The influence of foreign players on the transformation of Japanese rugby over the last three decades

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日本ラグビー発展のために

This thesis aims to contribute to the further development of Japanese rugby.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the influence of foreign players on the transformation of Japanese rugby over the last three decades. Foreign players first had an impact in company league teams and, more latterly, have also played with distinction in the Japanese national team. Using historical materials and interview data with players, coaches and administrators, I show how the game of rugby in Japan has developed, and consider aspects of the relationship between migrant players and the Japanese game. I follow the actors through the shift from the amateur to the professional period, and describe the impact on Japanese rugby of foreign players and coaches.

In the first chapter, I describe the establishment and historical development path of rugby in Japan. The game has incorporated aspects of Japanese styles of organisation, playing techniques and philosophies. Until the 1980s, high school and university rugby was the most popular form of the game, but after then, rapidly-developing company rugby became the predominant domestic form of the game. The company game's latest iteration, launched in 2003, is the Top League, and in it, labour relations have become more professional. Chapter Two describes the influence of foreign players in company teams, looking in particular at migration trends, eligibility rules and labour relations. I found that, as well as increasing in number, foreign players and coaches as teachers are having a deeper influence on the way that Japanese play the game.

Chapter Three narrows the focus to a case study of a representative company team, Yamaha Motors. It follows three broad themes, of the history of the team and its moves to a more professional style of organisation, labour relations and the team environment,

and the degree of equality between foreign and Japanese players, in terms of salary, social status and the expectations on them. The company teams have a high degree of control over players' contracts, and with salary and expectations differing between professional foreign players, the few Japanese professionals and Japanese players employed as regular employees, the majority, interpersonal relations are still difficult.

Chapter Four analyses the case of foreign-born players in the Japanese national team. The eligibility criteria for the Japanese national rugby team do not demand citizenship, only three years' residence, which has caused considerable debate. This chapter found that changes in role that have occurred since the first selection of foreign-born players in 1986, with emphasis of late on adding leadership rather than strength. Through comparative case studies of the national team at three key points in time, 1968, 1999 and 2003, this chapter found that the distinctive Japanese playing style on show in 1968 has now largely disappeared, although moves are underway to revive it. Additionally, players' main loyalties are often now to company teams rather than the national team, and many simply choose not to appear for Japan.

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and sport academic. Congratulations on your appointment to the Rugby World Cup
Committee of 'Rugby Stars' for France in 2007.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 Research Project

The experiences of my father, Yoshihiro (Demi) Sakata[1], and his rugby career provide

the starting point and inspiration for my analysis of the influence of foreign players in

company league teams and the national team on the transformation of Japanese rugby

over the last three decades. I have examined historical records and made use of my

father's narrative about his time as a rugby player. His life story, presented in brief

below, focuses on his involvement in two rugby cultural contexts. In particular, the

example of my father as a 'pioneer'[2] migrating Japanese player highlights the research

topic on rugby migrant players between Japan and New Zealand. My father's case

presents the reverse of the current player migration flow. While my father spent six

months in New Zealand in the late 1960s playing rugby as an amateur, the current trend

is for New Zealand players to migrate to Japan to take up lucrative professional

contracts with company teams.

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[1] My father was born at Osaka, Japan on September 26, 1942. He is a lecturer in sport leadership and coaching in the Department of Physical Education, Osaka University of Health and Sport Sciences, Japan.
[2] Maguire (1996:339) uses the following five typologies for sport labour migration. He classified sports migrants as pioneers, settlers, mercenaries, nomadic cosmopolitans and returnees. Maguire's description of the pioneer suits my father's case.

My father attended Rakuhoku High School[3] for the three years (from 1957 to 1960) in

Kyoto, where he began playing rugby at the age of 16. His team qualified for the

National Inter-High School Tournament in 1957-1960 as the Kyoto Prefecture

representative. Between 1960-1964, my father attended Doshisha University[4], majoring

in economics. He belonged to the university rugby club, which won the NHK Cup[5] in

1961 and the All Japan Championship in 1963. After completing his university degree,

my father was employed by Kinki Nihon (Kintetsu) Railway Company between 1963

and 1977, and played for their company club[6] until 1975. During his career at Kintetsu,

the team won the All Company Championship in 1966, 1967, 1969 and 1974, and won

the All Japan Championship in 1966, 1967 and 1974. Until his retirement, my father

played a significant role in building and supporting what is called the 'golden era' of

Japanese rugby (Murakami, 1999:4).

While my father played for Doshisha University and Kintetsu Company club he was

also selected as a member of the Japanese national team (All Japan). He won 16 caps

and scored 13 tries in 16 Test matches between 1963 and 1973. In 1968, on its first tour

of New Zealand, the All Japan team beat the Junior All Black team 23 to 19. In this

match, my father, who played on the wing, scored four tries. This was a significant

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[3] The Rakuhoku High School RFC is the oldest rugby club at high school level, established in 1912.
[4] The Doshisha University RFC is the second oldest club at university level, established in 1911. Since then, the team won four All University Championship titles and twice won All Japan Championship titles.
[5] Until 1963, there was no organised All University Championship Tournament, only regular inter-school matches. The champion Kansai and Kanto teams, plus the top two company teams, played off the national championship. From 1960 to 1952 there was, however, the forerunner of the national championship, the NHK Cup, Doshisha University won this title in 1961.
[6] The Kintetsu RFC is one of the most traditional company club, established in 1927. The team won seven All Company Championship titles and three times for All Japan Championship title. Since 2003, the team named Kintetsu Liners has belonged to the Top League competition. Their home ground is well known as Kintetsu Hanazono Rugby Stadium.

achievement because of the strength of the Junior All Black team and New Zealand

rugby in general. As a result, He was selected, by *The Rugby Almanac of New Zealand*,

as one of the five outstanding players[7] of the year. This sensational introduction to New

Zealand rugby gave him the chance to return in 1969.

While in New Zealand in 1969, my father played for the University of Canterbury's

rugby team, for the Canterbury provincial team (during the season when Canterbury

took the Ranfurly Shield from Hawke's Bay), for the New Zealand Barbarians and for

New Zealand Universities. My father showed his distinctive skills and techniques of

change of pace and side step to beat top-level players, including All Black players. This

was a significant achievement despite his lack of size and power. New Zealand media

called him *'Flying Wing SAKATA'*, because of his speed and agility (Murakami,

1999:32).

His initial motive for coming to play rugby in New Zealand was to challenge his rugby

skills at the top level of the world rugby – not to make money, as rugby was an amateur

sport then. My father purely wanted to play rugby in New Zealand. As there were very

few international matches, interaction between players from different countries was

minimal. And because there were no restrictions on the selection of foreign-born players,

my father was eligible for the above-mentioned teams.

My father encountered many challenging situations while playing rugby in New

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[7] With Wayne Cottrell (Canterbury), Sid Going (North Auckland), Walter Spanghero (French) and Joseph Maso (French). Those eligible for the award were players who had played in New Zealand during the 1968 season, be they of touring team, of New Zealand domestic teams, or of the All Blacks. In 1968, All-Japan and the French national team toured New Zealand, and hence the competition for selection for the five players of the year was among all New Zealand players plus those in the two touring squads.

Zealand in the late 1960's. These include anti-Japanese sentiments from WWII, the difficult of being the only Japanese player in New Zealand[8] and the problems obtaining visas. The company he worked for (Kintetsu) had given him five months' leave to play in New Zealand during the New Zealand rugby season, upon which he had to return to work and play for the company in Japan. In his day, the company considered the game to be amateur; my father had to work first, pursuing his rugby career only in the time available after work commitments had been fulfilled. The company had not been particularly supportive, and they had not given him any extra support or dispensations.

This situation is in direct contrast to the *shakaijin* amateur or semi-professional model[9] (see Section 2.3) today. After rugby became professional in 1996, many top Japanese company clubs have introduced New Zealand rugby exchange programmes, sending promising players to New Zealand to gain rugby experiences. Such player exchanges are regarded as 'special sabbatical leave' and the companies offer their players full support and encouragement[10]. By contrast, my father's circumstance was a first for Japanese rugby, and as there was neither precedent nor official guidelines for how his company should treat his wish to go to New Zealand, and my father had no way of appealing the company's decision. In this way, reflecting on the difference in treatment

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[8] There were times at night when his stomach ached from the pressure and tension of having imposed/immersed himself into such a different society. However, he is/was grateful to his host family's support and kindness. While my father was 27 years of age, his hosts warmly accepted him as a member of their family. On the rugby field in New Zealand, my father said only one word. As a winger, he needed to tell his teammates when to give him the ball. So, he would simply shout 'yes' and then let his play do the talking.

[9] At present, most top company clubs offer special treatment to their players hired as both regular employees and contracted (professional) players. When a professional player is injured or ill, he can also secure his positions as an ordinary company employee. This special treatment also includes overseas tours, summer training camps and time off during the rugby season. Some company clubs also pay bonuses pegged to players' performance on the field (see Section 2.3)

[10] For an example of how the Yamaha club encourages its players to spend time on rugby exchanges in New Zealand, see Section 4.2.

of Japanese players in the 1960s and today, I was encouraged to discover and analyse the changes in labour relations and broader issues concerning changes to Japanese rugby.

1.2 Research Questions and Objectives

The transformation of rugby from amateur to a professional sport in 1996 and the influence of foreign players has led to significant changes in the structure of Japanese rugby over the past few decades. The main aim of this thesis is to investigate what has happened to Japanese game as a result of the influx of foreign players and the shift from the amateur to the professional rugby. The issue of importing foreign players into Japanese rugby has become an important research topic in recent years, as the number of foreign players and their roles in the company leagues and the national team has increased.

The relationship between Japanese rugby and its migrant players is the key theme in this thesis. Many company clubs brought in migrant players in the 1990s, and lifted the level of rugby and its public profile. According to Ohtomo (1998:37), the 1990s is considered the era of 'the company game', decided on the strength and the influence of the foreign players. Moreover, foreign players in company leagues are now selected to the Japanese national team. According to *the Japan Rugby Magazine* (2002), there are currently a total of 1,672 players in the company teams, of whom 96 (6%) are foreign- born[11].

When researching this topic I discovered many 'sociological' questions to be addressed

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[11] I created this statistical data, based on company team profiles in the *JAPAN RUGBY MAGAZINE* in the 2002-3 season.

in this thesis. What have been the key trends in the historical development of rugby in Japan? In particular, how have labour relations between players and their employers changed over time? With regard to foreign players, why do they decide to play in Japan? What are their views about rugby migration to Japan? What qualities have foreign players brought to the Japanese game? More importantly, how are foreign players defined and accepted within the company leagues and the national team, and what influences have they had on the culture of Japanese rugby? In this thesis, I gathered and interpreted interview data from players, coaches and administrators to analyse the relationship between Japanese rugby and migrant players.

1.3 Thesis Structure

This thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter Two provides a historical overview of the development of Japanese rugby. The diffusion of rugby across the world has enabled different cultures and nations to construct particular forms of identity through their interpretation and practice of the game. The game of rugby was brought to Japan over a century ago. Rugby in Japan, despite its English origins, has provided for the construction of particular local masculine cultural practices. This chapter also outlines the Japanese organisational structures and competitions, and identifies some current issues of concern, primarily relating to the structure of the game and labour relations.

Chapter Three seeks to draw attention to the influence of foreign rugby players in the Japanese company leagues. It can be argued that foreign players have had a key influence on rugby in Japan for the last two decades. This chapter outlines the historical context of foreign players in Japanese company leagues, migrant data, eligibility rules

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and labour relations regarding foreign players. The major focus in this chapter is to examine the motivations, experiences and views, mobility patterns of foreign players and recruitment strategy in both the amateur and professional periods; how the influx of foreign players have gradually had an impact on Japanese rugby; and how foreign players view and experience the Japanese game.

Chapters Four and Five include two distinct case studies based on my primary research. Chapter Four shows how the shift of rugby from an amateur to a professional sport and the influence of foreign players have led to significant changes in the Yamaha Rugby Football Club (Yamaha RFC). Yamaha has responded to competitive pressures, which have but increased with the introduction of the Top League competition in 2003, by changing to a more professional style of club management and labour relations with players. Yamaha has heavily relied on foreign players to raise the quality of the game and public profile since 1994. This chapter also examines how foreign players are accepted and defined into the Yamaha team in comparison to their Japanese teammates. These three themes form the basis for the discussion of interviews with three players at Yamaha RFC; Kevin Schuler, a New Zealand player with experience of the amateur and professional eras in Japan, a representative Fijian player, and a leading Japanese player.

Chapter Five looks at the relationship between the national team and foreign players. Over the last two decades the influx of foreign-born players in the company leagues has also led to major effects on the performance of the Japanese national team. This chapter discusses the national eligibility criteria and the roles and objectives of foreign-born players in the national team in both the amateur and professional periods. The main

focus in this chapter is on the differing performance of the Japanese national team at three different stages; 1969's 'Ohnishi Japan', 1999's 'Hirao's Japan' and 2003's 'Mukai Japan'. Chapter Six draws together my findings and conclusions of my research. It outlines some of the key points of the earlier chapters, and outlines some issues for future sociological research regarding Japanese rugby.

1.4 Use of theoretical/analytical ideas

Elias (1982) argues that without some understanding of history, the study of social relations is empty and ambiguous. Hutchins (1998) also suggests that a historical dimension is needed in social analyses to understand the development of social practices and changes. These recommendations encouraged me to first undertake a historical investigation of the nature of Japanese rugby, in terms of its organisation and competitions, playing styles and cultural practices. Moreover, while the introduction of commercialism, professionalism and migrant players since the 1980s have brought significant changes to the structure of Japanese rugby, I have sought to understand how rugby developed in relative isolation in Japan, before the inflow of foreign influences.

The work of Nauright and Chandler (1999) was very helpful. This work is an introduction to an edited book collection of historical and contemporary analyses of world rugby. I began reading historical accounts of the game, which tracked its move from the playing field of the English public school. Rugby spread across the world and became adapted in different cultural contexts with distinctive local styles. Globalisation, professionalisation and commercialisation have also had a huge impact on the development of rugby. These social and historical accounts gave me clues to better

understanding the case of foreign players in the Japanese context.

In this thesis, I have drawn on the theoretical and analytical concepts of cultural flows, global sports labour migration and dependency theory to examine the case of foreign rugby players in the Japanese context. Literature on sports labour migration (Bale and Maguire, 1994) has influenced the thesis research questions and themes that I am interested in. McGovern (2002)'s economic and social analysis of foreign footballer players in the English League from 1946-95, provided me with another form of analysis focusing on labour markets which identifies changes in the patterns of migrant players and recruitment networks. In Stead and Maguire's (1998) work on Nordic/Scandinavian players in the English League Soccer, I found an assessment of the motivation and objectives of Nordic/Scandinavian soccer players and the lack of opportunity for indigenous professional players. This work also included interview and research methods, patterns of soccer labour migration, and characteristics of and experiences/views of the Nordic/Scandinavian soccer migrants.

I have made use of Obel (2001)'s analysis of New Zealand rugby as a means of comparison and explanation of how the transformations in New Zealand rugby have affected the flow of New Zealand players to Japan. The focus here is on the connection between Japan and New Zealand; that is, developments in New Zealand rugby are seen from a perspective of their impact on Japanese rugby, rather than an analysis of these developments in themselves.

In examining the case of foreign rugby migrants in Japan, I have referred to the work of

Nauright and Chandler (1999), Appadurai's work (1990) on ethnoscapes, the use of dependency theory in the work by Klein (1991) on Dominican baseball and Maguire (1996) on British ice hockey. Maguire (1999:104) believes that the migration of sports talents as athletic labour is a major feature of the 'global political economy'. He notes about the general context of player migration 'the sports labour process is bound up in a complex political economy that is itself embedded in a series of cross-cultural struggles that characterises the global sport system'.

This trend has been evident in many leagues in many sports around the world. In Maguire's (1996) study of ice hockey in Britain, the influx of Canadian-born players has contributed to a situation whereby Canadian players dominate the domestic leagues and the national team. The ready availability of keen and able Canadian players has meant that the club teams have not put nearly as much effort into developing young British-born players. Their development can be said to be mutually dependent, as the teams continue to rely on a supply of Canadian 'blade runners', and the young players rely on the British teams for professional opportunities.

Maguire's (1996) analysis of the influence of Canadian ice hockey players in England provides clear parallels to the case of foreign rugby players (especially New Zealand players) in Japanese company clubs and the national team. The migration of rugby players to Japan is an example of a cultural flow, and the mobility of rugby players has increased gradually in the last 20 years. The migration of foreign players to the wealthy northern clubs and companies in Europe (England, Italy and France) and Japan is primarily dependent on the demand of clubs, as the more economically powerful

leagues and teams have attracted foreign players by offering fulltime career opportunities, higher wages and better conditions than those provided in the foreign players' homelands. Japanese company teams in particular rely on migrant players, especially New Zealanders, to maintain and enhance the strength of their team. New Zealand players also depend on Japanese company clubs for many of their professional rugby-playing opportunities. This situation is an example of mutual dependency.

