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A Historical Study of Education and *Shūkyū* in Japan

WHITFIELD Dale Lee

Introduction

This study explores the inseparable relationship between *shūkyū* [football] and education in Japan between 1873 and 1945, examining how the Japanese educational system played a pivotal role in the sport's growth and integration into society. Building upon previous scholarship that highlights Japan's early development as a modern nation-state through cultural borrowing and a belief in the superiority of Western culture, this research investigates whether modern sports like football were instrumental in building Japanese character and shaping national ethics.

Employing the concept of *conjuncture* as conceptualised by the Annales School—which refers to medium-term cycles bridging slow-moving structural forces (*longue durée*) and immediate events—the study provides a framework to understand how social, economic, and cultural forces converged over decades to influence historical developments. This lens aims to gain new insights into how football and education became inextricably linked in pre-war Japan.

In this context, 'education' encompasses formal institutions and broader educational spaces influential in cultivating meritocratic cultural values essential for nation-building. Building on foundational studies of athleticism in Victorian and Edwardian public schools—which posit that the widespread adoption of sports had extensive educational and social repercussions—this research examines how football became intertwined with politics, economics, and culture within and across nations. Analyses of the assimilation of British character training in Japanese elite schools further underscore how the sport was initially viewed among the Japanese elite as a force for moral good, embodying qualities like courage, obedience, and physical and mental fitness in preparation for imperial conquest and control.

The research interrogates how these themes functioned as vehicles of Westernization through education, where modern values and ideals were nurtured and conveyed. Education, implying the reproduction of culture through a fusion of past and present and the cultivation of elite culture, identity, and moral codes, is thus crucial for understanding football within the broader socio-cultural

and political context. The study examines whether the cultural ethos and modern style that football embodied became intertwined as agents for societal development and moral guidance.

A contemporary reflection of this historical relationship is observed in the developmental pathway of Japanese footballer Kaoru Mitoma. His choice to pursue higher education at the University of Tsukuba before embarking on a professional football career contrasts sharply with European norms, where young talents are integrated into professional clubs from an early age. Mitoma's journey underscores the continued integration of education and football in Japan, where university football maintains a high standard and professional clubs accommodate academic pursuits.

In contrast, European football pathways have historically monopolised player development within professional clubs, with early professional training often undertaken at the expense of formal education once a player demonstrates potential. British football culture exhibits a prevailing resistance toward traditional academic pursuits, with clubs described as "sites of anti-intellectualism", reinforcing a prioritisation of physical capital over educational cultural capital. This approach leaves players underprepared for alternative careers following retirement from football.

Given that football in Japan and Europe shares a common antecedent—emerging from nineteenth-century British public school and university games—it is remarkable that the sport's development diverged significantly between the two contexts. In England, football development traces back to the Cambridge Rules (1848) and the establishment of the Football Association (1863), with a tradition of amateurism in public schools eventually giving way to the mass culture and anti-intellectualism of professional football. In contrast, football was introduced to Japan in 1873 by Archibald L. Douglas, shortly after the establishment of the modern Japanese educational system influenced by Western models.

Despite this shared heritage, historical studies of football in Japan have yet to fully illustrate the relationship between education and the sport as a socio-cultural and political *conjuncture*. This research addresses this gap by focusing on the broader context of the intersection of education and football beyond the emergence and predominance of extracurricular football clubs in educational institutions. It examines their continued involvement in domestic national competitions and their significance within the Japanese school curriculum as conduits for moral education.

By reappraising the role of key individuals and groups in shaping the ethics of the modern Japanese nation-state through the lens of football and education, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of how the cultural ethos and modern styles embodied in football became intertwined as agents for societal development and moral guidance in Japan. It offers a new perspective on the socio-cultural and political dynamics that have shaped the integration of football and education in Japan, contrasting it with the European model and highlighting the unique trajectory of Japanese football development within the broader context of nation-building and cultural identity formation.

Methodological Approaches and Arguments

This study employs a multifaceted framework to examine the intricate relationship between football and education in Japan from 1873 to 1945, addressing the following four key sub-concepts to answer the dominant research question:

1) Introduction of British Meritocratic Values into Japanese Football Education. Using a comparative historical approach, the study explores how football was transmitted from Britain and accepted in Japan. It focuses on the early diffusion of nineteenth-century British meritocratic values into Japanese higher educational institutions and elite secondary schools through extracurricular football clubs. By analysing primary and secondary sources from both countries, the research identifies similarities and differences in football's integration into educational systems, highlighting football's role as a medium for instilling discipline and the ethos of Western civilisation. This positions Japanese football as a case study of how British moral codes and cultural hegemony expanded through sport.

