō yakyū* (Rooftop Baseball), which looks at baseball from an intellectual and cultural perspective while analyzing some of the same works about baseball treated in this study. The magazine, which was launched in 2013 and has published two issues to date, is the brainchild of the publisher Hayashi Sayaka and brings together Hayashi, a great baseball enthusiast, and a number of her colleagues who share her passion for both writing and baseball. In an afterword that appears in the first of the two issues, Hayashi explains how she came to produce the journal:

It has always been the case that I never really have known what I wanted to do. When I quit the publishing company where I had been working and sponsored an event called the Tokyo Baseball Book Fair and established something like my own publishing company, I was suddenly drawn closer to baseball. In various venues I became privy to interesting discussions surrounding baseball. This merged with my long-held desire to publish a magazine, and before I knew it I had decided to produce a baseball magazine. Even I am unclear as to how this happened.<sup>31</sup>

Hayashi finishes by asserting that she is attempting to produce a magazine that changes the way her readers think about baseball and the role it plays in the life of

30. Kobayashi Nobuya, *Yakyū no shinzui: naze kono geemu o hikaserareru no ka* [The essence of baseball: What attracts us to this game?] (Tokyo Shūeisha shinsho, 2016), 78.

31. Hayashi Sayaka, *Okujō Yakyū* [Rooftop baseball]. Editor's Afterword. Vol. 1 (October 21, 2013), 96.

contemporary Japan. The contents of the magazine certainly bear testimony to those ambitious objectives, and its penetrating pieces examine a wide range of activities and productions concerning baseball. The first issue's theme is "Yakyū o ushinatta yakyū shōsetsu" (baseball fiction that has lost the baseball). The issue opens with an interview with Takahashi Genichirō, whose novel *Yuga de kanshotekina Nihon yakyū* (Elegant and Sentimental Japanese Baseball) is cited in the magazine's introductory article as representative of a variety of baseball fiction that is not ultimately about baseball at all but which nevertheless celebrates the game.<sup>32</sup> Other essays in the issue likewise introduce and analyze works of baseball-themed fiction—both American and Japanese—that ultimately can be said to about something other than baseball.

The issue also contains a brief manga based on Takahashi's novel; a collection of nine one-page columns about baseball; several baseball *tanka* and a free verse poem about baseball; a corner about baseball players-turned-singers featuring the career of former Giants' pitcher Yanagita Masahiro (1948–); the first installment of a serialized baseball-themed novel by Ishige Balbino; a round-table discussion of forgotten masterpieces in Japanese baseball film; and an interview with the owner of Biblio, a used bookstore in the Kanda district of Tokyo specializing in baseball books and memorabilia. The issue also features an article on the baseball cap as icon of casual fashion and the diary of a collector of baseball manga as he tallies the emergence of new baseball-themed manga. The second volume, which takes as its theme "Yakyū to oshare no kankei" (the relationship between baseball and fashion), continues the conventions introduced in the first volume and contains many of the same features and corners including essays, poetry, the second installment of Ishige's serialized novel and an interview with the chief manager of Jackman, a manufacturer of apparel featuring the logos of Japan's professional teams. In keeping with the guiding mission established in the first volume, the focus is on the culture of baseball in Japan and cultural productions surrounding baseball rather than on the game itself.

Baseball and modern culture emerged and developed side-by-side in Japan, and one way to understand modern Japan and its values and its contortions in the twentieth century is to look to baseball and to the literature, cinema, and other cultural productions treating baseball. In the absence of any single book in either Japanese or English that catalogues and analyzes cultural productions about baseball in Japan, this work is an attempt to fill that critical gap and to provide an introduction to the rich tradition of artistic expression in Japan related to the game of baseball. The approach taken in this book is to identify seminal works of Japanese-themed literature, film, and manga, and through an analysis of how each work addresses the theme of Samurai baseball and the values of Bushidō, to demonstrate how the work constituted either a particularly notable example of Japanese cultural representations of Japanese baseball or to explain how the work comprised a turning point in representations of the game in the context of modern Japanese cultural history.

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32. Takahashi's groundbreaking novel is treated in Chapter 5 of this study.

Cultural studies, unlike other humanities and social science disciplines with which it is linked, has not been bound traditionally by specific methodologies and has tended to employ a less doctrinaire approach to theory in its qualitative approach, with theories and methodologies often combined in service of analysis. Michael Pickering, in his definitive introduction to the field, suggests that cultural studies scholarship has traditionally focused on a close reading of texts and has been characterized by its willingness to incorporate multiple theoretical approaches in a creative application of those theories, “rather than by its adoption or development of practical methods.”<sup>33</sup>

This study employs a qualitative case study approach, which examines baseball-themed cultural products and seeks to understand how both the cultural milieu of specific historical moments and the conventions of various cultural forms contributed to works that responded to the Samurai baseball model. The concept of Samurai baseball constitutes a cultural construct, and the particular works analyzed in this study were chosen with an eye toward demonstrating baseball’s reception by various audiences at critical junctures in Japan’s modern history. Insofar as this study explores the development of the cultural significance of baseball in Japan in the modern era, the baseball-themed works considered in the chapters to follow are analyzed in the context of the particular historical moment in which they were produced starting in the late nineteenth century and extending into the twenty-first century.

This book reflects Pickering’s premise that “cultural studies without a historical dimension is weak” and attempts to utilize cultural history as a tool for assessing the significance of Samurai baseball to different historical audiences.<sup>34</sup> The Japanese self-characterization of Samurai baseball as distinct from the American game will be explored in terms of the hegemony of the values associated with the American brand of baseball. The construction of Japanese baseball as a distinct model has always been defined vis-à-vis its relationship with American baseball.

An examination of the meaning of each of these works entails considering the historically and culturally specific structures of meaning.<sup>35</sup> For the purposes of the argument being made in this book, that approach implies defining and redefining the values associated with Bushidō and determining what those values meant to each generation during the modern era. The qualitative approach utilized in cultural studies is one that employs what has been characterized as an “hourglass model.” This starts by positing a broad theoretical concern and articulating a thesis, then provides a narrow analysis of specific cases as in the center of the hourglass before broadening the argument to assess the meaning of the conclusions reached in the analysis.<sup>36</sup> Specifically, this study of cultural representations of Japanese baseball utilizes this hourglass design through an examination of the cultural significance of baseball in Japan by providing

33. Michael Pickering, *Research Methods for Cultural Studies* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 3.

34. *Ibid.*, 13.

35. Pertti Alasuutari, “Theorizing in Qualitative Research: A Cultural Studies Perspective,” *Qualitative Inquiry* 2, no. 4 (1996): 379.

36. *Ibid.*, 379.

close analyses of specific cultural products and by contesting the continuing relevance of the Samurai baseball model and its attendant myths for contemporary audiences in the Epilogue.

Chapter 1 provides both a background to baseball in Japan and to the origins of the concept of Samurai baseball that is central to the issues explored in this book. It also problematizes the role of the popular press in Japan. Starting in the Meiji period, the press both spread the gospel of baseball in Japan and sowed the seeds of the myths surrounding Japan's approach to the game, infusing it with dimensions of the rhetoric of *Nihonjinron*. Many of the qualities that have come to define the myths of Samurai baseball are the result of the success of the Ichikō high school team against American opponents in the Meiji period. The wide coverage of the team's lopsided victories by the popular press helped both to initiate Japan's love affair with baseball and establish the Bushidō-inspired values of *konjō* and *magokoro* as the chief virtues associated with Samurai baseball.

Chapter 2 explores the contributions of Masaoka Shiki to the spread of Japanese baseball. It examines his fiction and poetry as the first examples of baseball-themed cultural achievements while also describing his contributions to the creation of a lexicon of Japanese baseball terms. The poet, generally known by his nom de plume Shiki, is rightly remembered as the figure that largely defined the modern *haiku* form and as an important poet in his own right. Prior to his brief but astonishingly productive literary career, however, he was a rather typical *yakyū seinen* (baseball youth), and he helped to introduce the game of baseball in articles and treatises and in an unfinished, posthumously discovered baseball novel. He also produced baseball-themed poetry in both the *tanka* and *haiku* forms, thereby establishing a tradition of baseball poetry.

Beginning in Chapter 3, the book highlights the rich history of cultural production related to baseball in Japan organized according to cultural form. It focuses on works that constitute a particularly important moment or turning point in the history of cultural expressions of baseball. For example, Chapter 3 examines the long history of baseball films in Japan, a tradition nearly as old as the history of Japanese cinema itself. After a brief survey of the early history of cinema in Japan, whose history parallels that of the game of baseball chronologically, the study focuses on early *shomingeki* films and explores how baseball became an important marker of domesticity and middle class respectability in this genre of film in the 1930s. The chapter then examines several pivotal films in the postwar era, examining how baseball was used alternately to perpetuate a national hero, as in Suzuki Hideo's *Fumetsu no nekkyū* (Immortal Pitcher, 1955), or to chart the corruption and greed surrounding professional baseball, as in Kobayashi Masaki's *I Will Buy You* (1956).