Similar to the work of Maguire, Klein (1991:99) argues that there is a structural condition at the root of the domination of Dominican baseball by the U.S. Major League Baseball (MLB). Klein notes that the MLB has had a hegemonic impact on both the style and organisation of Dominican domestic baseball and the mobility of players, particularly to the U.S. This hegemony has met with resistance, as some in Dominican baseball have attempted to maintain its amateur traditions.

This situation has parallels to the case of Japanese company rugby teams and New Zealand players. While the MLB has come to dominate Dominican baseball through the power of its market, New Zealand rugby has exerted an arguably hegemonic influence over Japanese rugby due to the strength of its playing base and depth of its technical skills. Japanese company rugby teams, through importing many New Zealand players, have changed the style of their (and the national team's) game from the speed-and-ball-movement-oriented style which developed before the advent of foreign influences in the 1980s, to a more power-oriented game. This hegemonic trend has caused resistance, in the form of those who want Japanese rugby to be 'recognisably Japanese'. These trends, and the arguments surrounding them, are clearly illustrated in

the case of the Japanese national team at three points in time; 'Ohnishi Japan' in 1968, 'Hirao Japan' in 1999 and 'Mukai Japan' in 2003.

1.5 Methodological issues and Research data

In this thesis, I have used primary research, using existing networks of contacts (the snowball method) to gain access to and interviews with participants. I also collected statistical data on foreign players in Japanese company leagues and the national team in the period between 1978 and 2003. Secondary sources include rugby players' biographies, journals, newspapers, magazine and Internet articles, which provide insights into the migrant's motivations and objectives, patterns and trends of migrant players, views and experiences from players, coaches, administrators and rugby commentators such as journalists.

This thesis research mainly used qualitative methods, combining fieldwork observation and interviewing (Blaikie, 2000). In total, I carried out 11 interviews. Approximately half were conducted with foreign players, Japanese players, coaches, and an administrator in Japanese company clubs, and the other half with a JRFU administrator, players and coaches, and my father in his capacity as a former player, current coach and a sports academic. His personal narrative and oral history were productively employed in the historical analysis of the development of Japanese rugby. Needless to say, I benefited greatly from 'informed 'father and son' conversation'.

These largely 'unstructured' interviews were carried out in Japan between 2002 and 2004. I finalised the methodology, timeframe, confidentiality, and interview procedures, as well as making contact with the participants before I travelled to Japan to conduct the interviews. The participants and I also needed to discuss the way in which contact or communication could be maintained between Japan and New Zealand for clarification of the research. I approached media managers in the company clubs and the JRFU with a phone call followed by an email letter explaining who I was, what my thesis research was about and why they were important for my research. All my participants were happy to participate in the project. Most of the foreign players gave me feedback, and perhaps the research involved in my thesis can be an interesting reference for them should they encounter similar situations to those situations already encountered and described to me by other migrant players.

Each interview involved a discussion about the subject's playing and coaching career, and took 40-45 minutes. Discussion were audiotaped and extensively noted. Approximately half of the interviews were conducted in the interviewees' office. One took place in a café, another in a hotel restaurant, and two interviews took place in the indoor training room of the Yamaha RFC. My interview questions were centred around the themes of motivations/objectives, experiences/perspectives, recruitment strategy, professional contracts, eligibility and regulations of foreign players. I started with more basic questions, encouraging the participants to open up by introducing themselves and their background, aspirations, current and future issues. I approached the 'unstructured' interviews with some prepared questions to stimulate discussion, but mostly worked from a common theme, from which I developed questions during the course of the

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interview. In particular, Becker's (1998:58) research strategy on asking 'how' rather than 'why' questions was very useful in expanding in the scale and depth of my investigation by encouraging the interviewees to provide more details and honest opinions. Analysis of the taped discussions and interviews were very useful in order to identify key themes and issues.

One of the more difficult aspects of the interviews was power relations and cultural distinctions between researcher and participant. The content of my interviews involved power relations between those with 'more power' and those with 'less power'. Additionally, due to the distinction made between 'insider' and 'outsider' groups, I expected participants to respond with different stories or critical expressions to me as Japanese, influencing the outcome of my research. As Obel (2001:x) used her gender difference and cultural distinction as a resource in her PhD study on rugby union in New Zealand, I began with the assumption that, like Obel, I would be a 'cultural outsider' to foreign players. This influenced my approach to my initial interviews with foreign players. In this situation, my anxiety increased because English is not my first language. Thus, there were some difficulties when interviewing foreign players with respect to language and cultural etiquette.

When interviewing Japanese players and officials, I faced a different set of cultural challenges, those grounded in the expectations and nuances of Japanese culture. Firstly, the Japanese are brought up to believe that the older a person gets, the more maturity and knowledge he/she acquires (Nakane, 1997:185). That is to say, acceptable behaviours and attitudes in a certain situation are defined by the standards set by

sanctified custom and, perhaps even more so, by those in authority in that situation. In a society featuring a clear hierarchy based on age, the older people will generally be in authority (De Mente, 2004:12). As a researcher, I was expected to respect my Japanese participants and look up to them for guidance and advice.

Secondly, Japanese culture also emphasises formal interpersonal relationships more than the more informal and spontaneous relationships found in Western culture. In order to maintain 'harmony' or to prevent disagreements or unpleasant interchanges, Japanese people usually avoid freely expressing feelings and thoughts to others, especially in public (Nakane, 1984:192). There was no doubt that my Japanese cultural upbringing had a strong impact on this research project. This can be a dilemma, as I often felt caught between two cultures. I found that the Western perspectives and knowledge gained from my time as a university student in New Zealand helped me to get used to less formal interaction. However, I discovered that the research challenges facing me did not present as serious a problem as I had anticipated. I was in fact considered to be an 'insider', who had come from a strong rugby family background, with deep involvement in the field of rugby in both Japan and New Zealand, and found this to provide a major advantage in conducting the research process.

Chapter Two: Introduction to Japanese Rugby

2.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the transformation of Japanese rugby, focussing on the last three decades. It examines changes in the organisational structures and competitions, emphasising those that have occurred since the introduction of professionalism in Japanese rugby. In this chapter, section 2.1 will provide a brief historical overview of the development of rugby in Japan. The main focus is on the style of organisation of rugby in Japan, amateur competitions and local masculine cultural practice.

In section 2.2, I will examine the formal organisational context, such as the roles and objectives of the various competitions, including the new élite company competition, the Top League. I will also show in section 2.3 how development in the company teams, including the change to professionalisation, has resulted in changes to the power and labour relations between the JRFU, company clubs and players. This has become particularly notable in the Top League era, discussed in section 2.4.

All of the changes that have occurred at the company level have also had effects on the Japanese national team. The rapid pace of company team development has caused a shift in allegiance of many players and organisations, who now favour the company league as the peak of the Japanese game. This represents a fundamental shift in priorities from the amateur era, in which the performance of the national team was paramount (see Section 2.1 below). These trends, the changes to power relations they have brought about, and opinions from leading commentators regarding possible ways to improve national team performance, are discussed in section 2.5.

2.1 Historical Background: Rugby Union in Japan
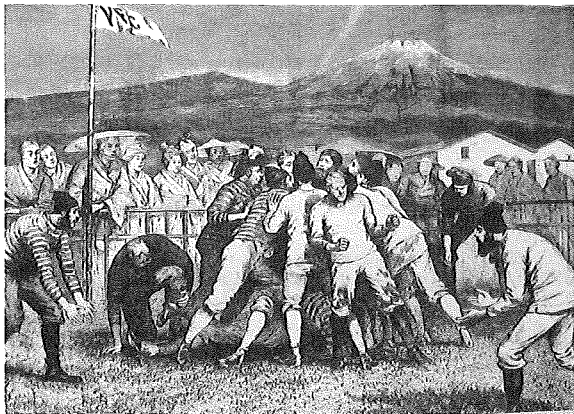
Rugby is thought to have been brought to Japan as long ago as the 1870s, when a rugby club (Yokohama Football Club) was established in the foreign settlement in Yokohama. An early UK magazine, *The Graphic*, printed accounts of rugby games in 1874. The picture from this magazine shows that the game was played mainly by the Royal Army and Navy, together with the settlers from Britain (Kobayashi, 2000:81). It was also played by foreign settlers at the port cities of Yokohama and Kobe from the mid-nineteenth century, but rugby was not played by a Japanese team until the turn of the century (Light, 1999:109).

It was Ginnosuke Tanaka, a graduate from Cambridge University in England, who, with his colleague E. B. Clark, introduced the rules of rugby to Keio University in Tokyo, and established the Keio Rugby Football Club in 1899. The first rugby game in Japan

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was played between Keio University and the Yokohama Country and Athletic Club. Subsequently, rugby spread throughout élite Japanese educational institutions from the early twentieth century, with the game experiencing rapid growth during the 1920s. As other universities and high schools introduced rugby to their curricula, a nationwide awareness of the game gradually built up (Yamamoto, 2000:2-4).

However, it was the 'traditional universities' that drove the spread in popularity of the game. The 'traditional universities' – Keio[12], Waseda[13] and Meiji[14] Universities – were the dominant three institutions in Tokyo rugby, and often attracted crowds of over 60, 000 people to their matches at Tokyo's National Stadium. In particular, the annual match between Waseda and Meiji, called the Sōmeisen[15], is a rivalry of similar significance to the match in England between Oxford and Cambridge. In summary, as Light (1999:107) explains, prior to World War Two, rugby in Japan developed solely within institutions of education. Furthermore, it was shaped there by an implicit perception of it as a way to promote and reinforce dominant cultural practice and social behaviours.

While rugby did not become a national sport, the game was also adopted into many high schools where methods of coaching and instruction were similar to baseball – unwaveringly harsh and disciplinarian, aiming to develop spiritual and physical strength through hardship. The methods featured individual sacrifice, endurance and an

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[12] Keio University RFC was established in 1899. The team has won three All University Championship titles and one All Japan Championship title. Its most notable university championship victory was in 1999, the year of the club's 100th anniversary.

[13] Waseda University RFC was established in1918. The team has won 11 All University Championship titles and four All Japan Championship titles.

[14] Meiji University RFC was established in 1922. The team has won 12 All University Championship titles and one All Japan Championship title.

[15] The Sōmeisen was first held in 1921, and 2004 will see its 79th edition. The match is now held annually on the fifth of December, and as of 2003, Waseda has won 42 times, Meiji 24 times, with two draws.

unswerving commitment to the team. The social organisation also featured strict age-based hierarchical relations between *sempai* (seniors) and *kōhai* (juniors)[16]. The system of values that underpinned these methods is called *seishin*[17] masculinity, and differs significantly from the ideology of Victorian and Edwardian games in England (Light, 1999:109-12). While Victorian rugby was a tool for the inculcation of genteel behaviour and upper-class values in public schools in the England, rugby in Japan was shaped by the militaristic values of dominating masculinity, and was applied at all levels of the education system. As a result, the practice of rugby displays Japanese concepts of manliness, including the likes of sacrifice and endurance, brought from the feudal samurai classes.

In this way, rugby was adapted to fit local cultural norms and ideals far from its British origins. Once introduced, the game developed in Japan in near-isolation. The rules and outward form of the game were adopted, but British values of manliness were largely discarded or changed. While the game was infused with a rich spiritual seam, it was not until the 1950s that distinctive styles of play began to emerge. In pre jet-era isolation

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[16] It is common for Japanese university and high school rugby teams to train six days a week, for at least two hours each session, for almost eleven months of the year. More significantly, taking advantage of the school summer holidays, thousands of rugby players from around the country take part in summer training camps in Sugaraida, Nagano prefecture. These 10–day camps are one of Japanese rugby's great rituals. In a cool climate arguably suited to rugby, each team is put through a physically and spiritually gruelling morning and afternoon training regime plus pre-season matches with rival teams. These camps are crucial as they form the final preparation for regional and national tournaments. Light (1999:114) interprets rugby, as practiced in the stronger universities and high schools, to be continuing a tradition of preserving Japanese culture and a conservative form of masculinity.

[17] In Japan, *seishin* was promoted by the military before WWII. The United State Occupation forces tried to eradicate it from the school curriculum, but it re-appeared in universities and high school sporting clubs, with rugby clubs practicing a more severe form. *Seishin* emphasise the unity of mind, body and soul to build courage and self-discipline (Light, 1999:115), and is considered part of 'the Japanese spirit'. The concept of *seishin* is culturally central to the ideology of the samurai warrior as the code of 'bushido'. Rugby, which allows players to use their whole bodies, was considered an ideal medium for the development of *seishin*. The *seishin* ideology is often expressed in competition, and the climax in the rugby context is the annual National Inter-High School Rugby Tournament, held at the Kintetsu Hanazono stadium in Osaka.

there were few international matches[18], the focus of the game was mostly internal[19], and intense rivalries (especially among the universities) encouraged the innovation and development of playing styles different to those imported decades before.

In particular, the game came to accentuate speed and agility, with play flowing smoothly across the field, rather than only up and down it. In fact, the game evolved to the point that it was no longer considered a foreign game (Kobayashi, 2000:82-5). Perhaps because of the rarity value, All-Japan matches were considered highly prestigious, of a status well above domestic concerns. In 1965, a JRFU committee was set up to work towards strengthening the All-Japan team and increasing the number of fixtures, and the fruits of its efforts was the All-Japan team that toured New Zealand in 1968 and hosted England in 1971. Masterminded by coach Tetsunosuke Ohnishi, the team overcame disadvantages in size and weight to be competitive with, and sometimes beat, their highly-ranked opponents[20]. This team is also considered to represent the peak of development of the Japanese style of play. The features of this crucial period in Japanese rugby will be further discussed in Chapter Four.

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[18] The Japanese national team first played in 1930, and toured Canada in 1932, beating the Canadian team 9 to 8. However, it mainly played against university selections on this tour. Its next Test (full international) match was not until 1959 against Canada followed by a ten-year gap before it played against the Junior All Black in 1968 and Hong Kong in 1969.
[19] This internally-focused pattern of development could also be seen in Japanese baseball, which developed styles of play distinctive from its American homeland (Whiting, 1989)
[20] The Japanese national team (*Nippon daihyō*) was known the time as 'All-Japan' (*Zen Nippon*). The team beat the Junior All Blacks 23-19 in 1968 and lost narrowly to the full England national team 3-6 in 1971, in the process winning the hearts of the over 50,000 people crammed into Tokyo's Prince Chichibunomiya Memorial Stadium.

2.2 Organisational Context

The JRFU Prefectural Union Map

Figure 2.1 Map of geographical prefectural unions

Calendar of Domestic Games in Japan (in the 2004-2005 season)

	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
Top League	18 Sep. to 10 Jan.					
Microsoft Cup						23 Jan. to 6 Feb.
All Japan Championship						5 Feb. to 27 Feb.
All University Championship					19 Dec. to 9 Jan.	
Inter-High School Tournament						
Others	Regional games and competitions at high school, university and company (Top East 10, Top West A and Top Kyushu) levels.					

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Japanese National Team                      │
│                                                              │
│                                                              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                              ▲
┌──────────────────────┐      │
│  All Company          │     │
│  Championship (1946-  │  ┌───┴──────────────────────────┐   ┌────────────────────┐
│  2003)                │  │  Top-League (since 2003)      │   │  All-Japan          │
│ (16 teams from Kanto, │──▶│ (Round-robin competition      │──▶│  Championship       │
│  Kansai and           │  │  featuring the top 12         │   │  (since 1948)       │
│  Kyushu play in a     │  │  company teams)               │   │  The format of the │
│  round-robin          │  │                               │   │  All-Japan          │
│  competition. The two │  └───────────────┬───────────────┘   │  Championship       │
│  best teams in each   │                  ▲                   │  between company    │
│  pool go into a       │                  │                   │  and university     │
│  knockout stage of    │                  │                   │  teams has changed  │
│  semi-finals and final)                  │                   │  several times      │
└──────────────────────┘                   │                   │  (see Footnote 34)  │
                                            │                   │                     │
┌──────────────────────────────────────────┴──┐               │                     │
│  All Universities Championship (since 1963)   │──────────────▶│                     │
│ (16 teams from around the country play in a   │               └────────────────────┘
│  round-robin competition. The two best teams  │
│  in each pool go into a knockout stage of     │
│  semi-finals and final)                       │
└───────────────────────┬──────────────────────┘
                         ▲
                         │
┌────────────────────────┴─────────────────────────┐
│  Inter-High School Tournament (since 1918)         │
│ (52 qualify, one from each of the 47 prefectures,  │
│  plus two each from Hokkaido and Tokyo and three   │
│  from Osaka)                                        │
└────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

Figure2.2 Institutional Contexts and Competition

The development of Japanese rugby has long been overseen by the JRFU. The JRFU

was founded in 1926 as the governing body of all Japanese rugby. The JRFU was

established to coordinate the unification of rules, scheduling of domestic and

international matches and organising of refereeing. The JRFU is the central authority for

the 47 prefectural unions[21], who are charged with the development of the game through

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[21] Geographical Zone (Affiliated Regional Unions): 1. Kanto RFU (Red) Zone (17): Hokkaido RFU, Aomori RFU, Iwate RFU, Miyagi RFU, Akita RFU, Yamagata RFU, Fukushima RFU, Gunma RFU, Tochigi RFU, Ibaragi RFU, Saitama RFU, Chiba RFU, Tokyo RFU, Kanagawa RFU, Yamanashi RFU, Nagano RFU and Niigata RFU. 2. Kansai RFU (Blue) Zone (22): Toyama RFU, Ishikawa RFU, Fukui RFU, Shizuoka RFU, Aichi RFU, Gifu RFU, Mie RFU, Shiga RFU, Kyoto RFU, Osaka RFU, Nara RFU, Wakayama RFU, Hyogo RFU, Okayama RFU, Hiroshima RFU, Tottori RFU, Yamaguchi RFU, Tokushima RFU, Kagawa RFU, Kochi RFU, Kochi RFU and Ehime RFU. 3. Kyushu RFU (Green) Zone

local clubs.

