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Citation

Manzenreiter, W. (2008). Sports, body control and national discipline in pre-war and wartime Japan. *Leidschrift : Brood En Spelen. Sport Als Kracht In De Samenleving*, *23*(December), 63-83. Retrieved from https://hdl.handle.net/1887/73218

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Sports, body control and national discipline in pre-war and wartime Japan

Wolfram Manzenreiter

Sport and body politics as fields of political and nationalist ambitions are characteristic features of totalitarian systems in modern societies. No other political movement knew better how to capitalise on the symbolic values and very practical implications of strong, healthy and superior bodies than the fascist ones that emerged as an essentially new force and a major factor within and outside of Europe during the 1930s. In response to the experiences of World War I, economic crises, political instability, and social unrest that continued throughout the post-war decade, fascist ideologies worldwide were regarded as a promising alternative and practical solution across national and social constituencies. Practical, immediate action and the corporeality of direct participation provided a main attraction to anti-intellectual fascism that gained currency, particularly but not exclusively, at the bottom level of the fascist organisations. Notwithstanding the many faces fascism had throughout the world, as well as to its followers, the concurrent emphasis on the superior *and* the collective body was a common feature contributing to its success since they resonated with the widespread longing for strong leadership and a secure sense of belonging. The symbolic expression of physical strength, that separated the strong from the weak, and the uniform body, that offered the feeling of home and community to the chosen members converged into the imagery, rituals and rhetoric of fascist aesthetics. Or, in the words of Juan Linz, fascism satisfied both the romantic desire for the heroic deeds of the individual and the desire for submergence in a glorious collectivity. Its political leaders knew how to employ these needs to subordinate the individuals to the goals of the state and those holding power in it.[1]

The history of Japan and Japanese body politics throughout the first half of the twentieth century provide an interesting case study for the analysis of the relations between sports and totalitarianism. In 1931, the year of the invasion of Manchuko in Northeastern China by the Japanese Imperial Army, marked the end of Japan's short interlude with liberalism and

[1] Juan J. Linz, 'Some notes towards a comparative study of fascism' in: Walter Laqueur ed., *Fascism: a reader's guide* (Berkeley 1976) 3-121, there: 23.

democracy. In addition, the military occupation signified Japan's outset towards the establishment of a seemingly fascist totalitarian regime, which was completed a decade later.

According to Willensky, Imperial Japan's evolution into a fascist state started with Japan's withdrawal from the League of Nations in 1933 and continued with the controversy over the Emperor Organ Theory (*Tennō kikan setsu*, in 1935, the signing of the Anti-Comintern Pact with Nazi Germany in 1936; the promulgation of the National General Mobilization Law (*Kokka sōdōin hō*), in 1938, the New Structure Movement (Shin Taisei Undō) and the dissolution of the political parties in May 1940; the signing of the Tripartite Pact with Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy in September of the same year; and then the inauguration of the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (Taisei Yokusan Kai), in October.[2] During this entire period the Imperial Japanese Government used ubiquitous calls for service to the state and allegiance to the ideal of *kōdō*, the way of the Emperor, which was outlined already in Kita Ikki's *Nippon kaizō hōan taikō* (Plan for the reconstruction of Japan) from 1919, to shape and mould the population into a motivated yet servile populace.

Even though Japan in the 1930s and early 1940s was clearly exhibiting all signs of radicalism, militarism, imperialism, ultra-nationalism and racialism, historians, with the noteworthy exception of Marxist researchers, have been largely at unease to describe pre-war and wartime Japan as a fascist state for a variety of reasons. Next to the circumstance that the emphasis on praxis and the anti-intellectual stance of fascism itself inhibited the development of a reasonable political theory, classification attempts have been hampered by the open and explicit refusal of political leaders of the 1930s as well as thinkers from the right to be labelled as fascists. Because of historical preconditions Japan's governing forces lacked the total power of fascist governments elsewhere. Even wartime cabinets were shaken by intra-ministry rivalries; elections were continued until 1942, offering alternative choices for independent candidates or refusing the right to vote; the mass organisation failed to control the military and did not entirely permeate civil society.[3] In addition, and this is of importance for the

[2] Marcus Willensky, 'Japanese fascism revisited', *Stanford Journal of East Asian Affairs* 5:1 (2005) 58-77, there: 77.

[3] Wolfram Manzenreiter, 'Die Faschisierung des Körpers. Sport in totalitären Systemen. Wien und Tokyo im Vergleich 1930 bis 1945' in: Rooland Domenik and

comparative historical research on fascism, the lack of a mass movement thrusting a political party into power and the non-existence of a radical disjuncture between early Shōwa Japan (1926-1945) and its precedent eras, have been identified as main arguments to defy the applicability of the term. However, on cultural terrain, in contrast to political institutions, Japan's emperor-centred ideology and its obsession with racial superiority was much closer to the main fascist ideologies of Europe. As Alfredo Rocco, the later Italian minister of Justice, explained in *The political doctrine of fascism* of 1925, fascism is indifferent to methods, but not to ends.[4] Maruyama Masao noted already in the early post-war years, in contrast to Germany and Italy, fascism in Japan did not come by force but succeeded by permeating the existing power structure from the inside.[5] On cultural terrain, in contrast to political institutions, Japan's emperor-centred ideology and its obsession with racial superiority was much closer to the main fascist ideologies of Europe. In fact, as Willensky has recently argued, the institutional preconditions and intellectual foundations for the fascist transformation of the political system have been laid much earlier (and more thorough) than the attempts of the Italian right wingers to found a doctrinaire base underlying their will to power.[6]