2) Cultural Accommodation of British Athletic Values by Japan's Educational Elite. The study examines how Western sports values, particularly football, were adapted and embedded into Japan's educational policies, historical documents, and contemporary literature. It illustrates how the ethos of football culture was represented and diffused through nationwide football periodicals among the elite schools' reading public. This dissemination cultivated modern codes of conduct and discipline, reinforcing the meritocratic principles and ethical values associated with the British moral code of athleticism.

3) British Moral Codes During the Period of Japanese Fascism with Ultra-nationalism. The study analyses the reflections of pre-war Japanese football players through oral histories, memoirs, and autobiographies, utilising Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire* [realms of memory]. It investigates how collective memories of football were formed during the atmosphere of Japanese fascism and ultra-nationalism. The focus is on whether football practices and the game ethic persisted within educational institutions despite widespread militarisation and stringent ideological indoctrination, highlighting the sport's resilience amidst ideological upheaval.

4) Grassroots, Female, and Other Involvement in Japanese Football? The research addresses whether alternative, concurrent routes for football participation existed, clarifying the significance of the educational sphere. It examines gender, peripheral, and professional spaces in correlation with the educational structure, highlighting the multifaceted spaces of football in Japanese society. By referring to studies on local and community-driven aspects, including potential women's football and grassroots initiatives, it contrasts the mediation of football by educational elites with external educational circumstances. This approach underscores the central role of education in football in Japan, showcasing education's dynamic and contested cultural space.

All chapters, especially Chapter 1, argue on the 1) Introduction of British Meritocratic Values into Japanese Football Education. Chapter 2 elucidates the 2) Cultural Accommodation of British Athletic Values by Japan's Educational Elite. Chapters 3 and 4 concern 3) British Moral Codes During the Period of Japanese Fascism with Ultra-nationalism. Chapter 5 answers the question 4) Grassroots, Female, and Other Involvement in Japanese Football?

Chapter 1. The Emergence and Foundation of Association Football in Japan

How did football's organisational development in Japan become uniquely intertwined with educational institutions, and why do school and university teams continue to be relevant alongside professional football? Chapter One investigates these questions by examining three critical perspectives: the formation of *undōbu* [school athletic clubs], their role in fortifying Japanese football culture through participation in major competitions, and their significance as environments for moral education.

The chapter highlights the pivotal role of British educators and Japanese school elites during the Meiji Restoration in introducing football to Japan. Football was initially adopted as part of the modern school system, developed on Western educational ideals. The formation of *undōbu* embedded football within educational settings, where these clubs became integral to educational objectives, instilling discipline, teamwork, and moral uprightness in Japanese youth. Through active participation in major domestic and international competitions, such as the Far Eastern Championship Games and the Emperor's Cup, *undōbu* fortified Japanese football culture and established educational institutions as primary hubs for football development in Japan. Additionally, the hierarchical relationships within these clubs facilitated the cultivation of values like perseverance, fair play, and social responsibility, drawing parallels with British moral codes and the game ethic of the time.

By integrating historical, cultural, and educational perspectives, the chapter uncovers the reasons behind the sport's unique alignment with education in Japan. It underscores how football served as a medium for transmitting Western meritocratic values, aiding nation-building efforts and constructing a modern Japanese identity. Despite the rise of professionalism and the establishment of the J. League, educational institutions continue to be central to Japanese football. They provide a critical recruitment pathway for professional clubs and maintain the sport's foundational emphasis on moral and character development. This enduring connection between football and education reflects a broader socio-cultural and political context in Japan, emphasising the intertwined roles of sports and education in the country's historical and contemporary advancement.

Chapter 2. The Transnational Diffusion of British Athleticism through Japanese Media

How did the Japanese media influence football's integration into educational institutions and shape the sport's cultural values? Chapter Two examines these questions by analysing articles from *Shūkyū*, Japan's earliest nationwide football magazine, focusing on how the media promoted the concept of 'character' development, embraced amateurism, encouraged individualism, and addressed the balance between sports participation and conventional education.

The chapter highlights the pivotal role of *Shūkyū* in diffusing British athletic values into Japanese football culture during its formative years. The magazine served as a platform for Japan's

educational elite to transmit ideals such as discipline, moral uprightness, and teamwork—values inherent in British public school athletics. Through articles written by prominent educators and football advocates, *Shūkyū* emphasised how football participation could cultivate 'character' in students, aligning with the nation's broader educational objectives. The promotion of amateurism was also central, reflecting a commitment to pure sportsmanship and fair play, even as Japan sought to compete internationally.

