

The Significance of Koshien Baseball in Postwar Okinawa: A Representation of ‘Okinawa’

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Following the Second World War, Okinawa was under the administration of the US armed forces from August 15, 1945 to May 15, 1972. High schools in Okinawa began entering the preliminary tournament of the National High School Baseball Championship Tournament in 1952, before the islands were returned to Japan. Schools from the region competed in the tournament in 1958, 1962, 1963 (when the Okinawa team won its first game), 1966 and 1968 (when the Okinawa team advanced to the semi-finals for the first time). After that, Tomishiro High School successively advanced to the quarterfinals in 1976, 1977 and 1978, and Okinawa Fishery High School succeeded in advancing to the finals in 1990 and 1991. Then, in 2010, Konan High School won the championship for the first time for Okinawa. In spite of being very skilled in the sport, until winning the championship, Okinawa's participation seemed to represent the 'sympathy' of the sad experiences from the war, 'special arrangements' and economic disadvantages compared to the mainland, and a mental weakness whereby there was a lack of tenacity for the purpose of victory. In short, it can be said that such representation drew the attention of Okinawan people to a 'summer moment', in effect throwing a veil over the real history of their experiences and lives during and after the war.

Keywords: Okinawa; high school baseball; Koshien; representation

Twenty-four years after being separated from their homeland, the sons of Okinawa, living their lives under discrimination as Japanese, have grown up to defeat their brothers on the mainland. 'Okinawa Shall Itself Return,' was one of the slogans advocated by high school students for requiring the return of Okinawa to the homeland at the All-Okinawa Gathering event. The players of Konan High School triumphantly showed the confidence and pride of Okinawan boys to all Japanese through their own abilities. Not one player shed tears at the moment of victory.¹

Characteristics of Japanese Baseball Culture

In studying the diffusion and acceptance of modern sports in Asia, Mangan commented that the globalisation of modern sports has progressed through three phases: imperialism, nationalism and consumerism. He also stated that the acceptance and appropriation of modern sports in Asia are in a 'double helix' with the modernisation of society.² In this context, the author has previously analysed how the Japanese people have accepted,

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translated, transformed and appropriated baseball culture – having originated in the USA and disseminated throughout the Pan-Pacific region – placing a focus mainly on the peripheral aspects of consumer society development, and then studying the establishment of a professional baseball league from the viewpoint of human networks.³

In terms of Okinawa, there are numerous studies on Okinawa's political relationship with the Japanese government and the USA administration,⁴ but there are only a few studies regarding the relationship in terms of sports, a reflection of what Bairner and Sugden would call 'sport in divided societies'.⁵ For instance, based on the history of Japan–USA relationships, Kazumi Tomiyama studied the significance of the Olympic Flame relay passing through Okinawa for the 1964 Tokyo Olympics,⁶ and the author has analysed the build-up and wavering of the Okinawan peoples' nationality.⁷ Ichida and Hukatani also have recently conducted studies on the history of baseball in Okinawa.⁸

In this paper, the author discusses high school baseball as it pertains to the characteristics of Japanese baseball culture. Studied and analysed are the process of acceptance, translation, transformation and appropriation of high school baseball by Okinawan people, as well as the formation of representing Okinawa through high school baseball. The author's comments and conclusions are based on an analysis of newspaper reports and the results of fieldwork interviews with persons concerned.

Narratives on Koshien Baseball: Sports, Image of Ideal Youth and Postwar Reconstruction

Held in August each year, the National High School Baseball Tournament (hereinafter the 'Koshien Baseball Tournament') originated from the first national junior-high school baseball championship tournament held in 1915. At that time, baseball tournaments were actively held among universities and junior high schools in various parts of the country, and the aforementioned championship tournament was sponsored by the *Asahi Shimbun* (newspaper) Company (hereafter, the *Asahi Shimbun*) in response to a request from the students of Kyoto University.⁹ Wataru Nakao, an employee of the *Asahi Shimbun* involved in the management of the championship tournament from its establishment, recalled the event as follows:

I could not help echoing my sentiment to the special atmosphere created solely by the batting of ingenuous young boy players. It moved me deeply. If this tournament is held regularly on a larger scale with the participation of more teams, which will create a championship contention of a much higher level, undoubtedly it will not only attract more spectators, but also further heighten the effect of student baseball.¹⁰

Accordingly, it is easy to see that those concerned with the tournament firmly recognised that baseball was a sport that intelligent young boys play fairly, putting forth their best efforts and abilities while understanding and practicing true sportsmanship.¹¹

The significance of high school baseball and the Koshien Baseball Tournament that the sponsors (i.e. the *Asahi Shimbun* and Japan High School Baseball Federation) expected to see led to the restarting of the National Junior High/High School Baseball Championship Tournament the year following Japan's defeat in the Second World War. On January 21, 1946, approximately five months after Japan's surrender, The *Asahi Shimbun* made the following announcement regarding the plan to start holding the tournament again:

The purposes of restarting the tournament are to nurture as many young boys as possible who will be able to shoulder the future of reborn Japan in various fields and utilize sports to rehabilitate the confused young minds twisted by the throws of war, while helping to nurture a democratic spirit and develop bright and openhearted dispositions through the virtues of

baseball. We believe that intelligent, bright young students will surely concentrate their energy and spirit on each pitch and opportunity at bat with the spirit of fair play for the sake of tradition and pride in the intense heat of summer. In so doing, they will become able to contribute much to the rebuilding of Japan in terms of sports.¹²

It therefore becomes clear that the ingenious, vivid plays made by young boys in the sport called baseball clearly affected their roles in the postwar reconstruction of Japan and helped to nurture democratic spirit.