Under the umbrella of the JRFU, there are the 47 prefectural unions. Each prefectural union administers the registration of local teams (players and coaches) from the grassroots to top level – junior, high school, university, company and club rugby – administration and management. Prefectural unions also run the local-level competitions within each prefecture.

The JRFU has centralised control over national competitions and issues rules to regulate them and the national team. However, there is a third level of administration – the regional RFUs. The three major regional unions (Kanto RFU: 17 prefectures, Kansai RFU: 22 prefectures and Kyushu RFU: 8 prefectures) arrange the regional games and matches within their regions (see figure 2.1) at high school, university and company level that serve as qualifiers for the national tournaments run by the JRFU. However, in 2003, the JRFU introduced the Top League competition, which, instead of three different regional competitions, includes the top 12 teams from throughout Japan. This administrative complexity, and attendant battles for control and influence between the three levels of administration, is one of the reasons for the inconsistent administration described in Section 2.5.

In 1918, the JRFU introduced the National Inter-High School Tournament, and further established the All-Company Championship in 1948, the All-Japan Championship in 1963 and the All-University Championship in 1964 (see figure 2.2). Through the

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(8): Fukuoka RFU, Saga RFU, Nagasaki RFU, Ohita RFU, Kumamoto RFU, Miyazaki RFU, Kagoshima RFU and Okinawa RFU.

domestic competitions held between September and February, the JRFU has striven to increase the popularity of the game, while ensuring that it remained strictly amateur. However, this amateur structure was to come under great pressure from the 1980s following the increasing commercialisation and later professionalisation of the company game. Until then, lucrative revenues from spectator interests, gate takings, sports newspapers and television rights, combined with adept management of the domestic game, saw the JRFU become one of the richest Japanese sporting authorities. Despite the increasing revenue raised from gate-fees, television rights, sponsorship and advertising, the vast majority of which was retained by the JRFU, the JRFU have maintained the cherished principles of amateurism.

According to recent JRFU statistics (JRFU, 2003), Japan is fourth in the world in the number of registered players (125,508), and easily top in the number of registered clubs (3,506)[22]. Yet, a cautionary note must be added. Despite the large number of affiliated players and clubs, and the many domestic competitions, it is still fair to say that rugby is not a major sport in Japan. This is because rugby, which was slower to turn professional than other major sports in Japan such as baseball and soccer, has gradually lost the vital media (especially television) exposure that had helped to enrich it[23]. The converse of a virtuous circle for other major spectator professional sports[24], has been that rugby has

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[22] This is despite the number of clubs falling dramatically from its peak of 4 776 in 1992 (JRFU, 2003).

[23] Rugby had enjoyed significant media coverage since the 1960s. From the mid-1980s, along with the boom in company rugby, television coverage especially expanded dramatically. However, with the sudden surge in popularity of soccer after the launch of the J.League in 1993, media networks moved their focus away from rugby and along with the reduction in broadcast time came a fall in TV revenues and overall popularity.

[24] Nippon Professional Baseball was formed in 1936. Baseball has remained one of the most heavily attended sports in Japan, with professional and high school level the most popular. There are 12 professional baseball teams (six in the Central League and six in the Pacific League).

Japan's professional soccer league, the J. League, was established in 1993. At present, the J. League has 26 teams, 16 in division one (called the J1) and 12 in division two (J2). From 2005, there will be 28 teams in this league, with the J1 expanding to 18 teams.

lost its position as a major spectator sport. However, the four major domestic competitions (perhaps with the exception of the All-Japan Championship) are still important fixtures in the Japanese sporting calendar.

The development of the National Inter-High School Tournament, established in 1918, showed how the popularity of the game and practices were cultivated and maintained to further shape of local ideals of *seishin* masculinity. Rugby at high school level is played throughout the year, with most teams playing in several regional tournaments. However, the national competition is the burning goal for all. From over 1,228 high schools, 52 qualify from the local prefectural championships[25] to compete in the knockout National Inter-High School Tournament at the Kintetsu Hanazono Stadium in Osaka. Run from the end of December until early January, the tournament is televised nationwide and draws a large audience[26].

In recent years, fighting sports have expanded in popularity among viewers, with 'K1' ranked the fourth most popular spectator sport. K1, founded in 1980 draws on martial arts such as Karate, Kickboxing, Tae kwon do and Kung fu. Throughout the year, the world's best fighters face off in K1 qualifying events on five continents for the honour of competing in the K1 World Grand Prix, held in December in Tokyo. In 2002, there were nearly 74, 500 spectators in the arena and TV audience rating hit 28.4%. K1 represents one of the most popular media sports. In comparison with these four popular sports, rugby has maintained the position as the fifth most popular spectator sports in Japan. (http://www.sanspo.com/fight/dageki/k-1/2002/1207taisencard.html).

[25] One team qualifies from each of the 47 prefectures, plus two each from Hokkaido, and Tokyo, and three from Osaka.
[26] Formerly, every game of the tournament was televised live nationwide. However, due to a loss of sponsorship and popularity, coverage has been scaled back to a daily highlights package with only the semi-finals and final shown live. A similar trend has afflicted the company and university championships.

The All Company Championship[27] was introduced in 1946, and ran until it was superseded by the Top League in 2003. This competition was popularly credited with having maintained the high standard of rugby in Japan. From the 1980s, the company leagues grew in popularity on the back of university rugby. As the competition in the university league intensified, more and more effort was poured into player development.

This provided a pool of talented players graduating from university and eager to continue playing rugby for a prestigious company. At the time, the company league enjoyed considerable television coverage, and image-conscious companies were keen to add to their reputation by having their name associated with a successful team. This was reinforced by Japan's bubble economy of the 1980s, a period of extreme corporate largesse, where image was paramount and money a secondary consideration. In such an environment, company rugby flourished (Harada and Takahashi, 2003:1117). Trends in company rugby are examined in greater detail in Section 2.3.

The All University Championship[28] was introduced in 1964. This was a major opportunity for the JRFU to attract large crowds, especially for games featuring the heated rivalries between the three traditional universities, plus established schools

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[27] There are seven company leagues: East Japan Company League (8 teams), Kansai Company A League (8 teams), West Japan Company League (8 teams), East Japan Company Challenge League (6 teams), Kanto Company Division One A (8 teams) and Kanto Company Division One B (8 teams). The format of the All Company Championship competition (2002): 16 teams from Kanto, Kansai and Kyushu zones, play of winners in four pools, from which the two best teams in each pool play go to into a knockout tournament.

[28] There are six university leagues: Kanto University Taikosen A (8 teams), Kanto University League Division One (8 teams), Kansai University League (8 teams), Tohoku Regional University League (4 teams), Tokai University League (8 teams) and Kyushu University League (8teams). The current format of the All University Championship competition in 2003: 16 teams from Kanto, Kansai and Kyushu zones, play the first round in the tournament. The 8 winners of the first round is divided into the 2 pools, where a round-robin is played within the pools. The 4 best teams of the pool games proceed to the semi-finals, and then to the final.

Hosei[29] and Doshisha[30]. After a tentative start, spectator interest in university rugby increased, especially after the 1980s with the rapid growth of university rugby.

This popularity of the traditional university matches expanded the base of support for university rugby, and by the 1980s attracted many newer universities to form rugby clubs. Rugby is one of the most popular televised university sports[31], and having a strong rugby club provided invaluable promotion for less famous universities to build their reputation and attract students. Examples of universities that increased their public profile through rugby are Kanto Gakuin University[32] and Daito Bunka University[33]. Kanto recruited players regardless of their academic ability, solely for their rugby skills. In the mid-1980s, Daito Bunka became the first university to recruit foreign students to help strengthen its team, before any company teams had signed foreign players. Daito, in its efforts to succeed in the university championship, became a pioneer in Japanese rugby.

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[29] Hosei University RFC was established in 1924. The team won three All University Championship titles in 1964.

[30] Doshisha University RFC is the second oldest rugby club at university level, established in 1911. Since then, the team has won four All University Championship titles and twice won All Japan Championship titles.

[31] Tokyo-based six traditional universities baseball tournament: Keio, Tokyo, Housei, Meiji, Rikkyo and Waseda. The ekiden event is a relay race over the classic marathon distance. The men's team consists of five runners (leg distances of 10km, 5km, 10km, 5km and 12.195km). The two travelling reserves will complete in a 5,000m track race. Since 1920, 20 universities competed in Hakone Ekiden. It has now become a representative New Year's sports event in Japan.

[32] Kanto Gakuin University RFC was established in 1961. Since 1997, the team has won five All University Championship titles. In the 2003-2004 season, the team beat Waseda University 33-7 to claim the 40th University Championship.

[33] Daito Bunka University RFC was established in 1963. Since 1986, the team has won three All University Championship titles.

Originally established in 1948, the All Japan Championship[34] is the tournament between the victorious university and company teams to decide the single best team in Japan. In the 1960s and 70s, the university teams, especially the traditional universities, often beat their company opposition. However, since 1987 a university team has not won the tournament. Since the company teams became totally dedicated to rugby excellence and improvement (by means such as employing foreign players, attracting the elite university players and lightening the office workload of its player-employees – see Section 2.3), the gap between company teams and universities has widened into a gulf. The playoff games have become one-sided, often highlighting the perceived differences between the 'men' of company rugby and the 'boys' of university rugby. Because of this, the tournament has lost much of its meaning, and the focus of élite play is now on the Top League involving company teams only.

2.3 The Development of Company Rugby

As discussed in Section 2.1, Japanese rugby has long been linked with the ideals of amateurism. However, the shape of that amateurism has been subject to change over the years. High school and university rugby has always been strictly amateur in the Western sense, and *shakaijin* (company) rugby was also considered to be an amateur sport. However, the *shakaijin* model is significantly different from Western conceptions of

[34] The format of All Japan Championship has changed several times. Until 1998, the champion teams from the All-Company and All-University tournaments clashed in a one-game playoff for the All-Japan Championship. In 1998, the best three teams from the company tournament and the best two teams from the university tournament played a round-robin tournament. In 1999, 2000 and 2002, the top four from both tournaments played off, though in 2001 it was the best four company teams and two university representatives. From 2003, the tournament shifted more radically to include 22 teams.
The many changes to the format of this tournament have been held up as an example of indecisive decision-making and leadership by the JRFU. Among others, Kevin Schuler (Howitt and Haworth, 2002:44) has criticised the lack of consistency in decision-making. See Section 2..5 for further explanation.

amateurism.

With full-time work commitments were expected of the players, who would then train and play for their company's team as well. From before the 'classic era' of Japanese rugby in the 1960s through until the late 1980s, players were 'employees for life' of their company. They mixed work and rugby as long as they physically could, and, upon retiring from rugby, became full time office workers. While rugby was taken very seriously, players still had to balance work and rugby, training after finishing a day's work in the office from nine to five.

Players accepted this lifestyle because, at the time, there was no other route to continuing playing rugby after university. In Japan in the 1960s and 70s, dedication to work and the company was a high ideal, and it was no different for rugby players. Time allowed for practice and matches was limited by the need to fulfil duties in the office – even during tournaments, when there would be two or three matches a week, the players had to be in the office as always on days without matches. Rest was at a premium, and the concepts of choice and mobility were foreign. Players like Yoshihiro Sakata were dedicated to the company and remained loyal to their employer long after hanging up their boots.

Until retirement, the lifestyle pattern of those involved in *shakaijin* rugby was similar to the amateur model found in New Zealand, the main difference being that the club was not a community club, rather one belonging to the company (Howitt and Haworth, 2002:39-40). However, there was a change in the late 1980s, where (Japanese) players

were allowed to spend more and more of their work time on rugby, up to around half of their time in some cases, rather than rugby training being strictly outside normal work hours as in the 1960s.

While these players were still all 'employees for life', this was the beginning of the move to a 'semi-pro *shakaijin* style' as described in Table 2.1 below. At around the same time, foreign players began to be hired on a short-term employment contract basis. Called *gaijin suketto* (foreign helpers) or *oyatoi gaikokujin* (employed foreigners) (see Chapter Three), they were respected and had great influence as teachers and coaches. However, this created a large difference in status between the Japanese and foreign players. In general, the Japanese were paid less, and often concentrated more on serving their company and on their long-term job security. Ultimately, they were less dedicated to rugby than to the company. By contrast, the foreign players focussed on playing good rugby for the moment.

One of the biggest factors contributing to the changes in the structure of *shakaijin* rugby was the so-called 'bubble economy' in the latter half of the 1980s. Companies built up their rugby teams by promoting them for strategic corporate image benefits, featuring the rugby team (named after the company) in general corporate publicity material such as advertisements. In highly image-conscious Japan, a company's prosperity was often linked more to conspicuous symbols, such as success in the company championship, than to financial measures (Harada and Takahashi, 2003:1117).

With the increasing pressure on company teams to win came moves to import foreign players. The foreigners were all hired on short-term contracts, and had little office work to do (Sakata, 2002:21). However, under amateur regulations they had to be hired as employees, what was often called 'shamateurism' outside Japan. After the introduction of professionalism in 1996, no such work requirement was necessary (see Chapter Three).

With a large influx of foreign players and coaches, company rugby developed rapidly through the 1990s (see Chapter Three). Clubs, who controlled players' contracts and status, grew in authority relative to the JRFU, and began to demand a new competition to bring in more revenue. The result was the introduction of the Top League (see Section 2.4), which began in 2003. However, in the new environment, expectations of and opportunities for the various actors are quite different. Japanese players, until now company employees, now have the chance to become contracted professionals.

However, the salaries on offer to them are still lower than those offered to their foreign teammates, and they must sacrifice their post-rugby job security if they take up professional contracts. This has produced a much more uncertain and complex rugby environment where the attractiveness of a professional contract must be balanced against long-term considerations. As Hiroshi Nagano, captain of the purely amateur *shakaijin* team Mazda RFC[35] points out, "life after rugby is much longer"[36].

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[35] Mazda RFC is a purely amateur *shakaijin* team, with all its players employed as regular employees. During the 1990s, Mazda employed foreign *suketto* under a semi-professional *shakaijin* model, and was in contention for the All-Company Championship. However, as the parent company's finances worsened towards the end of the 1990s, it was forced to release its foreign and star Japanese players, and revert to a purely amateur style. (www.chugoku-np.co.jp/sports/now/66now.html). Without significant parent company support, the team cannot hope to hire foreign stars, and hence cannot aim for the Top League. It

With the introduction of the Top League, the officials of top clubs began to try to exploit their more powerful position, demanding more influence over the organisation of the competition, traditionally always the preserve of the JRFU or regional unions RFUs. They have also refused to release players for national team matches. The JRFU, outwardly clinging to amateur ideals (as described in Section 2.2), does not officially acknowledge full professionalism, instead blurring the issue by describing the Japanese game as still *shakaijin* (JRFU Annual Report, 2003).

In this way, the JRFU is not exerting central control, instead allowing a free market for contracting players to develop, leaving all matters regarding player regulation and eligibility to the individual clubs to determine. Thus, in contrast to the New Zealand centralised control over both national competitions and player contracting for the Super 12 competition and the All Black team by the national rugby organisation, the NZRFU, the JRFU has not imposed a New Zealand-style centralised control over player labour contracting. In fact, without official recognition of the top-level Japanese game as professional, centralisation and rule-based regulation of any sort is very difficult. In the absence of JRFU regulation, power relations have shifted towards the top clubs (explored in more detail in Section 2.4), a situation which is only likely to continue in the current environment.

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now plays in the Kyushu regional company league.
[36] www.chugoku-np.co.jp/sports/now/66now.html.

The key features of the different models of organisation are summarised in the table below. Although the distinction between purely amateur and semi-professional *shakaijin* rugby is not absolutely clear, it is a useful way to characterise the changes that occurred in Japanese rugby after the late 1980s.