Moreover, the chapter explores how football was portrayed as a means of fostering individualism within a collectivist society. The magazine's discourse suggested that while teamwork was essential, developing individual abilities contributed to the greater good of the team and, by extension, the nation. This perspective allowed for a controlled self-expression compatible with Japan's nationalistic goals during the 1930s. Lastly, the chapter addresses the ongoing debate over balancing sports participation with academic responsibilities. Contributors to *Shūkyū* argued for integrating athletics into education, suggesting that physical activity and academic pursuits were not mutually exclusive but complementary in developing well-rounded individuals.

By integrating historical, cultural, and educational analyses, the chapter uncovers how *Shūkyū* acted as a conduit for embedding Western values into Japanese football, reinforcing the sport's close association with education. It demonstrates that the media played a crucial role in legitimising football within the educational system, influencing teachers and students. Despite rising nationalism and anti-Western sentiment during the Pacific War, football remained a medium for promoting British-inspired moral codes within Japanese education. This enduring connection highlights the intertwined roles of media, sports, and education in shaping Japan's modern identity and underscores the lasting impact of early media representations on the institutionalisation of football culture in the country.

Chapter 3. Resilience on the Field: Football in Wartime Japan

How did football navigate the challenges of Japan's ultranationalist era? Chapter Three investigates this question by analysing players' recollections from five regions—Hokkaidō, Aomori, Ibaraki, Tōkyō, and Hyōgo—to explore how the sport persisted despite wartime restrictions and ideological pressures. By delving into personal narratives and archival research, this exploration uncovers the

reasons behind football's resilience during a period marked by militarisation and suppression of Western influences.

The chapter examines four primary perspectives: the restriction of football competitions, the challenges faced in continuing football practice amid equipment scarcity, players' adaptation to the war effort, and the ideological positioning of football within Japanese ultranationalism, despite official bans and promotion of traditional martial arts over Western sports, football endured due to several key factors. The unwavering dedication of players, who viewed football as integral to their identity, motivated them to continue practising and organising matches, often clandestinely. Football provided psychological sustenance and a sense of normalcy amidst the chaos of war, serving as a subtle form of resistance against the totalitarian regime's attempts to control all aspects of life. Additionally, football's alignment with virtues valued by the militaristic state—such as discipline, teamwork, and physical fitness—allowed it to be somewhat tolerated. The sport was partially ideologically sanctioned due to its acceptance in Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, Japan's allies, which provided a rationale for its continuation despite its Western origins. Furthermore, players adapted to wartime conditions by creatively managing resource scarcity, repairing equipment, and adjusting training methods to cope with limited facilities. These adaptations demonstrated their commitment and ensured the sport's survival.

These findings significantly contribute to the historiography of Japanese football by illuminating a previously underexplored era. The chapter challenges the assumption that Western sports were entirely eradicated during the ultranationalist period, revealing that football's fate varied regionally and institutionally. The study demonstrates the complexities of cultural adaptation under oppressive regimes by highlighting the nuanced reasons behind football's persistence—from individual dedication to strategic ideological alignment. Understanding the resilience of football during this era offers valuable insights into Japan's social and cultural history and underscores the interplay between individual agency and state ideology in shaping cultural practices.

Chapter 4. Embedded Memory with a New Outlook

To what extent did pre-war Japanese football values carry over into the sport's post-war development? Chapter Four examines this question by analysing post-war memoirs and articles of pre-war Japanese football players, revealing how the cultural and moral codes embedded in the sport before 1945 influenced its evolution after the Pacific War. The chapter explores this continuity through four primary perspectives: football's integration into education, the preservation of educational values within corporate-amateur football, the enduring influence of student-organized sports, and the expression of 'European-style individualism' in players' recollections.

Players recognised football as more than a game; it was integral to moral and character development within the educational system. The sport fostered virtues like discipline, teamwork, and fair play, aligning with British athletic ideals and Japanese educational objectives. This integration shaped players' identities and remained influential post-war, reinforcing sports' role in personal growth and ethical development. As football transitioned to corporate-sponsored teams post-war, players emphasised maintaining these educational values and the essence of play. They resisted becoming solely profit-driven, arguing that football should continue to promote personal development and community spirit even within a corporate context, highlighting tensions between professionalisation and foundational principles.

Moreover, the tradition of student self-management and age-based hierarchies in football clubs, mirroring the British public school system, promoted players' autonomy, leadership, and camaraderie. These practices allowed players to develop strong relationships and a sense of responsibility over their teams, persisting into the post-war period. Additionally, players expressed 'European-style individualism' in their recollections. Football provided a space where individual talents flourished within a team framework. Players emphasised that personal excellence and creativity contributed to collective success, aligning with British notions of balancing individualism and teamwork. They challenged coaching methods that suppressed individuality, advocating for approaches encouraging creativity and personal expression on the field.