Historically, each time a ballpark became too small, a larger ballpark was used. After the 10th tournament held in 1924, the search for a larger ballpark led to the selection of Hanshin Koshien Ballpark (Nishinomiya City, Hyogo Prefecture). Since that time, the tournament has been referred to as the 'Koshien Baseball Tournament'. As a result, in the summer every year, the Koshien Baseball Tournament has provided news sources for the *Asahi Shimbun* to report and comment on the development of each game, and to repeatedly construct the narratives whereby intelligent, masculine, righteous, exemplary young players compete with impressive fine plays in the spirit of true sportsmanship and fair play as representatives of their respective districts. High school baseball, represented by Koshien Baseball, has shown the image of 'ideal youth' to all Japanese.¹³

Since the first national championship tournament in 1915, the National Junior High/High School Baseball Championship Tournament has been held 93 times (including 2011), and was suspended for the period from 1941–1945.¹⁴ In 2011, 4014 high school teams competed in the preliminary tournaments of their respective prefectures over a period of about one month, and then 49 representative teams of from all of the prefectures in Japan – two teams from Tokyo and Hokkaido, respectively – gathered at Koshien Ballpark.

Each year, local television and radio stations broadcast the preliminary tournaments of their respective prefectures, and Japan Broadcasting Corporation, NHK (Nippon Hoso Kyokai), broadcast all of the games of the first round via television and/or radio. The *Asahi Shimbun* also reports the results of every game on either the front page or another page in the newspaper. Almost every professional Japanese baseball player has experienced playing in this high school baseball tournament.

Baseball History in Okinawa and 'Special Arrangements' by Tatsuo Saeki

It is said that baseball was introduced to Okinawa in 1894, when Kiko Kanagusuku (1875–1967), a student of Okinawa Prefecture Junior High School (presently Shuri High School), and his friends visited Kyoto on a school trip and watched a baseball game for the first time at the ballpark of Daisan High School (now the University of Kyoto).¹⁵ On that occasion, they briefly learned the rules and were presented with gloves and balls. Then, on returning to Okinawa, they played baseball on the school grounds. After this, in 1903, Yuto Yamada (President of the Okinawa Baseball Federation pre-1939) planned and held a friendship baseball game with naval personnel of the USS *Boxberg*, an American warship with the American team winning the game by a score of 19 to 18.¹⁶

In 1910, Okinawa Second Junior High School (presently Naha High School) was established by the division of the school, becoming independent of Okinawa Junior High School, which became Okinawa First Junior High School. Following this, the two schools periodically played games with each other beginning from 1914. After that, baseball teams formed one after another, and the first baseball tournament in Okinawa was held in 1916.¹⁷

As for the National High School Baseball Championship Tournament, beginning from 1978 (i.e. the 60th memorial tournament), all prefectures qualified for participation in the

tournament. However, before that, participation was classified at prefectures that qualified and districts that qualified as a group. Regarding Okinawa, Naha Commercial School and Okinawa First Junior High School (presently Shuri High School) first participated in the Kyushu District Tournament of the Eighth National Championship Tournament in 1922. Then, beginning from 1932, Okinawa teams began participating in the Southern Kyushu District Tournament (Kumamoto, Oita, Miyazaki, Kagoshima and Okinawa) every year, but none of them advanced to the Koshien Baseball Tournament before the Second World War.

Following Japan's defeat in the war, it was not until 1952 that an Okinawa team advanced to the Eastern Kyushu District Tournament (Comprising Oita, Miyazaki, Kagoshima and Okinawa).¹⁸ Tatsuo Saeki (1892–1980), Vice-President of the Japan High School Baseball Federation at the time and President in 1967–1980, made the following comment when he was informed that the Okinawa team had already returned to Okinawa after being defeated in the Eastern Kyushu District Tournament in spite of its wish to make it to the Koshien Ballpark: 'Damn it! I have forgotten to pay attention to Okinawa. We must not leave Okinawa unattended. We should implement exchange related to baseball between Okinawa and the mainland'.¹⁹ Then, in 1955, he made a 28-hour trip by ship to the port of Naha, and in front of high school presidents and those concerned with baseball, he said, 'Let's organise a high school baseball federation in Okinawa'. On February 1, 1956, a general meeting marking the foundation of the organisation was held, in which Saeki also participated. The next day, Saeki was invited to Koza High School, which had the strongest baseball team in Okinawa at the time. He made the following speech in front of the participants:

Even though Okinawa is currently under the administration of the United States, the high school baseball teams of Okinawa have joined the Japan High School Baseball Federation of the mainland, which means, in a sense, Okinawa's return to Japan. So please understand you can avail yourselves of our cooperation without hesitation or self-debasement.²⁰

Tsuginori Asato (a first-year student of Koza High School and a member of its baseball team at the time, as well as a Chief board member of the Okinawa High School Baseball Federation) later on made the following comment on Saeki's special arrangement for Okinawa:

Mr. Saeki said, "Okinawa experienced violent ground battles, tens of thousands of people suffered terribly due to the war". Therefore, it is an urgent matter that we must help Okinawan people to become able to play baseball with ease, as on the mainland.