In the 1960s and 1970s, as young filmmakers challenged the dominance of the great postwar filmmakers and produced often avant-garde and politically charged films that reflected an international challenge to the hegemony of Hollywood films, the baseball film was again adopted as a means to that end. Ōshima Nagisa's *Gishiki* (Ceremonies), a film that contests the very concept of the baseball film, uses baseball

as a metaphor for Japan's abandonment of its citizens during the war. The recent splatter comedies of Yamaguchi Yūdai likewise play with the familiar tropes of Japanese baseball and of the baseball hero as antihero in problematizing the very concept of the baseball film.

Chapter 4 describes the venerable tradition of baseball fiction in the latter half of the Shōwa period and in the early Heisei period (1989–), an era in which baseball emerged as a true sport of the masses and in which Japan's economic success paralleled the emergence of professional baseball as Japan's national pastime. This chapter explores several important trends in baseball literature including the appearance of the first examples of baseball mystery literature and the continuation of juvenile fiction about baseball. This latter literary category developed from the body of writing aimed at young readers that had been initiated by *Akai tori* (Red Bird) and other magazines that appeared in the Taishō period (1912–1926). As baseball was resuscitated and gained popularity in the postwar period, it again emerged as a natural topic for juvenile fiction.

As with the *dōshin* (child's heart) literature of prewar Japan, postwar juvenile fiction, including the baseball fiction treated here, exhibited a decidedly didactic character. Stories of exploits on the diamond were meant to teach valuable life lessons and to instill new postwar democratic values. While the juvenile baseball fiction of the Occupation Era was cathartic and was intended to help young readers grapple with the harsh realities of the postwar era, the baseball fiction of the 1980s and 1990s, often set right after the war, tended to be more nostalgic, portraying baseball as a refuge and source of hope in a time of uncertainty.

Chapter 5 builds upon the foundation established in Chapter 4 by examining a particular approach to literature, postmodernism, and describing how the postmodern literature that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s in Japan, indebted to postmodern baseball fiction in the United States, exemplifies the continuing appeal of baseball as a literary subject and of baseball's capacity to adapt to cultural shifts. The chapter provides analyses of four baseball-themed works including fiction by the well-known postmodern novelists Murakami Haruki and Takahashi Genichirō, and more recent works by Nagao Seio and Enjō Tō. It demonstrates the possibilities that baseball fiction offers for avant-garde literary experimentation, possibilities exploited in American literature by writers from Philip Roth to Bernard Malamud. This chapter also charts how, ironically, Nagao Seio in his novel *Shiki to Sōseki no pureibooru* (Shiki and Sōseki's Big Game), achieves a remarkable pastiche in which one of the protagonists is none other than Masaoka Shiki with whom this survey of cultural representations of baseball in Japan begins.

Chapter 6 considers the cultural medium that constitutes the most substantial body of baseball-themed work in Japan: manga and the related form of anime. Manga emerged as a major cultural force at precisely the time that baseball was establishing itself as the unrivaled spectator and participatory sport in Japan. Starting in the Occupation period and continuing to the present, baseball has been an unrivalled

subject for manga. Starting with the blockbuster success of Kajiwara Ikki's *Kyojin no hoshi* (Star of the Giants) in the 1960s and continuing in the work of such luminaries of the manga world as Mizushima Shinji and Adachi Mitsuru, baseball manga and anime adaptations have consistently defined and redefined the hero in cultural terms that represent the values of the age in which they were produced, at times conforming to the cultural myths of Samurai baseball and at other times upending those myths. As the newest forms treated in this study, manga and anime are unburdened by many of the traditional expectations of poetry, fiction, or cinema, and continue to offer ideal forms for confronting the fundamental myths associated with Samurai baseball.

Finally, the Epilogue catalogues how, despite challenges to baseball's supremacy as the national pastime in Japan and despite the emergence of new media and ultra sports which have an increasing appeal to young people in Japan, baseball continues to exert a surprisingly resilient appeal. Recent works of fiction reflect the same generic range established in the postwar period, with an example like Kitamura Kaoru's *Yakyū no kuni no Arisu* (Alice in Baseball Land) simultaneously serving as an example of juvenile fiction, mystery, and creative pastiche. The Epilogue also describes interesting new directions in cinema with a particular dimension reflected in a few recent films: Samurai baseball and its values transposed to a foreign setting. These examples of works that both continue existing trends and establish new directions in baseball fiction, film, and manga demonstrate the continuing influence of baseball in Japan, and suggest that baseball is not likely to lose its revered position as a true cultural touchstone any time soon.

Admittedly, there are several important omissions: this study does not address popular music related to baseball in Japan nor does it describe the postwar phenomenon of television programming based on baseball. Television about baseball is closely related to both manga and literature, and it did not seem necessary to undertake a separate study of baseball television programs, since some of these works are subsumed in other chapters. Many of the works treated in this book are transgeneric, in which a work originally conceived and executed in one form is adapted to another medium. This transgeneric propensity is one of the defining qualities of postwar Japanese culture, and although many of these works were adapted to either animated or live action programs for television, few started as television programs. Examples include *Rookies*, which started as a manga before being adapted to an anime and finally being reworked as a live-action film.

Pop music related to baseball certainly warrants research but was deemed outside the scope of this particular study. Likewise, baseball-themed video or computer games and game apps for smartphones constitute another form of cultural expression that often treats the game of baseball. However, because these media are so new and quickly evolving, it was determined that it would be difficult to gather research data about these games or to fully describe what is essentially a moving target.

Some of the works analyzed in this study consider themes related to baseball or feature plots that revolve around the dynamics of the game itself. Examples include

Inoue Hisashi's story "Nain" (Nine), which treats the exploits of a local baseball team whose victories become the pride of a declining neighborhood, and the film *Vancouver Asahi*, which explores the power of Japanese baseball—Samurai baseball—to galvanize the community of Japanese-Canadians on the eve of war. Likewise, the manga series *Abu-san* by Mizushima Shinji showcases the nuances of baseball and appeals to true aficionados of the sport, often referencing actual players in Japan's professional league.

On the other hand, a great number of the works addressed in this study merely feature baseball as one of several plot elements or as the starting point for the exploration of issues not directly related to the game. Such examples include Ōshima Nagisa's avant-garde film *Gishiki* (Ceremonies), which uses baseball to frame the many rituals that govern the life of a wealthy provincial family in postwar Japan. Likewise, Murakami Haruki's postmodern story "Yakyūjo" (The Baseball Field) simply utilizes the baseball field as both a transitional space that separates the voyeur from the object of his voyeurism and as a lens through which the voyeuristic act is distorted. In manga series such as *Tetsuwan gaaru* (Girl with the Iron Arm) and *Taishō yakyū musume* (Taishō Era Baseball Girls), the baseball diamond becomes the site for contesting sexual politics and gender inequities.

Ironically, it is the latter body of work, the works not explicitly about baseball, that best demonstrate how inextricably baseball is woven into the very fabric of modern Japanese culture and how thoroughly the myths of Japanese baseball have permeated Japanese society. There is virtually no one in Japan who is unfamiliar with baseball, its fundamental rules and rhythms. One wonders whether the same could be said of the United States, where the game of baseball was invented. For example, one element of cultural production about baseball in Japan that might surprise the Western reader is the abundance of works produced by women. Along with the aforementioned baseball journal *Rooftop Baseball*, edited by Hayashi Sayaka, this book also includes analyses of baseball-themed poetry, fiction, anime, and manga by women writers and artists who have often used baseball as a lens with which to scrutinize social values and to challenge gender inequalities.

Filmmakers and artists in Japan have found in baseball a source to which they can return again and again for inspiration and a subject so familiar to Japanese audiences that it can be handled in a variety of innovative ways. This book is neither an exhaustive nor encyclopedic treatment of works related to baseball in Japan, but rather it is intended to demonstrate the resiliency and flexibility of baseball as a theme and inspiration for literature, film, and art. As with the cultural forms discussed in this study, modern fiction and poetry, film and animation and manga, baseball serves as one of the pillars of modernity in Japan and offers a means of charting cultural changes in Japanese society from the late nineteenth to the early twenty-first centuries. This book makes the case that examining baseball in conjunction with each of these cultural forms—looking at baseball-themed literature, film, and manga from modern Japan—offers a unique way of charting cultural change by focusing on how seminal

works from moments of change in Japanese society confronted the central myths of Samurai baseball.