	Amateur (NZ etc)	Shakaijin		Top League	Professional (Super 12, European Premiership)
		Purely amateur	Semi-pro style		
Job security	None (not employed by the club)	High (players are likely to be lifetime employees of the parent company)	High for Japanese players (all as lifetime employees). Low for foreign players (on short-term contracts).	High (for Japanese players who are lifetime employees; however, unlike *shakaijin* teams, some may be asked to return to the parent company if deemed below the team's standard). Low for foreign players and Japanese players on professional contracts.	
Professional players are who?	nobody	nobody	Only foreigners	Foreigners and some Japanese	everyone
Transfer system	None – freedom of movement	None – no freedom of movement (eg. Yoshihiro Sakata (Kintetsu)	Very limited movement	Weak regulations, case-by-case flexible approach introduced in 2003.	Clear, rule-based transfer system

Table 2.1 The key features of the different models of organisation

Although the distinctions between categories in the table are not as clear-cut as the table suggests, what is certain is that since the introduction of the Top League, Japanese rugby has become more 'fluid' and 'dynamic', with greater opportunities for player

movement and salary negotiation. Decisions about players' contract status are left to the clubs and players themselves; however, this has led to inconsistencies and an ambiguous 'hybrid system'. While some players, including all foreigners, are (in reality) on full professional contracts, the majority are still employees (as is the case at Yamaha RFC – see Chapter Four). This causes some confusion and friction, as there are often differences in motivation and dedication between team-mates. This is the case even in the more 'professional' clubs like Yamaha (see Chapter Four).

This situation has arisen because some companies cannot afford the costs of employing players on full professional contracts, but also because those players who are worried about their post-rugby security prefer to retain their *shakaijin* status (see the afore-quoted Hiroshi Nagano and Mazda Motors). Japanese professionals also earn significantly less than foreign professionals. Thus, even though the introduction of the Top League has changed the 'traditional' *shakaijin* model towards a fully professional contracting model, the greater openness and choice available to current Japanese players has not resulted in all players taking up professional contracts. The Top League has brought yet more structural changes to Japanese rugby.

2.4 The Top League Competition

In 2003, the JRFU established the Top League competition. This new competition is a significant step towards a professional league. The professional Super 12 competition in the Southern Hemisphere and the Heineken Cup in Europe have contributed to huge improvements in the level of rugby in the two hemispheres. The JRFU is hoping the Top League will have the same effect in Japan.

The JRFU's vision is for the diffusion of the game throughout the country in order for rugby to regain its former popularity. The Top League aims to promote and develop the game within local communities so as to encourage participation and enjoyment at every level, and build up the game from the grassroots to the national team. Ultimately, the JRFU hopes for rugby to compete more effectively with other major professional spectator sports such as baseball and soccer[37].

The key new features of the Top League are as follows:

- Instead of three different reginal competitions (Kanto, Kansai and Kyushu), there is one national league with the top teams from throughout Japan competing. The aim here is to encourage a sense of 'our region vs. theirs', a sense of belonging. This is a first step away from a company-team based model towards a more community-focused model similar to those in Europe and Australasia.

- By creating a smaller, élite competition, the JRFU is aiming to promote closer, more exciting matches.

- In doing so, the JRFU seeks to raise the level of Japanese rugby, and to consequently help raise the performance and standing of the national team

Replacing the traditional company championships, the Top League, run from September to January, consists of a round-robin competition involving the top 12 company teams[38].

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[37] Speech of Hiroshi Hibino, the vice president of the JRFU, at the press conference explaining the Top League Competition (http://www.jrfu-members.com/open/press/index.html).
[38] There are promotions and relegations from the Top League: the 11[th]- and 12[th]-placed teams are automatically relegated to the regional leagues, along with the loser of a play-off between the ninth and 10[th] teams and two best of the top teams in the Top East 10, Top West A and Top Kyushu leagues (see appendix page 137).

This new competition includes a total of 66 pool games and seven play-off games between the top eight teams to decide the overall champion. The top eight also move onto play in the knockout Microsoft Cup[39] tournament in February, as well as the All-Japan Championship against university and club teams (see Section 2.2). On September 13 2003, the inaugural season of Top League kicked off, with a crowd of 35,000 watching the opening match between Suntory Sungoliath and Kobelco Steelers at Tokyo's National Stadium[40] (Mitoji, 2003:12).

However, there are a number of points of contention regarding the new competition. While the JRFU aims to encourage more competitive balance between company teams[41], this is only happening between the very élite teams. The rich clubs are becoming stronger, and the poor are becoming weaker, or dropping out. While the new competition is bringing more media exposure to rugby, the focus has shifted to the top competition, largely ignoring the lower leagues. And increased media exposure has yet to result in large crowds – the average Top League gate in 2003 was only 3,500 (JRFU Annual Report, 2003). This is most likely below the number of spectators needed to cover costs, and hence puts an additional burden on the company to fund the club.

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[39] The Microsoft Cup is a new challenge cup tournament introduced along with the Top League. Administered by the JRFU along the lines of the Top League, the format is modelled on knockout competitions such as the F.A. Cup, with the tournament winner required to win every match.

[40] These two teams played the first match of the new competition because they had been the most successful teams during the previous ten years or so. This tactic of opening the new league with historically popular teams mirrored the J.League's opening game featuring the Yokohama Marinos and Verdy Kawasaki, which as Nissan Motor and Yomiuri Club had been the powerhouse *shakaijin* soccer teams of the 1980s (Birchall, 2000).

[41] Significantly, the JRFU is not aiming to encourage competitive balance between company and university teams, only among company teams.

There have also been many cases of companies being forced to abandon hope of competing at the top level, or close their rugby clubs. Some companies (especially those who established their teams in the bubble era) who are unable to fund a Top League team have wished to carry on with an amateur *shakaijin* team, such as the case of Mazda Motors. However, the reduced media exposure at the lower levels brings less PR benefits for the company, and thus less chance for the team to promote the company, one of its main purposes. Thus, some companies have disbanded their teams. Between 1997 and 2001, over 200 company teams were discontinued (Australian Financial Review, 2003:33), leaving approximately 500 still in operation JRFU (JRFU Annual Report, 2003), a significant decrease. So while rugby's popularity may be growing at the élite level, the number of company teams and players continues to decline.

Finally, there is also the fundamental problem of differing interpretations of the meaning of *shakaijin* rugby between the company teams and the JRFU. Among the Top League clubs, a more professional attitude is taking root, but the JRFU maintains an ambiguous position, still wanting to maintain the amateur values that have sustained rugby for over a hundred years (see Section 2.3). The JRFU considers the Top League to be a company-based amateur competition, but the reality is clearly different. Companies like Yamaha (see Chapter Four) are now becoming quite professional in their employment and training practices. Further, despite the aim of strengthening the national team, the early success of the Top League has driven the standard of company team play higher still, and made clubs and players even less willing to participate in national team matches. This issue will be further discussed in Section 2.5. Thus, there are no simple solutions and clear descriptions of these aspects of Japanese rugby.

Ambiguity and conflict best summarise its current state.

2.5 The Current State of the Japanese National Team

Despite the great improvements in the standard of the company game since the 1980s, the Japanese national team has not developed to the same degree. As outlined in the previous section, there is no consensus between the JRFU, company teams and élite players that improving the performance of the national team is the ultimate goal of Japanese rugby. While there is no doubt that the success of the national team helps to drive revenues for and interest in the game, it may still be possible to debate the merits of this concept – some company clubs might prefer to concentrate on domestic competitions. However, the structure of world rugby places national team competition at the top, and media coverage is heaviest for prestigious national-team tournaments, such as the World Cup and the global Sevens Rugby circuit. Japanese rugby has also traditionally placed great importance and honour on playing for the national team (see Section 2.1).

The JRFU certainly believes that the national team's welfare should be the highest priority. However, the company clubs, and an increasing number of players, do not agree. The clubs control the players' contracts and can prevent the players from appearing in any other team, including the national team, at will. *L'Equipe*, writing for the *Yomiuri Shimbun* newspaper[42] (2003), argues that some company clubs do not want to release top players in case they suffer burnout or injury while outside their control. Thus, even those players who may want to play for Japan can be easily prevented from

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[42] L'Equipe (2003). *Ragubī ōkoku Nihon-no yowasa* (The weakness of Japan, a strong rugby nation), *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 10 October.

doing so, to the point of becoming scared to ask. Universities also have the same power, and many block their players from selection for under-19 and under-21 national teams. Players at the élite universities in particular often see that their career chances may be better served by helping their university to the championship, rather than playing in a quickly-forgotten junior international fixture. This lack of emphasis on national team-selection even extended to the World Cup, the pinnacle of the global game – in the past, the Japanese team has been decimated by withdrawals ahead of the tournament[43].

Thus, it could be said that Japanese rugby has a flat structure, with the national team, company clubs and university teams all of roughly equal importance. The national team still carries prestige internationally, but this is diminished by players being unwilling to sacrifice playing time (and salary payment) from their company club or university. To promote a stronger national team, the JRFU has to negotiate player availability. There have been some moves towards this goal – for the 2003 World Cup, the JRFU negotiated a one-month break in the Top League to allow company players time off, and paid the players for their trip to Australia[44]. But there is still no overreaching unity of purpose among all those connected with Japanese rugby, leading to a fracturing between the various levels, and also between representatives of factions at the top level.

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[43] This problem has only become significant since the early 1990s. Before the first Rugby World Cup in 1987, the relatively small number of matches involving the Japanese national team meant that conflict and overlap with the company and university league was small.

[44] The 2003 World Cup was the first time that players had been paid to play for the Japanese national team; this was deemed necessary to encourage reluctant players to appear. However, the payments were low, and players were loathe to risk their future with their company team, their main employer. (http://www.sanspo.com/rugby/japan2003.html; http://www.rugby-japan/japan/japan/2003/index.html).

Andrew Miller, interviewed by Fujishima (2003:37), urges Japanese rugby to change its structure, asserting that the importance of the national team needs to be re-emphasised. He believes that there is a clear connection between many players' ultimate rugby goal no longer being to play for the national team, and the team's disappointing results. In my interview with him, he repeated this belief, adding that the JRFU must conduct structural reform as a first step to changing these attitudes.

Kevin Schuler (Howitt and Haworth, 2002:44) agrees that the ultimate goal for many in Japanese rugby is no longer playing for the national team. Instead, less encumbered by JRFU politics, the company teams are more dynamic and proactive in strengthening their squads. He argues that the real problem faced by the Japanese national team is the chronic lack of consistency of direction and policy development from the governing body. The JRFU is believed to be changing their plans and rules far too frequently, as can be seen in the many changes to the format of the key national tournaments[45]. This unpredictable decision-making process has led to lack of direction and co-ordination, and an inability to carry out long-term programmes to improve the national team.

Schuler believes that Japanese rugby first needs to solve its organisational problems, and urges it to implement a clear pyramid structure, with the national team at the apex. This would reiterate the place of a stronger domestic competition, such as the Top League, in terms of developing a successful national team squad. Such change can only come from the top, the JRFU – however, this would require shifting the balance of power in Japanese rugby back to the JRFU. And while the JRFU insists that rugby in

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[45] Of the four national tournaments, the only one to not undergo many changes in recent years is the National High School Tournament.

Japan is still amateur, it is both at loggerheads with reality, and unable to address the changes that the increasingly professional clubs are causing. In such a situation, the JFRU can only continue to lose control of Japanese rugby.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the development of rugby in Japan, from its introduction from Britain, to its current state. Through its use in educational institutions, I emphasised the role of the amateur ethos and its influence on high school and university, and later company, rugby. The game developed in relative isolation in Japan, which resulted in the development of distinctive playing styles.

The JRFU has institutionalised the domestic competitions as an amateur game. The National High-School Tournament has enjoyed strong popularity, though it has waned recently. The traditional universities (Keio, Waseda and Meiji) dominated the early development of university rugby, but by popularising the All University Championship, the JRFU attracted an increasing number of university teams to participate in the new competition. From the 1980s, the university teams aggressively recruited more and more top high school players, and then foreign players, to take part in this still-popular annual competition.

But it has been company rugby that has shown the most development over the last twenty years. *Shakaijin* rugby has gone from being a game played after work by full-time Japanese employees, to a largely professional sport with a significant foreign influence. *Shakaijin* rugby in the All-Company Championship, and particularly in its

latest iteration as the Top League, has drifted away from the amateur ideals long espoused by the JRFU, causing friction between the JRFU and clubs. The faster development of the company game has resulted in a shift in the balance of power towards the clubs/company teams.

As the company clubs control players' contracts and availability for the other representative teams, the clubs have a large influence over the fortunes of the Japanese national team. There is no universal agreement that the success of the national team should take precedence, and people such as Andrew Miller (Fujishima, 2003: 37) and Kevin Schuler (Howitt and Haworth, 2002:44) believe that this is a cause of the national team's recent weak performances. Schuler recommends implementing a 'pyramid structure', placing the national team firmly at the top.

It has been argued that, along with the rapid development of the company game, foreign players have had a key influence on Japanese rugby over the last two decades. Foreign players have both helped to improve the level of play, and changed Japanese players' fundamental attitudes to the game. In the next chapter, I will examine the influx of foreign players into Japanese rugby.

Chapter Three: Foreign players in Japanese Company Rugby

3.0 Introduction

This chapter seeks to draw attention to and analyse the influence of foreign rugby players in Japanese company clubs. It is argued that foreign players have had a key influence on rugby in Japan for the last two decades. From the 1990s, many company clubs recruited migrant players to lift the level of their rugby and public profile, and commentators declared that the era of 'the company game', decided on the strength and influence of the foreign players, had arrived (Ohtomo, 1998:37). Introduced in 2003, the new Top League competition (see Section 2.4), provides foreign players with further opportunities for international mobility.

In this chapter, I will explore the historical context of foreign players in the company league, migration data, eligibility rules and labour relations regarding foreign players. The major focus in this chapter is to investigate the motivations, experiences and views of migrant players, leading to their success or failure in contributing to their team. I will compare mobility patterns and the teams' recruitment strategies across the

amateur and professional periods. All of this will help to elucidate how the influx of foreign players has had an impact on the development of Japanese rugby. Firstly, however, I will examine the historical background to the treatment of foreign specialists in Japan, as some of the attitudes formed over a hundred years ago are still manifested in Japanese sport today.

3.1 Comparative role of foreign specialists in various Japanese organisational fields

Before World War I, Japan had already undergone a remarkable transformation. From 1869 the new government formed after the Meiji Restoration changed Japan from an isolated, feudalist country into a 'modern' nation. Under slogans like *wakonyosai* (Japanese spirit and Western knowledge), Japan imported technology and ideas from those countries considered to be ideal models in their field[46]. In order to quickly attain a deep understanding of the desired fields, the government invited foreign specialists to advise the fledgling modern nation. Known as *oyatoi gaikokujin*, or 'employed foreigners', they were highly respected, and had great influence in reforming the spheres they had specialist knowledge of. However, they were only permitted to be short term residents, and were little used outside their field (McCabe, 2003:30).

Foreigners employed in the field of Japanese sport have experienced a variety of different types of treatment, some far different to the *oyatoi gaikokujin*. After World War Two, Japanese baseball developed with an internal focus. During the 1970s, foreign professional players were brought to Japan for the first time, but their role was very

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[46] Examples of ideal models used by the Meiji-era government in re-organising its activities include the Prussian army, the British navy and the French education system.

different to that of the *oyatoi gaikokujin*. Dubbed *gaijin*[47] *suketto* (foreign helpers), they were well-paid short-term residents. However, crucially, Japanese baseball had already established an inward-looking cultural environment with strict norms of behaviour, and unlike the Meiji-era *oyatoi gaikokujin*, the *suketto* were not allowed to influence how the locals played the game (Whiting, 1990:274). They were expected to fit into the dominant culture of the team, and had no influence on bigger issues such as the team's organisation and playing style. In fact, most were ultimately dismissed with loud public and media criticisms of their 'laziness', 'selfishness' and lack of 'fighting spirit' (Kelly, 1998: 96).

Foreign baseball players were thus afforded much less respect than Meiji period *oyatoi gaikokujin*. The lack of respect and unwillingness to harness the full potential of the imported knowledge represented a backwards step for internationalisation in Japan (McCabe, 2003:60). However, other sports have allowed foreigners more influence. Soccer, particularly the professional J.League established in 1993, has allowed foreigners a large, but not overwhelming, degree of influence. Most have been positive role models and ambassadors, helping to raise the standard of Japanese soccer without destabilising it. It could be said that J.League soccer has found a balanced position (McCabe, 2003:60).

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[47] Linguistically, although *gaijin* and *gaikokujin* both translate as 'foreigner', *gaijin* is a derogatory term that is used to show cultural distinction between us (insider) and you (outsider). Some people are deeply offended by the word. By contrast, *gaikokujin* is a more neutral word, simply meaning 'a person of another country' (http://www.debito.org/kumegaijinissue.html. Japan's Misguided Kokusaika (www document).

The remainder of this thesis will seek to discover the degree of influence of foreign players in Japanese rugby. I hypothesise that Japanese rugby has allowed foreigners too much influence, having highly influential, perhaps even dominant roles. This dominance has extended to the point where it could be argued that the flow of many players (from New Zealand in particular) fit models of dependency theory. As commentator Koichi Murakami[48] outlined to me in our interview, company rugby without foreign players is now unthinkable. The rest of this chapter will investigate the historical and contemporary context of foreign players in Japanese rugby to illustrate the breadth and depth of their roles.