As described above, Saeki thought of Okinawa in a special way; the region seemed special to any observer.²¹

Asato remembers that every time Saeki came to Okinawa to watch a game played between a mainland team and an Okinawa team, he brought baseball goods such as bats and gloves, and presented them to the Okinawa team before the start of the game. Then, Saeki's special arrangement for Okinawa (i.e. under the administration of US armed forces at the time) led to the participation of a representative team from Okinawa at the 40th memorial tournament in 1958: each prefecture was entitled to dispatch a representative team. In advance of the national tournament that year, he invited four main players of leading teams in Okinawa to watch the games of the National High School Selected Teams Tournament at the Koshien Ballpark in the spring. Those players were Tsuginori Asato (first baseman, Koza High School), Shinichi Kuniyoshi (pitcher, Naha High School), Zenichi Ishikawa (pitcher, Ishikawa High School) and Hiroshi Nakasone (shortstop, Shuri High School).

On the mainland, television broadcasts of the games started in 1952, but broadcasting of games on television in Okinawa did not begin until 1959. Therefore, his intention was to have them see the Koshien Ballpark in advance of the national tournament, taking into consideration that professional baseball games were broadcast only on radio from time to time in Okinawa.²² Asato made the following comment in terms of Okinawa's distinctive disadvantages compared with the mainland at that time:

In Okinawa, people clap their hands applauding double-plays when they occur, but mainland players are well-fit physically, capable of catching short-hop balls skillfully and throwing them swiftly, so double-plays don't receive such reactions from the audience. Furthermore, I was surprised at the scale of the Koshien Ballpark.²³

Asato clearly remembers what Saeki said to him on that occasion: 'Well, you will all become leaders in the future after visiting Koshien and returning to Okinawa'.²⁴ Of the four players, only Asato entered a college on the mainland, practiced baseball earnestly and became a leader in Okinawa.

Sympathy for the Weak by Mainland Media, and Okinawa the Occupied Territory

Exempted from the district tournament, Shuri High School participated in the 40th Memorial National Tournament in 1958 for the first time, representing Okinawa. The average height of the team members was 162 cm, and apparently the team members looked physically inferior compared with the members of representative teams from other prefectures. In addition, Okinawa had no ballparks with outfield fencing or outfield bleachers, and tournaments were held in high school grounds. So they borrowed the Kamoike Ballpark in Kagoshima on the way to Koshien, and practiced handling balls that bounced back from the outfield fence. Then they left for Koshien, travelling on a night train.²⁵

Such being the situation at that time, then vice-president Saeki thought of having Hiroshi Nakasone, the captain of Shuri High School, to give the player's oath at the opening ceremony as a present to encourage him. At the moment the oath ended, a storm of applause filled the ballpark unexpectedly. Saeki commented, 'I felt moved to tears'.²⁶

After Shuri High School lost the game against Tsuruga High School (Fukui Prefecture) by a score of 0 to 3, Asato commented:

Although our team lost the game by a score of 3 to 0, Okinawan people were pleased with our performance, saying '3 to 0, that's a good game!'. Everybody thought that we would lose the game by a much larger score difference, like 20 to 0.²⁷

Choetsu Fukuhara, the manager at Shuri High School, participated in the tournament carrying a passport issued by the American military government, making a one-day trip by ferry to the mainland. Recollecting his experiences at the time, he commented:

One of the employees of the ryokan [a Japanese-style hotel] I stayed in at asked me, 'You are very good at speaking Japanese. What kind of a text are you using?'. I think that we seemed to be considered foreigners.²⁸

Moreover, a curious incident occurred. After the game, the players of Shuri High School returned to Naha carrying dirt from Koshien Ballpark with them to commemorate their participation, just as players of other prefectures do and as a symbol of the goal that every Okinawa baseball team wants to attain. But, the dirt was thrown into the sea because it was regarded as 'foreign soil' according to the plant quarantine regulations enacted before Okinawa's return to the mainland. This was reported widely in mainland media. After reading about it, Mitsuko Kondo, a flight attendant working the Okinawa route for

Japan Airlines, collected some small rocks from near the Koshien Ballpark, put them in a small box made of paulownia wood and presented it to Shuri High School. The school then built a friendship monument, into which the rocks were embedded. After that, this story came to be told often as an instance of good deeds that occurred related to baseball in Okinawa. However, Choetsu Fukuhara, manager of Shuri High School's baseball team at the time, said, 'We did not think so deeply about the fact of the dirt was thrown into the sea itself; however, after all the talk about it nationwide, we were amazed that news of the incident would spread so widely'.²⁹ However, in contrast, it should be noted that Asato said, 'I can't believe it! I felt that it was very strange. What a displeasing development for the team from Okinawa; destroyed by the war to the point of having no trees or grass at all'.³⁰ He seemed to be very displeased with this development.

In analysing all of this, one cannot help but notice the remarkable gaps between the sentiments of the Okinawan people who have kept trying to enjoy baseball irrespective of the saddening experience of war, life under the administration of the US armed forces, realisation of the disadvantages compared with life on the mainland and the mainland media trying to stereotype Okinawa. However, certainly there existed complicated sentiments in the minds of people concerned with baseball in Okinawa who thought that, without the special arrangements made by Tatsuo Saeki, it would be impossible to resolve the actual problem of disadvantages compared with the mainland.