The ascendancy of each of these cultural media at different crucial moments in Japan's modern history, in turn, reflects the evolution of cultural norms and changes in Japanese social mores, with cultural producers of the respective forms considered in this study utilizing baseball for different reasons. For the Meiji period poet Masaoka Shiki and for filmmakers and novelists in the Taishō and early Shōwa periods, the novelty and freshness of what was seen as the prototypical students' game imbued baseball with a cachet that made baseball especially attractive as a subject for asserting cultural values. In the postwar period, whereas baseball was seen by novelists as a nostalgic subject to revisit and thus to reassert comforting traditional values, it was seen by manga artists as a means either to celebrate the central myths of Japanese society or to challenge the basic assumptions surrounding Samurai baseball and to redefine the cultural hero.

What remains is an exploration of how baseball has influenced the culture of modern Japan and how it has exerted an influence and provided a valuable touchstone for cultural production in Japan. The story of baseball in Japan and its expression in these various cultural forms is, in a sense, the story of modern Japan and its quest to define itself as a modern nation. In Japan, modernity, the nation-building project, baseball, and new cultural forms all developed in tandem. Baseball has been, since its introduction to Japan, both novel and achingly familiar, a base to which artists have turned without hesitation to either reassert or challenge fundamental cultural values.

## *Epilogue: The Enduring Cultural Appeal of Baseball in Japan*

On May 15, 1993, amid much fanfare, the Verdy Kawasaki kicked off against the Yokohama Marinos in Kasumigaseki Stadium, inaugurating the J-League, Japan's professional soccer league. The J-League proved to be wildly popular in that inaugural season and almost immediately sports commentators and cultural pundits began to predict the beginning of the end of baseball in Japan. At the very least, it was reasoned, soccer would soon supplant baseball as Japan's national pastime. It was a time of economic decline in Japan, and baseball was associated with the stubborn refusal to adapt to the times that led to the economic downturn in the first place. Baseball represented all that was old and stultifying in Japan; soccer, on the other hand, seemed to reflect all that was new, international, and exciting. As one article at the time stated, "Soccer is, in short, everything that the tightly controlled samurai version of baseball here is not."<sup>1</sup>

The prognostications about soccer's eclipse of baseball proved to be immature. Despite the success of the J League in its early years, its wild popularity did not last. In fact, whereas in 1994 the average attendance at J-League games was 19,000, by 1997 that number had dropped to 10,131.<sup>2</sup> Baseball, on the other hand, shook off its associations with Japan's economic woes, and has continued to enjoy its exalted status in Japan. Matsui Hideki and Suzuki Ichirō (Ichiro), mentioned in the introduction, were both stars in Major League Baseball in North America, and as of the end of the 2015 season there were eight Japanese players on the roster of major leagues. Dozens of Japanese pitchers and position players have played in Major League Baseball since Nomo Hideo (1968–) joined the Los Angeles Dodgers in 1995. When successful Japanese professional players become available, they are highly sought after by Major League clubs, often initiating bidding wars. Moreover, in the first two rounds of the WBC (World Baseball Classic) in 2006 and 2009, Japan emerged as the champion, and took a third-place finish in 2013; between 2000 and 2008 the Japanese women's softball team, in a sport that is derived from baseball, won a medal in each Olympics

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1. James Sterngold, "Tokyo Journal; Japan Falls for Soccer, Leaving Baseball in Lurch," *New York Times* online, June 6, 1994, accessed February, 20, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/1994/06/06/world/tokyo-journal-japan-falls-for-soccer-leaving-baseball-in-lurch.html>.
  2. Anthony Scott, "How Japan Created a Successful League," *When Sunday Comes*, July 18, 2010, accessed February 20, 2016, <http://www.wsc.co.uk/wsc-daily/997-July-2010/5577-how-japan-created-a-successful-league>.

games, including gold in Beijing in 2008, testimonies to the efficacy of Samurai baseball. Moreover, the championship series of the High School Baseball Tournament played at Koshien Stadium continues to capture the imagination of the Japanese each August, and baseball remains a popular organized sport for children. By any measure, baseball remains a highly popular and relevant sport in Japan.

An additional indication of the continued relevance of baseball and its core values is the enduring appeal of the *Star of the Giants* franchise in which the myths of Japanese Samurai baseball are so firmly entrenched. The tenacious allure of the franchise is evident in the appearance in June 2016 of a new pachinko machine bearing the instantly recognizable image of Hoshi Hyūma and dramatic scenes of the story with which every Japanese is familiar. The game features cutting-edge graphics and machine design and the signal image that appears on posters plastered around Japan advertising the arrival of the new machine is of Hyūma in the familiar Giants' uniform holding a flaming baseball and with flames shooting from his eyes. The image seems to constitute the very epitome of the *gattsu supōtsu* ethos.

One more indication of the indissoluble connection between baseball and cultural production in Japan is the inauguration in 2010 of the Samurai Japan Baseball Award, whose very name evinces the sustaining myths of Japanese baseball. The award actually refers to the nickname of the Japanese national team and was established to commemorate Japan's consecutive victories in the first two iterations of the World Baseball Classic. The award, which treats both baseball fiction and baseball manga, is sponsored by Baseball Magazine Company and is co-sponsored by the publishers Kadokawa, Kōdansha, Shōgakukan, and PHP Research Center. The winner of the inaugural award was the novel *Nōbadi nōzu* (Nobody Knows, 2009) by Honjō Masato and the second award was won four years later by Mishima Eriko for her manga collection *Kōkō kyūji Zawa-san* (High School Baseball Player Zawa, 2009–2013). Although baseball-themed novels and manga have won virtually every major literary work in Japan, the Samurai Japan Baseball Award represents the first award devoted solely to baseball fiction and manga in Japan.

Baseball's popularity in Japanese culture too remains unchallenged. Baseball-themed films, manga, and works of fiction continue to appear each year, attesting to the unique status of the game as a fixture in the modern cultural landscape in Japan.

### Adventures in Baseball Land: Continuing Trends in Baseball Fiction

Recent baseball fiction in Japan demonstrates the influence of the thematic concerns and stylistic approaches that emerged in baseball works that appeared in the 1970s and 1980s. For instance, Tanaka Shinya's *Kamisama no inai Nihon Shiirizu* (A Japan Series without God) is a 2008 novel that examines the relationship between a father and son through the prism of their shared passion for baseball. A boy receives a cryptic postcard from his father, who has abandoned the family among crippling gambling debt, that simply asks, "Are you playing baseball?" The simple question about the sport

that both father and son love revives the boy's interest in the game, but also puts him at odds with his mother, who despises the game as a useless distraction. This dilemma is set against the 1986 Japan Series, a year which featured a remarkable comeback. The novel juxtaposes that major miracle on the field with the small miracle of baseball's capacity to bring a father and son together.

Memory and the power of baseball to heal wounds and to seal relationships is at the heart of *Hakase no aishita sūshiki* (The Professor's Beloved Formula),<sup>3</sup> Ogawa Yōko's million-selling novel from 2004 that was made into a film in 2006. The novel tells of a former professor of mathematics whose memory is reduced to a loop of 80 minutes as a result of an automobile accident, and the woman who comes to serve as his housekeeper. The housekeeper, who serves as the narrator of the tale, comes to understand the professor's eccentricities and becomes his most important caretaker during his final days. However, it is the rare bond formed between the Professor and the Housekeeper, who are never identified by name, and the Housekeeper's ten-year-old son, whom the Professor nicknames Root, and their shared love of baseball that helps bring the Professor happiness and provides therapy and healing. The novel also constitutes another example of baseball-themed cultural production by women writers and artists that suggests the widespread demographic appeal of baseball as a subject in Japan.

Both the Professor and Root are avid fans of the Hanshin Tigers, although the Professor supports the version of the team as he remembers it and is a particular fan of the pitcher Enatsu Yutaka (1948–), who was the ace of the team at the time of his accident and whose card he keeps in a cookie jar along with other items related to his life prior to his injury. The Professor has an old radio on which he used to listen to broadcasts of the Tigers games repaired so that he and Root can listen to broadcasts of the games together.

The Professor had always been drawn to the statistical complexity of baseball but had never had actually seen a live game, and one of the important subplots of the novel is the Housekeeper's efforts to bring the Professor and Root to a Tigers' game. The Professor's subsequent fever as a result of going to watch the game on a chilly night and the Housekeeper's brief dismissal from her position because of that decision constitute the most dramatic moments in this otherwise quiet novel. After being rehired, the Housekeeper holds a joint celebration for Root's eleventh birthday and the Professor's reception of a prize for solving a puzzle in the *Journal of Mathematics*. The Professor, who teaches Root about mathematical concepts and instills in the boy an interest in equations while delighting in baseball, continues to work on equations, but his memory becomes ever more limited and he is institutionalized and eventually passes away. Root, it is related, follows in the Professor's footsteps and goes on to become a math instructor.

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3. Entitled *The Professor and the Housekeeper* in Stephen Snyder's English translation.