Notwithstanding the conceptual problems that cannot be solved within the limited space of this paper, it is evident that the Japanese state faced similar challenges in forming a totalitarian community to its European counterparts. It is the task of this paper to identify the role sports played in this authoritarian enterprise. In the following sections I will delineate various ways in which sports and body politics were employed by the Japanese government to discipline and mould the population into a servile and compliant mass. I will show that the increasingly intense grip on the individual bodies was far from new in this period but a continuation of a sometimes contradictory and ambiguous policy line initiated already in the mid-Meiji period (ca 1885-1900). The picture would be incomplete without referring to important counter-currents. The increasing commodification of

Sepp Linhart ed., *Freizeit und Arbeit in Tokyo und Wien 1930-1945* (Vienna 2007) 33-54.

[4] Willensky, 'Japanese fascism revisited', 62.

[5] Maruyama Masao, Thought and behaviour in modern Japanese politics (London 1963) 88.

[6] Willensky, 'Japanese fascism revisited', 64.

sports since the early 1920s gave birth to new ideas and usages of sport without provoking explicit actions by state authorities. The resulting question concerning the reason for the Japanese state's indifference towards sports will be answered in the final discussion.

Theorising the national body

The dominant conception of the relation between state, nation and subject at the time was summarised by the powerful notion of *kokutai* (national or state body) that based the Japanese system on the supreme authority of the emperor. One of the most debated challenges to the conventional view of the *kokutai*, Minobe Tatsukichi's theory of the emperor as organ of the state (*Tennō kikan setsu*), also applied the image of the body by designating the emperor as a constitutionally defined organ within the body of the state. Of course, the somatisation of the nation or the state has not been a Japanese invention since the image of the body has been used in political theory since Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and other thinkers of the seventeenth century debated about the nature of the 'body politic'.

In marked contrast to renaissance thought, the somatisation of the national socialist society in twentieth century was triggered by a strong anti-intellectualism, which in contrast effected the valorisation of the body. According to Hitler's *Mein Kampf*, the entire education system of the national socialist state was to be geared on rearing healthy bodies; mental and intellectual capabilities followed second.[7] Academic schooling was ranked on last position, well behind character development, promotion of will power, decisive power and responsibility. In some fascist movements, the fetishist concern with the physical was publicly put on display by the very bodies of their leaders, such as Benito Mussolini or Oswald Mosley from the British Union of Fascists.[8] But with the exception of the leader cult, fascist body politics usually focussed on the collective, not on the individual. Bruno Malitz, a former fast track runner and sport officer of the paramilitary Sturmabteilung (SA), compared sports with conscription as a further 'service to the nation' ('*Volk*').

[7] Adolf Hitler, *Mein Kampf* (Munich 1937) 452.

[8] Cf. Tony Collins, 'Return to manhood. The cult of masculinity and the British Union of Fascists' in: J.A. Mangan ed., *Superman supreme. Fascist body as political icon – global fascism* (London 2000) 145-162.

> We national socialists want to educate the people through sports. The goal of national socialist sports is the thorough formation of the individual for the purpose of strengthening the national body (...)[9]

In ideological terms, the somatisation of the national socialist society derived from the hyper-inflated ideal of an imagined healthy and vital, in other words sportive national body ('*Volkskörper*'). Its vitality and energetic power were seen as the root of the expansionary drive into new territories and habitat ('*Lebensraum*'); hence the special role that the German fascist movement assigned to the body, its education and presentation. Rightist intellectuals in imperial Japan similarly paid high attention to the question of living space. On the one hand – in political scientist terms of realism – imperial Japan sought the expansion of Japan's sphere of influence within The Great East Asian Sphere of Co-Prosperity (*Dainippon Tōa Kyōeiken*), a layered zone of empowered and autonomous states placed like a buffer area around the core of the Japanese islands.[10] On the other hand, Katō Kanji and other proponents of the Japanese version of physiocratism (*nōhonshugi*) placed their hopes for a new Japan into the Manchurian annexation by the Kwangtung Army. In the vast open spaces of the Manchurian puppet-state they saw a new fertile soil for the surplus energies of those parts of Japan's young rural population that was exceeding demand in their impoverished home regions.[11]

The conception of the collective body as an agent of political power also tainted some theories of physical education in Japan. The palingenetic myth, a core element of all fascist ideologies heralding the advent of a new man out of the ruins of the old, rotten society, was adopted in the writings of Ueda Seiichi or Sasaki Hitoshi. Like other, not necessarily nationalist-minded intellectuals, they believed that educating the body provided the ultimate precondition for creating 'new man'. According to the social

[9] 'Die Leibesübungen in der nationalsozialistischen Idee' (München 1933), quoted in Manfred Leitgeb, *Sport als Transportmittel nationalsozialistischer Ideologie* (Master's thesis, Vienna University 2000) 28.

[10] Cf. Bernd Martin, "'Grossostasiatische Wohlstandssphäre", Japan, der Krieg in Asien und im Pazifik' in: Mathias Münter-Elfner *et.al.* ed., *Aufbruch der Massen, Schrecken der Kriege* (Leipzig/Mannheim 1999) 664-677.

[11] Cf. Mori Takemaro, 'Colonies and countryside in wartime Japan: emigration to Manchuria', *Japan Focus* July 2004. Online: http://japanfocus.org dated: 12 December 2004.

