

**Remember the Glory Days of the Nation:  
Sport as lieu de mémoire in Japan**

**Veranstalter:** Ghent University and University of Düsseldorf

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The French historian Pierre Nora introduced the theoretical framework for mapping lieux de mémoire, places of remembrance that shape both our knowledge of history and our history-shaped identities. The concept has been used to describe inventories of memory for different countries in the last two decades. During the conference, the participants tried to apply Nora's theoretical framework to memories of sports in Japan. Japanese history and national construction has been full of sports landmarks since the end of 19th century. Western-style sports were introduced to Japan in order to modernize the country and develop cultures of bodies resembling those of the Western world. Japan's modernization has been a process of embracing Western thought and culture, while at the same time attempting to establish what distinguishes Japan from the West, and sports functioned as sites of contested identities and memories. Olympics, baseball and soccer have produced memories, but so have the martial arts, which by their very name signify an attempt to create traditions beyond Western sports.

Modes of memory in Japan therefore act in two ways: They are engaged simultaneously in trying to ascertain Japan's place in modernity, and at the same time assert her singularity against the West. Since modern sports form bodies of modern citizens and at the same time offer countless opportunities for competitions with other nations, they provide an excellent ground for testing and contesting national identifications. But it is not only international competition that serves as lieu de mémoire in sports. National tournaments, which begin with local competition, then proceed to regional and finally national elimination rounds, have been influential in shaping the conception of national territory, just as the

Tour de France, for example, has served to shape the domestic conception of France, according to Georges Vigarello.

Opening the conference, ANDREAS NIEHAUS and CHRISTIAN TAGSOLD sketched out five dimensions to serve as a basis for discussing sport as lieux de mémoire in Japan. Identity, bodies and nostalgia are the sites in which memories inscribe themselves and help to form the notion of the nation. The image of the samurai has been widely used in Japan as a metaphor for sports and sportsmen, asserting Japaneseness in sports. Commodification has been one important channel for the distribution of sports memories in the 20th century, one which has also contributed to the image of the athlete as warrior and samurai. Finally, the use of irony in invoking quotations and in reading the past is a common trope for the invocation of memories that has been often overlooked but plays a crucial role for sport fans in the last decade. Not all sportsmen or fans use the image of samurais or other symbols of Japaneseness as springboard for identity construction, but can also often cultivate ironic uses of such symbols.

In her opening keynote, GERTRUD PFISTER introduced the concept of lieux de mémoire and pointed out that the spatial metaphor used by Nora goes back to Greek „memory palace“ memorization techniques that relied upon the mechanism of imagining one's self to be walking through a building, „placing“ memories at various locations. Sports, too, can function to serve as lieux de mémoire and thereby become part of the inventory of memory. Especially mega-events like Olympic Games bind memories and create symbolical meaning, as demonstrated by the examples of Athens 1896, Berlin 1936 and Sydney 2000. The question remains, however, to what extent highly symbolic events such as opening ceremonies are ultimately remembered.

The first panel focused on moments as lieux de mémoire. ANDREAS NIEHAUS analyzed the stunning success of the Japanese swimming team at the 1932 Olympics in Los Angeles. Encouraged by a popular newspaper contest, Japanese fans at home wrote nearly 50.000 „support songs“ for the Olympic team in Los Angeles, and followed the ra-

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dio broadcasts closely. The Japanese victory in swimming further fostered national pride in an already nationalist context. Memories of the victory have been vivid throughout Japan, as demonstrated by commemorative stamps, as well the regular invocation of the swimmers during Olympic broadcasting. As remarked by CHRISTIAN TAGSOLD, after WW II it was the victory of the so-called Oriental Witches at the women's volleyball tournament at the 1964 Tôkyô Olympics that created a lieu de mémoire; in lists created by newspapers of the greatest sports moments, the Witches feature prominently every time. Although it was women were won gold medal, the team's success is personalized by its male trainer Daimatsu Hirofumi. Hirofumi invented a special technique called the rolling dive that helped to overcome a perceived physical inferiority and symbolized the fate of Japan after 1945. Quick on its feet again, the country had regained its strength through clever technical innovations, economically as well as sports. ROBIN KIETLINSKI asked how memories of the 1964 Olympics and its glory moments resonate with the public with regard to Tôkyô's bid to host the 2016 Olympics. According to her survey, the older generation invokes the emotions of 1964 to justify another bid, while the younger generation generally views the bid unfavourably. Their criticisms often focus on financial risks, ecological sustainability and the potential destruction of existing realms of memory such as an old inner-city market to make way for planned infrastructure needed for the Games.

Transitioning from moments to places in the second panel, JOHN HORNE explored different modes of memory, not only theoretically but by concentrating on international sports stars in Japan. He thus connected the three themes of the conference: moments, places and heroes. Olympic soccer tournaments and World Cups have introduced international players and trainers to Japan who have become sites of memory. Dettmar Cramer and his favourite player Kamamoto of the 1968 Olympics parallel Troussier and Nakata during the 2002 World Cup. Fans celebrated the team's victories in this latter event by jumping into a river in Ôsaka, a practice originated by Japanese baseball fans. JIL-