*The Professor's Beloved Formula* is noteworthy for its portrayal of a scholar's obsession with mathematics as the starting point for empathy, but it is a shared passion for baseball that provides the humanizing element that sustains this unusual relationship, and it is a love of a baseball team that serves as the catalyst for true understanding. The novel, which clearly touched a chord in Japan and reached a wider readership than most baseball fiction, seems to prove the contention that provides the theme for the first issue of *Rooftop Baseball* that some of the best baseball fiction is not explicitly about baseball. Baseball is not central to the action of *The Professor's Beloved Formula* but without it a critical dimension and the source of much of the emotional impact of the novel would be lost.

Alongside baseball fiction aimed at adult readers, baseball fiction written for young readers continues a trend that goes back to the early postwar period and that remains an important subgenre of Juvenile Fiction in Japan. *Yakyū no kuni no Arisu* (Alice in Baseball Land, 2008) is a novel by Kitamura Kaoru who started his career as a teacher and who published his first book, *Yoru no semi* (Cicadas at Night) in 1991, winning the Japanese Suspense Literature Prize in the short fiction category. Kitamura started writing as his primary profession in 1993, and in 2006, he was again recognized in the True Mystery Prize contest and currently serves as the President of the True Mystery Authors' Club.<sup>4</sup> Kitamura's novel belongs to both that venerable tradition of baseball mystery fiction initiated by Arima Yorichika in the postwar period and to the long lineage of juvenile baseball fiction. *Alice in Baseball Land* appeared as part of Kōdansha's Mystery Land series, aimed primarily at young readers.

*Alice in Baseball Land* tells the story of a girl who has grown up loving baseball. Not content to simply watch and enjoy baseball, she had played for the local youth team, the Jaguars, and had been the team's ace starter. By chance, Alice again encounters a writer who six months earlier had followed the Jaguars in order to write a story about youth baseball. Alice reluctantly had quit playing baseball at about the same time that she had graduated from elementary school, but she cannot believe her good fortune in once again encountering the writer and relates a remarkable story. "Until yesterday, she begins, I was pitching in the strangest place . . ." The narrative she launches into describes her entering an alternate world through the mirror in her room and eventually being coaxed into playing in a baseball tournament in the world she finds there, which operates according to an entirely different logic and set of physical laws. In that alternate world, she finds versions of the same characters that populate the world encountered by the other Alice in Lewis Carroll's classic *Through the Looking Glass*, including the March Hare (Usagi-san) and the Queen of Hearts (Joō-sama).

Although the novel is part of Kōdansha's Mystery Land series, it is less a mystery than it is a fantasy aimed at young readers. In this work of juvenile literature, the didactic objective is clear. This ingenious pastiche of one of the true classic works of children's literature also treats baseball and centers around a mystery, but the true appeal of

4. Kitamura Kaoru, *Yakyū no kuni no Arisu* [Alice in baseball land] (Tokyo: Kōdansha, 2008), 292.

the work may be in the way that important life lessons are liberally sprinkled throughout the narrative. *Alice's Adventures in Baseball Land* is about fairness, about bouncing back after life's setbacks, about apologizing for one's mistakes, and about not always putting one's needs before the needs of others. The work seems to hearken back to the tradition of baseball literature as a didactic tool initiated in magazines marked for young readers starting in the early twentieth century and a feature of juvenile fiction from the Taishō period (1912–1926) onward.

Among the novel's moral lessons intended for young readers is the cultivation of a willingness to accept difference and to embrace diversity. After passing through the mirror, Alice finds herself in a world like that described by Lewis Carroll in *Through the Looking Glass* in which rules, logic, and the very physical laws that had governed her life back home are turned upside-down. She must learn to accept and adapt. As a pitcher, she learns to accept the ball's strange and unpredictable movements in this alternate world, where every lesson that had served her as a pitcher in her former world no longer serves her in this new place. After returning to the life and home that she had formerly known, in speaking with the writer who has promised to tell her story, she succinctly states, "Over there, none of that was strange, although looking at it from this vantage point, it may seem hard to believe."<sup>5</sup>

The writer comments, "That may be so. Looking from their point of view, things in our world must look a little weird. Inside each of us are customs that we simply take for granted. It's only when speaking to others that we realize how different those customs really are." The message of trying to empathize with the other is clear. In the Afterword to the novel, Kitamura explains that it was his own experience reading manga and watching cartoons in the 1960s such as *Robotto meitantei* (The Incomparable Robot Detective) about fantastical characters and settings that introduced him to difference and prepared him to accept other perspectives and values systems.<sup>6</sup>

The novel's use of pastiche, baseball, and didacticism parallels that of Nagao Seiō's utilization of the same heady combination in *Shiki and Sōseki's Big Game*, and although Kitamura's novel is aimed at young readers, it captures some of the same post-modern qualities as Nagao's novel. Moreover, *Alice in Baseball* powerfully conveys the protagonist's love of the game as she leads her team to one final victory just as she is on the brink of entering junior high school and leaving the game behind and embarking on a new adventure.

### Strangers in a Strange Land: Samurai Baseball Finds a Home Abroad

*Bankūbā Asabi* (The Vancouver Asahi) is a 2014 film directed by Ishii Yuya based on the same Japanese-Canadian team as the manga introduced in Chapter 7. The two works are different enough in terms of both plot and tone to warrant separate

5. *Ibid.*, 280.

6. *Ibid.*, 286.

treatment. While describing the achievements of that particular team, the film adaptation unabashedly celebrates Samurai baseball and exports what has typically been portrayed as a uniquely Japanese style of baseball to a foreign setting. The Asahi squad, the perennial also-runs in the Vancouver civic baseball league, execute a complete turnaround and emerge as league champions, inspiring a community in the process. The remarkable transformation is accomplished in this film by a willingness to embrace what is portrayed in the film as an entirely new brand of baseball, an approach based on *wile* and on the principles associated with Bushidō.

The story revolves a player on the Vancouver Asahi team named Reggie Kasahara, who works at a local sawmill. His father Seiji feels no affection for his adopted homeland and spends all of his paycheck on drink and on the remittances that he sends to family back in Japan to the consternation of his long-suffering wife. Reggie's sister Emmy attempts to assimilate and excels at the local girl's school but is denied the scholarship that she has earned to continue her education in a blatant act of discrimination.

The only respite Reggie and his friends have from the drudgery of work and the relentless prejudice they face is baseball, in which they participate as part of the Asahi team. Reggie's best friend is the gifted pitcher Roy Naganishi, who is as temperamental and explosive as Roy is taciturn. The team is saddled with a long losing tradition and is the subject of ridicule in the local community. When the team's two co-captains retire in order to support their families, the shy and retiring Reggie is enlisted to serve as the new captain. After nearly losing the support of the team due his inability to assert himself, Reggie hits upon a plan that he believes will turn the team's fortunes around—embracing small ball.

Reggie suggests, and then demonstrates, that by bunting, playing hit-and-run, and stealing bases, in conjunction with Roy's pitching prowess and the team's solid fielding, the Asahi team will be able to defeat opposing teams composed of bigger and stronger white players. The strategy begins to pay off, and although the opponents sometimes take umbrage at this style of play, even beaming Reggie with a pitch in one memorable scene, the Asahi fans rally behind the team as it embarks on a winning streak. At first, it is merely a small group of diehard fans that has been supporting the team all along that celebrates these victories, but soon the entire Japanese community comes out to support the team that it now embraces as its favorite sons.

The popular press in Vancouver, which had long disparaged the ineptitude of the Asahi team, now lionizes the team and this new style of play, which it dons "samurai baseball" and "brain ball" in articles about the team and its penchant for beating opponents with speed, wit, and skill rather than trying to overpower them. The success of the team, Ishii seems to be insisting, is built upon the very qualities inherent in the ideals of Samurai baseball, as we are presented with scenes of Reggie and Roy practicing until late into the night beneath street lamps and the entire team racing off to practice after long days at the lumber yard or on fishing boats.

Eventually, the entire Japanese community, which has been crushed beneath the weight of local prejudice, unites behind the team with even Reggie's father, who had

seen no value in the game, becoming a big supporter. Other members of the community who had no interest in baseball such as call girls, or who were opposed to the team such as some of the local merchants, begin to attend every game, raucously supporting their heroes. Remarkably, even many of the white Canadian fans are won over by the particular brand of Japanese baseball, and when the umpire makes some egregious calls against the Asahi team in the championship game, it is a number of the white fans, including the ill-tempered foreman from the lumber mill where Reggie works, who berate the umpires and demand that they call a fair game. In the deciding game against Mt. Pleasant, in the pivotal final at-bat, a base hit through the drawn-in infield that was expecting a bunt brings home the winning run for the Asahi. Brains and the samurai spirit have prevailed over brawn.

The tragic reality is that despite the victory and all that it does for the community, that community will soon be shattered by war. In fact, after the victory, we see the entire Japanese community being marched through the main street of the Japantown neighborhood toward the trains that will take them to the internment camps. Flashbacks showing the exploits of the team and depicting how the community came to rally behind it simply serve to make the loss of the team and of the vibrant community all the more poignant. The victory of the Asahi team at smashing stereotypes and bringing the community together was a pyrrhic victory—the greater forces at work will soon scatter that community to the wind.