The special arrangements for Okinawa by Tatsuo Saeki continued. Even if Okinawa won a preliminary district tournament, beginning from 1952, it did not qualify for participation in the National Baseball Championship Tournament unless it succeeded in winning the Eastern Kyushu District Tournament (Miyazaki, Kagoshima, Oita and Okinawa), and then from 1959 it had to also win the Southern Kyushu District Tournament (Miyazaki, Kagoshima and Okinawa). As a result, Asato commented,

When Mr Saeki came to watch our game, he said, 'Okinawa will never make it to Koshien as long as it is in the group including Kagoshima'. So, he changed the existing grouping at his own discretion; that is, by his voice of authority, saying 'Combine Okinawa with Miyazaki!'.³¹

After Saeki used his authority to realign divisions, Kagoshima qualified for the national tournament in 1960 (i.e. the 42nd tournament) and Okinawa could qualify for the national tournament provided that it won the Southern Kyushu District Tournament (i.e. Miyazaki and Okinawa groups). As a result, Okinawa High School (presently Okinawa Shogaku) won the game played with Miyazaki's representative team in the Southern Kyushu District Tournament in 1962, and qualified for the 44th national tournament for the first time (i.e. Okinawa lost the first round game with Hiroshima's representative team, Koryo High School, by a score of 6 to 4). As an aside, Sohachi Aniya was the ace pitcher at the time. After graduation, he secured employment at Ryukyu Tobacco and continued to play baseball for the company team. He later became actively engaged in baseball for various professional baseball teams such as Hiroshima and Hanshin.

Shuri High School participated in the 45th memorial national tournament held in 1963. A team from each prefecture was entitled to play in the tournament, and Shuri High School represented Okinawa. It won its first round game with Nichidai Yamagata, the team representing Yamagata Prefecture, by a close score of 4 to 3, but lost its second round game with Shimonoseki Commercial High School, the team representing Yamaguchi Prefecture, by the score of 8 to 0. The following is an article from the *Asahi Shimbun* titled 'Independence of Sympathy and Powerful Growth – Shuri Has Realised Its Dream!':

Shuri's victory is not simply for itself. It can be said that this victory is for all 26 high schools that participated in the Okinawa District Preliminary Tournament and for the people of

Okinawa. People have always watched games with sympathy. However, the game played this time proves that Okinawa's weakness in baseball is now something of the past, and Okinawa baseball has grown to the extent of being able to stand on its own legs. After the game, Obara, the manager of Nichidai Yamagata, commented, 'I don't want to make any excuse for our defeat, but it was difficult for us to play the game against the Okinawa team; possibly a sense of difficulty due to national sentiments'.³²

From this article, it is understood that any team that competed with a team from Okinawa feels a sense of difficulty in competing due to being conscious of national sentiments. It can be said that there was a deep 'sympathy towards Okinawa' by the high school baseball players as well as the people watching the games.

The fourth time Okinawa participated in the national tournament was realised by Konan High School in 1966 (i.e. the 48th tournament). However, the team lost the game against Ryugasaki Ichiko by the close score 6 to 5, losing in an extra Tenth inning. A great step was taken at the time of Okinawa's fifth participation in the tournament in 1968, the 50th tournament (Again, each prefecture was entitled to a representative team). The representative team that year was Konan High School, which advanced to the semi-finals by winning four games successively from the first round. However, they lost to Kokoku High School of Osaka by a score of 14 to 0. The results were reported throughout Okinawa in newspapers, the title reading 'Konan Typhoon':

Here and there on shopping streets (Naha), some shop owners are shouting loudly 'No time to do business today. Let's watch high school baseball on TV', while bringing their televisions from their homes and setting them in front of their shops. What a surprising arrangement it is! On Yaeyama [an isolated island in the Okinawa chain], people at companies, public offices, shops, and general household tuned in their radios before the start of the broadcast. Only a few people were seen on the streets, but each time Konan scored a run, shouts of joy could be heard here and there. The moment Konan won the game, the joy in peoples' voices reached a climax.³³

While reporting about the excitement of the Okinawan people, newspapers kept translating and reporting about the general circumstances in Okinawa at that time, taking into consideration the region's historical background. The article published in the *Okinawa Times* introduced at the beginning of this paper is one of them, but there were also a different kind of article as described below. This particular article places a focus on the wish to develop a better future for Okinawan people as they had lived in adversity, emphasising that it is possible to realise whatever one desires as long as one keeps trying to do so:

And yet, we want to emphasise that they have shown, through their own play, a typical example of the faith 'it is possible to realise whatever one desires as long as one keeps trying to realise it'. This translation has something to do with the history of oppression experienced by Okinawa and the fact that Okinawa is still under the control of a different people. Being under such circumstances, all of Okinawa has gone wild with excitement. It can be said that, 'Energy like this will become a driving force of the prosperity of our society,' and it is Konan that has ignited it.³⁴

Chosho Ahagon, the principal of Konan High School at the time and the one of those concerned, made the following comment:

Okinawa has been separated from the homeland for a long period of time, and in comparison, has been subjected to distinctive disadvantages. However, the players of Konan demonstrated their willpower in terms of the faith 'it is possible to realise whatever one desires as long as one keeps trying to realise it' under any circumstances. Okinawa is not wealthy and is in a disadvantageous region. For the future existence and prosperity of Okinawa, we have no choice but to move forward with the determination which Konan has shown at Koshien

