

“Enemy Soldiers” and “Ball Mates”: Intra-Imperial Football and Identity Politics in Interwar Northeast Asia

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In the mid-1930s a string of Korean successes in athletic events tested colonial relations with Japan. The best known of these occurred at the 11th Olympiad in Berlin in 1936, where marathoners Son Ki-jōng 孫基禎 (1912-2002) and Nam Sūng-nyong 南昇龍 (1912-2001) took gold and bronze medals, respectively. Japanese were angered when Korean newspaper editors erased the rising sun emblem from Son’s jersey in a photograph of the medal ceremony and, according to an official report, his victory “was seized as a sign of the superiority of the Korean race.”¹

Yet it was in another sport that Koreans consistently displayed “superiority”: association football (soccer). In the year before Son and Nam’s medal wins, Koreans won two major football tournaments that were supposed to determine which teams would represent imperial Japan in Berlin. At the Greater Japan Football Association (JFA) Emperor’s Cup tournament, the first to include squads from external territories within the Japanese Empire, the Kyōngsōng (Seoul) Football Club (KFC) trounced Japan’s strongest side, Tokyo Science and Literature (Bunri) University, 6-1. In November that same year, KFC prevailed again at the Meiji Shrine Games, shutting out Keiō University’s BRB (Blue, Red & Blue) alumni team, 2-0.

Irritated yet impressed, JFA officials initially announced they would recruit seven Korean players (for a roster of eighteen) for the Olympic team. Koreans were infuriated when JFA eventually recruited only two, Kim Yōng-gūn 金永根 (1908-70) and Kim Yong-sik 金容植 (1910-85). In the end only Kim Yong-sik participated, sharing with the marathoners what was both an honor and an indignity: representing their colonial oppressor in the world’s most prestigious sporting event.

There are two schools of thought about the impact of international football competition on relations between countries. Many enthusiasts fervently exalt football as a “sport with no borders” that fosters international amity.² “Football gives unparalleled opportunities for the projection of national identity on the global stage, which, additionally, serves to illuminate the whole stage.”³ Believing football “create[s] understanding between different peoples,” in 2001 Swedish MP Lars Gustafsson nominated football for the Nobel Peace Prize.⁴

Yet international competition of course also intensifies nationalist sentiment. Football is “a central domain in which nation-related rituals including intense collective emotions are observable.” These emotions are “crucial” to the “heightened affective arousal” that fosters

¹ *Tong-a ilbo* (hereafter *TAI*) August 13, 1936: 2; and *Annual Report on the Administration of Chosen (1936-37)* (Keijō: Government-General of Chōsen, 1937), 177.

² Nasu Shō 那須翔 (1924-2014), chairman of JAWOC, quoted in exhibit at Japan Football Museum, Tokyo.

³ Peter Hough, “‘Make Goals Not War’: The Contribution of Football to World Peace,” *International Journal of the History of Sport* (hereafter *IJHS*) 25.10 (September 2008): 1287.

⁴ Lars Gustafsson quoted in Peter Hough, “‘Make Goals Not War’: The Contribution of Football to World Peace,” *IJHS* 25.10 (September 2008): 1287; Simon Kuper, “Playing for Peace,” *The Guardian* January 28, 2001, <https://www.theguardian.com/football/2001/jan/28/europeanfootball.sport>.

“cognitive and affective” attachments to national communities.⁵ If football success fortifies national pride, it concurrently “represent[s] an expression of aggression toward one’s rivals, toward representatives of other countries.”⁶ George Orwell famously characterized international football as a “species of fighting” and “war minus the shooting.”⁷

Few scholars have studied the impact of football on *intra-imperial* relations, when one competitor is a “nation” and the other technically is not. Intra-imperial competition was admittedly rare, since the possibility of colonizers losing to colonized peoples endangered the racial hierarchies on which imperialism was based. Imperial powers encouraged the spread of modern sports throughout the colonial world “as one means of inculcating respect for the values of time, discipline and authority within the minds and spirits of the colonised.”⁸ But engaging colonial subjects in direct athletic competition made the colonizer vulnerable to exposure of his weakness: in every situation and setting, his mastery must be confirmed.

Moreover, native victories (or even good showings) inspired collective celebrations easily construed as nationalist expressions. In 1911 when the Bengali Mohun Bagan FC, playing barefooted, defeated the British Army’s Yorkshire Regiment team, 2-1, the English press noted that the victory “had brought in its wake a sense of universal joy” that crossed caste and communal barriers.⁹ Scholars have shown that even in the absence of direct competition against colonizers, football created colonial communities of national self-assertion and resistance in places as diverse as Egypt, Indonesia, Zanzibar, and Vietnam. Rather than making colonized people more disciplined and docile, football gave them a mechanism for defiance.¹⁰

Nowhere was intra-imperial football competition more routine than in Northeast Asia, between imperial Japan and colonial Korea. Like other imperial powers, Japanese used sport strategically to inculcate discipline, respect for rules, and moral development in its formal colonies, but colonial subjects turned competitive sport into a “medium of national resistance,” “the only means with which [they] could defeat Japan.”¹¹ This imbued each accomplishment with deep

⁵ Sven Ismer, “Embodying the Nation: Football, Emotions and the Construction of Collective Identity,” *Nationalities Papers* 39.4 (July 2011): 548, 560-561.

⁶ Liubov’ Borusiak, “Soccer as a Catalyst for Patriotism,” *Russian Social Science Review* 51.1 (January-February 2010): 74.

⁷ George Orwell, “Such, Such Were the Joys ...” *Partisan Review* 19.5 (September-October 1952): 535; and George Orwell, “The Sporting Spirit,” *Tribune* December 14, 1945, available at The Orwell Foundation, <https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/the-sporting-spirit/>. See Peter J. Beck, “‘War Minus the Shooting’: George Orwell on International Sport and the Olympics,” *Sport in History* 33.1 (2013): 72-94.

⁸ Laura Fair, “Kickin’ It: Leisure, Politics and Football in Colonial Zanzibar, 1900-1950s,” *Africa: Journal of the International African Institute* 67.2 (1997): 224.

⁹ Boria Majumdar, “The Vernacular in Sports History,” *IJHS* 20.1 (March 2003): 117-118.

¹⁰ Shaun Lopez, “Football as National Allegory: Al-Ahram and the Olympics in 1920s Egypt,” *History Compass* (January 2009): 282-305; Patrick Hutchison, “Breaking Boundaries: Football and Colonialism in the British Empire,” *Inquiries Journal/Student Pulse*, 1.11 (2009), <http://www.inquiriesjournal.com/articles/64/breaking-boundaries-football-and-colonialism-in-the-british-empire>; Agathe Larcher-Goscha, “Du Football au Vietnam (1905-1949): colonialism, culture sportive et sociabilités en jeux,” *Outre-Mers: Revue d’Histoire* 97.2 (2009): 61-89; Freek Colombijn, “The Politics of Indonesian Football,” *Archipel* 59 (2000): 171-200.

¹¹ Chien-Yu Lin and Ping-Chao Lee, “Sport as a Medium of National Resistance: Politics and Baseball in Taiwan During Japanese Colonialism,” *IJHS* 24.3 (March 2007): 319-337. See also Gwang Ok, “The Political

meaning for undermining imperial discourses of Japanese superiority—and unlike other forms of popular culture, by its very nature sport was not censorable.

JFA’s incorporation of Korea as a “regional” affiliate meant that intra-imperial competition was more frequent and routine than in other empires. This administrative structure made JFA an embodiment of the official *naisen ittai* (“Japan and Korea—one body”) policy. Officially announced in September 1938, *naisen ittai* had in fact been a longstanding policy objective intended to neutralize lingering vestiges of Korean cultural independence and aspirations for sovereignty. Though no doubt skeptical of Japanese intentions, some Koreans hoped to use *naisen ittai* to their advantage, to promote “mutual understanding and cooperation.”¹²

A handful of scholars and journalists have written accounts of Japan-Korea football relations, with varying degrees of analytical rigor.¹³ The best of these, by Ōshima Hiroshi and Seok Lee, provide contextualized and nuanced perspectives, transcending the nationalist frameworks of other narratives.¹⁴ Relying extensively on oral histories among players from both countries, Ōshima demonstrates how deeply intertwined the football communities of colony and metropole were throughout the 1930s. Lee focuses primarily on internal controversies and regional rivalries in the Korean football community in the lead-up to the 1936 Olympics.¹⁵ By contrast, Takenouchi Kōsuke and Kagawa Hiroshi’s breathless celebration of Japan’s “miraculous” Olympic victory over Sweden entirely omits the tense colonial politics that preceded it.¹⁶

Adopting Ōshima and Lee’s post-nationalist perspectives, here I incorporate additional sources to take a longer view of Japan-Korea football relations, and further elaborate on their arguments with particular reference to colonial relations generally and *naisen ittai* integration specifically. I argue that although technically intra-imperial (glossed as “regional”) competition between imperial Japan and colonial Korea certainly provided ample opportunities for nationalist expression—indeed, in interwar Northeast Asia footballers were called “soldiers” (*gun/kun*) and opponents “enemies” (*teki/chōk*)—it also exemplified what *naisen ittai* was supposed to look like.

Significance of Sport: An Asian Case Study—Sport, Japanese Colonial Policy and Korean National Resistance, 1910-1945,” *IJHS* 22.4 (2005): 649-670; Wei-Cheng Chiu, Dong-Jhy Hwang, and Alan Bairner, “In the Shadow of National Glory: Taiwan Aboriginal Baseball in the Politics of Identity,” *IJHS* 31.3 (2014): 347-362; Karam Lee and Gwang Ok, “A War Without Weapons: Rugby, Korean Resistance, and Japanese Colonialism, 1910-1945,” *IJHS* 33.5 (July 2015): 1-12; John Harney, “Youth Baseball and Colonial Identity in Taiwan, 1920-1968,” *NINE: A Journal of Baseball History and Culture* 22.1 (Fall 2013): 20-43; and J.A. Mangan, Kyongho Park, and Gwang Ok, “Japanese Imperial Sport as Failed Cultural Conditioning: Korean ‘Recalcitrance,’” in J.A. Mangan, et al., *Japanese Imperialism: Politics and Sport in East Asia* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2017), 43-69.