3.2 Historical background of foreign rugby players

The first foreign players to play rugby in Japan were two Tongan short-term exchange students who enrolled at Daito Bunka University in 1974. The main purpose of their stay in Japan was not only to play rugby, but also to gain knowledge of Japanese abacus programming under the instigation of King Taufa'ahu Tupou IV[49]. Since then, Tonga and Daito Bunka University have developed an exchange programme, with a number of Tongan students going to Daito Bunka solely to play rugby. Since the 1970s, their influence on the rugby team has been huge, as Daito Bunka won the Kanto University League title for the first time of many in 1974. In 1980, Tongan students Hopoi Taione and Nohomuli Taumoefolau, and in 1985 Sinali Latu and Watesoni Namoa, came to Daito. The two became the driving force behind Daito's domination of the 1986 All

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[48] I interviewed him in a café, Tokyo on 20 June 2002.
[49] The Tongan royal family has strong links with the Japanese Imperial household, and King Tupou had become interested in Japanese abacus techniques. Wanting to spread such techniques further within Tonga, he asked the two students to travel to Japan to learn the techniques and then pass them on upon their return to Tonga. However, as rugby pioneers, they arguably had a far greater influence than originally intended.

University Championship. As a result of the performance of the Daito Bunka Team, the awareness among rival university teams of the value of foreign players increased more and more (Ohtomo, 1998:36).

In 1978, two Oxford graduates (Rod Paley and Peter MacFarlan) became the first foreign players to sign for a company club when they became contracted to play for Kobe Steel. But their spell in the team was short, and no foreigners played for company teams for another seven years. In 1985, two Tongans who played for the Daito Bunka University team, Taione and Taumoefolau, signed for Sanyo Electric. In the 1990s, the company clubs began to employ more and more foreign players, beginning a period of rapid growth in the number of foreign players in the company leagues. From 1991 to 1997, numbers grew from 20 to 88, a 77% increase in six years (see Figure 3.1). Rugby journalist Nobuhiko Ohtomo (1998:36) commented that the era when the game would be decided on the strengths of foreign players had begun.

In the 1990 All-Company Tournament the Sanyo team's physical attack, based around the 'Tongan Trio' (Hopoi Taione, Sinali Latu and Watesoni Namoa) reached the final, but was derailed by Kobe Steel's Ian Williams (Australia) who scored a last-minute try in a dramatic victory. In 1992, Ricoh, with Samuel Kaleta (Samoa) and Glen Paterson (New Zealand) as the pivots on both attack and defence, captured the East Japan league title in a phenomenal performance. The flow of stars to Japan did not cease. Glen Enis, who led Canada to the quarterfinals of the 1991 World Cup, joined Suntory, the Fijian 1987 World Cup hero Paulo Nawalu singed for Hino Motors, and in 1994, compatriot and sevens legend Waisale Serevi joined Mitsubishi Motors Kyoto were among the

notable foreign players to be recruited into the company leagues (Ohtomo, 1998:37). By the mid-1990s, many foreign players were used as role models to help encourage young Japanese players into the game. From New Zealand, apart from NEC's high profile 1997 signing of John Kirwan, Kevin Schuler (Nishin Steel to Yamaha), Graeme Bachop (Sanix), Jamie Joseph (Sanix), Arran Pene (Kaneka) and Ant Strachan (Kaneka) formed a procession of current All Blacks coming to Japan.

At the same time, overseas coaching and training methods were brought into many teams by foreign players and coaches. Current All Blacks assistant coach Wayne Smith joined the World company team, and Eddie Jones, the current Australian national coach, has a continuing involvement with the Suntory team[50]. Their involvement spread over a wide range of team activities, including technical advice, match plans and fitness techniques. As teachers, they have been highly influential in reshaping the teams they have worked for, bringing the latest in rugby techniques and advances to Japanese company teams. However, it is possible that these advances have come at the cost of the loss of the ideas and techniques refined by the likes of Tetsunosuke Ohnishi.

The standard of rugby in company leagues has greatly improved with the top-class foreign players around. With the introduction of the Top League and ever-increasing competitive pressures, company teams are now looking to sign only the very elite foreign players. This was evident in 2004's signings of superstar All Blacks Leon MacDonald (Yamaha), Troy Flavell (Toyota Motors), Ron Cribb and Mark Robinson

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[50] Based in Tokyo, Suntory Rugby Football Club was established in 1980. It has won the All-Japan Championship three times, the All-Company Championship three times, the Kanto A Company League five times. Suntory plays a Brumbies-like game as a result of Eddie Jones's influence. During the 2001 tour to Japan by Wales B, the Suntory club defeated (45-41) the touring side, while the national team lost to Wales B by 40 points.

(Kobe Steel), Tony Brown (Sanyo Electric), former Wallaby Toutai Kefu (Kubota) and current Springbok Jaco van der Westhuizen (NEC).

3.3 Migration data of foreign players (1978-2002)

The migration of foreign rugby players depends on the demand of Japanese company clubs. Since 1978, 361 foreign players and coaches have taken part in the Japanese company competition. The players have come from 13 countries, mainly New Zealand, Australia, Tonga, Fiji, Samoa, Korea and Canada. The increase in the numbers of foreign players recruited between 1972 and 2002 (see Figures 3.1 and 3.2) indicate that the market for foreign rugby players has dramatically grown. According to the *Japan Rugby Magazine*, the number of foreign players migrating to Japan between 1978 and 2002 has dramatically risen from two to 96 per year, with a high of 99 in 2000[51] (see Figure 3.1 and appendix page 139). New Zealand players represent the largest group of recruited/migrant players, followed by Australians, Fijians, Tongans and Samoans (see Figure 3.3). In fact, Southern Hemisphere players dominate, accounting for 97% of all recruits (see Figure 3.3).
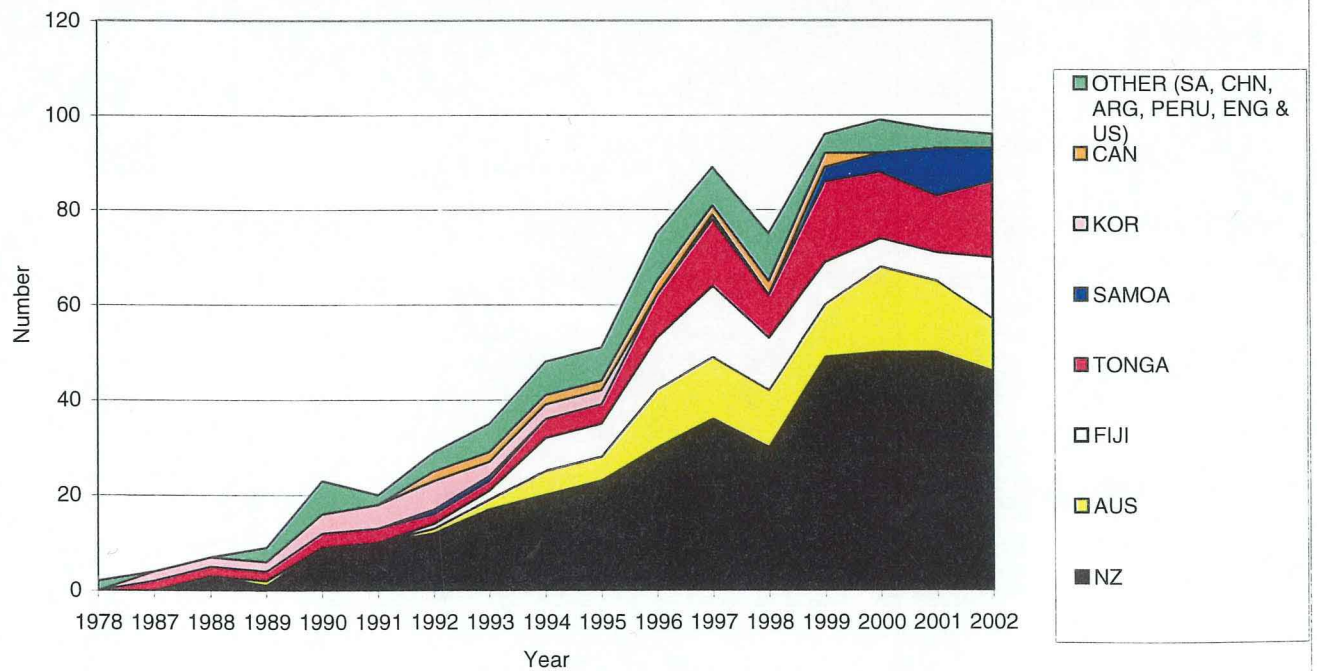
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[51] I created this statistical data on company rugby teams and players from information in *the Japan Rugby Magazine* between 1978 and 2002.
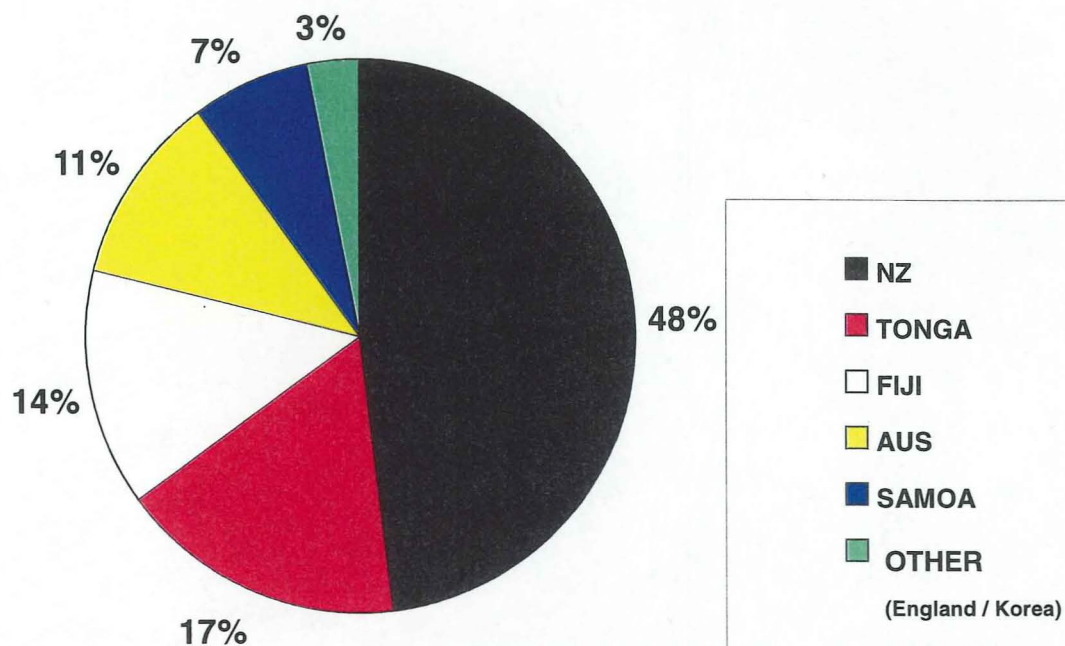
Figure 3.1: Number of Foreign Players
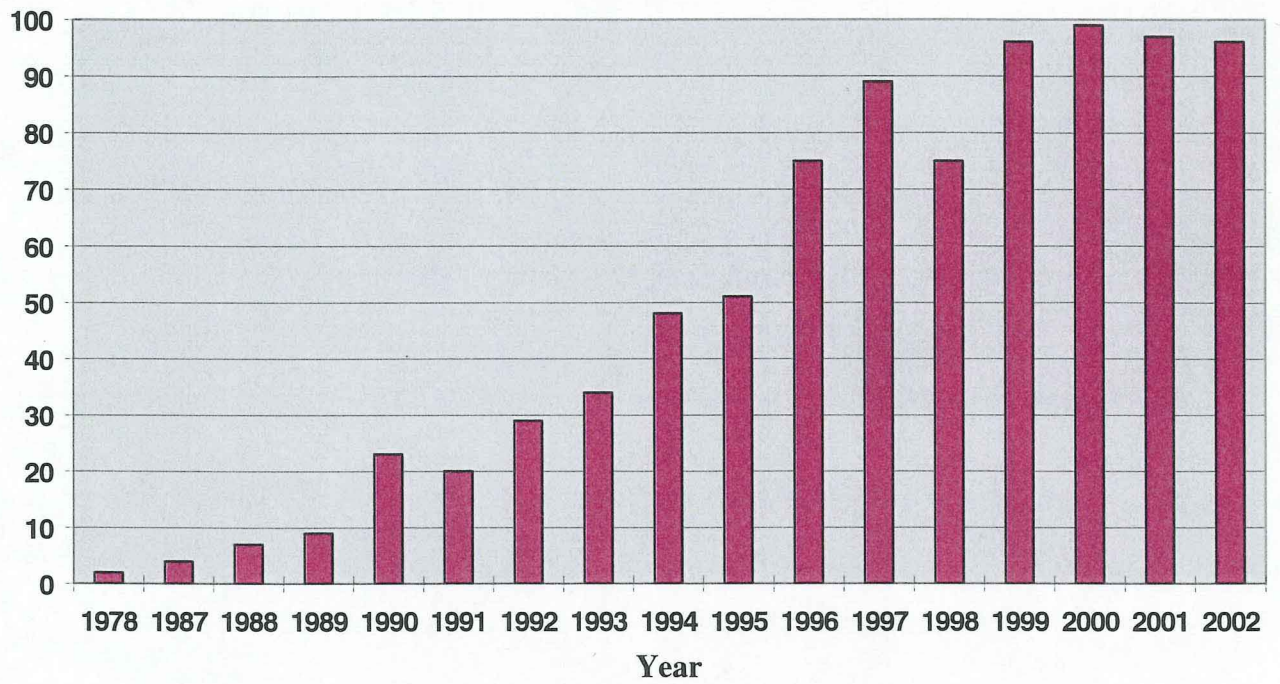
Figure 3.2 The Composition of foreign rugby players in the Japanese company league between 1978 and 2002

Figure 3.3 Foreign players in the 2002 season (n=96)

Table 3.1 Foreign players in Top League teams in the 2003 season

Team	NZ	AUS	FIJI	TONGA	SAMOA	ENG	TOTAL
NEC Green Rockets	3		1				4
Kintetsu Liners		1	1	1	1		4
Kubota Spears	2	2		1		1	6
Kobelco Steelers	3			1			4
Suntory Sungoliath	1	2	1				4
Sanyo Wild Knights	5						5
Secom Rugguts				2	2		4
Toshiba Brave Lupus	3			2			5
Sanix Bombs	4						4
Yamaha Jubilo	1		5				6
Ricoh Black Rams	2	1		2			5
World Fighting Bulls	1	2		1	1		5
Total	25	8	8	9	4	1	55

3.4 Eligibility, Quota and Transfer System of Foreign Players

The JRFU is responsibility for governing the eligibility of foreign players in all Japanese company clubs. Given the inflow of foreign players as described in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, the JRFU wished to reiterate its policy of keeping the game amateur, aiming to discourage professionalism and player movement. In 1991, it JRFU outlined its policy on foreign players in the amateur guidebook, under which, from 1992, the JRFU restricted the number of foreign players on each team to only two. (Specifically, there is no limit on the number of foreign players in each squad, but only two may appear on the field at any time).

This quota system was instituted to prevent foreign players flocking together in one company team, and to ensure that teams must recruit and help the development of Japanese players. However, despite this restriction, there are ways to have more than two foreigners on the field at once as foreign players who play in Japan for three years are counted as Japanese, even if they do not hold Japanese citizenship. Despite this rule enabling teams to recruit more foreign players several company teams have encouraged their foreign players to seek naturalisation[52].

Also, while the JRFU's 1991 ruling was aimed at limiting the number of foreigners in Japanese company teams, after it, even more companies then began to actively recruit foreign players[53]. This was because it was now officially sanctioned, and, in the context

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[52] For example, Tongan-born players Lopeti Oto (Toyota Motors) and Timote Manako (Kubota to Sanyo) have undergone this process, and are now playing as Japanese. They are hence not considered to be foreign players any more.

[53] The pattern of foreign players' migration to Japan over the last 20 years can be divided into three phases. From 1991 until the mid-1990s formed the second phase, during which company clubs started hiring foreign players (well-known players at the end of their careers, or second-tier domestic players) as

of typically risk-adverse Japanese management, an officially-sanctioned action carries no official and fewer social repercussions[54]. This was an early example of the difference in expectations between the JRFU and company clubs, a gap which would later widen into a gulf (see Section 2.4).

One problem facing new foreign players in the company teams is that JRFU regulations do not allow them to play until six months after the date of their registration. This has put Northern Hemisphere recruits at a disadvantage because they face a scheduling clash; they are still playing at the end of February, and so being unable to register by the beginning of March, would thus miss the start of the Japanese season in September. By contrast, if players in the Southern Hemisphere (New Zealand, Australia, Fiji, Tonga and Samoa) register at the beginning of February, they can play for the company club from September. This has made Southern Hemisphere players more attractive to the Japanese company teams, reinforcing the pattern shown in Figure 3.3.