Ballpark as a driving force of important targets to achieve such as economic growth, educational reform and so forth.³⁵

Masaru Gakiya was the team captain and an outstanding player on the Konan baseball team at the time. Gakiya is currently the manager of the Konan baseball team that won the championship among the National High School Selected Teams Tournament in March 2010 and the championship of the National High School Baseball Championship Tournament in August 2010. He is presently the principal and chief director at Konan as well. Gakiya made the following comment regarding the circumstances at that time:

We returned to Okinawa with the account of our achievement as a kind of souvenir. That is to say, our achievement was the championship, which was the result of our faith in believing 'it is possible to realise whatever one desires as long as one keeps trying to realise it'. We attached importance to this faith, but in reality, we have often been at a loss to find the right answer to the question, 'What should we do, and how should we do it practically to win?'. Nevertheless, we have succeeded in winning the championship as a result of our efforts. Certainly, we made various plans ourselves and carried them out in practice and training. We made special preparations for the Koshien tournaments, which I think nobody might have been able to conceive in Okinawa in the past. Our aim was to realise 'self-sufficient baseball'. What is important is to recognise our own abilities and those of the opposing teams. When playing a game, all players must keep close mutual communication in order to be ready for situations that are expected to arise. When we carried out joint practices with other teams at Koshien, all of us, including me, were able remain calm knowing 'there is no difference in our skills and those of the players on the mainland'. That is, we could become confident of ourselves while comparing ourselves with others.³⁶

By 1968, there already existed the seeds of self-sufficient baseball in Okinawa; meaning that the players were thinking by themselves and repeating well-planned practice applicable to actual play. After graduation, Gakiya left Okinawa for the mainland, found employment and went into the non-professional baseball world. He lived in Hokkaido for 38 years, and became manager of the Konan High School baseball team in Okinawa in 2007.

Achievements of the Teams Under Manager Hiroyoshi Sai

In the latter half of the 1970s, Tomishiro High School succeeded in advancing to the quarter-finals round for three consecutive years: 1976–1978, the 58th tournament to the 60th memorial tournament. After that, Okinawa Fishery High School advanced to play at Koshien from 1984 to 1988 (i.e. the 66th tournament to the 70th memorial tournament), and consecutively again in 1990 and 1991 (i.e. the 73rd and the 74th tournaments). The team advanced to the best 16 teams round in 1985, the quarter-finals in 1986, the semi-finals in 1988, then consecutively to the finals in 1990 and 1991. While these teams never managed to win the championship, the number of teams that advanced so high in the rounds in as many years is few.³⁷ However, when Okinawa Fishery High School succeeded in advancing to the final for the first time in 1990, losing the game with Tenri High School (Nara) by a very close score of 1 to 0, The *Asahi Shimbun* made the following comment in its editorial:

It is very impressive and significant that a team of Okinawa, where participation in the Koshien Tournament started quite late compared to other regions, advanced to the finals for the first time. This heroic achievement reminds us again that high school baseball has been a bridge between the mainland and Okinawa during its occupation by the United States, and a symbol of reconstruction after Okinawa's return to the mainland. However, the scholastic ability of Okinawa high school students is still inferior to that of mainland high school students, and improving the ratio of students who continue on to higher education remains an important theme. The average income of Okinawan people is still the lowest in the country,

and it is often said, 'Let's catch up to the mainland'. The winning spirit of Okinawa Fishery High School symbolises a hope to be realised through such efforts. Warmhearted applause from the bleachers and people watching games being broadcast via television seemed to be saying, 'You will overcome Okinawa!'.³⁸

Despite the fact that Okinawa Fishery High School attained outstanding results, the mainland contemptuously believes that the reconstruction of Okinawa is far from over and that it is struggling for 'future hope' in terms of indices for scholastic aptitude, economic strength and other factors. This view of Okinawa is exemplified by the comment, 'Lacking in mental strength,' made by Reiichi Matsunaga, a famous commentator at the Koshien Baseball Tournament when Tomishiro High School advanced to the quarter-finals in 1977:

Drastically advanced technically, Okinawa high school baseball players seem to be slightly weak in mental strength. If they become stronger in that point, they will become the best bet for the championship.³⁹

This comment seems reasonable in the eyes of a commenter specialised in baseball; however, when Tomishiro High School was defeated in the quarter-finals round the next year (1978) as well, the following article appeared on the *Okinawa Times* under the title, 'General Comment on the Tomishiro Game':

In this game, lack of an important element was observed in Tomishiro, regarded as a strong team for the reason that it consists of highly capable players and reportedly has practiced very hard and efficiently. In other words, it lacks mental strength or vitality, which may be defined as a weak point. It still seems difficult for any Okinawa team to win the championship. Certainly it is possible to train to obtain strength (power), but the mental strength to break through the diversity is still insufficient.⁴⁰

When Konan High School advanced to the semi-finals in 1968, the faith, 'possible to realise anything if one keeps trying', was generally acknowledged. Then when Tomishiro High School advanced to the quarter-finals for three consecutive years, everybody thought, 'It is possible for them to play on at an even level or even lead in games against mainland teams'. Nevertheless, there still exists a tendency to emphasise a weakness of vitality in terms of self-reflection. The same belief is noted in an editorial in the *Okinawa Times* when Okinawa Fishery High School advanced to the semi-finals in 1988 (the 70th memorial tournament):