¹² Kang Ch’ang-ki, *Naisen ittai ron* (Tokyo: Kokumin Hyōronsha, 1939), 3.

¹³ See Kō Tateo, *Shirazaru Nikkan sakkā gekitō shi* (Tokyo: Kōzaidō Shuppan, 1998); Pak Kyōng-ho and Kim Tok-ki, *Nihon wa teki, JAPAN wa tomo*, trans. Morioka Ryū (Tokyo: Ōkura Shuppan, 2002); Kang Hui-bong, *Nikkan sakkā gekitō shi* (Tokyo: Gakken Bunko, 2002).

¹⁴ Ōshima Hiroshi, *Nikkan kikkūofu densetsu* (Tokyo: Jitsugyō no Nihon Sha, 1996); and Seok Lee, “Becoming a Member of the Japanese National Football Team as a Korean: The 1936 Berlin Olympic Trials and Colonial Korea,” in *Sport in Korea: History, Development, Management*, eds. Dae Hee Kwak, Yong Jae Ko, Inkyu Kang, and Mark Rosentraub (London and New York: Routledge, 2017), 31-44.

¹⁵ Jong Sung Lee, *A History of Football in North and South Korea c. 1910-2002* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016) also devotes significant attention to regional rivalries.

¹⁶ Takenouchi Kōsuke and Kagawa Hiroshi, *Berurin no kiseki: Nihon sakkā no kirameki no isshun* (Tokyo: Tokyo Shinbun, 2015).

Football was one area in which Koreans and Japanese could and did collaborate on terms of relative parity. Korean supremacy in football earned Japanese respect and inclusion on the Japanese national (Jp. *daihyō*; Kr. *taep'yo*) squad. Whatever their other disadvantages under colonial occupation, in football Koreans were indomitable: Korean sides won 73% of the 139 matches for which I could find records (101 wins, 27 losses, 11 draws); and the total goal differential was a staggering 364 (501 for Koreans to 137 for Japanese).¹⁷ If Korean footballers were unable to secure political independence for their homeland, they most assuredly won a lovely consolation prize: humiliation of their oppressors on the soccer pitch.

Yet with no independent national side of their own, Koreans *wanted*—indeed, felt entitled—to represent Japan in international play; and Japanese *needed* Korean footballers to be more competitive. Association football thus muddled national identities within both the metropole and the colony. Rabid regional rivalries between the eastern Kansai and western Kantō in Japan, and P'yōngyang and Kyōngsōng in Korea, seriously compromised national cohesion and had a significant impact on the process of forming the *daihyō* side that went to Berlin—in fact, brawls, belligerently disputed calls, and exhortations from the stands to *murder* opponents were much more common in matches between Koreans than against Japanese.

Furthermore, when representing Japan abroad, playing for Japanese universities and company teams, or competing in JFA-sponsored regional tournaments, Korean footballers were nominally “Japanese.” Like other colonial subjects, Korean footballers strategically invoked their status as “children of the emperor” when it suited their purposes.¹⁸ Situationally, they occupied a liminal, performance-based meritocracy (*jitsuryoku no sekai*), in which ethno-national animosities were temporarily suspended, and they developed friendships with Japanese teammates who respected them and with whom they shared passion for the sport. “When I was on the Japan *daihyō* team,” Yi Yu-hyōng 李裕瀼 (1911-2003) insisted, “there was no discrimination.”¹⁹ Athletes shifted identities, objectives, and allegiances depending on circumstances, usually prioritizing improved performance above all else.

Discrimination among players may have been minimal, but not always among JFA officials, coaches, referees, and fans. My perspective here is not Pollyannish: ethnic discrimination was rife off the pitch and nationalist hostilities sharply evident in matches pitting Koreans against Japanese. If not technically “international” matches, they carried the same symbolic weight. “You are not just playing football,” one Korean coach reportedly told his squad before a match against Japan. “You are fighting for the independence of the Korean people.”²⁰ This fraught history of football as an expression of Korean nationalism cast a broad shadow over all post-liberation matches between Japan and the Republic of Korea (ROK), as well as the 2002 FIFA World Cup tournament, co-hosted by both countries in an unprecedented arrangement.

¹⁷ Compiled match results available at https://www.niu.edu/etatkins/_pdf/japan-korea-matches.pdf.

¹⁸ Kirsten Ziomek, *Lost Histories: Recovering the Lives of Japan's Colonial Peoples* (Cambridge: Harvard University Asia Center, 2019), 6, 256, 287.

¹⁹ Quoted in Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 89-90.

²⁰ Quoted in Korea Sports Council, “The History of Korea Sports Council” (unpublished report, 1965), 167, cited in Lee Jong-Young, “The Development of Football in Korea,” in *Japan, Korea and the 2002 World Cup*, eds. John Horne and Wolfram Manzenreiter (London: Routledge: 2002), 78.

Finally, association football also disrupted the center-periphery orientation of relations between colony and metropole, as well as within each territory. If Korea was “one part” (*ichibu*), “region” (*chihō*), or “periphery” (*gaichi/gaibu*) of Japan in spatial imaginations, Korean dominance on the pitch arguably made it the center of Northeast Asian football. Internally, P’yōngyang and Kyōngsōng vied to a stalemate for status as the sport’s peninsular epicenter, whereas in Japan, Kantō’s more established centrality was constantly contested on and off the pitch by Kansai. Football thus embodied multiple identity struggles—national, regional, imperial, personal, and professional—within interwar Northeast Asia.

The “Beautiful Game” in Northeast Asia

The Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) officially recognizes an East Asian game (Ch. *cuju*; Jp. *kemari*; Kr. *ch’ukku*) played by elites in China, Korea, Japan, and Vietnam as the “forebear of football.”²¹ The British brought the modern incarnation to East Asian treaty ports in the latter half of the 1800s. Lieutenant-Commander Archibald Lucius Douglas (1842-1913) of the Royal Navy and sailors under his command introduced cadets at the Imperial Japanese Naval Academy to the game in 1873. Koreans first observed a football match among British commercial sailors in 1882, when the HMS *Flying Fish* was at port in Inch’ōn.

The arrival of football in Northeast Asia coincided with the rise of a Social Darwinist-inflected athletics discourse, which linked the physical fitness of individual (male) citizen/subjects to the health of the national body (pun intended). East Asian nationalist intellectuals repeatedly stressed physical education and athletics as essential to modernity and national viability. Combining the Anglo-American ideology of “muscular Christianity” and Confucian principles of self-mastery, obedience, and stoicism, Japanese educators promoted sport as a mechanism for character-building and moral development.²² Sport had instrumental value for fomenting emperor-centered nationalism, developing military prowess, instilling obedience and discipline, and improving Japan’s racial stock. Korean advocates likewise repeatedly foregrounded sport’s potential benefits to country and, implicitly, the recuperation of personal manliness and national sovereignty. “Superior races win and inferior races lose,” a 1920 editorial bluntly asserted. “[I]n Korea the present situation is one in which body and mind have weakened and declined. This is because Koreans have lived an idle life and not taken care of their health, and thus been unable to develop the life force of Heaven and Earth.”²³

Modern sports (baseball, basketball, rugby, track and field, rowing, golf, tennis, volleyball, gymnastics, swimming, and association football) had their respective advocates in Japan and Korea, each declaring their favored sport best for accomplishing national objectives. In terms of domestic popularity and media coverage, baseball was the clear favorite in Japan. However, because association football was rapidly becoming the world’s most popular spectator sport, JFA

²¹ “History of Football—The Origins” (<https://www.fifa.com/about-fifa/who-we-are/the-game/index.html>); and Vincent Haywood, “China’s 1936 Olympic Football Team: Eight of the Players Were from Hong Kong,” *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society Hong Kong Branch* 48 (2008): 8-9.

²² Sugimoto Atsuo, “School Sport, Physical Education and the Development of Football Culture in Japan,” in *Football Goes East: Business, Culture and the People’s Game in China, Japan and South Korea*, eds. Wolfram Manzenreiter and John Horne (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2004), 102-116.

²³ “Chosōn Ch’eyukhoe e taeyahan,” *TAI* July 16, 1920: 1; quoted in J.A. Mangan and Ha Nam-gil, “Confucianism, Imperialism, Nationalism: Modern Sport Ideology and Korean Culture,” in J.A. Mangan, ed., *Europe, Sport, World: Shaping Global Societies* (London: Frank Cass, 2001), 69.

officials worked hard to raise its profile, convinced that success in football confirmed the national narrative of Japan's progress toward "civilization" and cultural prominence in the modern world.

On the other hand, despite the presence of American missionaries and Japanese imperialists, Koreans preferred football as their "national sport" (*kukki*). A 1941 *Asahi* article characterized football as the "pride of the peninsula," and Korean baseball as "torpid" (*teichō*).²⁴ But aside from some "friendlies" (Jp. *shinzen shiai*; Kr. *ch'insŏn sihap*) against Shanghai and Tianjin teams in the 1930s, Koreans did not technically engage in international play during the colonial period: playing a Japanese side was regional competition.²⁵

The game sank roots in the peninsula due to the efforts of private school students and alumni, court translators, the YMCA, and Christian missionaries.²⁶ Missionaries believed that football "carried within it a moral order based on the ethics of commitment and dedication, of team spirit and the subjection of the individual to the demands of the group and of valour and personal bravery," qualities purportedly "lacking" in colonized populations.²⁷ This dovetailed nicely with the emphasis both Japanese and Koreans placed on moral education.