The film portrays the team unity and discipline, the willingness to make sacrifices and demonstrate faith in the vision of a leader that are the hallmarks of Bushidō and of Samurai baseball. In the film, the chief characteristics of Samurai baseball that the Asahi team successfully exploited in creating its winning formula mirror the values of Vancouver's Japanese community itself as it negotiates both poverty and unceasing prejudice.

There is, as one commentator has suggested, a “soft nationalism” at work in this film, and the capacity of baseball to overcome the raw prejudice that the community faces “repetitiously simplifies the messy process of assimilation that so many immigrants underwent in that era.”<sup>7</sup> The film seems to make the case for Samurai baseball as a panacea, but just as suddenly undercuts that theme with the historical reality of the ending. The values of Samurai baseball on which the team had pinned its hopes serve the team but not the community that rallied behind it.

The historical reality is actually much more uplifting. A 2003 documentary by the Canadian filmmaker Jari Osborne, *Sleeping Tigers: The Asahi Baseball Story*, describes how the team came upon its particular style of play and proves that this transition happened earlier in the history of the team and more gradually than the sudden eureka moment described in Ishii's cinematic treatment. The team was better and more popular for longer than described in Ishii's film, winning the first of a string

7. Mark Schilling, “The Vancouver Asahi: Angels Are Not in the Outfield for Immigrants,” *Japan Times* online, January 1, 2015, accessed March 4, 2016, <http://www.japantimes.co.jp/culture/2015/01/01/films/film-reviews/vancouver-asahi-angels-outfield-immigrants/#.WVtaTxhh06g>.

of championships in 1926 and being voted the league's most popular team in the city. This was the first of a string of victories until the team was disbanded in 1941.<sup>8</sup> After a decade of victories built upon this brand of Samurai baseball, the team won the respect of the opponents and acquired a status that helped sustain them during the period of internment and in the relocation period beyond. Those long-term results of Samurai baseball are more inspiring than the short-term dramatized victory in Ishii's film.

Intriguingly, like Ishii's *The Vancouver Asahi*, several recent non-Japanese works also depict the influence of Samurai baseball abroad. Among these, *KANO*, a 2014 Taiwanese film by Umin Boya portrays Samurai baseball as an export flourishing on foreign soil. In this case, the foreign soil is Taiwan during its period as a Japanese colony, and the team, comprised of multiracial players from a small school in southern Taiwan, achieves a remarkable victory propelling them to an unlikely appearance at the National High School Tournament championship at Koshien. This is possible due to the team's willingness to embrace and excel at the Samurai brand of baseball and the accompanying life lessons imparted to them by their Japanese coach. As with *The Vancouver Asahi*, in *KANO*, the impact of those Bushidō values goes far beyond the playing field and beyond the team and helps to transform an entire community.

Like *KANO*, the 2002 South Korean baseball film *YMCA Baseball Team* directed by Kim Hyeon-Seok constitutes nationalism in the guise of baseball and treats the power of baseball to unite a community and to serve as a proxy for political empowerment. Set in Korea in 1905, the film is a comic treatment of Korea's first baseball team set against the background of the beginning of Japan's colonial period. It also attempts to depict the rising political and class tensions among the players on the team and its female manager, all of whom hail from a variety of social classes. The YMCA team beats a few other recently formed teams and becomes the pride of the district where they play until a Japanese military battalion appears demanding that the YMCA team vacate the practice field. The Korean team challenges the Japanese team to a baseball game, which the more skilled but arrogant Japanese team wins decisively. In the inevitable rematch, the Korean YMCA squad, playing for pride of village and country, match their Japanese opponents in skill and eventually win by superior strategy employing a squeeze bunt in the final at-bat when their opponents least expect it, winning via "brain ball" in the same manner as the victorious Vancouver Asahi squad. Moreover, the Korean YMCA squad, like the *KANO* team in Umin Boya's film, wins by employing the very values that define Samurai baseball, in the process depicting the *gattsu supōtsu* model appropriated and successfully exported to foreign soil.

Similarly, the 2007 American film *American Pastime*, directed by Desmond Nakano, also explores the efficacy of Samurai baseball to bring together a community and to fight prejudice. Lane and Lyle Nomura are relocated to the Topaz Internment Camp in dusty rural Utah, where they and the other Japanese-Americans interned there must try to salvage lives shattered by this act of internment based on race. The

8. National Film Board—Office national du film du Canada, November 18, 2010, accessed March 4, 2016, [https://www.nfb.ca/film/sleeping\\_tigers\\_the\\_asahi\\_baseball\\_story/](https://www.nfb.ca/film/sleeping_tigers_the_asahi_baseball_story/).

older son, Lane, who had been a professional baseball player, organizes a baseball league in the camp in order to provide a diversion from the monotony of camp life. The younger brother, Lyle, angry and rebellious over the unfairness of the interment experience, originally resists and refuses to participate, but eventually finds motivation and joins the team, which challenges the camp guards and local minor league players, some of whom are openly racist, to a game after Lane has enlisted and gone off to serve in the 442nd Regiment. In its approach to the game, the Japanese-American team, like the other teams in the films outlined here, reflects the very qualities that define Samurai baseball. The games are played beneath the eyes of the ever-present guards, inspiring Lyle and his teammates to play with both discipline and ferocity in order to prove themselves and the superiority of their brand of baseball, an approach that defines them as a team and as a community.

The implication of *The Vancouver Asahi* and the other recent films described here is that Samurai baseball is an approach to baseball that has always defined the Japanese version of the game, and in keeping with the Nihonjin discourse from which it is derived, this approach is uniquely Japanese. The inference is that, as with many imports to Japan, the Japanese made something of their own with it and developed an approach to the game derived from and parallel to the American game, only fundamentally different. The game of baseball as played in Japan is, like the Japanese themselves in Karel Van Wolferen's memorable turn of phrase, "uniquely unique."<sup>9</sup>

However, these films suggest that Bushidō values and the practices that define this brand of Samurai baseball can be transferred to other settings as well. Even when transplanted, the values of Samurai baseball result in a fundamentally different game, a model that seems to suggest that an approach based on hard work, discipline, and a willingness to sacrifice for the sake of the team is the way the game is supposed to be played. According to the view promulgated in these recent baseball films, Samurai baseball is not only different that other forms of baseball—it is better.

### Managing Expectations: Women in the Dugout in Recent Japanese Manga and Fiction

In the field of manga as well, despite an ever-widening spectrum of topics and themes, baseball continues to occupy a hallowed position. The range of baseball manga that has appeared in recent years reflects both continuing trends in terms of the portrayal of baseball and its values and also demonstrates new, innovative directions. As argued in Chapter 6, a body of baseball-themed cultural productions has emerged in Japan, as exemplified by the television anime *Princess Nine*, that employs the traditional Samurai baseball narrative model to expose gender inequalities by portraying female protagonists as baseball heroes. One related recent direction, evident in both manga and light fiction, involves portraying women in leadership positions, as either the student team

9. Karel Van Wolferen, *The Enigma of Japanese Power* (New York: Vintage, 1990), 18.

manager or as the club's manager. These narratives lay bare the conviction that through acumen and innovative leadership, victory can come via an unsuspecting source.

Not surprisingly, at the forefront of recent manga about baseball is the perennial baseball fan, Adachi Mitsuru, whose recent manga series *Asaoka kōkō yakyūbu nisshi* (*Over the Fence: The Asaoka High School Baseball Club Daily*) reflects the interest in baseball that characterized Adachi's earlier successful manga series. As with all of Adachi's baseball manga, *Over the Fence* focuses on the lives of high school students and on how the challenges of adolescence can best be understood through the lens of baseball. Serialization began in the *Weekly Shōnen Sunday* (*Shūkan shōnen sandee*) on April 27, 2011 and has continued on an irregular basis ever since.<sup>10</sup>

*Over the Fence* is the story of Serizawa Minoru, a female student who reluctantly takes over the managerial duties of the talented but dysfunctional high school baseball club. Minoru, who has a special knack from bringing out the best in people, is able to cure each of the players of their various bad habits as she unifies the team. What is innovative about this otherwise very conventional baseball story is the focus not on the actual players but on Minoru's acumen in managing the complex dynamics of the team using an approach which flies in the face of traditional ideals of the strict, wizened old male manager who unsmilingly brings decades of experience to his oversight of the team. The team manager Minoru, on the other hand, succeeds via good will and intuition. It is a conflict between old and new that drives the action of *Over the Fence*.