Until now, representative teams from Okinawa have been sadly defeated at Koshien many times. Each time on such occasions, 'mental weakness' has been pointed out, and there have even been comments on the 'character' of Okinawa people. However, it seems that the leading high school baseball teams of Okinawa have overcome this tendency by virtue of the confidence gained from hard practice.⁴¹

There were only two baseball leaders who graduated from universities on the mainland and returned to be a manager of baseball in Okinawa. They are Tsuginori Asato (1940–present) and Hiroyoshi Sai (1941–2007). These baseball mentors are in the same age bracket and strenuously worked to improve the level of Okinawa baseball beginning in the 1960s. They introduced various baseball tactics to Okinawa baseball, where energy was only exerted to hit the ball, not considering the option of bunting or trying a squeeze play.⁴² It is now worthwhile to examine the ideas Hiroyoshi Sai, who managed the Tomishiro High School and Okinawa Fishery High School baseball teams, had about high school baseball in Okinawa.

In Okinawa, where the school district system was being used at the time, Sai applied for and was accepted to teach at Tomishiro High School, which had been newly established in Naha City. Many middle school students were allowed to enter the school,

and he recruited numerous capable players. Then, when the school district system was abolished, he applied for and was accepted to teach at Okinawa Fishery High School in 1980, where it was easier to recruit players from all over Okinawa.

Asato commented as follows:

High school baseball teams in Okinawa were comparatively small in scale when compared to those on the mainland. Only Sai's team was nearly equal with the teams on the mainland. His team could even be referred to as 'all Okinawa.' He used to say, 'My team (Tomishiro) can beat any team in Okinawa, but to win the championship on the mainland, I must move to Okinawa Fishery High School.' He went to isolated islands such as Miyako and Yaeyama in search of players, recruiting many of the stoutly built boys he found there. Accordingly, his team (Okinawa Fishery High School) succeeded in advancing to the finals in 1990 and 1991. Nearly 30 players from his teams became professional baseball players.⁴³

Sai, who desired nothing else but for his team to be champions of the Koshien Baseball Tournament, made the following comment before his death:

Every time my team was defeated, I heard various comments, such as 'gave up too early,' 'not persistent' or 'always unlucky at games of chance'. Such comments may partially suggest the characteristics of the Okinawan people. But I never thought so. My boys practiced to the best of their ability and made it to the Koshien tournament, but were defeated in spite of their best efforts. Accordingly, I do not think it is fair for anyone to say, 'They have put Okinawa to shame'.⁴⁴

Masaaki Uehara, one of Sai's disciples and the present manager of the Okinawa Fishery High School baseball team, made the following comment on the strict and hard practice that Sai required of his players:

If a batter strikes out once, he will be prohibited from playing for one year. If a player makes an error, he will be replaced by another and will be ordered to leave the dugout. We were all forced to carry out such strict and hard practices. Therefore, what I remember is that everyone made frantic efforts. I think that Okinawan boys were branded as 'weak in the later part of a game', 'once the score is evened, they always lose the game'. I think that it was Manager Sai that created the environment where Okinawan boys came to believe, 'We are no longer weaker than mainland players in terms of mental strength'.⁴⁵

From the words of Sai's disciple, it is understood that, although branded as 'once the score is evened, always lose the game' in terms of mental weakness, the players themselves and the manager himself were well aware of such comments, and made their best efforts to prove them wrong. Special arrangements had been made for, and sympathy directed to Okinawa as the result of what it had experienced as the result of the war; that is, being troubled by delays in postwar reconstruction, and struggling with scholastic aptitude and economic gaps. On the other hand, it has been said that 'lack of persistence and mental strength are specific characteristics of Okinawan people', despite the successive victories mentioned above.

Manager Sai and his teams spent days practicing and training very hard to overcome such comments or discourses. Okinawa has continued to attain remarkable results since its advance to the semi-finals in 1968, especially compared with the many other prefectures that have not attained good results worthy of appraisal. This is because Sai and his disciples have been taught that to win the championship, it is a must for them to overcome the representation of 'Okinawa' that others have created.

Okinawan People's Memories and Their Hope Cast Upon Baseball

Hiroyoshi Sai considered himself deeply involved with baseball in its relation to war experiences. He made the following comment before his death:

I was so badly burned by the blast from a grenade to the extent that I sometimes wonder why I am still alive. If the war had not broken out, I might not have been involved in baseball. War has a direct relation to my playing baseball. It is not a matter of questioning, is it bad, or good?⁴⁶

It is presumed that he devoted his whole life to 'pleasing Okinawan people by helping Okinawa, the farthest prefecture from the Koshien Ballpark, win the championship' and appealing the existence of Okinawa through baseball, saying to himself following the extensive scarring to his body, 'I will never be taunted!'.⁴⁷

Tsuginori Asato was also born in Saipan, where his father, who was a soldier, was stationed. He was able to flee the island before the heavy bombardment from American warships; however, his grandparents died during the island assault. He also witnessed seeing many dead bodies of Japanese people floating along the coastline, after the military taught them to commit suicide rather than be captured, leading them to jump into the sea from Banzai Cliff. On the way to the coast, his father was forced to let family members join in this group suicide action. There are many Okinawan people who had this type of experience, and they have lived with those memories for decades of postwar years. Such experiences are quite different from the experiences of the Okinawa baseball players, as represented by a mainland television in a programme intended to introduce players playing baseball, using a scene of fighter jets taking off and landing in the background.⁴⁸