Persuading educators of football's didactic value was therefore essential to its proliferation. Tokyo Higher Normal School (now Tsukuba University) published football handbooks on the game for physical education teachers, stressing the sport's moral impact. Tsuboi Gendō 坪井玄道 (1852-1922), Japan's first gymnastics teacher, wrote that football was an engrossing game whose spiritual benefits surpassed even its corporeal ones. Cooperative team play "cultivates the spirit" and enabled British and Americans to develop their "gentlemanly spirits" and "sturdy physiques."²⁸

Korean Christian, Buddhist, and Ch'ōndogyo religious institutions all promoted football for moral instruction.²⁹ Athletes were expected to be *kunja* (Ch. *junzi*, the masculine ideal of virtue, self-mastery, and erudition) who conducted themselves with "great honor."³⁰ In a 1922 article in the Korean intellectual journal *Creation* (*Kaebiyōk*), footballer Kim Wŏn-t'aek 金源泰 insisted that soccer was the most "effective" and "reliable" game for developing both body and mind, as well as a "cooperative spirit" (*hyōpdong chōk chōngsin*). Redemption of the nation was contingent on the recuperation of Korean manhood through athletics—particularly football—at a time when Korean culture was disparaged as "civilian rather than military, and somewhat effeminate."³¹

²⁴ "Chōsen taiikukai no tenbō—hantō no hokori, shūkyū—yakyūkai wa teichō no ichizu," *Asahi shinbun* (hereafter *AS*) May 24, 1941: 6.

²⁵ Kō, *Shirazaru*, 59-60; Kanō, "Sakkā," 243-244.

²⁶ Gwang Ok and Kyongho Park, "Cultural Evolution and Ideology in Korean Soccer: Sport and Nationalism," *IJHS* 31.3 (2014): 365-367; Lee, "Development," 76-77; Kō, *Shirazaru* 49; Kang, *Nikkan*, 21.

²⁷ J.A. Mangan, "Soccer as Moral Training: Missionary Intentions and Imperial Legacies," *IJHS* 27.1-2 (2010): 421.

²⁸ Tokyo Kōtō Shihan Gakkō Futtobōrubu, *Assoshieshon futtobōru* (Tokyo: Shōbidō, 1903), n.p.; Tokyo Kōtō Shihan Gakkō Kōyūkai Shūkyūbu, *Futtobōru* (Tokyo: Dai Nippon Tosho, 1908), n.p.

²⁹ Jong Sung Lee, *A History of Football in North and South Korea c. 1910-2002* (Oxford: Peter Lang, 2016), 36.

³⁰ Gwang Ok, *The Transformation of Modern Korean Sport: Imperialism, Nationalism, Globalization* (Elizabeth, NJ: Hollym, 2007), 234; Lee, *History*, 71; Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 79, 81.

³¹ Kim Wŏn-t'aek, "Sanai kōdūn p'ūtblol ūl ch'ara," *Kaebiyōk* 5 (November 1922): 104-107; Jung Hwan Cheon, "Bend It Like a Man of Chosun: Sports Nationalism and Colonial Modernity of 1936," in *The Korean Popular Culture Reader*, eds. Kyung Hyun Kim and Youngmin Choe (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 205-

In the first half of the twentieth century, it was more common for East Asian nations to send their strongest preexisting teams or national tournament champions to international competitions (most prominently the Far Eastern Championship Games) than to field “pick-up” (*pikku appu*, all-star) sides consisting of select players from clubs throughout the country. Centralized governing bodies determined which clubs would represent from one event to the next.

As national associations became the norm internationally, Japanese followed suit with the JFA on September 10, 1921, and joined FIFA in 1929. However, the Korean Sports Association (1920-38) organized the All-Korea Football Tournament (1921-41) for high school, college, and company teams on February 11-13, 1921, some nine months before the JFA’s first competition took place (unfortunately, the championship match between Chung’ang High School and Paejae Academy was suspended due to fierce disputes about the rules of the game and questionable officiating).³²

The Korea Football Association (1933-42, hereafter KFA) evolved from an earlier referees’ association founded in 1928. KFA did not have an independent FIFA affiliation until its post-liberation incarnation in the ROK was established in 1948; nor did it participate as an independent side in the Far Eastern Championship Games. KFA was one of seven regional affiliates alongside those in the metropole.³³ It existed primarily to organize and oversee intra-peninsular competition and to determine which teams would represent the “region” in JFA tournaments.

Still, Koreans and Japanese approached their contests with the same motivation and gravitas they brought to official international play. Rhetoric and administrative initiatives incorporated the colony as “one part” or “region” of Japan, as Algeria was a French *département*.³⁴ Yet the de facto alienation of Koreans as either foreigners or, at best, second-class Japanese subjects gave football matches between the peninsula and the archipelago at least the flavor of international competition. In the end, each was the other’s fiercest adversary, elevating passions and inspiring their best play.³⁵ “If we lose to Japan,” Korean players said, “we can’t go home.”³⁶

Enemies Within

Municipal, scholastic, and regional rivalries are essential to any self-respecting football country. Football teams in Japan’s eastern Kantō and western Kansai were acutely competitive with one another, whereas in Korea a fervid rivalry developed between P’yōngyang and Kyōngsōng in the late 1920s. In both cases, football rivalries reflected deeper socio-cultural differences and longstanding resentments between political centers and provincial peripheries. Moreover, they

206; Lee, *History*, 31-32; and Seok Lee, “Colonial Korea and the Olympic Games, 1910-1945,” Ph.D. dissertation, Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania, 2016, 81-82. The literal translation of the *Kaebbyōk* article’s title is “if you are a child of the mountain, kick a football,” but Cheon translates it as “if you are a man of Chosōn, kick a football.”

³² Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 35-36; Lee, *History*, 38; Lee, “Becoming,” 36-37; Kang, *Nikkan*, 22; Ok, *Transformation*, 246.

³³ Kantō, Kansai, Hokuriku, Hokkaidō, Chūgoku, Tōkai, and Chōsen.

³⁴ Nayoung Aimee Kwon, *Intimate Empire: Collaboration and Colonial Modernity in Korea & Japan* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015), 155-156.

³⁵ Kō, *Shirazaru*, 60; Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 121; Lee, *History*, 32.

³⁶ Kō, *Shirazaru*, 54; Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 106; Kanō, “Sakkā,” 243; Kang, *Nikkan*, 25; Sin Mu-kwan, *Ilbon (Nihon) wa raibaru ka—Kankoku no J rīgā 28 nin no honne* (Tokyo: Pitch Communications, 2015).

complicated and compromised the allegiances, motivations, and identities of Japanese and Korean footballers.

Northwestern P'yongan province's antipathy toward the Kyōngsōng capital region was longstanding. For P'yōngyang residents, football was a means to stick it to their nemesis to the south. Factionalism in Korea's hopelessly splintered nationalist movement also made football clashes nastier: some key figures in the Kyōngsōng-centered Kiho and Sōbuk (Northwest) political factions were also involved in YMCA football.³⁷ P'yōngan province produced powerful teams such as Muo FC, Sungsil Vocational School, P'yōngyang Higher Regular School, and Hamhŭng Smeltery that defeated Japanese sides in important competitions. Sungsil nurtured the talents of the man whom many regard, along with Hong Kong's Li Huitong 李惠堂 (1905-79), as East Asia's first "soccer genius," Kim Yōng-gŭn.³⁸

Northwestern teams were known for wild, aggressive, physical play, whereas teams in Kyōngsōng were considered more technically proficient and tactical.³⁹ The colonial capital was home to Paejae Higher Regular School, Posōng Vocational School (now Korea University), Kyōngsin Middle School, Yōnhŭi Vocational School (now Yōnsei University), Keijō Imperial University (now Seoul National University), and Chosōn FC (formerly the Buddhist Youth Association FC).

In 1929 and 1930 the *Chosōn ilbo* newspaper sponsored a three-day Kyōng-P'yōng Football Tournament pitting all-star teams from Kyōngsōng and P'yōngyang against one another. Bedlam ensued. "Players intentionally kicked their opponents and threw them to the ground while the referees looked the other way. They were encouraged by shouts from the fans to 'hit them,' 'kick them,' and 'kill them.'" After a two-year suspension, the newly established KFA resurrected the competition in 1933, organizing spring and autumn matches between the newly formed P'yōngyang FC and an all-star lineup from Kyōngsōng. Sadly, "violent incidents continued" and after three years the Kyōng-P'yōng tournament was again canceled and did not resume until after liberation in 1946.⁴⁰

The Japanese parallel to the Kyōng-P'yōng competition was the East-West (Tōzai) College Championship (1929-65), between the respective champions of the Kantō and Kansai college leagues. Perhaps because it emphasized east-west competition (an organizing principle in *sumō* and other sports), to many fans Tōzai was more important than JFA's Emperor's Cup tournaments (1921-40). Kantō university teams such as Waseda, Keiō, and Tokyo Imperial dominated the competition throughout the interwar and wartime periods. Kansai teams fared much better in the Emperor's Cup and national middle and high school tournaments. The region boasted two powerhouse sides: Kōbe's Mikage Normal School and Hiroshima's renowned Rijō FC.⁴¹

³⁷ Lee, *History*, 41, 43-45; Lee, "Becoming," 35.

³⁸ Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 77-91; Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 70-71.

³⁹ Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 50; Lee, *History*, 49-50.

⁴⁰ Lee, *History*, 45-46; Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 115-119; Lee, "Becoming," 37-38.

⁴¹ Tanada Marin, *Hyōgo-ken ni okeru a-shiki shūkyū no shiteki kenkyū* (Kōbe: Kōbe Shōgyō Daigaku Keizai Kenkyūjo, 1991).