A similarly innovative depiction of a completely different manager and management style is at the heart of a blockbuster success "light novel" from the same period by Iwasaki Natsumi with the preposterously long title *Moshi kōkō yakyū no joshi manējā ga Durakkā no "Manejimento" o yondara* (What if a High School Baseball Girl Manager Had Read Drucker's *Management?* 2009) also shortened to the abbreviated *Moshidora*. The novel sold 1.8 million copies in 2010, becoming the surprise best-selling Japanese novel of the year. A manga version was launched in the magazine *Sūpā janpu* (Super Jump) in December 2010 and was followed by a ten-episode animated television series and a live-action film bearing the abbreviated name *Moshidora* in 2011.<sup>11</sup>

Iwasaki's original blockbuster novel tells how Kawashima Minami, as a favor to her friend Miyata Yuki, takes over as the team manager of the Hodokubo High School team from Yuki when Yuki is hospitalized with an illness. Minami, who has no interest in baseball, only agrees to fill in for Yuki until her friend is ready to resume her position. As the student team manager, she is only tasked with serving as a gofer for the manager. Nevertheless, ambitious by nature, Minami is disgusted not so much by the team's poor results as by the players' total lack of ambition, with players not showing

10. "Adachi Mitsuru: Sunday ni shinrensai joshimane shujinkō yakyū rabukomemono" [Mitsuru Adachi serializing in *Sunday* a new love comedy featuring a female manager as protagonist], *Magicom Journal*, April 20, 2011, accessed September 19, 2015.

11. "Moshidora Business Novel Gets TV Anime Next March," *Anime News Network*, October 16, 2010, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.animenewsnetwork.com/news/2010-10-16/moshi-dora-business-novel-gets-tv-anime-next-march>.

up for practice and repeating fundamental mistakes, which the manager either fails to notice or to which he simply has resigned himself. Minami decides she wants to do something to help the team in Yuki's absence, but she does not know to where to start. By chance, while thumbing through books at a used bookstore, she comes upon a Japanese edition of Drucker's 1954 classic *The Practice of Management* and purchases it, thinking it is about managing a baseball team. After reading it, she becomes a firm believer in his approach to business management and wonders if it could not be applied to the management of the Hodokubo baseball club.

Armed with Drucker's book and an endless supply of optimism, Minami sets as her goal the unreasonable expectation of reaching the championship at Koshien. The approach that Minami advocates is based on a quotation from Drucker's book that serves as the guiding principle to the various changes and innovations that she introduces to the team. Drucker maintains, "The one quality needed in management is sincerity," which in Japanese translation uses the noun form of word *shinshi* for "sincerity." This term is closely related to *magokoro* and signals the connection of this narrative to the ideal of baseball as an expression of the devotion implied by the term *magokoro*. The various innovations introduced by Minami, who soon becomes more of the actual manager than merely a team manager, all relate to this devotion to the game and the single-minded goal of going to Koshien.

The team eventually buys into Minami's approach and starts winning. Minami develops strategies based on key words from Drucker's text such as "innovation" and "consumerism" to help the team improve its performance. One example is the "no bunt, no ball" strategy, which flies in the face of the use of sacrifice bunts and walks to try to conservatively move runners over. She employs assistant managers and begins to focus on various areas in need of improvement. At first, the improvements are slight, but eventually become significant enough that they are hard to ignore, and with improved performance, the victories start piling up. Eventually, the team wins and advances to the championship tournament at Koshien against all odds. Just as the team is on the verge of success, Minami comes to learn from Yuki's mother that her friend's illness was more serious than she had realized and Yuki passes away on the morning of the final game, a game in which the team makes an improbable comeback from a 4-0 deficit to claim the national championship.

The innovative concept that drives the plot of *Moshidora*, of a high school baseball team's club manager becoming the team's actual manager and then using a well-known book about corporate management entitled, appropriately and ironically, *Management*, to lead her team to an improbable run at a national championship, is complemented by Iwasaki's equally innovative style. The protagonist, Kawashima Minami, treats Drucker's book with the reverence of a hagiographer and her overly serious interpretations of "the Master's" words are often incongruous, but shockingly always somehow bring positive results.

Minami's inclusion of the actual page number in Drucker's text from which each of the passages she cites is derived echoes the conventions of religious

interpretation in which a scholar might include book and verse from scripture, as in the following passage:

In *Management* although it is written that management is not some kind of magic wand, Minami had come to think of job satisfaction as the magic wand to motivate people. In regard to job satisfaction *Management* has the following to say: “In order to provide satisfaction, the job itself must possess a sense of responsibility.” (page 74)

Work and responsibility were thus two sides of the same coin. What Minami took away from this passage was that she needed to incorporate “responsibility” more fully into the team’s practices.<sup>12</sup>

Likewise, Minami looks to Drucker for an articulation of the innovation that she realizes will be necessary for the team to succeed, having confirmed with Mr. Kachi, the manager of the Hodokubo team, that there have been two precedents of managers successfully incorporating innovation in the long, largely rigid history of high school baseball in Japan.

In *Management* there was this:

Innovation is a value not confined to science or technology. It is not something that occurs within the organization, rather it is a change that is accomplished outside of the organization. The measure of an innovation’s success is the effect that it has on the outside world (pages 266–67)

Innovation was outside the organization . . . In other words, the change was not with the Hodokubo baseball club itself but with the world of high school baseball in which the baseball club resided.<sup>13</sup>

*Moshidora* represents an innovative approach by Iwasaki to baseball fiction that in turn tells the story of an innovative approach to the staid and tradition-bound approach to high school baseball in Japan. It was precisely this element of innovation that spoke to readers when the book became the best-selling book of 2011, and it was adopted by organizations that embraced the novel’s vision of innovation and change. *Moshidora*, in its original form as a novel and in its later adaptations as a manga, an anime, and a live-action film, provides yet another recent example of the suitability of baseball as a subject that continues to challenge and stimulate audiences in Japan.

Demonstrating the power of art to effect social change, this novel about baseball which advocates a return to the management principles upon which Japan’s postwar Economic Miracle was built has stimulated some rethinking of business practices among small to midsize businesses, with some small business owners making both Iwasaki’s novel and Drucker’s 1954 book, which figures so prominently in the work,

12. Iwasaki Natsumi, *Moshi kōkō yakyū no joshi manējā ga Dorakkā no Manejimento o yondara* [What if the girl manager of a high school baseball team had read Drucker’s *Management*] (Tokyo: Diamond Publishers, 2011), 137.

13. *Ibid.*, 143.

required reading for their employees.<sup>14</sup> Drucker's admonition to focus on clear and measurable goals, and to build upon those goals in setting a more ambitious agenda, has clearly resonated with a contemporary audience. What has made Iwasaki's work so revolutionary, however, is its utilization of a female protagonist who successfully applies Drucker's principles to baseball. In a society in which women earn half of what men do and occupy barely one percent of management positions, Iwasaki's baseball novel and subsequent incarnations struck a chord.<sup>15</sup>

### Final Thoughts: Finding the Sweet Spot

Beat Takeshi's (Kitano Takeshi) reflection on the meaning of baseball in the postwar era, *Yakyū kozō no sengōshi: kokumin no supōtsu kara Nippon ga mieru* (A Baseball Brat's Postwar History: Japan Observed from Its National Sport, 2015) is a standard history of Japanese baseball in postwar era. What makes this a timely and compelling piece of baseball writing is the opportunity that this work provides of seeing postwar Japanese history through the eyes of one of contemporary Japan's most influential cultural figures. Beat Takeshi, who was described in Chapter 4 in the analysis of his novel *The God of Sandlot Baseball*, is not only perhaps Japan's most recognizable cultural figure, he is also a lifelong baseball fan. *A Baseball Brat's Postwar History* is comprised of very short, blog-like entries divided into several discrete sections focusing on the sandlot baseball of the Occupation era; the golden age of professional baseball in Japan that coincided with the age of the Economic Miracle; the opening up and internationalization of the Japanese baseball in the last thirty years; and a section devoted entirely to the legend of Nagashima Shigeo enlivened with personal anecdotes about Takeshi's relationship with his baseball idol. Finally, Takeshi offers his assessment of the continuing importance of baseball in a Japan of diminished economic clout and decreased international influence. In the author's final assessment, despite myriad challenges, baseball in Japan is alive and well and as relevant as ever.

Beat Takeshi's book constitutes the ultimate expression of nostalgia for aspects of Japanese baseball that have been lost, by focusing first on an era in which baseball as a participatory and spectator sport was unchallenged. The book is part of a growing trend of nostalgic reflections on the postwar era. Takeshi makes the case that for his generation, entertainment equaled baseball, and baseball therefore provides the appropriate context with which to look back on that time period. The nostalgia for the intimate relationship that his generation had with the game of baseball that has been all but lost is established in the introduction to the book: "My generation of kids was,

14. "Drucker in the Dugout," *The Economist* online, July 1, 2010, accessed March 23, 2016, <http://www.economist.com/node/16481583>.