Darwinist law of the strongest, the physically trained new mankind was to be empowered to destroy the social world suffering from the constraints of capitalist society and mechanisation, to renew it and find new ways of social living in imperialist expansion.[12] The fascination of reaching the masses by addressing their bodies impacted upon the writings of sympathisers of leftist and socialist ideas as well. Maekawa Mineo, Nakaya Jūji, and Yamada Yoshimasa were outspoken critics of the social conditions resulting from modernisation and urbanisation. While they were in favour of the idea of proletarian sports, which by definition should transgress national borders, they also perceived radical physiocratism as an escape route from the inherent contradictions of modern society.

Moulding the masses into a national body

For all Japanese governments after the Meiji-Restoration in 1868, the modern institutions of compulsory schooling and the conscription army provided the most effective tool for integrating the majority of the Japanese population into the construction of the national body. Particularly the modern mass education system, allowing the authoritarian state encompassing access to the entire young generation, diffused the intense nationalism of the upper classes downwards to all the Japanese. Ever since physical education became a compulsory subject in the early Meiji period, the body and its formation were central policy objects for the development of national identity, loyalty and submission as core values of the authoritarian family state ideology.[13] Physical education at elementary school level basically consisted of callisthenics and games. Particularly the techniques of the former, which were conducted according to military-style orders and afforded the conscious adjustment of individual moves with the bodies of the instructor and fellow students, were well suited to install collective attitudes and deliberate subordination. Body techniques acquired in physical education could be used for public demonstrations of social cohesion as well as for more practical military purposes. Since the 1880s,

[12] Irie Katsumi, *Nihon fashizumu ka no taiiku shisō* [Concepts of physical education under Japanese fascism] (Tokyo 1986) 76.

[13] Cf. Wolfram Manzenreiter, 'Moderne Körper, modern Orte. Sport und Nationalstaat in Japan und Österreich 1850-1900', *Minikomi - Informationen des Akademischen Arbeitskreis Japan* 2 (2001) 14-21.

heishiki taisō (military gymnastics using military equipment, mock rifles, marching exercises and combat simulations), was introduced to the school curriculum for higher grades. With the years, pressure to extend the reach of pre-military education increased: in 1917, the Special Council on Education recommended to the Parliament that students above middle school should be trained to be soldiers with patriotic conformity, martial spirit, obedience and toughness of mind and body.[14] During the Taishō years (1912-1926), liberal educationalists in the councils of the Ministry of Education safeguarded the younger age groups as well as female students against these objectives of the Ministry of Army.

A similar tug-of-war between opposing camps of educationalists and bureaucrats delayed the introduction of martial arts to the national curriculum for about three decades. Physiological concerns with the effects of martial arts on the young bodies accompanied the discussion of the suitability of martial arts for children and youth. Classical *bujutsu* as well as *budō*, the modernised versions of Japan's autochthonous physical culture, were regarded as equally useful for the purpose of indoctrination because of their common emphasis on obedience, endurance, and self-discipline. Furthermore, the practice of *budō* allowed the immediate establishment of links with a glorious tradition and the historical continuity of the warrior ethics from feudal Japan. As Reischauer had observed, both primary school and conscription convinced the peasant population, 'who for almost three centuries had been denied swords and other arms, that they too were members of a warrior race' and 'inculcated in them the glory of Japan's great military traditions and the ideal of death on the battlefield in the service of the emperor'.[15]

But only in the 1930s, when the military's influence outweighed liberal reasoning within the cabinet government, martial arts were finally adopted by the official school curricula. In the year of the Manchurian invasion, *kendō* and *jūdō* became compulsory for secondary schooling, and in 1936 for the higher grades of elementary schools, too; since then, girls were also obliged to take courses in *naginata-dō* and *kyūdō*. A year prior to the reform, the Educational Reform Council suggested to the Ministry of Education to abolish the harmful element of competition and

[14] Abe Ikuo, Kiyohara Yasuharu and Nakajima Ken, 'Fascism, sport and society in Japan', *The International Journal of the History of Sport* 9:1 (1992) 1-28.
[15] Edwin Reischauer, *Japan. The story of a nation* (New York 1970) 185.

championships from all sports; instead it encouraged to stress piety, fortitude, and fairness in accordance with the traditional ideal of *bushidō*.

Members of the National Reserve Army always had been valuable resources to teach the military style of gymnastics, and in 1925 the Ministry of Army was conceded the right to send serving army officers into the schools for supervising military training (*gunji kyōren*) in middle schools and above. In the course of the 1930s, the instrumentalist objectives became increasingly clear when sport games muted into military exercises. At the National Youth Defense Games (*Seinen gakkō kokubō taiiku taikai*), students in uniforms marched into sport grounds that partially resembled battle fields. Held for the first time in 1939 and since then annually, the programme contained competitions in throwing grenades and running with gas masks, stretchers or water buckets, thereby simulating activities of high demand in combat abroad or at the home front. In 1939, the new sport of national defense (*kokubō undō*) was added to the sport curriculum. Within the public education sport system, Western sports were increasingly marginalised and oppressed. Starting from 1940, the Ministry of Education officially allowed students to participate in competitive sports merely for one or two hours a week, and this just on Sundays or holidays; instead the youth was encouraged to study martial arts. The nationalist appropriation of Western sports acquired a rather absurd, yet highly symbolical dimension, when English expressions were replaced by newly coined sport terms in Japanese. This development started in 1936 and was reinforced by the beginning of war against England in the Pacific.[16]