The following comment by Masaru Gakiya suggests something of importance:

As to the question of what Okinawan people have sought in terms of seeking happiness after the war, people there are playing the shamisen [musical instrument with three strings], being mutually broad-minded and having the mindset of, 'Leave it to me,' which anyone can do by themselves. What we cannot do by ourselves has to be entrusted to politicians, sportspersons, artists and public entertainers. Among them, I think there is a part we can entrust to high school baseball. Okinawa has experienced war, many victims of war live here, and it has been reconstructed after the war. Indeed, Okinawa has experienced much. Under such circumstances, over a history of 50 years, it was a moment of hope focused on high school baseball that helped our players to win the championship [both the spring and summer tournaments in 2010]. I said to myself, 'At last, realisation of our heartfelt desires'.

I am not trying to say that 'Okinawan people have had to live in adversity' by way of excuse. I do not place blame on others, and of course, not on the war. Perhaps, it may be better to say, 'the character of Okinawan people,' what I have built up until now, is due to my patience, which is unique to Okinawan people. Some say, 'Anything and everything is due to the war or politics'. In Okinawa, however, those who are truly strong do not think so. When Konan High School advanced to the Semi-finals round, common people said, 'Okinawa is now equal to the mainland'. Until then, some 70% of the people cheered for Okinawa, but now such cheering is no longer seen. Additionally, passports are no longer necessary when crossing over to the mainland. High school baseball has contributed to removing such handicaps and realizing our hopes and dreams. This is the real Okinawa at the present time.⁴⁹

With regard to high school baseball, Tsuginori Asato commented: 'Okinawan people are now freed from an inferiority complex'.⁵⁰ Taking its history into account, Okinawa has certainly been represented with 'sympathy' towards the region due to disadvantages as compared with the mainland, 'special arrangements' made for it, and 'mental weakness' as a characteristic of its people. Even before Okinawa's return to the mainland (May 15, 1972), its teams continuously participated in high school baseball, attracting the attention of people throughout the country and creating great expectations. But the representation of 'Okinawa' that its people have intentionally tried to erase at times, irrespective of the baseball teams having advanced ability superior to that of other prefectures, has remained unchanged. It is worthwhile to pay special attention to this fact.

Seemingly, the representation of 'Okinawa' in high school baseball has created a veil, letting Okinawan people to forget the reality and history of the relationships between the mainland and Okinawa, Okinawa and America and America and the mainland using figures of high school students playing lively in a 'summer moment'. The real history of the experiences of Okinawan people and their lives and strength should be reconsidered taking the virtue of baseball into consideration.

Notes on Contributor

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Notes

1. 'Filled with Delight for Strong Konan', *Okinawa Times*, August 21, 1968.
2. Mangan, *Asian Sport*, 5–9.
3. See Shimizu, 'The Creation of Professional Sports Leagues in Japan'; Shimizu, 'Pan-Pasifikku ni okeru Yakyu no Seijigaku'.
4. See for example, Igarashi, *Bodies of Memory*.
5. Bairner and Sugden, *Sport in Divided Societies*, 2.
6. Tomiyama, *Tokyo Gorin Seika Okinawa-to 1-shu*. Tomiyama, *Orinpikku Tokyo Taikai Okinawa Seika Rirē*.
7. Shimizu, *Rebuilding the Japanese Nation at the 1964 Tokyo Olympics*.
8. See Ichida, *Ryukyu Bōizu*; Ichida, *Umi no Kanata no Koshien*; Hukatani, 'The Whereabouts of Zeal and Fierce Game'.
9. Shimizu, 'The Creation of Professional Sports Leagues in Japan', 558–60.
10. Nakao, *14nenkan no Kaiko*, 4.
11. Shimizu, *Koshien Yakyu no Arukeorōji*, 214–24.
12. *Asahi Shimbun*, January 21, 1946.
13. Shimizu, *Koshien Yakyu no Arukeorōji*.
14. Regarding the Koshien Baseball Tournament, during the period that Japan occupied East Asian countries before the Second World War, one team each from Korea and Manchuria participated from 1921 to 1940, and one team each from Taiwan participated from 1923 to 1940. Future studies on baseball culture in Asia, placing the focus on colonisation, race and nationality, are anticipated.
15. Okinawa is a group of islands consisting mainly of islands scattered east to west, from Amami Island to Yaeyama Island. It is a geo-political keystone for East Asia and Southeast Asia. Much of its history is a history of occupation by other powers. The name 'Ryukyu' was used from 1429 to 1879, having been bestowed by the Emperor of Ming dynasty China. The country prospered as a transit point for trade between Korea, China, Japan, Southeast Asia and Spain. While its suzerain was Ming (and later, Ch'ing) China, Ryukyu was invaded by the Satsuma clan in 1609, and was then controlled by both Japan and China. From 1872 to 1879, it was colonised by Japan and became known as Okinawa Prefecture. During the Second World War, Okinawa was the only major Asian land mass invaded by the American armed forces, and over 200,000 people died in offensive and defensive battles. After the war, the United States established the 'Ryukyu Government' and placed Okinawa under military administration. In 1953, the Amami Islands were returned to Kagoshima Prefecture and became Okinawa Prefecture on May 15, 1972. In 2011, Okinawa Prefecture has a population of 1,400,171. United States Forces Japan (USFJ) in Okinawa are Futenma and Kadena Air Bases, Camp Foster, Camp Hansen, Camp Schwab, Camp Lester and Camp Kinser, etc. amounting to 74% of the American armed forces bases in Japan. In 2008, the number of American military and support personnel in Okinawa totaled 44,963 which was 47.7% of the total number (94,217) in Japan. On June 30, 1959, a US Air Force jet fighter crashed and burst into flames on the grounds of Miyanomori Elementary School (present-day Uruma City), killing 17 people, including 11 children, and injuring 156 people. During the Vietnam War (1959–1975), B-52 strategic bombers were stationed at Kadena Air Base on a regular basis from 1968, and