15. By way of example, Osanai Satoko, a sales manager at a designer glasses company in Tokyo, described how after reading both Iwasaki's novel and Drucker's book, she began to approach her work and her interactions with clients differently, taking more responsibility for reaching monthly sales quotas. See "Drucker in the Dugout."

you know, dirt poor. As far as play went, we didn't have the things kids have today, so we had to make due with things that didn't cost much money like marbles and sandlot baseball. But, we were totally absorbed by those things anyway."<sup>16</sup> This nostalgia for the sandlot game provides the context for the author's observations about the meaning of the game in the seventy years that are surveyed in this book.

On one level, *A Baseball Brat's Postwar History* is also an homage to Nagashima Shigeo, the great slugger and captain of the Giants during their greatest years. Takeshi describes the age of the Economic Miracle as an age in which Japan needed stars and cites as examples the singer Misora Hibari (1937–1989) and the actors Ishihara Yūjiro (1934–1987) and Takakura Ken (1931–2014). Baseball too needed heroes, and Nagashima seemed to embody the qualities that defined Samurai baseball and the baseball hero in its golden age. Takeshi later became friends and golfing partners with Nagashima after the latter's retirement.

In later chapters, Takashi notes that part of the resiliency of professional baseball in Japan as a form of entertainment has been the emergence of new stars at key moments in postwar Japanese history. Just as Nagashima and Oh Sadaharu constituted the heroes that Japan needed in the critical years of international growth and internationalization, the opening of Japanese baseball to the world—here Takeshi uses the term *kaikoku* (opening of the country) from Bakumatsu-era Japan—led to the emergence of new heroes who competed on an international stage including Nomo Hideo, Matsui Hideki (1974–), and Suzuki Ichirō. The exploits of these players in Major League Baseball in the United States, competing against the world's best at the very moment that soccer was challenging baseball as Japan's national pastime, Takeshi argues, revived passion for professional baseball in Japan.

The author's final assessment of the continuing popularity of the game parallels the conclusions of this book. In assessing the ongoing significance of baseball in Japan, while allowing for generational differences, Takeshi asserts, "It is often said that professional baseball is rapidly losing its popularity in Japan, but it seems that little has really changed, and it is still the national sport."<sup>17</sup> The book's essential thesis is that while it is appropriate for people of Takeshi's generation to be nostalgic for the sandlot baseball of their youth and for the heroes that sustained the generation that drove the Economic Miracle, nostalgia for the game of baseball, referring to nostalgia reserved for something in danger of being irrevocably lost, is premature. Baseball in Japan has proven time and again to be resilient, and the seventy-year period that he surveys in this book provides indisputable proof that despite challenges in a shifting cultural terrain, baseball's appeal remains largely undiminished, and baseball heroes will always be in the wings to emerge and sustain the game's popularity when that need arises.

In terms of reflecting on the meaning of baseball in Japanese culture, the group responsible for the *Rooflop Baseball* magazine venture cited in the Introduction

16. Kitano Takeshi, *Yakyū kozō no sengōshi: kokumin no supōtsu kara Nippon ga mieru* [A baseball brat's postwar history: Japan observed from its national sport] (Tokyo: Shodensha, 2015), 6.

17. *Ibid.*, 9.

remains committed to exploring the role of baseball in Japanese culture. Contributors to the magazine, beside the editor Hayashi Sayaka, also include veteran baseball beat writers associated with Japan's major sports dailies; academics whose research involves Japanese baseball; and writers and artists who produce baseball-themed work. They constitute the first conscious attempt to chart the impact of baseball on Japanese culture (see Figure 11). In the tradition established in its inaugural volume, Volume 2 of *Rooftop Baseball* continues to explore baseball in the context of cultural values and social mores. Along with the issue's thematic focus on baseball and fashion, there is a secondary focus on baseball's relationship with nuclear energy. In a series of essays, a timeline, and an interview, the writers of these pieces treat a relationship that even the introductory article admits is an "unusual match."

In an article called "Shimin yakyū merutodaun" (Civic Stadium Meltdown), Hori Naoki, writing from Hiroshima, addresses the plan to build a new baseball stadium in that city and wonders if, in Hiroshima of all places, the civic government should not be providing leadership about legislation to ensure energy safety rather than worrying about funding a stadium initiative. A timeline and subsequent article look at the development of nuclear energy in Japan alongside milestones in Japanese baseball, identifying Shōriki Matsutarō (1885–1969), the president of Yomiuri who has been touted as the "father of professional baseball in Japan," as also the "father of nuclear energy" in Japan in that he was an early advocate of its adoption. Another article looks at the name and marketing of the minor league Albuquerque Isotopes, which playfully treat the team's proximity to Los Alamos, as an example of different attitudes toward nuclear power in the United States and in Japan. Finally, this special section of the issue also includes the transcription of an interview with an economist asking questions about the Japanese Professional Baseball League's response to the nuclear meltdown in Fukushima and whether the league could survive a major earthquake in Tokyo.

Likewise, Volume 2 of *Rooftop Baseball* also continues providing reviews of baseball-themed literature, films, and music. In particular, the issue provides reviews of recent baseball books that in some way break new ground. Among the books that the editors recommend is the American author Chad Harbach's 2011 novel *The Art of Fielding*. In fact, so revolutionary do they find Harbach's book that four of the contributors have a roundtable discussion about the novel. The novel tells the story of a promising young college shortstop named Henry Skrimshander, a defensive phenomenon, whose life and the lives of those around him are upended when one of his throws to first base goes awry and injures one of his teammates. The participants in this roundtable discussion cite Harbach's novel, which was warmly received by both critics and readers and won the New York Times Award for best work of fiction of the year in 2011, as the rare baseball book that appeals to readers not necessarily interested in baseball, without abandoning baseball as its focus. In many ways, according to the contributors, Harbach's is a baseball fan's baseball novel that rises above the level of a baseball novel to appeal to a diverse audience of readers.

Remaining true to the magazine's mission of concentrating on Japanese cultural productions about baseball, the issue also features an interview with the baseball writer and publisher Hori Naoki, who penned the earlier article about attitudes toward nuclear energy in Hiroshima and has authored over fifteen books, including such baseball novels as *Tengoku kara kita sutoppaa* (The Stopper from Heaven, 2013). In the article, Hori describes what it is about baseball that lends itself as a theme for fiction. Volume 2 also includes the impressions of a game at the Seibu Dome by two young female singer-songwriters and an interview with a DJ who incorporates baseball songs into his music at events that he holds around the country.

Many of those associated with the production of *Rooftop Baseball* are also involved in the annual Tokyo Yakyū Book Fair that is held at Biblio in the Jinbōcho section of Tokyo. The Fair has come to serve, along with the Rooftop Baseball Publishing house itself, as the unofficial headquarters for this loose affiliation of cultural commentators about baseball. In turn, many of these same figures are involved in an organization called the Shōwa Twenties Baseball Club, whose participants discuss the glory days of Japanese baseball in the third decade of the Showa period (1945–1955) while looking at books and magazines from Biblio's extensive collection of works from that period that constitute something of a moveable baseball library.<sup>18</sup> The discussions that come out of these meetings have helped dictate the content of the two issues of Hayashi's magazine.

Among the intriguing recent books about the intersection of baseball and culture in Japan is one that explores the relevance of baseball in the context of contemporary Japan's rapidly changing culture. Nakamizo Yasutaka's *Puroyakyū shibō yūgi: saraba Shōwa no puro yakyū* (Professional Baseball's Death Game: Farewell Shōwa Era Professional Baseball) represents the bringing together in book form of a number of entries in Nakamizo's wildly popular blog of the same name in which he laments both the demotion of baseball from its undisputed status as object of cultural obsession and the loss of the Yomiuri Giants' unchallenged status as "Japan's team." He looks back to the Giants' final glory days in the late 1990s and early 2000s when a young Takahashi Yoshinobu (1975–) looked like the second coming of Nagashima Shigeo and the team was managed by the unflappable Hara Tatsunori (1958–). Despite the title, Nakamizo's work really marks the early Heisei period (1989–) as the final heyday of Japanese professional baseball and provides a nostalgic portrait of Japanese baseball that undoubtedly holds an appeal for an audience that mourns the loss of baseball as the "only game in town" in twentieth-century Japan's cultural milieu.

In a style that is engaging and rich in detail, Nakamizo charts the diminution of baseball in the popular imagination in Japan in terms of recognizable cultural phenomena. For example, in the chapter entitled "The World Baseball Classic Is the World's Koshien," Nakamizo points to the Japanese media's attempt to describe the importance and excitement attached to the recently inaugurated World Baseball Championship

18. Hayashi Sayaka, "Shōwa 20 Nendai" [Showa twenties], *Okujō Yakyū* [Rooftop Baseball], Vol. 1 (October 21, 2013), 74.

in terms of Japan's annual High School Baseball Championship, thereby framing the importance of Japan's victories in the first two tournaments in culturally relevant terms.<sup>19</sup> Similarly, in the chapter entitled "The Ideal Baseball Stadium Is Saizeriya" Nakamizo attempts to demonstrate that the last great age of baseball coincided with the emergence of family restaurants, including the popular chain in the title, as a popular dining option and how like family restaurants, baseball teams had recognized the need to work hard to draw fans, including families, to the ballpark in an age of fierce competition from other forms of entertainment.