The administrative organs in charge of school and social education used rational scientific methods in an attempt to prove the effectiveness of their politics. Panel data on the physical fitness of the youth were available since public schools had been obliged to conduct regular examinations in the early twentieth century. The results showed an alarming decrease in physical abilities of military conscripts and the general deterioration of health conditions among the young urban generation (see table 1). In the 1930s, the newspapers echoed the Army's concern with the loss of military manpower and transferred the issue of public health into the public domain. According to a newspaper report from 1932, 200,000 children in rural areas were chronically undernourished, which seems fairly underrated, but nonetheless caused the Ministry of Education to nationalise the operation

[16] Abe, Kiyohara and Nakajima, 'Fascism, sport and society', 15.

of school nutrition few weeks later.[17] Short-sightedness (myopia) and chronic diseases of the respiratory organs were labelled as typical school diseases because their occurrence tended to increase with the length of school visit.[18] In order to cope with the ailing national body, the Army Ministry urged for the instalment of a new ministry in charge of health and social welfare and made its establishment one of the conditions for supporting the new cabinet under Konoe Fumimaro.

In 1938, the new Ministry of Health and Welfare took over all competencies related to public health and national fitness, including the provision of sport facilities and the control of sport organizations; only school sport remained under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Education. The new ministry's Board of Physical fitness (Tairyoku Ka) enacted the Physical Strength Badge Test (*Tairyoku shō kentei*) in August 1939 and promulgated the National Physical Strength Law (*Kokumin Tairyokuhō*) in April 1940. The fitness test aimed at the entire male population between fifteen and twenty-five years; those who had participated in a speed running competition (one hundred meters), a mid-distance run (two thousand meters), broad jump, throwing a hand grenade, a fifty-meter run carrying a sandbag, and pull-ups, received a badge, indicating the level of their performance. In 1943, the test also was adapted to females from fifteen to twenty-one years of age.[19]

The National Physical Strength Law regulated that all males under twenty-six years of age and females under twenty years of age were measured (height, weight, volume of respiratory organs, strength of grip) and inspected for diseases in a way as a ministerial ordinance from 1900 had already requested from all attending public schooling. Whereas in former times data were primarily collected and transferred to the Ministry of Education, they were now interpreted on a case by case scale, since the latest law reform from 1938 obliged school to share the responsibility for improved health conditions with their students. Examination data were forwarded to the students together with concrete recommendations of therapies and general improvement. The score cards listed the individual

[17] Kishino Yūzō *et al.* ed., *Kindai taiiku supōtsu nenpyō* [Chronological chart of modern sport and physical education](Tokyo 1973) 156.

[18] Yamamoto Takuji, 'Kokuminka to gakkō shintai kensa ni tsuite' [Nationalisation and physical examinations at school], *Ōhara Skakai Mondai Kenkyūjo Zasshi* 488, 30-43; there: 39.

[19] Abe, Kiyohara and Nakajima, 'Fascism, sport and society', 18.

results together with national and prefectural averages, which invited the individual to perceive its ranking in comparison with the collective nation. At the same time, as material objects the sheets symbolised the grip of the state onto the individual body and extended state control function into the private sphere of households and neighbourhoods, into which students and their family members carried the score cards.[20]

Control structures beyond the school apparatus

With the years, the state authorities' interest in the bodies of the subjects surpassed the limited realm of compulsory and secondary schooling. Particularly useful was the new national mass medium of radio broadcasting and the spread of early morning radio gymnastics (*rajio taisō*), beginning in 1930. Modelled after a scheme devised by life insurance companies abroad, the Japanese broadcast did not simply aim at strengthening the bodies of children and adults alike, but also at their minds and sentiments. Through the medium of the radio, the state was practically empowered to reach the entire populace, practicing in identical fashion, listening to the same tunes and following the same orders.

The structures of mass organisations facilitated the state authorities' outreach for the bodies of its subjects. Founded in 1930, the All Japan Gymnastics Association (Zenkokumin Taisō Kyōkai) soon matured into a mass organisation with some million participants throughout the nation.[21] The annual highlight was the *taisō matsuri*, a mass callisthenics festival, which was held at Meiji Jingu Gaienmae Undō Kyōgijo, the national sports ground next to the spiritually symbolic centre of the state, the Meiji Shrine. The national juncture was even more pronounced by holding the festival on November 3rd, the national holiday commemorating the Birthday of Meiji Tennō, the founding figure of the modern Japanese nation state. The symbolic significance of time and space for the experience of national identity must not be underestimated. Ever since the National Sports Games

[20] Yamamoto, [Nationalisation and physical examinations], 38.

[21] In 1932, there were 2,950 organisations in 23 prefectures with a total of 1,952,417 participants; in 1934, the association counted 3,218,158 members of 7,052 organisations in 35 prefectures. Sakaue Yasuhiro, *Kenryoku sōchi to shite no supōtsu. Teikoku Nippon no kokka senryaku* [Sport as power device. The nation-state strategy of Imperial Japan] (Tokyo 1998) 121.

were held at the National Stadium at the Meiji Shrine for the first time in 1924, their final day concurred with the Memorial Day for the Meiji Emperor, which was declared All Japan Sports Day (*Zenkoku taiiku dē*). A visit to the national monument was obligatory for the athletes from out of town, when they represented their home region at the national sports festivals in the capital. At the occasion of the national sports day, schools and youth organisations nationwide held sport events. The peripheries were united with the centre from 1932 onwards, when live broadcast from the *taisō matsuri* and the National Sports Games integrated them into the imagined community of sporting Japan.