First Shots

Before Kyōngsōng FC's 1935 Emperor's Cup and Meiji Shrine Games triumphs, most matches between Japanese and Korean sides were friendlies, with no trophies, titles, or prize monies at stake (the exception was Korean participation in Japan's national middle school tournament). In April 1926 Ōsaka Soccer Club played two matches in Kyōngsōng, tying one, losing the other.⁴² In October, the *Asahi* newspaper sponsored a tour by the "formidable" Chosōn FC (CFC).⁴³ The tour portended a future of Korean dominance: over eleven grueling days CFC compiled five wins and three draws. The Koreans "displayed overwhelming strength" and "excellent individual skills" in its 2-1 win over Tokyo Normal, the cradle of Japanese football. "[I]f CFC has one defect," *Asahi's* report stated, "it is that they have poor shooting accuracy. The fact that they finished with merely two points despite all their chances proves that. Tokyo Normal took 31 goal kicks. This demonstrates the recklessness of the CFC taking careless long shots."⁴⁴ Reflecting on the triumphant tour, CFC captain/center forward Hyōn Chōng-ju 玄正柱 (1899-1970) noted the "scientific" training of Japanese opponents as something for Koreans to emulate and attributed Korean victories to a "spirit that we *had* to win no matter what."⁴⁵

Occasional friendlies continued into the early 1930s, including an annual best-of-three competition between Keijō and Kyūshū imperial universities. But the stakes rose when JFA announced its intention to send a representative side to Berlin for the 1936 Olympics and to audition "aspiring teams" at the 1935 Emperor's Cup and Meiji Shrine Games.⁴⁶ The phrase "aspiring teams" (*yashin aru tīmu*) was important, indicating that, per precedent, whole extant squads rather than selected individuals were eligible to be sent to Berlin. JFA in fact rejected KFA's plan to send to Tokyo an all-star squad consisting of players from both Kyōngsōng and P'yōngyang. KFC beat its rival in a close 1-0 match to decide which side would represent the colony.⁴⁷

If most Koreans rejected the notion that they were part of Japan, Korean footballers nonetheless evinced a situational change in attitude. Immediately, they not only aspired to represent Japan but felt entitled by their prowess to do so. Since KFA was formally a regional affiliate of JFA, technically Korean teams were no less eligible than any Japanese squad for the coveted Olympic assignment. At the very least, they expected Koreans to comprise half of a select Japan national side.⁴⁸ The rhetoric of *naisen ittai* only strengthened their case. What better way to demonstrate Japanese sincerity and Korean buy-in than for Koreans to represent Japan in international football?

⁴² "Osakka sakka ch'ukkudan ōje ipkyōng," *TAI* April 24, 1926: 2.

⁴³ "Chōsen Shūkyūdan naichi ensei," *AS* October 16, 1926: 3; "Kyōteki wo mukaete gaien no shūkyū sen," *AS* October 17, 1926: 3; "Chōsen Shūkyūdan iyoiyo konseki nyūkyō," *AS* October 18, 1926: 3; "Chōsen Shūkyūdan genki de nyūkyō su," *AS* October 19, 1926: 6; "Tai Sōdai shūkyūsen—Chōsen gun kentōsu—ichi tai ichi hikiwake to suru," *Keijō nippō* (hereafter *KN*) October 21, 1926: 3.

⁴⁴ "Chōsen Shūkyūdan daiichi sen ni katsu," *AS* October 20, 1926: 3; "Chōsen Shūkyūdan katsu," *Yomiuri shinbun* (hereafter *YS*) October 20, 1926: 5.

⁴⁵ Ichi kisha ["one reporter"], "SPORTO: Hantō no hokori—Chosōn Shūkyūdan o tō," *Chōsen jiron* December 1926: 86-88 (emphasis in original).

⁴⁶ *Shūkyū* 3.2 (April 1935): 3.

⁴⁷ Lee, "Becoming," 37.

⁴⁸ Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 84-85.

The Rough Road to Berlin

Whereas Japanese media usually described the 1935 Emperor's Cup and Meiji Shrine tournaments as "regional competitions," Korean print media regularly mentioned their double function as Olympic qualifying events (*Olrimp'ik taehoe ch'ukku yesŏn*).⁴⁹ Embarking for Tokyo for the Cup tournament, KFC head coach Hyŏn Chŏng-ju and several players expressed the gravitas of the competition with melodramatic rhetoric worthy of *kamikaze* pilots. Kim Pyŏng-hŭi 金炳禧 admitted that "our football world is a baby advancing onto the international stage," but the team did not lack for ambition: Yi Hye-bong 李惠逢 and Kang Ki-sun 康基淳 indicated they were already coveting the Olympian "laurel wreath of victory" (*sŭngri ūi wŏlgye kwan*). Anticipating Orwell's comment that football is "war minus the shooting" by nearly two decades, fullback Yi Pong-ho 李奉鎬 stated, "We are soldiers going to the battlefield without weapons." "I will fight with redoubled courage," his teammate Chŏng Yong-su 鄭龍洙 chimed in, "even if it means losing my life."⁵⁰

Six teams competed in the two-day Emperor's Cup tournament on June 1 and 2, 1935, with the semi-final and championship matches played on the same day. Having thrashed Nagoya Higher Commercial School, 6-0, in a late-morning match, KFC defeated Tokyo Bunri in the final on just two hours' rest.⁵¹ The fact that *Keijō nippō*, the Japanese-language newspaper in Kyōngsŏng, called KFC "our [hometown] football team" (*waga shūkyū chīmu*) indicated the intra-imperial affinities football promoted and hinted at the integrationist ethos of *naisen ittai*.⁵² By contrast, football journalist Yamada Gorō 山田午郎 (1894-1958) peevishly griped about the field conditions, wind, heat, and off-season timing of the tournament. While grudgingly praising KFC players' adroit individual technique and ball control, he deemed this individualism "disastrous."⁵³ A 12-1 goal differential across two matches did not deter his criticism. In hindsight Yamada was laying the groundwork for a negative assessment of Korean play that would justify preventing KFC from representing Japan in Berlin.⁵⁴

KFC responded to such criticism on the pitch five months later at the 8th Annual Meiji Shrine Games, a multi-sport event. Remarkably, P'yŏngyang FC loaned star forwards Kim Yŏng-gŭn and Kim Sŏng-gan 金成汗 (1912-84) to its fiercest rival for the occasion. KFC trounced Hiroshima's Gako, 6-2, eked out a close win over Hakodate, then posted clean sheets against Kansei Gakuin and Keiō's BRB in the final.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ See for instance "Chōsen daihyō katsu—Kantō kesshō ni yaburu," *AS* November 3, 1935: 2; *TAI* June 4, 1935: 3, and November 4, 1935: 2; and *Chosŏn Chung-ang ilbo* (hereafter *CCI*) June 1, 1935: 2, and June 4, 1935: 2; "Berurin hatsu butai megake," *AS* May 30, 1935: 3.

⁵⁰ "Tŭngjŏng han Kyōngsŏng Ch'ukkudan—sŏnsu kakja ūi sogam," *CCI*, evening ed., June 1, 1935: 3; Yi Pong-ho and Chŏng Yong-su's remarks translated in Lee, "Becoming," 38-39.

⁵¹ "Keijō muteki gun—hayaku mo yūshō no yobikoe," *AS* May 30, 1935: 3; "Bundai no kōgeki o fūji, Keijō dōdō yūshō," *AS* June 3, 1935: 3.

⁵² "6-1 Keijō gun yūshū kyōiteki shunsoku de Bunri Dai o yaburu," *KN* June 3, 1935: 2.

⁵³ Yamada Gorō, "Zen Nippon Sōgō Senshūken Taikai hihan," *Shūkyū* 3.3 (1935): 25-26.

⁵⁴ Lee, "Becoming," 39-40.

⁵⁵ *Dai hakkai Meiji Jingū Taiiku Taikai hōkokusho* (Tokyo: Meiji Jingū Taiikukai, 1936), 545-546; *Dai hakkai Meiji Jingū Taiiku Taikai shashinchō* (Tokyo: Meiji Jingū Taiikukai, 1936), 72-75.

Since this championship seemed to settle the matter of who would represent Japan in Berlin, the Korean press took greater notice of the Meiji Shrine triumph than it had the Cup win.⁵⁶ Korea's two major newspapers, *Tong-a ilbo* and *Chosŏn ilbo*, showed little restraint in their headlines, using the phrases "decisive victory" (*kyölsŭng*), "master battle" (*chepaeng chŏnhyang*), "Kyöngsŏng football supremacy" (*Kyöngch'u usŭng*) "easy victory" (*kkwaesŭng*), "conquest of the Japanese football world" (*Ilbon ch'ukkugye rŭl chŏngbok*), and "with overwhelming superiority, KFC's final domination." Perhaps the boldest headline proclaimed, "Strong Opponent Broken to Dust in Easy Win—Kyöngsŏng Football Championship—Magnificent All-Kantō [Side Reduced] to Nothing."⁵⁷ Written in Sino-Korean—blending Chinese characters with the *han'gŭl* syllabary—these headlines were easily intelligible to Japanese readers who spoke no Korean.

By contrast, despite the likelihood of a substantially Korean team representing Japan in Berlin, in its December 1935 issue JFA's magazine *Shūkyū* (*Football*, published 1931-41) said nothing of it. In its January 1936 edition *Shūkyū* published a ten-page, year-in-review roundtable discussion on the Tokyo university league, in which KFC's wins over Bundai and Keiō were not mentioned once.⁵⁸

This silence foreshadowed several months of confusion, duplicity, and obfuscation as JFA maneuvered to avoid the indignity of deputizing a Korean team as Japan's *daihyō*. Koreans were alert to the plot. In mid-December 1935, KFA director Chŏng Mun-gi 鄭文基 (1898-1995) responded to a report that JFA would select the winner of the December 25 Tōzai match between Waseda and Kansei universities. Although JFA had not yet officially announced this news, Chŏng conceded, it would be "absolutely unfair" and an act of "tyranny" to ignore KFC's spring and autumn wins. "The Tōzai competition should be used for reference only, equivalent to one-third of the evaluation criteria at most."⁵⁹

As late as March 1936, there still seemed hope: in the *Yomiuri* column "Voice of the Fans," a Korean warned that JFA was throwing away its best shot at a strong debut on the international football stage by not building its team around Korean players.