By analysing these aspects, the chapter reveals that pre-war Japanese football values significantly carried over into the sport's post-war development. The essence of British athleticism—

emphasising moral virtues, educational integration, self-management, and individual expression within a team—persisted despite wartime disruptions and ultranationalist influences. This continuity facilitated the sport's smooth evolution after the war, influencing its trajectory toward professionalism while retaining its foundational values. These findings enhance our understanding of how cultural exchange and adaptation shape national sports identities, highlighting the enduring impact of these values on Japanese football's history and evolution.

Chapter 5. The Heterotopic Space of Pre-war Japanese Football

To what extent did grassroots initiatives and women's football establish their own presence within a sport historically dominated by elite educational institutions in pre-war Japan? Chapter Four investigates this question by exploring the multifaceted development of Japanese football before 1945, seeking to determine whether alternative pathways existed where football thrived beyond traditional educational settings.

The chapter examines the limited but noteworthy instances of women's football participation in pre-war Japan. Despite occasional engagement during free periods or sports festivals in schools, women's football was neither widely accepted nor consistently included in curricula. Influential educators often deemed football unsuitable for women, resulting in its marginal status within women's physical education. The analysis reveals that even these rare instances were closely tied to educational institutions, highlighting the pervasive influence of the education system on the sport's accessibility. Additionally, the chapter explores grassroots football initiatives, including local clubs and community efforts. An analysis of teams participating in the pre-war Emperor's Cup shows that many prominent teams were alum clubs formed by graduates of educational institutions rather than independent grassroots clubs. These teams extended educational values into the broader community, reflecting the sustained impact of the educational elite on football culture. Unlike in Britain, where football was widely adopted by the working class and local clubs flourished independently, Japan's grassroots football remained intertwined with educational influences.

By investigating these peripheral activities, the chapter reveals that while alternative football pathways did exist, they remained closely connected to the educational institutions that initially

fostered the sport. Even in grassroots and women's football, educational values and British moral codes persisted, indicating that the mainstream educational pathway significantly shaped football culture beyond formal academic settings. These findings challenge the notion of a wholly independent grassroots football culture in pre-war Japan, underscoring the centrality of education in shaping the sport's development. Understanding the limited role of women's football and the nature of grassroots initiatives enriches our comprehension of Japanese football history. The chapter concludes that the sport's growth was intricately linked to social and cultural contexts, with educational institutions remaining the fundamental platform for football's evolution in Japan before 1945, emphasising the adaptability and perseverance of educational principles even within non-mainstream spaces.

Conclusion

This research aimed to address notable gaps in the historiography of Japanese football by investigating how the sport was inseparable from Japanese education in a broader socio-cultural context, including national consciousness. In particular, it sought to uncover how moral and ethical principles derived from British athleticism attached to English association football were adapted and ingrained through *shūkyū* in Japanese society during the establishing period of modern education and football in Japan (1873 to 1945). The study's significance lies in examining football not only as a game but as a vehicle for disseminating cultural and moral codes through school-amateur *undōbu*, shaping new traditions that are 'Japanese identity' following Western modernisation. The integration of nation-building ideals within schools and the adaptation of football both uphold and confront political ideologies, even during Japan's most tumultuous historical period when ultra-nationalism, fascism, and militarism were influential. This analysis reveals that football values, far from transient, endured throughout the previous centuries, showing evidence of its robustness through collective memory history, profoundly shaping Japanese football's cultural and social landscape well into the post-war era, despite being superficially replaced due to fascist influences.

This study demonstrates that British moral principles introduced to Japan through football endured and became subtly and unconsciously woven into the national consciousness, shaping the sport's development and societal role for decades. These values were disseminated through

educational channels, ensuring their persistence even following Japan's major post-war transformation. By emphasising the intricate connection between education, football, and national identity, this research provides a more nuanced understanding of Japanese football's cultural and social importance. It reveals the latent, unconscious impact of early British moral values on the evolution of football in pre-war Japan, showing how these principles became integral to Japanese football culture. These values continued to shape the sport's development well into the modern era, even after it became known as "soccer", demonstrating how an educational, moralistic internal code remained deeply rooted, extending into present-day school sports. This study addresses a socio-cultural *conjuncture* through the history of Japanese football, offering broader insights into how the sport can serve as a tool for cultural transmission and social cohesion, shaping national identities and values that resonate well beyond the playing field.