Many sources from the 1920s and 1930s indicate that the concern with leftist ideas and socialist movements was a major cause for the government to tighten measures of social control over the young generation out of schooling. Representatives of capital and labour were both well aware of the importance of the workers' physical strength and health. In 1913, the year after the inception of the Yūaikai by Suzuki Bunji and other labour activists, club branches for physical exercises and recreational activities were established within this first union-like organisation. During the reoccurring labour disputes of the early 1920s the unionists at large companies such as Yawata Steel, Kawasaki Shipbuilding and Mitsubishi Shipbuilding organised regular sport events for the striking workers. The companies soon realized that the extension of social welfare measures, including the provision of sport facilities, was an effective counter weapon against the spread of unionism and socialism among their workforces. Thus, company management actively encouraged the establishment of company sport teams and the construction of sports fields immediately after the labour disputes were settled. Since the early 1920s, sports such as baseball, track and field, volleyball and others flourished on the company level in the modern sector of Japan's economy.[22]

In 1921, baseball, tennis, swimming, athletics, field trips, strolls and mountaineering were sport activities offered to young male company workers in Ōsaka. Female workers could participate in swimming, strolls

[22] Kōzu Masaru, 'Seisaku to shite no supōtsu. Taishō demokurashii to supōtsu no seisakuka' [Sport as politics. Taisho democracy and the political grip on sport] in: Nakamura Toshio *et al.* ed., *Supōtsu Seisaku* (Tokyo 1978) 35-93, there: 58-61.

and occasional field trips.[23] An association of corporate sports clubs (Kōjō Supōtsu Renmei) was founded in 1930. Over its first year 602 companies joined the organisation just in Tokyo.[24] Sporting activities and facilities became part of a range of services provided by companies, through which they were able to exercise control over their workers' life outside the work place. Corporate sports turned into a characteristic element of paternalist relations between employers and employees. Prominent forerunners included Yawata Steel Industries, Mitsubishi Shipbuilding, the National Railways and the Municipal Administration of Tokyo. They successfully reconstructed their employees' free-time practices and the institutions that supervised their conduct even during time off.

The development of corporate sports perfectly matched the social policy line of the government. However, the state also controlled the sport activities within private enterprises. The establishment of a section for social education within the Ministry of Education in May 1919, which became later the Department of Social Education, marked for the first time the national determination to extend physical and health education beyond the borders of school institutions. Corporate sports, however, were under the supervision of the Ministry of Home Affairs and its special police department on corporate affairs (Keisatsuchō Kōjō Ka) which also organised sport fests and tournaments. According to a survey of the department from 1934, 11,251 companies with 212,070 workers participated in the official industrial sports day.[25] A survey on the state of corporate sports from 1937 gives a somehow opaque picture of the companies' sponsored activities,[26] but at least the figures indicate the interest of capital in the physical well-being of their labour resource. The report on the survey also includes a number of research studies from the Research Institute of Labour Sciences in Kurashiki, Okayama, which demonstrate the negative impact of industrial labour on physical

[23] Ōsaka-shi Shakai-bu Chōsa-ka, 1923, quoted in Kaga Hideo, 'Miritarizumu to supōtsu (senzen no mondai)' [Militarism and sport. Pre-war problems] in: Nakamura Toshio ed., *Supōtsu Nashonarizumu* (Tokyo 1978) 145-178, there: 152.
[24] Sakaue, [Sport as power device], 156.
[25] Ibidem, 155.
[26] Unfortunately, due to methodological shortcomings of the data presentation a precise interpretation for the general state of company sports is impossible.

development[27] and the consequential need for regular, even obligatory sports programmes.[28] A ministerial ordinance from October 1938 made gymnastics compulsory for company workers[29] – which may explain why gymnastics was the most often practiced sports activity within corporate sport.

Only large companies could actually afford providing their own social welfare programmes. The majority of workers at small and medium-sized industries needed different supply sides. Together with corporate sports, national youth associations helped establish a framework for moderate mass participation in sports. During the years of World War I, Tanaka Giichi, the former prime minister, studied patriotic youth organisations abroad and upon his return initiated a nationwide network of voluntary youth groups (*seinendan*). In 1925, the Japanese youth organisations consolidated in a centralised organisational structure. Membership of the local branches of the Greater Japan Federation of Youth Groups (*Dai Nippon Rengō Seinendan*) was compulsory for every male inhabitant of a respective administrative district if he had completed elementary school and still was under conscription age.[30] School directors and members of the reserve army usually served as group leaders and instructors. The basic concern was the moral education of the working youth and their surveillance. Next to military drill exercises, sports comprised a major component at the weekly meetings. By means of physical education, including athletics, gymnastics and *budō*, youths were expected to contribute to the national aims of producing strong soldiers and diligent workers. The actual practice of sports, however, differed considerably depending on the location of the branches. According to surveys from the late 1920s, baseball matches already attracted audiences of some ten thousands, but active participation was very limited, particularly in rural regions which simply lacked facilities

[27] Comparing female workers and students, the researchers found out that 'the rapidity of mental mobility' (*seishin undō sokudo*), i.e. the coordination of hand and eye movements, was slower among industrial workers than among students of the same age group. Another research project suggested that industrial labour inflicts upon the balanced growth of the body; particularly the lower limbs reportedly remained underdeveloped.

[28] Kōseishō Tairyoku Kyoku ed., *Tairyoku kōjō shisetsu chō* [Survey on facilities for the improvement of physical strength] (Tokyo 1940) 391-405.