In all of Japan, what fans call the Kyöngsŏng FC has twice achieved dominance; now at last there is nothing objectionable about its being Japan's Olympic representative ... [I]f a team was made centering on KFC, mixed with [players from] P'yöngyang FC, a stronger, more invincible and dominant squad than a pickup side centered on a student team would appear ... I'm convinced they could return triumphant.⁶⁰

⁵⁶ "Sasöl—'süp'ojŭ' Chosŏn ũi ũiöb," *TAI* November 5, 1935: 2; "Chölm-ün Chosŏn ũi paeki! Ch'u, ryong, chŏng e kak usŭng," *TAI* November 5, 1936: 2; "Son Ki-jong sŏnsu hwangyŏnghoe palhwi," *TAI* November 10, 1935: 2; "Pusan hwangyŏng ch'ukku," and "Kyöngch'uk hwanyŏnghoe," both in *TAI* November 8, 1935: 2; "Kyöngsŏng Ch'ukkudan Taegu sŏ hwanyŏngjŏn," *Chosŏn ilbo* (hereafter *CI*) November 8, 1935: 2.

⁵⁷ "Chonghap ch'ukku kyölsŭng e Kyöngsŏng t'im usŭng," *TAI* June 4, 1935: 2; "Kyöngch'u usŭng kka chi chep'ae chŏnhwang," *TAI* June 6, 1935: 3; "Kyöngsŏng ch'ukku kkwaesŭng," *TAI* November 4, 1935: 2; "Ilbon ch'ukkugye rŭl chŏngbok," *CI*, evening ed., June 6, 1935: 2; "Abdochök useri e Kyöngch'uk suchepaeng," *CI* evening ed., June 4, 1935: 2; "Kyölsŭng e kangchök punswae—Kyöngsŏng ch'ukku usŭng— tangtang chŏn Kwangdong ũl ryöng ũro," *TAI* November 4, 1935: 2.

⁵⁸ "Tokyo gakusei shūkyū rīgu senkyū hyaku sanjūgo nen hihan," *Shūkyū* 4.1 (January 1936): 8-18.

⁵⁹ "Sasil iramyŏn inŭn kŭn pulkongp'yŏng," *TAI*, evening ed., December 15, 1935: 2.

⁶⁰ Cho Ch'ŏn-u, "Fan no koe—Chŏsen shūkyū seiha nozomi dai," *YS* March 7, 1936: 4.

Players later claimed that JFA had promised to invite as many as seven Koreans to the spring training camp.⁶¹ But according to a March 11 *Asahi* report, JFA had stated in February it would “not make a Korean team the core of the Olympic representation.”⁶² It expressed interest only in striker Kim Yōng-gūn and midfielder Kim Yong-sik. Initially, KFC forbade them from attending the tryout.⁶³

Despite initial praise for Korean football cited earlier, some Japanese contended that Koreans’ style of play did not mesh with theirs. Japanese favored the Scottish “combination game,” emphasizing short passing and methodical, coordinated teamwork, which they had learned from Burmese exchange student Kyaw Din (1900-?) in the 1920s. Din had actually written a textbook, *How to Play Association Football* (1923), for his Japanese pupils, to which they perhaps adhered too closely: some regarded their play as too “by the book” (*kyōkashoteki*) and “lacking in interest” (*omoshiromi ni kakeru*).⁶⁴ Kim Yong-sik himself described Japanese soccer as “inflexible” (*yoyū ga nai*).⁶⁵

By contrast, Koreans played English-style “kick-and-rush” football, initiating quick counterattacks with long aerial passes from the back line, a style that was exciting to watch but also sloppy, risking possession by putting the ball up for grabs. Moreover, Koreans played a rougher, more physical game, emphasizing *gegenpressing* (the football equivalent of a “full-court press”) and individual ball skills.⁶⁶ When it declared Korean footballers “technically inferior” to justify excluding or limiting them on the Olympic side, JFA directly contradicted the mainstream assessment in the Japanese press.⁶⁷ JFA officials and some sportswriters thus tried to make football strategy, incompatible national styles of play, and Korean technical deficiencies the issue. Naturally, Koreans were convinced the real problem was ethnic discrimination.⁶⁸

Another issue in both countries was regional favoritism for Kantō and Kyōngsōng players.⁶⁹ Seok Lee emphasizes that Korea’s football world hardly presented a united front: “The issue of Olympic football trials was, in part, not so much related to national unity as often mingled with the individual interests of a variety of actors, including football associations, teams, leading lights, fans, and players.”⁷⁰ Although a Kyōngsōng team had actually done all the winning, P’yōngyang officials, players, and fans felt slighted by KFA. For neither the first nor the last time, peninsular regionalism compromised Korean nationalism. Not that it mattered in the end.

⁶¹ “Olrimp’iku kwa ch’ukku daep’yo—chōnch’ung wiwōnhoe,” *CI*, evening ed., December 15, 1935: 2; *HCP*, 269; Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 84-85; Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 73; Kō, *Shirazaru*, 74; Lee, “Becoming,” 39.

⁶² “Kantō chūshin ni senkō—Chōsen wa gijutsuteki ni otoru,” *YS* March 11, 1936: 4.

⁶³ “Ilbon ch’ukku hyōphoe ūi taep’yo sōnbal pukong—Kyōngch’uk ūn puch’amga kyōlūi,” *CI* March 20, 1936: 2; Kō, *Shirazaru*, 78.

⁶⁴ Kyaw Din, *How to Play Association Football* (n.p., 1923), Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 74; Kō, *Shirazaru*, 87; Takenouchi and Kagawa, *Berurin*, 51-56.

⁶⁵ Kim quoted in Takenouchi and Kagawa, *Berurin*, 75-76.

⁶⁶ See Kō, *Shirazaru*, 120; Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 74; Lee, “Becoming,” 44-45.

⁶⁷ “Kantō chūshin,” 4.

⁶⁸ Lee, “Becoming,” 39-40.

⁶⁹ “Myōngnyōn Berlin Olrimp’ik e p’akyōn twil—ch’ukku hwa ryonggu chōnch’ung pangch’im,” *TAI*, evening ed., December 15, 1935: 2; Taehan Ch’ukku Hyōphoe, *Han’guk ch’ukku paengnyōnsa* (hereafter *HCP*) (Seoul: Nasara, 1986), 268-269; Lee, “Becoming,” 38-41; Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 71-72.

⁷⁰ Lee, “Colonial,” 111.

That said, Japan's Kansai football community was no happier than Korea's. Waseda's throttling of Kansei Gakuin, 12-2, in the December 1935 Tōzai competition became a pretext for favoring its players heavily for the Olympic side. In a livid statement, the Kansai affiliate alleged that the JFA board of directors had dismissed the recommendations of a selection committee consisting of three Kantō and two Kansai representatives, disbanded it, and then appointed an all-Kantō coaching staff. Kansai officials threatened to "vigorously push for reform of JFA."⁷¹ Hence, the only Kansai footballers who accepted invitations to training camp were those currently playing for Kantō universities.⁷²

In response to the controversy, on the eve of the Berlin Olympiad JFA published a detailed timeline of the yearlong selection process in *Shūkyū* and in the official Olympic report compiled by the Japan Sports Association.⁷³ There are clear disparities between contemporaneous press reports and the timeline, suggesting either substantial retroactive tinkering or, at best, confusion:

- May 26, 1935: JFA decided to participate in the 11th Olympiad, set up a committee to select players for a *daihyō* side, and solicited nominations of players from each regional affiliate. There is no mention that the upcoming Emperor's Cup—a mere five days away—would be an Olympic audition for "aspiring teams," even though Japanese and Korean newspapers and the April issue of *Shūkyū* all reported it as such at the time.
- September 15, 1935: Since the "current state of Japan's football world" made a national "pick-up" side "inappropriate," JFA would build one around a core from the strongest established team during the regular season. In the event no such team rose to the occasion, JFA would assemble a squad from nominees sent from each of the regional associations. JFA also would take the results of the Emperor's Cup, Meiji Shrine, Tokyo University League, and Tōzai competitions into account; if there were no clear winner, there would be a playoff match (between whom?). Again, earlier press accounts said nothing about the Tokyo University League and Tōzai competitions being part of the Olympic audition process. The timeline suggests multiple factors going into the decision that were not previously reported, giving the impression that JFA was both flexible and discretionary in assembling an Olympic side—but again, this appears to be a retroactive characterization. Note also that this "decision" predates the Meiji Shrine Tournament by almost two months; and that even if JFA's selection committee did make such a decision on September 15, one could reasonably assume that KFC's victories in the Cup and Shrine tournaments qualified it as "hands down the strongest team." Later, JFA officials nitpicked KFC's performance in its win over Keiō BRB in the Meiji Shrine final.⁷⁴ Its three victories in the earlier rounds and a total 15-3 goal differential in the tournament—after an exhausting boat and rail journey from Korea and four consecutive days of competition—apparently counted for nothing to the selection committee.
- November 3, 1935, the very day of KFC's Meiji Shrine win: The selection committee decided that no team stood out in the previous competitions. JFA was interested in "only two or three individual players from the champion Korean team," naming the two Kims

⁷¹ "Shūkyū daihyō zenshō ni Kansai soku ga fuman hyōmei," *AS* March 29, 1936: 4.

⁷² "Orimupikku uijin shūkyū kōhō kimaru," *YS* March 11, 1936: 4; "Orinpickku shūkyū dai ichiji kōhō happyō—Chōsen kara mo ni mei," *KN* March 13, 1936: 5.

⁷³ *Shūkyū* 4.2 (June 1936): 2-3; Dai Nippon Taiiku Kyōkai, *Dai jūikkai Orinpickku taikai hōkokusho—1936 nen—Berurin* (hereafter *OTH*) (Tokyo: Dai Nippon Taiiku Kyōkai, 1936), 87-88.