The regulation will be relaxed by the JRFU from the 2004-5 season. Rather than a six-month wait after registration, any player, regardless of length of stay, can play from the start of the league in September. Moreover, if registered by the end of June and with the consent of the player's former team, players transferring between clubs can now

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semi-professional shakaijin players (see Section 2.3), paid high salaries under an ostensibly amateur employment contract. The period from the last 1980s until the early 1990s was the first phase, in which amateur Tongan students (see Section 3.2) and a few other foreign players took up contracts with companies as amateur company employees, like the Japanese players around them. As more large companies began to actively establish their rugby clubs and recruit foreign players in a competitive spiral, the JRFU introduced the above-mentioned limit of 'two' foreign players on the field per team. The third phrase began after 1996, when professionalism was allowed depending on the relationship between the company and the individual player.

[54] http://www.csuchico.edu/~ms99~/paper.html (Japanese and American management on www document).

play for their new team that same year. This new regulation will provide further opportunities for both foreign and returning Japanese players domestically and internationally, and especially for Northern Hemisphere players to be recruited by Japanese teams.

3.5 Recruitment of foreign players

In the past ten years, the conditions surrounding the recruitment of foreign players have changed dramatically. In the amateur era, the company teams relied heavily on large and powerful foreign players to help the team as *suketto*. Since rugby became professional, the number of foreign players from the southern hemisphere (New Zealand, Australia, Tonga, Fiji and Samoa) has increased considerably. The beginning of the Top League competition in 2004 saw the number of teams in the top competition limited to 12. Most top teams do not merely seek to recruit foreign players but are putting a renewed emphasis on recruiting and developing top Japanese university players as appropriate to the needs of the team. This is because Japanese players have become stronger and more skilful. Therefore, recruiting foreign players alone cannot bring a competitive advantage.

The Top League competition has also arguably improved the overall quality of élite company games, with a much more physical style emerging across the league. By implication, this means that a higher standard of foreign player is needed. As a result, apart from the rule of 'two foreign players on the field', three or four foreign players on the reserve bench has become the norm. Table 3.1 shows that there are 46 foreign players, with an average of four per Top League team (see Table 3.1). This has worked

around the ostensible rule of 'two foreign players on the field'.

After the advent of professionalism in 1996, the recruiting strategies of the company teams changed rapidly. Many of the top teams looked to sign leading Southern Hemisphere players before February, to meet the registration requirements for the Japanese season. In particular, negotiations with New Zealand players were carried out from the end of the previous year's New Zealand playing season, that is, from around September. Negotiations with players contracted to the NZRFU (NZRFU Year Book 2003), that is, All Blacks and Super 12 players, were limited to a one-month window in October.

However, Japanese company teams actively scouted and made contact with players before their NZRFU and provincial union contracts ended. Many companies employ rugby agents and/or have networks through foreign players who have returned home after playing for that company's team. Since the start of the Top League in 2004, the contract negotiation period has been extended, with the JRFU hoping for more security in the foreign player transfer market. However, the players and their agents generally accept the highest offer from any of Super 12 teams, European clubs and Japanese company clubs. That is to say, in a global rugby market where player transfers between clubs are not regulated by the IRB, there is open competition between rich Northern Hemisphere clubs and fiercely competitive Top League teams for the most famous players. Thus the price of star players can be expected to continue to rise, and it will be only the few richest clubs that can secure the services of the top players.

The case of New Zealand players

Matheson (2000:28 cited in Obel, 2001) explains the flow of players and coaches to northern hemisphere clubs, companies and unions by highlighting the increasingly uneven economic opportunities in the game. According to *NZ RUGBY WORLD* (1998), Super 12 and NPC players can earn the equivalent of the standard NZ$150,000 All Blacks contract when they play overseas. In New Zealand, a Super 12 player gets only NZ$65,000, while a 'top of the line' All Black can earn more than NZ$300,000 a season in New Zealand.

My own research reveals that contracts may in fact have increased significantly since 1998. For most top Japanese company teams, there is bonus on signing the contract, but the club offers a preparation fee, which includes accommodation, Japanese language lessons, private car and health insurance in the first year. A recruiter with a top company team explained to me that there are three different salary bands – All Blacks, ¥25 million (NZ$358,000) [55] , Super 12 players, ¥15 million-¥20 million (NZ$215,000-NZ$358,000) and NPC players, ¥10 million (NZ$143,000). Clearly, the substantial salaries on offer would seem to be a factor in players' decisions to migrate to Japan. In recent years, the size of the deals of top-class players has escalated dramatically. A few rich company teams offer extraordinary deals to 'superstars'. For example, Toutai Kefu signed a three-year contract worth ¥120 million (NZ$1.7 million)[56] with Kubota, and Troy Flavell signed for two years for over ¥98 million (NZ$1.4 million) with Toyota Motors. The Northern Hemisphere free market for top

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[55] I calculated NZ dollar-Yen exchange at a rate of 75 yen to the dollar.
[56] Had Kefu stayed in Australia, it would have taken him approximately six seasons to earn the equivalent salary as a national and Super 12 player. (http://www.theage.co.au/articles/2003/02/01/1043804571583.html).

players, as opposed to the centralised, controlled market in New Zealand, is clearly providing great rewards for élite players (interview with a recruitment manager, 1 April 2004).

The case of Pacific Island players

In the case of Pacific Island players, the introduction of professionalism has certainly provided them with opportunities for social and economic mobility. Their mobility patterns – leaving the Islands at relatively young age – emphasise the weak economic and rugby infrastructure in the Islands relative to more advanced rugby nations like Japan. The introduction of professionalism has also changed recruitment strategies in Japan. A company team recruit manager told me that while the team has a large budget, it conversely faces increasing pressures and demands (interview with a recruitment manager, 1 April 2004). He explains how Fijian players are willing to accept less money than New Zealand players. In recent years, the recruiters have taken on primarily Fijians not likely to earn Super 12-level salaries, that is, on less expensive and usually multi-year contracts. Fijians are also reputedly more willing to compromise to secure contract extensions. A Pacific Island player can cost about half as much as a NZ Super 12 player, enabling teams to sign more foreign players for the same money.

Moreover, Tongan players are often recruited from high school or university, with their living costs covered by scholarships. They then proceed to play for company teams (and sometime the Japanese national team), a pattern being followed by more and more players through expanding family ties and social networks. Current or former Tongan players who are trusted by the company clubs are often asked to recommend promising

young players in Tonga, who are then scouted by the club.

By contrast, Pacific Island players who have played professionally outside the Islands and come to Japan straight from the Islands form a cheap source of labour for company teams. Another benefit, from the company's point of view, is that there is a growing view in the global rugby market that the physical power and agility of Island players is superior to Caucasian and Asian players, and that power is perfectly suited to the style of rugby currently in vogue. Allied to this is the so-called 'Fijian magic[57]', the flair and spark they bring to the game. In addition, critically, there are cultural similarities between the Island countries and Japan (such as age based hierarchical relation) that helps the players assimilate into and better understand Japanese rugby culture (Suzuki, 1986:45).

Unlike the case of New Zealand players, who can still earn a living in the professional New Zealand rugby infrastructure, a consequence of this migration of Pacific Island players to Japan (or New Zealand, Australia and Europe) is the 'under-development' or 'dependent development' of rugby in the Islands. This situation parallels the dependent development of Irish and Scottish soccer (McGovern, 2000) and of Dominican baseball (Klein, 1989). Yet, this should not be understood as exclusively a "zero sum game" (McGovern, 2000:415). Obel (1996:196) argues that despite the tendency to select overseas-based players to the Pacific Island national team, the skills of these players have improved the national teams' international standing and can further the national rugby union's ability to obtain sponsorship. However, the majority of the benefit of

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[57] The Fiji national team is one of the top seven-a side rugby teams in the world. They feature a fast, unpredictable and physically confrontational playing style that poses great challenges for their opponents.

hiring low-cost Pacific Island labour to fill specific team needs accrues to the Japanese company team. On the contrary, as outlined above, New Zealand players benefit from high, guaranteed salaries. In this case, the objectives and motivations of foreign players in Japan of different nationality and ethnicity are likely to differ.

3.6 Motives and Objectives of foreign players

Obel (1999:180-2) argues that the new professional opportunities in the northern hemisphere, which provoked these migration patterns, are characterised by competition between wealthy rugby clubs in Europe and Japan for New Zealand players. While professionalism has increased the playing opportunities for New Zealand players in New Zealand through the establishment of the Super 12 competition, there is not room for the entire player base in the five Super 12 franchises, causing a surplus of players that Japanese company teams seek to employ. Clubs in Europe and Japan can offer higher-value contracts to New Zealand players than the NZRFU can.

Additionally, an increasing emphasis on the selection of young players [58] means that established (but still not old) players miss selection for Super 12 teams and the All Blacks at a younger age than in the amateur era. Coaches under pressure to win every week are picking players ever more strictly on form, which means that selection to the All Black team and even for the Super 12 teams is not guaranteed from year-to-year and week-to-week. Many older (late 20s and above) players see their chances of selection slipping away, and look for other playing opportunities overseas. This was one of the

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[58] For example, at the 2003 World Cup, coach John Mitchell left out veterans Anton Oliver, Taine Randell, Andrew Mehrtens and Christian Cullen, in favour of young guns like Corey Flynn (at the age of 22), Ali Williams (22), Daniel Carter (21), Ma'a Nonu (21) and Joe Rokocoko (20).

reasons a New Zealand player (ex-All Black and Super12 player with Waikato Chiefs) cited for considering and ultimately accepting an offer from a Japanese club (interview with #1, 14 November 2003). In short, the increasingly difficult selection environment at home may push players to think about playing for overseas clubs, fuelling what I characterise as a 'spiral of departing experience'.

These players are looking for new contract opportunities, and increasing numbers are finding them in Europe and Japan. In this research, I found out that Japan is an attractive destination for top-class New Zealand players, who are looking at opportunities outside the Super 12 competition. Apart from the lucrative contracts on offer for New Zealand and Australian players[59], in particular, the close proximity to home, relatively short competitive season, and lower physical demand make Japan an attractive destination. A good example is player #1[60], who went to Kobe Steel after the end of the 2003 Super 12 competition. He described in an interview with me how he enjoyed playing his first season of rugby in Japan. His main motive to play in Japan was a need for 'change' and 'opportunity' in his rugby career. He felt a bit older and had been injured. He wanted to do something different and hired an agent to look around overseas clubs for the best deals (interview with player #1, 14 November 2003).

Obel (2001:192) argues that the introduction of professionalism encouraged Pacific Islanders (Samoa, Tonga and Fiji) to seek playing opportunities in New Zealand and in the northern hemisphere. Pacific Island players often acknowledge that a lack of

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[59] Players set to star in the Top League in 2003: New Zealand: Royce Willis (to Kobe Steel from the chiefs), Eroni Clarke (to Ricoh from the Blues, Deon Muir (to Sanix from the Chiefs) and Nick Collins (to Sanyo Electric from the Chiefs). Australia: Cameron Pither (to Kubota from ACT Brumbies).
[60] I interviewed him in the training field of the Kobe Steel Club on 14 November 2003.

domestic tournaments[61] and of full-time professional employment opportunities is the main factor pushing them towards international migration, and the likes of Japanese company teams offer attractive destinations. Pacific Island players are spread across the major rugby markets in the Northern (England, France, Italy and Japan) and Southern (New Zealand and Australia) hemispheres. Japanese company clubs are no exceptions.

My survey provides an indication of the presence of Pacific Island players in the company leagues (see Figure 3.3). This number has increased with the introduction of professionalism in 1996. Prior to moving to Japan, these Pacific Island players played for their country and were contracted to NZ (and Australian) Super 12 teams or European clubs. In the 2003-4 season, 14 Pacific Island players were included in the Top League teams. All of those players represented a Pacific Island nation[62] (five Fijians, four Tongans and four Samoans) in the 2003 RWC. Japanese company clubs clearly form an attractive rugby market for these Pacific Island players.

In a TV interview on the IRB's weekly programme 'The World of Rugby', June 2003, the captain of Tongan national team, Inoke Afeaki, talked about relations between Tonga and Japan. He noted that one of the most prominent aspects of the friendly relationship between the peoples of two nations is sport, especially rugby. In fact, several Tongan students play for strong Japanese universities (such as the Daito Bunka University) or

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[61] Apart from a few test matches against other relatively weak nations (such as the South Pacific Triangular tournament), playing opportunities are limited in Fiji (although Fiji successfully competes in the IRB Sevens Series), Tonga and Samoa.

[62] Tonga: Benhur Kivalu (Kintetsu) · Inoke Afeaki (Secom) · Ipolito Fenukitau (Ricoh) · Pierre Hola (Kobe). Fiji: Alivereti Doviverata (Yamaha) · Alifereti Doviverate (Yamaha) · Seta Tawake (Hino) · Alfred Uluinayau (Suntory) · Norman Ligairi (Yamaha) · Vilimoni Delasau (Yamaha). Samoa: Leo Lafaiali'i (Sanyo) · Peter Poulos (NTT DoCoMo Kansai) · Brian Lima (Secom) · Romi Ropati (Toyota).

company teams, and a few of them are also members of the Japanese national team. A Fijian player, who I interviewed at the Yamaha RFC, told me a similar story. He believes that Fijian representative players playing for overseas clubs is quite normal and acceptable. His view is that young local Fijian players are being encouraged to chase professional opportunities overseas as a result of a lack of properly organised games at home, and he supports their moves overseas (Interview with player #3, 22 January 2004).

3.7 Foreign' players' views and experiences

It was often mentioned to me in interviews that for most players, other than those from the Pacific Islands[63], living and playing in Japan is a difficult experience. Starting a new life in Japan can be both rewarding and challenging. Different customs, rules and conventions can become sources of confusion, and many of the players mentioned that the language barrier provided a constant barrier in their quest for knowledge. Andrew McCormick[64] explained how he felt very uneasy at the beginning of his stay in Japan, not knowing a single word of Japanese and being alone in a strange land. The barriers that lie between Japan and New Zealand were not limited to simply language issues or differences in lifestyles.

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[63] In my research, I have found that players who grew up in the Pacific Islands tend to fit into the culture of Japanese rugby more easily than those from New Zealand. This latter category also includes those of Pacific Island descent, perhaps because the traditional culture of the Islands, which as described in Section 2.2 has strong parallels with that of Japan's, is stronger among those raised there than in New Zealand.

[64] In this thesis, I have generally avoided naming the players to maintain their privacy. However, in certain cases, the respondents can be easily identified from the nature of their replies, and hence can be named; Andrew McCormick is one of these. I interviewed him in a café, Tokyo, on 20 June 2002).

He said,

> *I was very lonely during the first year, but after a while what I did was to spend a lot of time with many Japanese rugby teammates. Knowing players and getting involved with the team was how I improved my Japanese and began to understand Japanese culture* (interview with Andrew McCormick, 20 June 2002).

Some of the foreign players whom I interviewed moved with their family to Japan, but then encountered many more everyday challenges and hurdles. Company teams based in cities provide more chances to interact with other foreigners than those in regional towns. A former Canterbury Crusaders and Bay of Plenty player has lived in Kobe with his wife and two children, a city with a large foreign community, and reported feeling no culture shock. Additionally, several American professional baseball players from the Hanshin Tigers[65] team lived in the same 'foreigner apartment' block. Thus, they had people in the same social situation to talk with about everyday problems (interview with #2 player, 14 November 2003). By contrast, teams based in smaller centres or rural areas gave foreign players few chances to meet other foreigners, and problems festered, often resulting in homesickness or culture shock. Kevin Schuler[66] had such an experience on first coming to Japan (see Section 4.3). These interview results parallel with the theory of Stead and Maguire (1996:46), who argue that sports migrants can encounter difficulties in trying to maintain relationships with family and friends back home.

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[65] The Hanshin Tigers, the most popular team in the Osaka-Kansai area, were formed in 1935. In the 2003 season, the Tigers won the Central League baseball championship for the first time in 18 years. Four 'foreign *suketto*' players, Trey Moore (starting pitcher), Lou Pote (relief pitcher), Jeffrey Williams (closing pitcher) and George Arias (infielder), played a key role in helping the team capture the league title.

[66] Kevin Schuler, like Andrew McCormick, is a well-known player who can be easily identified from the nature of his interview replies, and thus can be named. I interviewed him in his office on 14 November 2003).

There were more than a few examples of families unable to cope with the lifestyle and who had returned home, leaving the player to live alone for the playing season, and to visit his family in the off-season (interview with Andrew McCormick, 20 June 2002) McCormick explained that many foreign players he knew had particular problems with their children's education in a country with such vastly different culture, customs and language. In a few cases, such as those of Tongan Sinali Latu and New Zealander Kevin Schuler (players who have lived and played rugby for several years in Japan), their families adapted to living in Japan and their children went to local schools.