[29] Kishino *et al.*, [Chronological chart of modern sport], 168.

[30] Kōzu, [Sport as politics], 45-48.

and equipment. *Budō* and gymnastics, which are sports with a low demand of technological thus financial input, therefore were among the most common sport activities in the countryside; mountain climbing, swimming, table tennis and baseball were much more popular among urban *seinendan* branches.

Similar organisations for the social education of late-teen girls came into existence in 1927 (Dai Nippon Rengō Joshi Seinendan). By the early 1930s, membership exceeded four millions for both sexes.[31] A new organizational structure for youth schools (*seinen gakkō)* was established in 1935 integrating the former youth training centres (*seinen kunrenjo*) and vocational supplementary schools under the supervision of the Social Education Bureau of the Ministry of Education, which received some support from the Ministry of the Army. According to the first article of the 1935 Youth School Order, youth school education aimed at the provision of instruction in discipline and virtue of the mind and body and, at the same time, intended to instruct the working youth in the knowledge and skills necessary for their vocation and everyday life, so as to assist them in the development of the requirement for the members of the Japanese nation. Courses lasted for four to five years and included physical education and military drills for boys.

During the later half of the 1930s, pressure increased on these and all other major youth major organisations, like the Japan Boy Scout Association (Shōnendan Nippon Renmei, 1922) and the Imperial Association of Boy Groups (Teikoku Shōnendan Kyōkai, 1934), to standardise content, objectives and form of social education along the lines of the state. Ultimately they were forced to merge into one single organisation at the end of the decade. In January 1941, the foundation of the Greater Japan Youth and Child Organisation (Dai Nippon Seishōnendan) was celebrated at the Nippon Seinenkan in Tokyo.[32] The

[31] By 1928 there were 15,295 youth groups for boys with a membership of 2,534,326 and 13,043 girls' groups with a membership of 1,514,459. The total number of groups amounted to 28,338 with 4,048,785 members. Monbushō ed., *Gakusei hyakunen shi* [A history of hundred years of the educational system] (Tōkyō 1972).

[32] Sakashita Akakazu, "'Shōnendan" to "Shōnendan Nihon Renmei". Soshiki to katsudō no kenkyū' [Boys groups and the Association of Boy Scouts Japan. A study on organisation and activities], *Nihon Daigaku Daigakuin Shakaijōhōgakka Kiyō* 4 (2003) 1-13, there: 11.

structure of the organisation copied the straightforward control configuration of the national administration system, linking the local level via prefectural sections with the centre of state power. Prefectural sections were headed by governors, and directors of youth schools supervised the activities at local level.

The same design characterised the structure of the Japan Amateur Sports Association (Dainippon Taiiku Kyōkai), founded in 1911 and reorganised into a federation of autonomous sports associations and regional branches in 1925. Under its auspices championships were held and athletes selected for participation at international tournaments. Since the heads of the regional branches were public employees and the association heavily depended on funding from the Ministry of Education, it transformed gradually into an arm of central government.[33] When the governmental concentration of body and sport politics culminated at the beginning of the 1940s, the amateur sports federation and its associated member organisations were resolved. All university sport organisations were pooled in one singular sports club (Dai Nippon Gakutō Taiiku Shinkō Kai) at the end of 1941, and all civic sport organisations turned into members of the newly founded Greater Japan Sports Club (Dai Nippon Taiiku Kai, 1942) under the presidency of prime minister Tōjō Hideki, who also headed the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (Taisei Yokusan Kai), the only equivalent of an overarching and all-embracing mass organisation during Japan's fascist regime.

Cleavages: mass sports, entertainment and intra-ministerial competition

If the discussion were to stop here, the picture of an ever totalitarian and suppressive state would largely be conform with the general idea of fascist body politics. However, sports also came to fulfil leading roles for commercial interests, new lifestyle patterns of the urban middle-class and Japan's public diplomacy. Since the beginning of the century, profit-seeking strategies of modern mass transportation and mass media companies provided the ground for a fairly important supplement to the disciplinary tool of sports in the 1930s. Sparked by the huge interest in inter-school competitions, newspaper publishing companies started to exploit the rising

[33] Sakaue, [Sport as power device], 156.

popularity of sport for their own profit from 1900 onwards. Competing for subscriptions, the national newspapers employed sport coverage as a vehicle to redefine themselves as mass media, rather than as merely political newspapers.[34] Hosting sport contests, sponsoring individual athletes, and promoting sport participation among the broader public were meant to spark the interest in sport generally and to capitalise on the increased demand for sport coverage. The newspapers commissioned even the construction of the Kōshien Stadium in Nishinomiya, since spectator demand for the annual National Middle School Baseball Tournament, sponsored by the Ōsaka Asahi Shinbun, was by far exceeding capacities of Toyonaka Sport Ground. As long as construction was under way, the national baseball tournaments moved into another sport complex built by the Hanshin Railways Company. In August 1924, the new Kōshien opened its gates, accommodating up to 60,000 visitors. Yet popular demand was so high that the side stands had to be expanded twice in 1929 and 1936 to accommodate even more spectators. Construction costs of the Kōshien were defrayed between the publishing company Mainichi Shinbun, which sponsored its own annual spring baseball tournament (Zenkoku Kōkō Yakyū Senbatsu Taikai) in the stadium since 1924, and the Hanshin Railways Company, that controlled public transport to the stadium.[35]