⁷⁴ Lee, "Becoming," 39-40.

specifically (Korean football cognoscenti regarded overlooking Kim Sŏng-gan as particularly foolish).⁷⁵

- December 15, 1935: The selection committee stated that Waseda had the best team and would form the core of the Olympic side. However, Kansai representative Saitō Saizō 齋藤才三 (1908-2004) insisted that there were excellent players in his region and urged the committee to scout them in the upcoming Tōzai match (actually, it did the committee no favors to admit in the timeline that it already favored Waseda players *before* Tōzai). Furthermore, December 15 was the same day that *Tong-a* published KFA director Chŏng Mun-gi's angry response to a newspaper report that the Tōzai result would determine the Olympic roster. Clearly, the news was circulating before JFA's selection committee meeting. Yet testimonies by Korean footballers indicate they still thought KFC would be the core of the Olympic squad up until the preliminary lineup for the spring training camp was announced in March 1936.
- March 9, 1936: JFA officials accepted the recommended lineup on which the selection committee decided at its January 19 meeting. The March 7 *Yomiuri* editorial indicates that some observers, at least, believed the idea of a *daihyō* side composed primarily of KFC—and possibly some P'yŏngyang—players was still a possibility.
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Thus, JFA's timetable comes across as disingenuous at best; the most charitable characterization of the entire episode is that the organization sent numerous mixed signals to both Kansai and Korean football officials and players.

Surely ethnic discrimination and Japanese nationalism were factors in JFA's refusal to build a national side around a KFC lineup. As in other areas, Koreans were "Japanese" when it was convenient, but not enough so to represent the Empire on the world stage. Yet regionalism figured into JFA's decision, as well: in fact, since two Koreans were on the squad, Kansai wound up being the biggest loser. Aside from the Kims, the twenty-three Japanese who showed up in Tokyo for tryouts on April 23, 1936, were all from eastern schools; twelve were current or alumni players from Waseda alone. The final Olympic roster of seventeen players included ten from Waseda, as was head coach Suzuki Shigeyoshi 鈴木重義 (1902-71). By making Waseda the Olympic squad's core, in effect JFA inadvertently, if disingenuously, *did* honor its initial pledge to send established "aspiring teams" to Berlin.

The Korean Football War

Koreans debated the very propriety of their players representing Japan in Berlin at all, given JFA duplicity. Some observers believed it would be a self-indulgent affront to national pride. An anonymous essay in *Tong-a ilbo* denounced "players only seeking personal honor with reckless bravado and a superiority complex." Would the two Kims whose names were still in the running (Yŏng-gŭn and Yong-sik) join the Japanese side despite the objections of their clubs? "If so, it is a disgrace to Korea and reveals the disadvantage of the Korean sports community, in which players only focus on physical ability and lack the team spirit needed for social life and being true

⁷⁵ "Nihon daihyō senshu kōho senkō," *Shūkyū* 7.8 (August 1939): 2-4.

sportsmen.”⁷⁶ Prominent nationalist intellectual Yō Unhyōng 呂運亨 (1886-1947), chair of the Korean Sports Council and president of KFA, admonished the Kims to decline the offer and boycott the training camp.⁷⁷

Conversely, many in the Korean football community saw the Berlin Olympiad as an unprecedented opportunity both to show the world how good its players were and to improve their own tactics and skills by observing firsthand and competing against top-notch Europeans. The chosen Kims themselves were anguished by attacks on their patriotism, but since they were legendarily dedicated to self-improvement as footballers, they understandably wanted to take the world stage, both to demonstrate their abilities and to learn from the best in the world. Their identities as practitioners of a challenging craft and as Korean patriots appeared to be in conflict, although in their own minds this likely seemed fatuous. If we take them at their word, their individual accomplishments accrued to all Koreans.

Although he wowed his prospective teammates at the first training camp in March, Kim Yōng-gūn did not last long. He repeatedly clashed with assistant coach Takenokoshi Shigemaru 竹腰重丸 (1906-80). In a practice match against an amateur English side, Japan was down 0-2 at the half. Kim Yōng-gūn, accustomed to a leadership role on the pitch, defied Takenokoshi’s game plan and scored six goals, singlehandedly taking Japan to a 6-3 victory. Infuriated by Kim’s insubordination, Takenokoshi upbraided him in the locker room. Convinced he was being scolded only because he was Korean, Kim decided to rejoin his hometown team P’yōngyang FC for some April friendlies in Tianjin, and then rejected JFA’s offer to take him back. Considering how important Olympic dreams are to most athletes, Kim Yōng-gūn’s decision to forsake his for a few stake-less matches in China was remarkable. It also effectively ended his football career.⁷⁸

And then there was one. Kim Yong-sik was a competitive, pugnacious personality so devoted to his craft and so attentive to his fitness that he spurned both women and alcohol. Perhaps because of soccer’s popularity and his own celebrity, Kim took much heat from Koreans who accused him of betraying his nation for his own personal ambitions. He persistently articulated his aims as collective, telling *Shūkyū* that he was happy to have an opportunity to “make the whole world recognize our football.”⁷⁹

To whom did “our” refer? As the very embodiment of liminal imperial subjecthood, Kim Yong-sik could have been referring specifically to Korea, Japan, the *naisen ittai* union, or East Asia in general, since Japan and China’s Berlin appearance was the region’s debut in international football. Player testimony indicates that Kim earned the genuine respect of his Japanese teammates through his prowess, leadership, and refusal to countenance discrimination. “Even though Kim was mild-mannered, he had fight in him,” his teammate Horie Tadao 堀江忠男 (1913-2003) recalled. “He was active in the Sweden match. He didn’t show any resentment about

⁷⁶ Ryōng Kwang C Saeng [靈光 C 生, pseudonym meaning “Spirit Light”], “Sonyonmun ‘sūp’och’ū mensip kwa tanch’e ūi hunryōn,” *TAI*, April 24, 1936: 6; translated in Lee, “Becoming,” 41.

⁷⁷ Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 85; *HCP*, 269; Kō, *Shirazaru*, 78.

⁷⁸ Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 85-89; *HCP*, 269, 563; Kō, *Shirazaru*, 79.

⁷⁹ “Orimupikku e warera iku! Senshu no kotoba,” *Shūkyū* 4.3 (July 1936): 10.

discrimination.”⁸⁰ Kim’s continual participation on the Japan national side into the 1940s, alongside increasing numbers of Koreans, indicates his comfort and loyalty to the team.

But by all accounts, he was also a patriot, boasting that Koreans had “completely conquered the Japanese football community.” Kim regretted leaving his Korean compadres behind, but responded to accusations of selfishness by saying, “I am going only to learn skills and tactics from countries that are advanced in football.”⁸¹ Abused and admired by fellow Koreans, respected and resented by Japanese, and representing both his homeland and its oppressor on a conspicuous international stage, Kim Yong-sik bore to Berlin the pressure of overlapping identities and conflicting expectations.

There indeed seem to have been few obvious signs of ethnic disharmony among players. Ninomiya Hirokazu 二宮洋一 (1917-2000) recalled that Japanese and Korean players “got on well” (*naka yoku yatte imashita*). “At that time, no matter what, Japanese would say, ‘That’s Korea,’ but we wouldn’t say that; we called them by their team names, like, ‘That’s Posōng Vocational, Yōnhūi Vocational, or Hamhūng.’” That is, Japanese footballers thought of Koreans and their teams as individual people and units rather than as undistinguished ethnotypes. Yi Yu-hyōng described camaraderie among the players: “Because we didn’t have much money, we always took care to split costs the Japanese way. But on days we didn’t practice, we listened to music and went to see movies together. As athletes we all loved sports and there was no discrimination.”⁸²

The “Berlin Miracle”

The 11th Olympiad was an example of Nazi mastery of “mass pageantry” and “contrived festivity” designed to persuade Germans and non-Germans alike of the competence, viability, and validity of the new Reich.⁸³ The world was meant to acknowledge and wonder at Germany’s postwar resurrection as reflected in facilities, festivities, and Aryan athleticism. Since racial supremacy was no less fundamental to Japanese imperial fascism than it was to Nazism, there is something vaguely poetic in the fact that Korean athletes representing Japan—marathoners Son and Nam, and footballer Kim—performed with such distinction at the same Olympiad in which Jesse Owens won four gold medals, demolishing Nazi tenets.

To prepare for the Games, the Japan *daihyō* side was scheduled to play three matches against Berlin soccer clubs, Wacker 04, Minerva 93, and Blau-Weiß 1890 Berlin. It was a transformative moment for Japanese football: it was not only the first time an East Asian side played on European soil, but also an opportunity to adapt to the latest tactical innovations in the sport. In response to FIFA’s 1925 amendment of the offside rule, European coaches had begun tinkering with the conventional 2-3-5 “Cambridge pyramid” formation (two defenders, three midfielders, and five forwards) to fortify defenses and deploy offside traps. At the time, Arsenal coach Herbert Chapman’s (1878-1934) W-M (3-2-2-3) formation (with a center midfielder pulled

⁸⁰ Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 102-104; Horie quoted in Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 79.

⁸¹ “Olrimp’ik sōnsu hakwōn ch’attō 3—ch’ukku nūn Pojōn ūi charang” *TAI* June 28, 1936: 2; and “Ch’ukku taepyo Pojōn chuō Kim Yong-sik tam,” *CI*, evening ed., June 23, 1936: 2; both quoted in Lee, “Colonial,” 106.

⁸² Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 89-90; Kō, *Shirazaru*, 108-110.

⁸³ Richard Mandell, *The Nazi Olympics* 2nd ed. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987), xxii, 49-50.

back as a third defender) was catching on in German soccer.⁸⁴ Suzuki and Takenokoshi observed the W-M in their embarrassing 1-3 loss to “second-tier” Wacker and worked to implement it in forthcoming matches.⁸⁵ After a week of training, Japan looked stronger in its match against a first-rate Minerva squad, scoring two goals within the first ten minutes. Although Minerva responded with four before halftime, the reconfigured Japanese defense regrouped to hold the Germans scoreless in the second half.