However, they were indeed a small minority, as most players, preferred short-term contracts so that they could return home before their children reached school age. In his interview with rugby journalist Hiroshi Suzuki (1986:41-5), Latu, a pioneer foreign player, argues *"on experiencing Japanese practices and rules for the first time, I was surprised. However, when in Rome you must do as the Romans do. Going by this proverb, I threw myself into the Japanese way"*.

In Japan, foreign professional players like Schuler and player #1 have common daily routines, with Japanese language lessons and weight training every morning, and team training in the evening. All of the foreign players that I talked to were shocked at the emphasis on long, hard daily training régimes. At the top level in Japan, training typically involves hard sessions six days a week for a whole year.

Kevin Schuler opined that

> *We train for such a long time. On the other hand, there is a lot of time to get things right, but a lot of training does not become enjoyable, because we simply train too much. We train for games, not play to train, train and train, even though we have only 10 games in the season. It is basic Japanese philosophy that the more training you do, the better results you get. Japanese coaches and players put more emphasis on quantity than on quality, but we, foreign players are slowly trying to change that* (interview with Kevin Schuler, 18 June 2002).

This quote illustrates the methods involved in 'managed rugby' (see Section 2.2), and the continuing influence of the *seishin* ideology. Long, hard training sessions are designed to make the players physically and mentally strong, in the same way that high school rugby teams have trained since before World War Two.

3.8 Failed migrant players

Japanese rugby has a clearly defined cultural practice, featuring anti-individualism, strict hierarchy and rules of behaviour, plus ideals of hard work and importance of team harmony (Light, 1999:114). It is strictly organised around a set of rules and systems characteristics of Japanese-style management, which is often presented as a distinctive Japanese accomplishment (De Mente, 2004:305 and Nakane, 1984:38-9, 60-3). Many foreign players experience tension between themselves and Japanese players, given the different pressures and expectations placed on them (see Section 2.3). Japanese players also found the imports threatening to the fabric of the team environment, weakening the teamwork ethic with excess emphasis on the individual. These attitudes and suspicions of one group against the other reflect issues common to the presence of foreigners in

broader Japanese society (Sugimoto, 1997).

In the past, some foreign players have gone to Japan with little pre-departure orientation or post-arrival guidance. Thus, they often did not know the expectations they had to live up to, and the norms of the aforementioned cultural practice they had to adapt to. These issues mentally overwhelmed some players, arguably stopping them from performing on the rugby field. For example, Adrian Cashmore (ex-All Black and Auckland Blues star) took up a three-year contract with Toyota Motors in 1999 and Clark McLeod (ex-New Zealand A and Canterbury Crusader) a two-year deal with Suntory in 2002. However, neither fitted into the Japanese style of game, nor the team's cultural environment, and found themselves spending much time on the reserve bench. Their contracts were not renewed, and they returned to New Zealand to play in the NPC.

I discussed the issue of a potential culture clash or culture shock experienced by foreign players with a top company rugby team manager[67] who explained to me that they have carefully changed their foreign player and recruitment strategy. In the past, foreign players were given great freedom, but were considered as being a bad influence on the team (interview with a company team manager, 1 April 2004). In fact, some foreign players were overshadowed by controversy and disciplinary problems. A minority of cases caused some serious problems and a few foreign players behaved very badly. Excessive aggressiveness on the field caused major problems for the likes of centre Te Rua Tipoki of World, (ex-New Zealand Maori and North Harbour, now Bay of Plenty). His violent conduct in the match on November 8, 2003 against Toshiba led to

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[67] I interviewed him on the rugby field in the Osaka University of Health and Sport Sciences on 1 April 2004).

complaints being made by opposing teams. Tipoki earned a three-week suspension from the JRFU Judicial Committee for punching an opposing player in the face. As a result he missed two matches – which is significant given the teams only play 10 in the Top League season. Despite it being only a third-round match, it was his second violent outburst that season[68]. In Japanese company teams, whose team image is so closely linked to the parent company's, any such behaviour directly reflects on the company's reputation. Thus, Tipoki's individual acts were considered to cause the entire company severe embarrassment, and in addition, had a negative impact on the image of all foreign players in Japan.

3.9 Reflections on the influence of foreign players

Over the last ten years, company rugby in Japan has experienced increasing international contact, through overseas tours and camps, and the influx of high-profile international players and coaches (Light, 1999:107). Underlying the issues surrounding foreign players is clearly a corporatist mindset on the part of the employer. Companies see the foreign players as an efficient means of strengthening the team and promoting the company through the team. The players decide to come to Japan to secure their income, and the companies are looking to build the team up quickly in the face of the rapidly strengthening domestic competition. Both sides benefit from the player movement, and as they are mutually dependant, the player flow is highly unlikely to stop.

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[68] http://www.sanspo.com/rugby/top/rg200311/rg2003111201.html.

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The standard of company rugby in Japan has greatly improved through the presence of top-class foreign players and coaches. The domination of the company leagues by the new company teams is an example of this. Foreign players have served as valuable role models to help Japanese players improve their technical skills and playing styles. However, the influx of foreign players also presents problems for company teams. At the extreme end of the spectrum, there are teams, which have abandoned developing Japanese players in favour of recruiting foreigners. In such a situation, foreign players are no longer *suketto*, relegated to a narrow role, but they instead had an influence far beyond their small numbers.

It is also possible that the demand for foreign players has threatened the development of young Japanese players, and deprived them of opportunities (see Section 4.5). It is very difficult to compete for a place in the team against a star foreign player, and opportunities for Japanese players are sometimes blocked (see the example of Wataru Murata in Section 5.3). More significantly, the introduction of foreign players has changed the traditional domestic competition. The inaugural Top League competition (see Section 2.4) quickly changed the nature of the company competition, with increasing financial inequality opening up a large gap in team performances between those at the top that can afford to employ superstar foreign players, and those in lower leagues that cannot. The radical change in the company leagues and competitions forced teams to hire more and more quality foreign players to retain their status and profile in the Top League. In a sense, teams become locked into a competitive spiral of simply hiring the best foreign players.

3.10 Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the strong influence of foreign players in the Japanese company league. In 1992, the JRFU imposed a limit of two foreign players on the field per team to slow the inflow of foreign players, but paradoxically, more foreign players were recruited. The standard and public profile of rugby rose in the 1990s at the same time as foreign players' participation increased. Many top company clubs have relied on imported talent, and many of the leagues' stars have been foreign players. The transfer system has until very recently favoured Southern Hemisphere players, and New Zealand recruits, in particular, have been numerous and influential. These migrant players are primarily dependent on the demand of Japanese company teams, as they form the most economically powerful league in Japanese rugby.

Foreign sources have added new dimensions to company teams' play. In Japanese baseball teams, foreigners have often been marginalised to narrow roles. However by contrast, in company rugby teams they have had a variety of responsibilities, and have had a broad influence. While some have been *suketto*, many have been inspirational leaders, teachers of technical skills, coaching methods and playing styles. The patterns and trends of foreign players in the company league illustrate the clubs' continuing reliance on foreign players. However, the players want contract and career security, and although the balance of power remains tilted towards the rich clubs, this two-way flow of influence forms a pattern of mutually dependent development.

The different objectives and motivations of foreign players over the last two decades were examined in this chapter. In the case of New Zealand players, (prior to 1996) the

majority of them were looking to the Japanese company clubs to bolster their earnings at the end of their rugby careers (under the amateur regulation). Despite the controversial restriction imposed by the NZRU that selection for All Blacks requires a player to be playing in New Zealand, the attraction of playing overseas (especially Europe and Japan) has been greater for players who are towards the end of their careers and/or who perceive themselves to be out of contention for selection for the All Blacks.

In the case of Pacific Island players, the introduction of professionalism has provided them with opportunities for social and economic mobility, because of the weak economic infrastructure of Pacific Island rugby and the lack of opportunity for young talent. From the company club's point of view, the best strategy is to recruit many Pacific Island players on less-expensive contracts, while top-class New Zealand (and Australian and South African) players are more likely to take up lucrative short-term contracts. In summary, salaries for foreign players can be said to be a function of those players' motivations and expectations. Thus, while famous New Zealand players demand salaries that are multiples of what they could have earned playing for the All Blacks, the lower earning potential of Pacific Island players at home affects the amount of money they expect to receive. Even if they are paid the same multiple of their salary at home as the New Zealand players, this still makes them significantly cheaper for Japanese company teams to hire.

The inaugural Top League competition has increased the pressure to import foreign players, because the 12 League teams are now more likely to hire four-five foreign players to sustain their position at the top of the league table. This environment

produces financial and competitive inequalities, with only Top League teams able to hire the biggest foreign stars, and the gap to lower-division teams is becoming very large.

But as well as the inequalities between teams, there are also points of difference regarding the dynamics within teams. While foreign players are often very highly paid and motivated, many of their Japanese teammates are still paid as regular company employees. In the next chapter, I focus on the Yamaha Rugby Football Club and consider the influence of foreign players and the relationship between them and their Japanese team-mates.

Chapter Four: Foreign players in the Yamaha RFC

4.0 Introduction

In Chapter Two, I outlined the changes that have taken place in Japanese rugby for the last three decades. I emphasised in particular the trend away from the game's amateur and *shakaijin* (company) past to a more professional manner of organisation. In Chapter Three, I explored the history and broad influence of foreign players in Japanese rugby. While foreign players have helped to raise the standard of Japanese rugby, their influence has worked in many directions, and the process of integration and change has not been without conflict and controversy. In Chapter Four, I provide a case study of the involvement of foreign players in the Yamaha Rugby Football Club.

The chapter will follow three broad themes. The first is the history of how the Yamaha company team has come to play and organise itself more professionally, which will be covered on Section 4.1. The second theme, discussed in Section 4.2, focuses on labour relations between the club officials, new recruits and local players. The state of labour relations has changed from the amateur to the more professional era, and foreign players

have had a strong influence in this progression. This leads into the third theme, which is the issue of equality between foreign and Japanese players, in terms of salary, social status and the expectations placed on them by companies.

This theme is explored through three interview-based case studies of representative players; New Zealander Kevin Schuler in Section 4.3, a representative Fijian migrant player in Section 4.4, and a star Japanese player in Section 4.5. The aim of these sections is to explore the impact of foreign players in the Yamaha RFC. Foreign players are of vital importance, as they can affect the atmosphere and performance of the team as a whole, and hence the likelihood of attaining the team's goals. This chapter is based on interviews with players, coaches and administrators of the Yamaha team during the 2002-3 and 2003-4 seasons.

4.1 A Brief History and Current Philosophy of the Yamaha RFC

Based in Shizuoka, central Japan, Yamaha RFC was first established as a corporate welfare and fitness vehicle by parent company Yamaha Motor in 1984 (see appendix page 140). In the 1980s, a company's promotion of competitive and social sport was considered to have a major effect on its reputation, and many companies established and actively developed new sports teams (Top League, 2003). Yamaha Motor was also one of these new teams. From 1987, the Yamaha club was reorganised by its parent company to become a competitively-oriented entity, with the ultimate goal of winning the national company tournament. After promotion to the C division three and then B division two of the Kansai Company League, the team won promotion into the Kansai A (division one) Company League in 1997.

However, past national company champions such as Kintetsu[69], Toyota Motors[70] and Kobe Steel[71] play in this league, leaving seemingly few chances for Yamaha to take the title. However, despite such powerhouse opposition, in 2002, less than 20 years after the team's establishment and five years after winning promotion to the first division, Yamaha won its first league championship title. Building on this achievement, the team advanced into the inaugural Top League in the 2003 season. Yamaha came third in the Top League competition, with an eight-win, one-loss, two-draw record. After that, playing off against the eight best Top League teams in the Microsoft Cup, the team secured fourth place, and in the All-Japan Championship, advanced to the semifinals for the first time ever. Three players from Yamaha were also selected to the Japanese national team for the 2003 RWC – locks Hajime Kiso and Naoya Kubo, and halfback Wataru Murata.

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[69] Kintetsu, a major Kansai private railway operator, established its rugby club in 1929. Kintetsu has won the All-Japan Championship three times, the All-Company Championship eight times, and the Kansai A Company League 17 times.

[70] Based near Nagoya, Toyota Motors Rugby Club was established in 1941. It has won the All-Japan Championship three times, the All-Company Championship four times, and was promoted to the Top League for the 2004 season.

[71] Based in Kobe, near Osaka, Kobe Steel Rugby Club was established in 1928. It has won the All-Japan Championship nine times, the All-Company Championship nine times (including seven straight wins from 1988 to 1994), and won the inaugural Top League.

Under the influence of Jubilo Iwata[72] in the J. League, and even more so since the inauguration of the Top League, company clubs' attitudes have been transformed, towards a more professional style of club management. However, there is no one single model of professionalism – as discussed in Sections 2.3 and 2.4, the company teams are given a large amount of leeway by the JRFU. Yamaha's guiding thought is 'Looking towards professional rugby', a clear statement of its aims to become a fully professional organisation. This is evidenced by the growing demands on players to perform at the level demanded by the team, or leave the team (see the rebuilding phase described in Section 4.2).

The team manager[73] of the Yamaha club told me in an interview,

> *While it has only been 20 years since the team was founded, in those 20 years Yamaha has built a solid and distinctive team culture and identity. We love rugby with everything we have. In the near future, the chance will come for us to reach the very top of the Japanese game. And we want the Yamaha name to be known worldwide as a pro rugby club that attracts the attention of other clubs and top players. We want to manage in a way that will fascinate and appeal* (interview with team manager, 18 January 2002).

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[72] The Yamaha Football Club was established in 1972 as the company soccer club. The team was promoted to the First Division of the Japan Soccer League (JSL) in 1979, winning the league championship in 1988. Yamaha Motor owns and is the main sponsor of the team, named Jubilo Iwata in 1992. However, the Yamaha Football Club Co., Ltd was established as a more independent financial entity to carry out all aspects of club management, including sponsorship, membership and merchandising. The team was again promoted to the professional J. League in 1994. After winning the overall season titles in 1997 and 1999, Jubilo became the first team ever to win both stages in 2002. In 2004, the team won the Emperor's Cup for the second time, following its first win in 1983 (Jubilo-Iwata, 2002; http://www.jubilo-iwata.co.jp). Foreign managers and players (mainly from Brazil and Europe) have made a positive- opinion just say what their involvement has meant- or refer to what others have said about foreign players contribution to the team for the last ten years. For example, Brazilian star Dunga led the development of a new, success-oriented team culture after the team's promotion to the J. League (Birchall, 2000).

[73] I interviewed him in his office on 18 January 2002). Yamaha's team manager has held his current position for two years, and has a sound knowledge of the team's history and aims. I interviewed him in his office at the Yamaha rugby team dormitory on 18 January 2002.

As a Top League team, the Yamaha club is required by the parent company and competitive pressures to create a competitive team, to promote the Top League competition, and also to think of the ways they can contribute to their community and their supporters. Part of the Top League vision (see Section 2.4) is the development of community-based support for the rugby club. Yamaha holds itself out as promoting sports together with their hometown community, working to promote rugby and soccer alongside Jubilo Iwata (Yamaha RFC, 2003). Until recently Yamaha's support has mostly come from Yamaha employees and their families, with attachment to the team based on direct links to the club through the parent company. To increase its community-based support (among people not affiliated with the Yamaha Company) and improve the club's image, Yamaha has set up an official website, featuring up-to-date team information, ticket sales and fan club membership.

The Yamaha rugby club's efforts to attract community-based support in its hometown of Iwata City in Shizuoka Prefecture have been clearly influenced by the activities of the Jubilo Iwata soccer team. Differing from the J.League's emphasis on local support, the Top League envisions its teams building support for rugby through a nationwide campaign, however Yamaha has interpreted this with a more locally-oriented bent (JSports, 2004). This difference in league vision warrants further consideration, however it is outside the main focus of this thesis, that of foreign players in Japanese rugby. Moreover, to expand the popularity of Japanese rugby, they make sure that the Yamaha rugby school and clinic is fully equipped and put great effort into the development of junior rugby.

4.2 Team Strategy and Labour Relations

O'Brien and Slack (1999:24-43) argue that professionalism and commodification have forced significant changes in the organisational structure and culture in rugby football union clubs in the United Kingdom. Japan is no exception, and the momentum for change has increased into the Top League era. The move to a more professional league has put pressure on the company teams to create a strong team and promote a high quality game to retain Top League status and attendant company prestige. Nauright and Chandler (1999: xxiii) argue that professionalism has not just affected the manner in which players are expected to train and perform, but has just as critically affected the attitudes of club officials who have been responsible for the well-being and day-to-day running of the club.

This change in attitude has also been evident at the Yamaha club. Yamaha has recently employed fulltime staff such as specialist coaches, video analysts, fitness specialists and physiotherapists, interpreters and media liaisons. These administrators, who during the 1980s may have spent half their time on regular office work and half on rugby, now devote all of their time to the rugby club. From the players' weight training routines, practice schedules and nutrition regimes to media and community relations, Yamaha is becoming a more and more professional rugby organisation[74].