Moreover, Nakamizo attempts to chronicle the decline of baseball from its golden age through an examination of the evolution of computer games during the period considered in the book. Family Stadium, usually abbreviated to Famista, is a baseball video game developed by the Namco Bandai company in 1989, which featured some of the great players from the final years of the Shōwa period, including Ochiai Hiromitsu (1953–) and Murata Chōji (1949–). *Jikkyō Powerful Pro Yakyū*, or *Pawapuro*, on the other hand, released by Konami in 1995, distinguished itself from the former game by a focus on young players just emerging in the 1990s; with its cute characters with oversized heads, it was clearly directed at a younger demographic.<sup>20</sup> The evolution in gaming, according to Nakamizo, is yet one more indication of an intense marketing designed to sustain baseball's relevance in an environment in which there are a greater number of entertainment options than ever.<sup>21</sup>

In Japanese baseball itself as in its cultural representations, the continuing validity of the Samurai baseball model is being challenged. In an article about Kawamoto Kōji, the manager of the Marukame Jōsei High School baseball team, a perennial baseball powerhouse in Kagawa prefecture at which Kawamoto was once a star player, the manager was asked to reflect on differences between the attitude and approach to baseball by today's high school players and the *konjō*-focused baseball of his generation.<sup>22</sup> Kawamoto admits that today's approach is healthier and more effective, but players have to be more self-motivated and as the manager, he needs to find ways to build the sense of team consciousness and team work that are essential for a winning team but which do not necessarily come naturally to today's players. In abandoning the excesses of the *konjō* model, which was built on strict hierarchies and unreasonable expectations of adherence to the values of Bushidō, something essential to the sense of playing for a team has been lost.

Takahata Yoshihide, who introduces himself in *A Theory of Guts Baseball for the Twenty-First Century* as a "mental trainer," offers an alternative view of Samurai baseball

19. Nakamizo Yasutaka, *Puroyakyū shibō yūgi: saraba shōwa no puro yakyū* [Professional baseball's death game: Farewell Shōwa-era professional baseball] (Tokyo: Yūkyan Manabi Shuppan, 2016), 56.

20. Ibid., 128.

21. Ibid.

22. Morishita Yūsuke, "Konjōron kieta jidai: 'jibun de kangaete ugoke' Kagawa Marukame Jōsei" [In the age of the disappearance of guts baseball theory: "Think for and motivate yourselves" Kagawa Prefecture's Marukame Jōsei], *Asahi* online, July 1, 2016, accessed January 8, 2017, <http://www.asahi.com/articles/ASJ6X0201J6WPLXB014.html>.

for a new generation. It maintains some of the qualities that have long defined the Japanese game while meeting the needs of a new generation and a new set of cultural expectations. Takahata's contention is that Japan's Samurai baseball model, to remain relevant, needs more than ever to be grounded in the value of *konjō*, but an approach in which *gattsu supōtsu* and the suffering it entails is not simply a badge of courage, but is one dimension of a more nuanced approach to the game in which enjoyment of the game and pleasure in the stages it takes to achieve victory are paramount. According to this model, taking pleasure in baseball as a game makes for a more effective approach than one in which suffering and tolerating pain are equated with success.<sup>23</sup>

The recent books discussed in the introduction by Sayama Kazuo, Takahata Yoshihide, and Kobayashi Nobuya all revolve around the central concern about baseball's viability in the cultural landscape of a changing Japan and all attempt to respond to some of the same central questions: what role might baseball play in the future of Japan's society? If baseball continues to appeal to the Japanese, will its appeal be that of the Samurai baseball model that has flourished in Japan traditionally or will it be a different model, one closer to the model embraced in the United States that differs in fundamental ways from Japanese *yakyū*? Although these works address these questions differently, all are alike in seeing a prominent role for baseball in Japan even as the culture changes.

Likewise, what Nakamizo's and Beat Takeshi's recent books and the journal *Rooftop Baseball* and the wide-ranging activities associated with the magazine and with the Shōwa Twenties Baseball Club suggest is a more intentionally analytic approach to the study of baseball and culture in Japan. Implicit in these reflective works is a recognition of the rich history of cultural production about baseball in Japan and a willingness to reflect on the cultural significance of literature, film, and manga that treat baseball. Reflection on the game of baseball in Japan and the body of works to which it has given rise also reveals the persistence of the recurring myths surrounding Samurai baseball that have long defined the image and understanding of Japanese baseball.

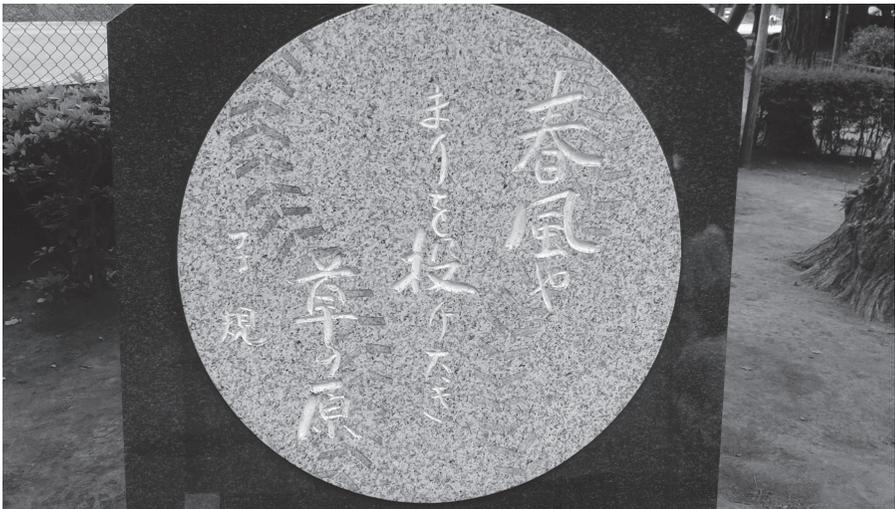
Despite challenges in recent decades from both within and without the world of sport to its undisputed position as Japan's most popular sport, baseball has survived and continues to thrive. Baseball has proven resilient time and again, and when pundits have predicted baseball's demise, the sport has reemerged as one of Japan's most reliable cultural touchstones, as a subject that constitutes the site for alternately sanctioning or challenging traditional values and the myths of Samurai baseball. Understanding modern Japan and its evolving values demands looking at the ways in which writers, manga artists, and filmmakers have represented the grand old game, a nation's pastime that continues to exert an incomparable appeal.

If there is a shrine to baseball as a subject of cultural production in Japan, it is to be found in Tokyo's Ueno Park. Tucked away in a corner of the park, far from the bustle of the popular zoo, far from the museums welcoming thousands of visitors each day, is

23. Takahata Yoshihide, *Yakyū 21 seiki konjōron* [A theory of guts baseball for the twenty-first century] (Tokyo: Ikeda Shoten, 2016), 132.

a small, unassuming baseball field. The field itself is relatively new, but it is said to stand on the very spot that was appropriated by Ichikō players in the mid-Meiji period and became the team's *de facto* practice field. The field is called the Masaoka Shiki Memorial Baseball Field and bears a plaque of the Ichikō player who later in his tragically short life would not only contribute to the popularization of the sport through explanatory essays, but who also saw in baseball the material for cultural expression (see Figure 12). It was in Shiki's baseball-themed poetry and the manuscript for his work of baseball fiction, "Lone Branch in the Mountain Wind," unpublished in his own lifetime but rediscovered later, that established the tradition of cultural expressions of baseball in Japan. The setting for the baseball games in Shiki's novella, including the scene where the protagonist first encounters the young woman who will become the object of his affections, is the very baseball ground that now bears his name.

Whether in the humble baseball field in Ueno Park or the sacred soil of Koshien, whether in the magnificent Tokyo Dome or the sandlots and temple grounds that served as baseball diamonds for the postwar generation fulfilling a hunger to reconnect with the game, the Japanese in the modern period have found within the baseball diamond the setting for a genuine national love affair while discovering in the same intimate space a repository for traditional values. Generations of writers, filmmakers, and manga artists have sought in baseball-themed work to confront the myths of Samurai baseball, alternately affirming and challenging the values embedded in those myths. Baseball has never failed to fulfill that mission, providing a reassuring home field to which the Japanese have returned in times of uncertainty and change, offering the inevitable safety of home.



**Figure 12.** A commemorative plaque with a baseball haiku by Masaoka Shiki in front of the field that bears his name in Ueno Park. Photograph by the author.

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