Having been benched in the Wacker and Minerva matches, Kim put his coaches on notice that he expected to play. The evening before the Blau-Weiß match, he accused Takenokoshi of discrimination and declared that if he was not in the starting lineup he would go home.⁸⁶ Takenokoshi’s capitulation was wise: in its report on the Blau-Weiß contest (a respectably close 2-3 loss), *Die Fußball-Woche (Football Weekly)* named Kim as one of Japan’s strongest players.⁸⁷ He started at left midfield—occasionally moving to center—in the next three matches until Japan was eliminated.

Kim’s shining moment came in the “miraculous” come-from-behind victory over a heavily favored (and much taller) Sweden side on August 4 at Stadion am Gesundbrunnen. Eric Persson (1909-89) netted twice in the first half, but Japan’s team play gradually coalesced, shutting down Sweden’s offense with its new three-back defense and Sano Rihei’s 佐野理平 (1912-92) stalwart goalkeeping. Following goals by Kamo Shōgo 加茂正五 (1915-77) and Ukon Tokutarō 右近徳太郎 (1913-44), with five minutes left in regulation Kim broke through the Sweden back line on the left wing and centered the ball to forward Matsunaga Akira 松永行 (1914-43), who nudged it to the far post past goalkeeper Sven Bergqvist (1914-96).⁸⁸ For the first time, an Asian side had defeated Europeans in international soccer; and Kim Yong-sik had accomplished his goal, earning “recognition for our football” on the world stage. *Tong-a ilbo* crowed, “Mr. Kim Yong-sik fights bravely!”⁸⁹

Any delusions of grandeur Japan’s footballers might have carried after defeating the “Nordic giants” quickly and decisively evaporated in a sobering 0-8 loss to Vittorio Pozzo’s mighty Italian side, eventual winner of the gold medal. For our purposes, what is important to note is that after 1936 Japanese soccer cognoscenti realized their fortunes in international competition were best served by casting their net across the Tsushima Straits to ensnare talented players from the Korean peninsula. Yi Yu-hyōng, who joined the Japan national team in 1937, recollected Takenokoshi saying, “If we had brought more Koreans to Berlin, I think we might’ve done a little better,” a notable admission from the coach whom some Koreans accused of prejudice.⁹⁰ With Tokyo slated to host the 1940 Olympiad, JFA wanted to make an even stronger showing than in

⁸⁴ Kevin E. Simpson, *Soccer Under the Swastika* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2016), 17; Jonathan Wilson, *Inverting the Pyramid: The History of Soccer Tactics* (New York: Nation Books, 2013), 102.

⁸⁵ OTH, 97; Takenouchi and Kagawa, *Berurin*, 121-124, 132; Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 77-78; Kō, *Shirazaru*, 83-87.

⁸⁶ OTH, 99, 101; Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 104-105.

⁸⁷ OTH, 101, Kō, *Shirazaru*, 90-91.

⁸⁸ Footage of the play is visible at “Pyōlül itūn kūdae ege’ Han’guk ch’ukku ūi taebu, Kim Yong-sik,” MBC Sports (<https://youtu.be/k6PwOKoFftU>, 0:54). See also Takenouchi and Kagawa, *Berurin*, 184-185; Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 105; Kō, *Shirazaru*, 91-100; Kim Sūng-gak, “Han’guk ch’ukku ūi taebu, Kim Yong-sik ūi salm,” *Kyoyukhak kwa ch’eyuk kyoyuk chōn’gong* 6 (2018): 1-7.

⁸⁹ “Kim Yong-sik-kun kōndu!” *TAI* August 6, 1936: 8.

⁹⁰ Quoted in Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 83 and Kō, *Shirazaru*, 106-107.

Berlin. As Korean teams continued to compile a favorable win-loss record (with a sizable total goal differential) in competitions against Japanese, JFA could not ignore the benefits to its *daihyō* team of poaching more Koreans. Moreover, as *naisen ittai* and *kōminka* (“imperialization”) became core tenets of colonial policy, recruiting Koreans had propaganda value. Thus, between 1936 and 1942 thirty-eight Koreans played for Japan.⁹¹

Stoppage Time

After Berlin, Japanese and Koreans continued to play alongside each other for the national side, university teams, and Korea-based Japanese company squads. Kim Yong-sik even briefly attended Waseda and played for its football team.⁹² In 1938 and 1940, Tōzai became a “tri-regional” competition, with the colony added as a third region. Nevertheless, the integration of Koreans into Japanese football facilitated more competition *against* Japanese through participation at all levels in JFA-sponsored tournaments, which continued until well into the Pacific War. Still, football remained a potent vehicle for nationalism. Notwithstanding the genuine goodwill that football could generate between colonized and colonizer exhibited on the *daihyō* team, national enmity took center stage after 1936.

Even as their rivalry intensified, Japanese frequently praised Korean football prowess. Comments by players, coaches, and in the press regularly acknowledged Koreans’ strength, fitness, speed, stamina, technical skill, strategy, firepower, and fighting spirit, as well as their physical size (“All the Korean footballers were big”).⁹³ A report on Chungdong Middle School’s triumph in the 11th Meiji Shrine Games stated that one “would not think this is a middle-school team,” but rather a college side.⁹⁴ The fitness regimen of Hamhŭng Smeltery became famous: players started practice at 6:00 AM, worked from 9:00-2:00, then practiced again until sunset, climbing mountains and jogging on sandy beaches. “We trained with the plan of fighting for 180 minutes,” coach Yi Yu-hyōng recounted.⁹⁵

In a 1939 *Shūkyū* feature entitled “Tomorrow’s Peninsular Footballer,” Meiji University’s Hondō Morio 本堂守男 suggested that Korean “ball mates” (*kyūyū*) should be integrated into metropolitan teams because they had “an innate interest” in the game. Regarding the “theory that Korean players value only individual technique and think little of group cooperation,” he retorted that Koreans on his university team had helped improve its cooperative play. Individual technique was important, but this did detract from Koreans’ “spiritual power” when playing as a team. “I enjoy football that fully [includes] Korean compatriots into the football of Great Japan.”⁹⁶

Such praise notwithstanding, three specific incidents demonstrated persistent inequality, discrimination, duplicity, and bitter resentment. The first of these occurred at the 9th Meiji Shrine Games on November 3, 1937, when Ch’ōngjin FC from northeastern Hamgyōng province faced

⁹¹ HCP, 269-270; Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 83-90; Kō, *Shirazaru*, 106-112; “Shūkyū kōho gasshukuchi e,” AS July 11, 1938: 8.

⁹² Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 106-107.

⁹³ Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 115.

⁹⁴ “Seinen Nihon no jitsuryoku hakki—dai jūikkai Jingū taikai,” *Shūkyū* 9.1 (December 1940): 5-6.

⁹⁵ Quoted in Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 104. See also match report on Hamhŭng’s 1939 Meiji Shrine Tournament victory in *Shūkyū* 7.12 (December 1939): 18.

⁹⁶ Hondō Morio, “Ashita no hantō futtoborā,” *Shūkyū* 7.7 (July 1939): 32-34.

Waseda WMW (White Maroon White, the alumni team) in the championship match.⁹⁷ Ch'ōngjin fell 1-2 after two goals were nullified by offside calls. Vigorously disputing referees' decisions was certainly a trait of Korean football culture, but Ch'ōngjin found these particularly egregious. The game was suspended temporarily while the Koreans argued their point; the official KFA history contends that they abandoned their protest only so that Korean soccer would not get a bad reputation. To be fair, Japanese observers were not entirely unsympathetic. Although he found complaints about the referee's decision to be “disgusting,” *Shūkyū*'s correspondent called Ch'ōngjin's loss “regrettable” and praised the referee and Ch'ōngjin coach (and Korean sport legend) Yi Yōng-min 李榮敏 (1905-54) for settling things down. *Asahi* and *Tong-a* both reported that the Japanese spectators appreciated Ch'ōngjin's sportsmanship and “warrior-like demeanor”—but *Tong-a* added that the crowd, too, was “dumbfounded” by the official's “incomprehensible verdict” (*simpan ūi aemaehan sōn'go*).⁹⁸

The second controversial incident occurred on June 10, 1939. In the 19th Emperor's Cup semifinal, All-Posōng was down 1-2 to Waseda with one minute remaining in regulation, when Kim Yong-sik fired a twenty-meter shot into the back of the net, tying the match. Neither side scored in extra time, so each team captain drew an envelope in a lottery to determine who would advance to the championship match.⁹⁹ According to Kim, the Waseda captain opened his envelope, made a strange face, then turned his back, without revealing its contents. Kim opened his envelope and saw the character for “loss” (*hai/p'ae*). Waseda was declared the winner. Unable to verify for himself that the Waseda envelope's contents said “win” (*shō/sūng*), and having observed his counterpart's initial reaction, Kim suspected that both envelopes said “loss” and that the lottery had been rigged against Posōng. He later said that not demanding to see Waseda's envelope on the spot was one of the greatest regrets of his life.¹⁰⁰ The incident was particularly bitter because Kim had played alongside Waseda players for several years.

The third incident occurred when P'yōngyang Nikkoku triumphed over another company team, Hitachi Ibaraki, to take the title in the 12th Meiji Shrine tournament on November 2, 1941. A sizeable contingent of Korean college students residing in Tokyo attended the match. Down 1-2 in the second half, Nikkoku came from behind, tying the match then scoring the winning goal with five minutes remaining in regulation. When the final whistle blew, Korean students leapt from the stands and rushed onto the pitch, lifting the victorious footballers in the air and celebrating in a manner that Japanese found obnoxious. Spectators, the press, and JFA officials were enraged that Koreans behaved in such a manner in the “sacred” precincts of the shrine to the Meiji Emperor, whose grandson Prince Takamatsu 高松宮 (1905-87), Emperor Hirohito's younger brother, was in attendance with his wife.