LY TRAGANOU described the design for the 1964 Tôkyô Olympics as connecting past and present. Among other inspirations, designers used old family crests to create highly simplified and modern designs for the Games. For the first time, pictograms were used to guide visitors. This modernity has established memories of its own in recent last decades as those designs have been praised as a breakthrough, defining Olympic spaces in new ways. Ôsaka's baseball stadium, Kôshien, is surely the most revered place in Japanese sports, as shown by WILLIAM KELLY. The Japanese high school tournament is hosted there every year. Though introduced in the 1930s, the tournament gained in popularity especially after WW II. Both because of the prohibition of Japanese martial arts by the Occupational Forces and because younger athletes had no connection to ultra-nationalism and war, baseball rose to become a national sport. Scenes of young men digging up the earth of this holy ground to take home after their teams have lost are among the most emotional in Japanese sports. Kôshien has served as a symbol for youth and spirit over the decades, but has lost some of its power in recent years, as high-school baseball seems to no longer spark the imaginations of fans to the extent it once did. Stadiums were also the topic of TAKAHASHI YOSHIO's presentation: The sites of the 2002 soccer World Cup have not been able to produce lasting memories in Japan. After only half a decade, most Japanese do not even remember which stadiums hosted their national team. In contrast, the training grounds of some international teams have created bonds that have lasted into the present. For example, regular festivities and an ongoing engagement on the part of the Croatian soccer federation have reinforced memories and led to a strong connection between that national team and the soccer fans of Tokamachi, the city which hosted the team in 2002.

In the final panel, on heroes, AARON SKABELUND analyzed the memory of Japanese Olympians who served during WW II. Conservative institutions have repeatedly staged exhibitions of those soldiers, but have concentrated on soldiers killed in action while neglecting those who came back from the battlefields. The (in)famous Yasukuni Shrine in

Tôkyô used the memory in the run-up to the 1964 Olympics to reassert its position and connect the memory of the fallen to post-war Japan's success. Stories that were most often invoked to memorialize soldiers as noble Japanese include those of Baron Nishi, the winner of the show-jumping gold medal killed in the Battle of Iwojima, and that of two pole vaulters who won the silver and bronze medal in Berlin's 1936 Games, a story vividly retold by Riefenstahl's film on the Olympics. ABE IKUO showed how the heroes of the Tôkyô Olympics lead a second life in the manga *Supotsu-kon*. The manga writer Kajiwarawa Ikki adopted the tale of the victory of the Dutchman Anton Geesink in the open class of judo against his Japanese opponents to re-emphasize „Japanese“ virtues like endurance and humility. This manga series sold widely and impressed young Japanese, thereby spreading Kajiwarawa's conservative viewpoint. Young Japanese of today would ridicule the morality of those comics, though, considering talent to be much more important for becoming a sports hero than relentless effort. LEE THOMPSON added the memory of another popular sports hero of the 1960s: pro wrestler Riki Dôzan, known for his fights against American opponents. His victories, which were widely covered in the media, were seen as symbolic revenge by many. Yet Riki Dôzan cannot simply be interpreted as an anti-Western hero, since he integrated many symbols of the Western lifestyle into his daily life. The memory of Riki Dôzan has also been a contested ground for defining national identities in the last decades because the wrestler was born in Korea to Korean parents during Japanese colonial rule. Whether or not to remind the public of this origin has been a delicate question for biographers of Riki Dôzan, and shows once again that memories are not undisputed.

In his closing remarks, WOLFRAM MANZENREITER pointed out that demographic changes have led to different modes of memory too. As life expectancy has sharply increased over the last decades in Japan, personal memory has extended and a lifetime can include lieu de mémoire which would formerly have divided generations.

By revealing some of the key realms of me-

mory in the Japanese field of sports, the papers presented showed how memories and counter-memories of moments, places and heroes constitute an inventory for identity. Sports have helped generations to identify themselves. They have helped to form ideas of national territory through events such as high-school baseball, and at the same time helped to form regional identities. Finally, memories of sports have been important in spreading a sense of Japaneseness and at the same time introducing modernity. By evoking some of the most important lieux de mémoire of sports in Japan, the conference has been able to show how sports work on a symbolical level and to what purposes they are used, be it deliberately or unintentionally.

#### Conference overview:

Introduction: Andreas Niehaus (Ghent University), Christian Tagsold (University of Düsseldorf) - Remembering the Glory Days of the Nation - Sport as lieux de mémoire in Japan

Keynote: Gertrud Pfister (University of Copenhagen) - Les Lieux de Mémoire of Sports

#### Panel I: Moments

Chair: Wolfram Manzenreiter (University of Vienna)

Andreas Niehaus - Swimming into Memory: The Los Angeles Olympics (1932) as Japanese Lieu de Mémoire

Christian Tagsold - High-Tech and the Oriental Witches. The Tôyô no Majô and „rolling dive“ as Lieux de Mémoire

Robin Kietlinski (Fordham University) - One World One Dream?: Twenty-First Century Japanese Perspectives on Hosting the Olympic Games

#### Panel II: Places

Chairs: Gerald Gems (North Central College), Abe Ikuo, Tsukuba University

John Horne (University of Central Lancashire) - Football and the 2002 World Cup

Jilly Traganou (Parsons The New School for Design) - Olympics (1940/1964) as Places of National Design

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William Kelly (Yale University) - Team Rivalries, Regional Struggles: Baseball Stadiums as Sites of Memory in 20th Century Japan

Takahashi Yoshio (Tsukuba University) - From National Event to Local Memory - World Cup 2002

*Panel III: Heroes*

Chair: Jan Tolleneer (KU Leuven, Ghent University)

Aaron Skabelund (Brigham Young University) - Fighting for Country-Twice: The Glorification of Japanese Olympic Soldiers during the Asia-Pacific War

Abe Ikuo (Tsukuba University) - The Emergence of Supokon-Manga: Japanese Pop-Culture as Lieu de Mémoire

Lee Thompson (Waseda University) - Rikidozan and Professional Wrestling as Lieu de Mémoire in Japan

Discussion and Closing Remarks by Wolfram Manzenreiter (University of Vienna)

Tagungsbericht *Remember the Glory Days of the Nation: Sport as lieu de mémoire in Japan*. 18.03.2009–20.03.2009, Brüssel, in: H-Soz-Kult 18.04.2009.