emergency take-offs and landings at night were common. In one instance, a B-52 crashed and burst into flames immediately after taking off; the cause was determined to be poor maintenance. Additionally, there have been a series of tragic cases of girls being raped by US soldiers and numerous accidents involving military vehicles.

16. Okinawa Baseball Federation, *Okinawa-ken Yakuyu Renmei 50nen-shi*, 1.
17. *Ibid.*, 1.
18. Since Okinawa was under the occupation of the US armed forces, it was allowed to participate in the tournament, but only unofficially. Saeki, *Saeki Tatsuo Jiden*, 185.
19. *Ibid.*, 185–86.
20. *Ibid.*, 186.
21. Asato, from interview, August 23, 2011.
22. Ichida, *Umi no Kanata no Koshien*, 191–92.
23. Asato, cited in *Asahi Shimbun*, July 5, 2007, evening edition.
24. Asato, from interview, August 23, 2011.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Saeki, *Saeki Tatsuo Jiden*, 187.
27. Asato, from interview, August 23, 2011.
28. Fukuhara cited in *Asahi Shimbun*, July 5, 2007, evening edition.
29. Fukuhara, comment made on ABC TV at the opening ceremony of the 84th National High School Baseball Championship Tournament, August 8, 2002.
30. Asato, cited in *Asahi Shimbun*, July 5, 2007, evening edition.
31. Asato, from interview, August 23, 2011.
32. 'Dojyo kara hitoridachi Takumashii seicho – Yume wo hatashita Shuri no shori ['Independence of Sympathy and Powerful Growth – Shuri Has Realised Its Dream!'], *Asahi Shimbun*, August 13, 1963, evening edition.
33. 'Konan Typhoon', *Okinawa Times*, August 21, 1968.
34. *Okinawa Times*, August 22, 1968.
35. Ahagon, cited in *Okinawa Times*, August 17, 1968.
36. Gakiya, from interview, August 24, 2011.
37. Except for two tournaments suspended because of war, of the 91 tournaments held with 47 prefectures participating, 27 prefectures have won the championship and 17 have won it twice. There are eight prefectures that have won it more than six times: Aichi, Hiroshima, Ehime, Osaka, Wakayama, Kanagawa, Tokyo and Hyogo. Konan High School, led by manager Masaru Gakiya, won the first championship for Okinawa, and the achievements for the Okinawa teams after the 1970s are ranked high compared to those of other prefectures.
38. 'Editorial Comments', *Asahi Shimbun*, August 22, 1990.
39. *Okinawa Times*, August 19, 1977, evening edition.
40. 'Sohyo: Tomishiro-sen' ['General Comment on the Tomishiro Game'], *Okinawa Times*, August 21, 1978.
41. *Okinawa Times*, August 22, 1988.
42. Asato, from interview, August 23, 2011.
43. *Ibid.*
44. Japan Broadcasting Corporation, 'Koshien wo Wakaseta Mei-Kantoku tachi' ['Most Impressive Great Managers in Koshien'], NHK Archives, July 31, 2011.
45. *Ibid.*
46. Nippon Television Network Corporation, 'Tengoku no Sai Kantoku e' ['To Manager Sai in Heaven'], Spōtsu Urugusu GG ['Sports News Urugusu GG'], July 8, 2007.
47. Japan Broadcasting Corporation, 'Koshien wo Wakaseta Mei-Kantoku tachi' ['Most Impressive Great Managers in Koshien'], NHK Archives, July 31, 2011.
48. Okinawan people continue to their lives influenced by military base cultures. Hiroyoshi Sai, after talking about the scars on his body as a result of the war, made the following comment on Nippon Television (July 8, 2007):

At that time, the military draft system was still in effect, and there were many major league baseball players stationed in Okinawa. So, I had many chances to see their marvelous playing skills. You know, they do weight training while playing baseball!

Sai, who learned the necessity of muscle toning, introduced it to his players years ago using training gear made of concrete. In talking about communicating with American soldiers, as

an elementary school boy living in Ishikawa City (presently Uruma City) in the latter half of the 1940s, Tsuginori Asato also saw a team of Afro-American men playing baseball with a team of Caucasian men on ground they had leveled using a bulldozer. He clearly remembers a major league catcher who could throw a ball to first base while still in a crouching posture. In an interview (August 23, 2011), he said, 'I made a living by collecting home-run balls and selling them to the baseball team of Ishikawa High School located nearby.

49. Gakiya, from interview, August 24, 2011.
50. Asato, from interview, August 23, 2011.

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