⁹⁷ “Dai hakkai Meiji Jingū Taiiku Taikai,” *AS* October 31, 1937: 8; “Sōdai no kanroku”; Yamada Ikiru, “Jingū taikai—Kantō daihyō (WMW) no ran—Shintsu [Ch'ōngjin] munen no haitai,” *Shūkyū* 5.4 (November 1937): 19-23.

⁹⁸ *HCP*, 264; “Ch'ōngjingun sōngp'ae sangbo,” *TAI* November 5, 1937: 2; Yamada Gorō, “Supōtsu seishin—shūkyū kesshō no funsō kaiketsu,” *AS* November 4, 1937: 8. See also “Singung ch'ukku kyōlsūngjōn e Ch'ōngjin ch'ukkudan sōngp'ae,” *TAI* November 4, 1937: 2; “Wōnhan ūi hanjōm—Ch'ōngjingun kōndu,” *CI* November 5, 1937: 2; and Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 95-96.

⁹⁹ Takenokoshi Shigemaru, ‘Shiai kakuhyō,’ *Shūkyū* 7.7 (July 1939): 6, 17.

¹⁰⁰ Pak and Kim, *Nihon*, 107-108.

Japan's Ministry of Health and Welfare (Kōseishō) demanded that KFA apologize for the incident. How was KFA to control the behavior of Korean students in Japan? Yet, having "revealed its incompetence," as *Keijō nippō* put it, KFA complied. President Ko Wōn-hun 高元勳 (1881-1950) formally apologized to the Governor-General; and before resigning *en masse*, KFA officials decided to relinquish Nikkoku's title and to cancel the upcoming annual peninsular tournament at the last minute.¹⁰¹ Soon thereafter KFA was defunct. Any semblance of autonomy in Korean athletics was eliminated.

KFA's dissolution did not end competition between Japanese and Koreans but was nonetheless meaningful.¹⁰² From a purely organizational standpoint, the disbandment of KFA was technically akin to abolishing, say, the Hokkaidō or Kansai regional affiliates in the metropole. However, by holding KFA accountable for the conduct of Korean exchange students in Tokyo, the Ministry and JFA marked it as a different beast. KFA represented something more than a region of Japan: an undesirable quasi-national entity—Korea/Chosŏn/Chōsen—that was not supposed to exist.

Extra Time

Every football match between Japan and the two Korean states carries the baggage of the history related here, especially at the highest-level competitions (e.g., Asian Football Confederation Cup, Olympic, Asiad, and World Cup). To embellish their international profiles, both peninsular regimes generously invest in football and take glee in defeating their former colonial tormenter.¹⁰³ "When the former colonized emerges triumphant," Guy Podoler observes, "the pains of the past are somewhat mollified, and the colonial period can be fitted into a narrative that is based on a historical continuum of valor and stamina."¹⁰⁴

Japan and the ROK played their first post-liberation match in a World Cup qualifier in Tokyo on March 7, 1954, ending with a 5-1 Korean victory.¹⁰⁵ Many former teammates and opponents faced each other again as coaches and players, but now on an equal footing as citizens of sovereign nations. President Yi Sūng-man 李承晩 (Syngman Rhee, 1875-1965) refused to allow Japanese footballers onto Korean soil. Echoing the colonial-era refrain "if we don't beat Japan, we can't go home," he ordered his players to win or "drown themselves in the East Sea."¹⁰⁶

¹⁰¹ "Muryoku o bakuro shita shūkyō—yakuin jishoku to Nikkoku shobun no yoron," *KN* November 25, 1941: 2; "Shūkyō shusai no senshūken taikai chūshi," *KN* November 26, 1941: 2; Ōshima, *Nikkan*, 110-111. Curiously, its official history says KFA "felt responsible" (*ch'aek-im ūl nūkkye*) for the incident (*HCP*, 276).

¹⁰² P'yōngyang Hyōyū won the final Meiji Shrine football tournament in 1942, dispatching Hakodate Docks 7-0 and Hitachi Ibaraki 2-1 for a combined 8-goal differential.

¹⁰³ Chung Hongik, "Government Involvement in Football in Korea," in Manzenreiter and Horne, *Football*, 123-129.

¹⁰⁴ Guy Podoler, "Japanese Colonialism, National Memory and Korean Football," *Asia-Pacific Journal* 4.2 (February 16, 2006) (<https://apjif.org/-/Guy-Podoler/2125/article.html>).

¹⁰⁵ As of December 2019, the ROK men's national side maintains a huge margin of victory (42-14-23) over Japan's, although the World Cup-winning Nadeshiko squad has dominated the South Korean women's side (17-4-10). Since their first matchup in 1975, Japan's Samurai Blue has done only slightly better (8-7-4) against the northern DPRK team. I have not been able to find a summary of results between the Japanese and DPRK women's sides.

¹⁰⁶ Quoted in Podoler, "Japanese." Japanese sides did not play on Korean soil until 1960.

In 1996 FIFA made the unprecedented (and clueless) decision to have Japan and South Korea co-host the 2002 FIFA World Cup. After years of fierce jockeying against one another, the two countries only conceded to the arrangement when they recognized that neither would be granted sole possession. ROK president Kim Yŏng-sam (1927-2015) spun it as “an opportunity to further solidify friendly relations,” while other Korean commentators described it as a coming-out party of sorts for the fledgling democracy.¹⁰⁷

Considering the logistical problems, ill feelings, and numerous controversies, the tournament was successful and the South Korean “Reds” advanced as far as the semi-finals, one match shy of their dream of winning the Cup on Japanese soil. Japanese fans rooted enthusiastically for their hosting partners but were mystified and hurt that Korean fans did not reciprocate. Apparently ignorant, misinformed, or oblivious to their shared history, many Japanese struggled to understand Korean resentment.¹⁰⁸

Yet as demonstrated here, Japan-Korea football history cannot be reduced simply to a one-dimensional tale of nationalist animosities acted out on the pitch. To be sure, such enmity underlay every intra-imperial encounter. With no other options for competing internationally, Koreans no doubt savored the ironic possibility of an Olympic Japan side built from a preassembled core of peninsular players. Moreover, Koreans threatened to displace the Tokyo-based JFA as the center of football within the empire: though organizationally on the periphery of Japanese football, in terms of quality play the peninsula became its center, a fact Japanese cognoscenti could not help but acknowledge. Koreans unquestionably endured overt discrimination and micro-aggressions, as evident in the Olympic selection process and the three episodes described above. Then, KFA was dissolved for an incident for which no reasonable person could say it was responsible.

Still, football was one arena, among others, in which Japanese and Koreans were not only foils but partners, who took East Asian soccer to high-level international play. Within an empire rhetorically committed to seamless integration, the sport created competing loyalties and complex identities. Regional antipathies impaired unified nationalist identifications, though without completely erasing them. Despite hostility from KFA, teammates, and fans, Kim Yong-sik earned a spot on the Olympic team and was pivotal in the “Berlin miracle.” Japanese realized that they would perform better internationally if they kept poaching from the peninsula. The football pitch was meritocratic liminal territory in which players could set aside ethnic differences, thinking of themselves as compatriots collaborating to improve their individual and collective performance.

¹⁰⁷ Grahame L. Jones, “A Political Football Lands in Japan and South Korea,” *Los Angeles Times* June 1, 1996 (<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1996-06-01-sp-10647-story.html>); *Korean Experience with the World Cup* (Seoul: The Korean Information Service, 2002); Rachel Miyung Joo, “Consuming Visions: The Crowds of the Korean World Cup,” *Journal of Korean Studies* 11.1 (Fall 2006): 42.

¹⁰⁸ Will Magee, “How the 2002 World Cup Became the Most Controversial Tournament in Recent Memory,” *Vice*, July 18, 2017 (https://www.vice.com/en_uk/article/ywvx4y/how-the-2002-world-cup-became-the-most-controversial-tournament-in-recent-memory); James Davis, “A Tale of Two World Cups,” *The Guardian* June 30, 2002 (<https://www.theguardian.com/football/2002/jun/30/worldcupfootball2002.sport150>); Jere Longman, “SOCCER; Subtext in South Korea: Payback for Colonialism,” *New York Times* June 24, 2002 (<https://www.nytimes.com/2002/06/24/sports/soccer-subtext-in-south-korea-payback-for-colonialism.html>); Jun Yoon, “South Korea vs. Japan, a Rivalry Like No Other,” *Soccer Politics*, September 19, 2013 (<https://sites.duke.edu/wcwp/2013/09/19/south-korea-vs-japan-a-rivalry-like-no-other/>).

Kirsten Ziomek posits “different degrees” or a spectrum of “subalternity” among colonial subjects who “had different levels of access to power.” “The location and movement of colonial subjects affected their relationship to the empire; their position was constantly in flux as they traveled from the colony to metropole.”¹⁰⁹ Korean footballers interacted with Japanese from a position of demonstrated strength. When their “location and movement” were on the football pitch, Koreans were either powerful teammates or indomitable adversaries to Japanese. For the better part of a decade, to take their football to the next level, to the most prestigious international venues, Japanese and Koreans needed each other. Shoulder to shoulder on the pitch, footballers from both countries displayed *naisen ittai* idealism in action.

Acknowledgments

This project was funded by a Short-term Research Grant from the Northeast Asia Council of the Association for Asian Studies and by the United Faculty Alliance Research, Pedagogy, and Innovation Fund from Northern Illinois University. I appreciate kind and patient assistance from Dr. Ayako Yoshimura of the University of Chicago Library’s East Asian Collection, and from the masked staff at the Reference Room of the Japan Football Museum, National Diet Library, Tokyo Central Library, and Nagoya University Library during my research visit in early February 2020, which coincided with the stressful outbreak of COVID-19 in Japan. Thanks also to Dr. Heeyoung Choi for feedback and generous assistance with translations, and to anonymous reviewers whose comments and criticisms were constructive and thought-provoking.

¹⁰⁹ Ziomek, *Lost*, 16, 380.