Opening private pools, ski slopes and hiking trails, publishing companies and private railway companies also pioneered the exploration of Japan's leisure industries during the Taishō years.[36] The growing activism of the media and the new popularity of sport events attracted the attention of local and national authorities. In Ōsaka, the Municipal Survey Bureau of Social Affairs (Ōsaka-shi Shakai-bu Chōsa-ka) recorded 48 sport events in 1921 that were sponsored or hosted by local newspapers. Over a period of 185 days, 12,124 athletes and 1,618,818 spectators participated at the media-sponsored events, which totalled an average of 33,978 participants per event.[37] National intercity tournaments in various sports disciplines, usually sponsored by the national newspapers, started in 1927. Thus Gonda

[34] William W. Kelly, 'The spirit and spectacle of school baseball. Mass media, statemaking, and "edu-tainment" in Japan, 1905-1935', *Senri Ethnological Studies* 52 (2000) 105-115.
[35] Sakaue, [Sport as power device], 21-22.
[36] Takemura Tamio, 'The embryonic formation of a mass consumption society, and innovation in Japan during the 1920s', *Japan Review* 10 (1988) 173-197.
[37] Kaga, [Militarism and sport], 151.

Yasunosuke, the Japanese pioneer of social science research on leisure, noted as early as 1923 that baseball certainly no longer belonged to the elites exclusively since now it fascinated all social classes and mobilised mass spectatorship. Seven years later, Gonda reported in his field research notes the 'unbelievable incident' of empty cinemas throughout the entertainment quarter Asakusa. This extraordinary state was caused by the start of the traditional inter-university baseball match between Waseda and Keiō university teams (*sōkeisen*). Radio broadcast of the game also interrupted the usual bustling street life. The street corner radio immobilised passers-by until the final siren allowed life in Asakusa to return to normal routine.[38]

Given that sports clearly helped to reach a mass audience, particularly the wealthier-off new middle class, it is difficult to imagine why the media, transport companies and other modern commodity producers, as well as their audiences and customers, should have changed their conceptualisation of sports as mass entertainment without external pressure. The National Baseball Order from 1932 was an attempt to control the burgeoning popularity of baseball and discipline their fans;[39] yet it did not prevent the newspaper publisher Yomiuri Shinbun from setting up a professional team. With other corporations following the example, eight professional teams began competing for the annual league title in 1937. The highly popular baseball league continued to play their legs until air raids on Tokyo interrupted the league in 1944.[40]

The mass interest in spectator sports gave birth to new special-interest media. Long before the Japanese state's war economy started to control the allocation of resources – which ultimately had a much stronger impact on the suppression of Western sports and the sport entertainment business than the state's ideological reservation – in 1938, the Japanese sports media market inflated with uncountable new journals, magazines and

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[38] Kōzu Masaru, *Nihon supōtsu shi no teiryū* [Undercurrents of Japan's sport history] (Tokyo 1995) 253.

[39] The Order on Control and Management of Baseball required all organisations to apply for permission for baseball games from the Ministry. The regulations also prescribed the rules of amateurism and requested the organising bodies to guarantee disciplined behaviour of the cheering groups.

[40] For a very detailed account of the history of professional baseball, refer to Kiku Kōichi, *'Kindai Puro Supōtsu' no Rekishi Shakaigaku. Nihon Puro Yakyū no Seiritsu o Chūshin ni* [Historical sociology of professional sports. The establishment of professional baseball in Japan] (Tokyo 1993).

other print formats catering to the need of the modern urbanites. In 1936, the Ōsaka Asahi Shinbun enlarged its daily sport pages to a total of nine pages, that certainly covered more baseball games than military gymnastics. The immense increase of publishing activities during the 1930s was a response to new technologies and new consumption styles as well.

A final factor contributing to the popularity of sports was the increasing visibility of Japan on the international stage when her athletes participated in international tournaments. After unspectacular results at the Olympic Games of Stockholm in 1912, where just a small delegation of three athletes participated for the first time, Japan's representatives became increasingly successful in the 1930s. Funds from the Imperial family supported the travel abroad of the athlete delegations to the Los Angeles Olympics in 1932 and the following Berlin Olympics.[41] According to the report to the Emperor by the president of the amateur sport association, Kishi Seiichi, the success of the Japanese delegation at the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles positively changed the attitude towards Japan in the American press which had turned increasingly hostile towards Japan after the Manchurian crisis.[42] In 1936, the first live coverage ever linked the Japanese audience immediately to the excitement of the tournament. Interest in the Games had been intensified since the announcement that Japan was going to host the 1940 Olympics. Social critic Yamakawa Hitoshi noted a patriotic wave and common understanding of national victory sweeping through the newspapers and the mind of their readers.[43] In official statements, representatives from the Tokyo City Council and the Dainippon Taiiku Kyōkai commented the decision as a public acknowledgement of Japan's national power (*kokuryoku*) and an honourable accolade.[44] However, the joint alliance of sports and politics did not last long, and after the war with China broke out, political support started to wane. Particularly the Ministry of the Army interpreted the huge allocation

[41] Sakue argues that the imperial family started in the mid-Taishō years to remodel itself as modern ruler by establishing explicit links with the world of modern sports. Sakaue, [Sport as power device], 186.
[42] Sakaue, [Sport as power device], 188.
[43] Ishizaka Yūji, 'Kokka senryaku to shite no futatsu no Orinpikku. Kokka no manazashi to supōtsu no soshiki' [Two Olympics as state strategy. National standards and sport organisation] in: Shimizu Satoshi ed., *Orinpikku sutadiizu. Fukusū no keiken, fukusū no seiji* (Tokyo 2004) 108-122, there: 112.
[44] Sakaue, [Sport as power device], 224.

of funds for the Olympics as a waste of resources. Already in 1938, the Games were cancelled, together with the Sapporo Winter Olympics and the World Exhibition, which all had been meant to be part of the official programme to memorise the 2,600 years anniversary of the Japanese empire.[45] The Oriental Games, hosted by Japan at this occurrence, were not much of a substitute since next to Japan only those countries were represented that belonged to the sphere of influence of Japanese colonialism.

Conclusion

I have shown in the previous discussion how sports and body politics have been utilised by the Japanese state to mould its citizens into a disciplined and submissive mass. But the sport system was far from being consistent and pervasive, as the final section tried to argue. At no time of the period under surveillance, the state acted as a homogeneous and unified body. Quarrels of competency constantly accompanied administrative issues, and body politics resulted from ongoing negotiations between the Ministries of Education, the Army and Social welfare, including their respective advising committees, lobbyists and pressure groups. The cancellation of the Tokyo Olympics occurred at a time when the expansion of the war into the Pacific was not yet to be seen. But the military dominated cabinet politics, and it certainly disagreed with the representational merits of hosting an international sports event. This is a remarkable contrast to the Fascist governments' symbolic appropriation of the Olympic Games.[46]

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[45] Sandra Collins, Tōkyō 1940: Non-Celebres' in: Andreas Niehaus and Max Seinsch ed., Olympic Japan. Ideals and realities of (inter)nationalism (Würzburg 2007) 89-110.

[46] Cf. Thomas Alkemeyer, *Körper, Kult und Politik. Von der "Muskelreligion" Pierre de Coubertins zur Inszenierung von Macht in den Olympischen Spielen von 1936* (Frankfurt/New York 1996). Hoberman particularly noted the ideological compatibility between the IOC elite and the Nazis which was based on the common glorification of the physically perfect male as the ideal human being and the twin frameworks for achieving (or imagining) reconciliation between soldiers and athletes: the code of mutual respect between military adversaries and the ideal of sportsmanship that binds competitive athletes. John Hoberman, 'Toward a theory of Olympic internationalism', *Journal of Sport History* 22:1 (1995) 1-37, there: 17. For a different, East-Asian perspective on the politics of international sport

Capitalist interests differed in some respects from the political objectives, and these cleavages were tolerated to a far greater extent than in Western fascist societies. Professionalisation of sports was shunned by the German national socialists but it found acceptance by the Japanese state who embraced sport spectacles as a kind of high pressure valve (*anzenben*) to let off social unrest, economic uncertainty and political frustration. It seems that the state accepted the commercial initiatives since they provided leisure services to the masses which the state could not accomplish. But the national newspapers also served governmental interests, for example by organising and staging National Defense Sport Games (*Kokubō undō taikai*) or collecting suggestions from their readership on how to raise national strength and fitness in 1937.[47]

Generally speaking, sports played a crucial role for discipline, also for moral guidance (*zenshin shidō*), but less for nationalist indoctrination. In this regard I cannot follow Mangan and Komagome who argued that sports in Japan were at the centre of the induction of the male body (and mind) into martial self-sacrifice.[48] This goal was far more effectively realised within different social contexts, first of all at school level, and followed by the routines of everyday life in communal self-organisation. Within the state ideology, sports fulfilled a complementary function, and since it was not central, it could be read, practiced and used for different, alternating purposes. In sociological terms, this is not a very satisfying explanation but it neatly describes the core essence of the Japanese sport system as well as my reservations to the unchallenged usage of fascism as a suitable term to categorise the political system of Japan in this period.

The development of Japanese sports, which may be rendered as propelled by the dynamics within the social field of powers, are a result from the competition between all the actors and agents that have to make a certain claim in relation to sports. These actors included athletes, educators, the media, administrative bodies and state authorities in charge of body

events, see Date Yoshimi, 'Kyokutō senshuken kyōgi taikai no sekai. Ajia shugitekina supōtsu kan no risō to genjitsu' [Die Welt der Fernöstlichen Spiele. Ideal und Wirklichkeit einer asianistischen Sportsicht] in: Hirai Hajime ed., *Supōtsu de yomu Ajia* (Kyoto 2000) 205-224.

[47] Kishino, [Chronological chart of modern sport], 166.

[48] J.A. Mangan and Komagome Takeshi, 'Militarism, sacrifice and emperor worship: the expendable male body in fascist Japanese martial culture' in: J.A. Mangan ed., *Superman supreme. Fascist body as political icon – global fascism* (London 2000) 181-204.

politics, among many others. Empirical evidence shows that the state had only limited interest, or success, in the total regulation of the field since its ideas of the sportive body were countered by several alternative and opposing practices and interpretations. The state provided the hegemonial ideology of the body. But dominance never occurs without opposition, even in totalitarian systems.

Table 1: *results of examination for conscription, 1915-1935*

	1915	**1920**	**1925**	**1930**	**1935**
Class A	35.8%	36.1%	33.7%	29.3%	29.7%
Class B	15.4%	14.7%	13.7%	11.6%	11.5%
Class C	18.5%	22.7%	24.7%	20.5%	20.5%
Class D	23.4%	21.7%	23.9%	31.5%	31.8%
Class E	6.1%	4.3%	3.8%	6.9%	6.3%

Source: Abe, Kiyohara and Nakajima, 'Fascism, sport and society'.