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[74] As outlined in the previous footnote, the current pattern of organisation at Yamaha could be described as 'mixed', or not yet fully professional. However, in any case it contrasts sharply with the pattern in the *shakaijin* era, in which players were required to put in a full day's work until 5P.M., before beginning their rugby training.

For example, foreign players and professional Japanese players, a typical day at Yamaha involves training every morning at the gym, with various weights and dynamic sessions. This is followed in the afternoon with sessions designing game plans, selected areas (forwards and backs) that need extra work, and up to two hours' team training. Japanese players employed as regular employees are given special permission to leave the office by early afternoon to be in time for the afternoon sessions. This stands in clear contrast to the amateur (1960s) and various *shakaijin* models (1980s and early 1990s) described in Section 2.3; amateur players practiced only after they had completed their office duties by 5P.M. The difference in training schedules between players who are professional and those who are regular employees is also an everyday manifestation of the difference in contractual status between professional and non-professional players, also discussed in Section 2.3.

The move towards professionalism has also had an impact on labour relations between the club officials and players. The JRFU, clinging to its amateur ethos (see Section 2.3), has not laid out a clear definition of the shape of labour relations between company clubs and players. Instead, it has left contracting arrangements to the two parties, and as a result, labour relations have developed differently among the company teams. Factors such as the team-building strategy and financial wealth of the company club influence its will and ability to recruit foreign players and hire Japanese players on professional contracts.

Recruiting foreign superstar players is considered to be a vital part of Yamaha's team-building strategy. Until recently, the recruitment of foreign players alone could increase the gap in ability between company teams through brute strength. However, in the last few years, a gradual increase in the abilities of Japanese players has seen the quality of the club game in Japan jump, with a more physical style emerging across the leagues, and the physical power of all the teams is now quite similar. As a result, the Yamaha club has looked less to recruit player with physical strength and more for player with skills, aggressively recruiting big-name players from both within Japan and overseas. In 2003, six foreign players joined the team, and made a significant contribution. In particular, the Fijian winger Vilimoni Delasau was number two on the Top League try ranking list with 10 touchdowns, making him invaluable to the team.

There are also Japanese players in the team on fixed-term contracts as professionals. In 2002, Japanese representative halfback Wataru Murata joined Yamaha as a professional. In doing so, he became the first Japanese professional at Yamaha. Murata was a semi-professional *shakaijin* player (see Table 2.1) for Toshiba from 1990 to 99, and then left to take up a professional contract at Aviron Bayonne in France from 1999 to 2001. Murata, on his personal website, explains how he wishes to play wherever he can put his skills to the best use, and to train in an environment that will allow him to develop[75]. This led him to seek a professional contract upon his return to Japan. He is now considered to be a role model for young Japanese players hoping to gain professional contracts; indeed, four Japanese players (see below) at Yamaha have since followed in his footsteps.

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[75] http://www.wata888.net; http://justice.i-mediatv.co.jp/murata/profile.html.

Under its results-focused professional orientation, Yamaha is aiming for the very top of Japanese rugby. Despite coming third in the 2003 Top League and fourth in the Microsoft Cup, the club went through a rebuilding phase, with 20 players released[76]. The nature of the 'release' and the direction taken afterwards depends on the individual players. Yamaha's *shakaijin* players had the option of returning to the parent company, an effective early retirement from the game, or leaving to seek employment with another club. Professional players (at the time only foreigners) had no such option – they had to look elsewhere for employment of any sort. This is part of the dilemma facing young Japanese players considering taking up a professional contract – whether or not they sacrifice their future employment stability in the name of short-term professional rugby opportunities (see Section 2.3).

This radical restructuring was aimed at making a great leap towards becoming a much stronger club. To succeed in such a fiercely competitive competition, the 40-member squad for the 2004 season included 14 new recruits. Changes were made across the board, with every position coming under scrutiny. And even more significantly, of the 40-member squad, 11 players (six foreigners and five Japanese) are professionals contracted to the Yamaha club, and 29 are semi-professional *shakaijin*. It must be noted that contract terms vary significantly between the three employment classes. The foreign players (all professionals) are on ¥30,000,000 per year or more ($NZ400,000), the Japanese professionals receive between ¥10,000,000 and ¥12,000,000 ($NZ133,000 to $160,000), and the *shakaijin* players ¥6,000,000 and ¥8,000,000 yen ($NZ80,000 to

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[76] http://www.sanspo.com/rugby/top/re200403/rg2004032502.html.

$106,000) (interview with Yamaha team manager, 30 November 2004).

The lineup of new recruits is impressive. To introduce new energy to the team, All Black legend Grant Batty was signed as the team's professional coach, and local and overseas stars including New Zealander Leon McDonald (ex-All Black and Canterbury Crusader), Nathan Williams (ex-Australian A and Queensland Red), prop Ryo Yamamura from Kanto Gakuin[77] and first-five Tatsuhiko Otao from Waseda University took up lucrative contracts. In signing such high-profile players to professional contracts (both Japanese and foreign), Yamaha is demonstrating their intention to become a 'professional rugby organisation' and aim for the summit of the Top League (Yamaha RFC, 2004).

To improve the development of young players, Yamaha recently also set up its 'New Zealand rugby experience programme'. Players spend five months in New Zealand, are provided with language training, and have a homestay arranged for them. The programme's main purpose is to encourage and provide ways for young Japanese players to gain top-level experience and knowledge in New Zealand and ultimately to improve their mental and physical approach to the game. The club is hoping that this investment in its players will inspire them to reach a new level, bringing huge benefits to the team in the long term.

The Yamaha club is strongly linked with North Harbour Provincial Union and Yamaha's sister club Silverdale (in the North Harbour area) helps young players join the union's

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[77] Kanto Gakuin was the previous year's university championship finalists, and Yamamura, one of their star players, was also the only student selected for the 2003 World Cup team.

training scheme, and play a few matches with the North Harbour development squad.

Yamaha also supports elite Japanese players experiencing top-class rugby (at the NPC

or Super 12 levels) in New Zealand. In fact, Youhei Shinomiya (wing) and Hajime Kiso

(lock) have used opportunities provided by Yamaha to take part in NPC rugby trials for

several seasons. In 2003, Shinomiya played for NPC Division Two Mid-Canterbury and

Kiso[78] was selected for NPC Division One North Harbour (New Zealand Herald Online,

2004)[79].

On two levels this forms a stark contrast to the case of my father in 1969. The attitudes

of company officials with regard to players who desire to play for overseas clubs have

dramatically changed. While the company club maintains their labour relations of

control over players' status, contract and mobility, they now actively encourage their

players to gain experience overseas. This stands in direct contrast to my father's

situation, where he was a 'first case' for Japanese rugby. In his day, full-time work

commitment was essential, and if the company did not allow him to take time off to

play rugby, he had no other choice but to remain in Japan (see Chapter One). On the

institutional level, in the 1960s there were no regulations over players' mobility.

However, as my father's example highlights, Japanese players, who were at the time all

shakaijin, could not move overseas without their company's acceptance. If they did so,

they would lose their jobs. Furthermore, there was no support system established for

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[78] Kiso had to return to Japan (in August 2004) without appearing in the NPC. Under IRB and JRFU regulations, a player fundamentally cannot be affiliated to two teams at the same time (excepting, of course, for higher representative teams in the same country). As he was signed to Yamaha and registered in Japan, he could not appear in both the NPC and Top League tournaments. That meant that Kiso had to choose between quitting his Yamaha club or returning home to play in the Top League. These new, much stricter, eligibility regulations were introduced since the start of the professional era in rugby in 1995.

[79] 'Japanese loosie delights fans back home' by Chris Rattue 21 July 2004.

them should they choose to move. However, especially since the introduction of professionalism in 1995, global rugby migration rules have been tightened significantly, as evidenced by the case of Hajime Kiso. Thus, while the company teams may encourage their players to travel, on the institutional level, the rule preventing affiliation to two teams at once works against migration such as experienced by my father.

Returning to the case of the Yamaha club, the first foreign players contracted to the Yamaha club were two New Zealanders in 1994, Stephen Lancaster and David Atkins. From then until the 2003 season 15 foreign players have played for Yamaha. In 1994, the team was in the B league (Division Two) of the Kansai Company League. In order to lift the team's performances to the A league standard, the club began to actively recruit foreign players. In 1996, Lancaster and Atkins were replaced by four foreigners; Tongan William Lose, and three New Zealanders, Kevin Schuler, Rees Ellison and Norman Broughton. And just as significantly, the basis of employment of the foreign players changed.

Initially, they were employed as *suketto* (players filling a narrow role only with no influence over the broader team strategy, see Section 3.1) to increase the team's strength. However, Schuler, and later ex-New Zealand sevens player Scott Pierce in 1999, were employed[80] as much as teachers as players, passing on coaching methods, playing styles and a more professional attitude. That is to say, as role models, Schuler and Pierce fitted the *oyatoi gaikokujin* model of foreign player (see Section 3.1). From 1996 until

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[80] The players' contracts themselves did not reflect the distinction between the two roles, instead only specifying salary and benefits. However, the players' likely roles were implicit, and had been discussed before signing.

2003, nine foreign players[81] were recruited by Yamaha. Five were Fijian representatives and two were former All Blacks, an indication of the higher 'class' of foreign player Yamaha looked to recruit. In 1997, in the promotion-relegation game against Mitsubishi Motors Kyoto, Yamaha won 47-0, and with it, promotion to the A league.

Especially after the start of the Top League in 2003, many players who had made their name at the top level of rugby in New Zealand and played in the Rugby World Cup for New Zealand and Fiji joined Yamaha. The New Zealanders especially were contracted with the expectations from club management of them being players and educators at the same time, teaching the Japanese players not only strategies and tactics, but also the attitude needed to be a true professional (JSports, 2004). In a team aiming to become fully professional, these foreign players have not only motivated the local players, but also influenced the coaches and front office management. The foreign players are spreading the ideas of winning rugby, and in doing so, they are proving to be good role models for the Japanese players.

The following three sections develop the theme of relations between Japanese and foreign players through case studies of three influential individuals; New Zealander Kevin Schuler in Section 4.3, a representative Fijian migrant player in Section 4.4, and a star Japanese player in Section 4.5.

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[81] They were: former Fiji international, Waisaki Sotutu in 1998; Pierce in 1999; ex-All Black and Canterbury Crusader, Steve Surridge in 2000; ex-All Black and Fijian international, Tabai Matson and Canterbury development player Tim Henshow in 2001; and Fiji representatives Alifereti Doviverata in 2002 and Kolino Sewabu, Norman Liairi and Vilimoni Delasau in 2003.

4.3 Kevin Schuler – Cultural and Technical Leader

Kevin Schuler is a former New Zealand Colt, New Zealand Development, New Zealand Divisional, and North Harbour captain, and first won All Black honours in 1989. He was a reserve for the home Tests in 1990 and then, two years later, as an All Blacks loose forward, was noted for his rock-solid defensive qualities (Howitt and Haworth, 2002:43). In 1992, his plan was to go overseas for a couple years, refresh, and then come back and have another go at making the All Blacks. His initial motive for coming to Japan was quite simple. He wanted to go to a different country, one in which he had never played rugby.

He said, "*I had never considered Japan because Kiwi rugby players were moving to Italy and France to secure job opportunity and rugby careers at that time. Japan was not the popular place where everyone wanted to be*" (interview with Kevin Schuler, 18 June 2002). Schuler[82] was the one of the first All Black players to be given clearance[83] by the NZRU to play in Japan. His rugby career in Japan has been unique, in that he has played both as an amateur and as a professional. This gives him a highly valuable breadth of perspective on the changes affecting Japanese rugby.

In 1992, Schuler took up a three-year contract as a foreign player at Nisshin Steel, centered in an industrial town in Hiroshima prefecture in central Japan. He was an employee of the Nisshin Steel under an amateur *shakaijin* contract. He did some

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[82] As explained in Chapter Three, in this thesis I have generally avoided naming the players to maintain their privacy. However, in certain cases, the respondents can be easily identified from the nature of their replies, and hence can be named; Kevin Schuler is one of these players.

[83] During the 1992-93 New Zealand summer, 208 players (including Schuler) were given clearance by the NZRFU to play overseas. This exodus of players and coaches encouraged journalists to comment that Japan, Italy, France and South Africa offer economic prospects outweighing any advantages for players or coaches (Obel, 2001:155).

promotional and office work for the company, and notes, "*I was working in the international division as a translator, because Nisshin exported materials overseas*" (interview with Kevin Schuler, 18 June 2002). He and his wife Michelle had some difficulties in settling down. As that time, there were not many foreigners living there and he sometimes felt unwelcome as a foreigner, as Japanese people pointed to them, saying 'gaijin' (see Section 3.1). Schuler tried his best to integrate into the Japanese employee's life styles, learning Japanese and living alongside other employees in the company's apartments.

However, despite having some office duties, his main responsibility was as a rugby player. Schuler was employed because of his rugby status and the high recognition of the All Blacks in Japan. He mentioned, "*One of the reasons Nisshin picked me was to lift up their team in the Kyushu Company league and to stimulate Japanese players to get encouragement and confidence*" (interview with Kevin Schuler, 18 June 2002). As the foreign star, he introduced basic skills and All Black training techniques, and planned tactics for the team. However, after three years at the Nisshin club, the parent company was struggling amid Japan's economic recession, and the survival of the rugby club itself was under a cloud.

He explained that

> *A Japanese company team could only succeed if the parent company made a large profit. Otherwise, there is no budget to maintain its rugby club, and the club has to be disbanded. But even under such tough circumstances, the Nisshin players of the time rallied around, pursuing both regular work and rugby, training incredibly hard to try and win the Kyushu Company League* (interview with Kevin Schuler, 18 June 2002).

Schuler wanted to stay at Nisshin, but ultimately, the company would not offer him a new contract. After the introduction of professional rugby in 1996, Schuler moved to play for the Yamaha club, as a professional player-coach. The Yamaha club has a short history, and brought him in to help the team win promotion to the Kansai A League championship, with the goal to further progress to become one of Japan's elite teams. With Schuler's knowledge of Japanese rugby and his ability to communicate with Japanese players, the Yamaha team hoped to introduce a different type of game from the way the team had been playing in the previous few years. When Schuler came to Yamaha, the way the players were thinking and playing was that it did not matter whether they won or lost, as long as they showed their best and pleased the company officials. Schuler sometimes felt that the players did not have confidence in their own abilities or the intensity or aggressiveness required to win.

Schuler and his teammate Scott Pierce introduced various training 'menus' and routines, such as new skill drills, various weights and dynamic sessions, and fitness training from New Zealand. He said,

> *The Yamaha team has changed the traditional training, repetitive exercise and typical daily hard training. I showed them new drills of a shorter duration to focus on particular skills and game plans. It was hard for the players to adapt to new concepts, but they were gradually adopted into their game* (interview with Kevin Schuler, 18 June 2002).

Schuler was impressed: "*Japanese players are bigger, fitter and stronger than they used to be, as they have been doing weight programmes for years. They now take it very seriously. Their fitness training and gym strength work appealed to me, as they had the potential to reach a professional level*" (interview with Kevin Schuler, 18 June 2002). In

fact, the team has noticeably developed year-by-year, and Schuler believed that the team had a good chance to compete at the top level of the Japanese company competition by the 2002 season.

In 2002, at the time of our interview, he was head coach for Yamaha. Schuler explained that he was comfortable in his new role, as he had already been a player-coach. He had also established a special relationship with his players. Schuler said that he promoted communication with them as a key component of getting the players to know one another. It was an idea that came to him through his experiences in Japanese rugby. He added:

> *In many cases, players in Japan are over-managed by their coach, which makes the transmission of ideas a one-way flow, in which it is hard for people to understand each other. Respecting and understanding each other's ideas strengthens the team. Without holding back from addressing the hard issues, the players positively discuss what they have to say, be they Japanese or foreign. Meeting each other halfway and having fun together off the pitch is the source of the Yamaha team's unity, and contributes to further improving teamwork* (interview with Kevin Schuler, 18 June 2002).

Schuler noticed an amazing transformation in the team culture from 2002 to 2003. The whole team environment became accommodating, welcoming and supportive, with everyone thinking of the team's welfare and success. He was proud to be able to be part of the development of this culture. For the 2002 season, Schuler put forward 'becoming a team' and 'becoming the best' as the team's aims.

The team manager spoke to me about the reason why Schuler was hired by Yamaha.

> *Kevin has a clear vision of how the team will become stronger, and to that end what training is needed. He is fluent in Japanese, and also*

has strong morals. This is because he has goals and works to achieve
them. He states his opinion frankly, but also carefully listens to the
team's opinion (interview with team manager, Yamaha RFC, 18 June
2002).

The culture and unity in the team proved successful and it was something to be
maintained. Schuler served the team successfully for five years as a player and coach.
He believed that the contribution to the development of the special culture was crucial
to the team's victory in the Kansai A league.

4.4 'Fijian Player' – A Representative Migrant Player

In contrast to the case of Schuler, the recent Fijian migrant players in the Yamaha club
had different objectives and motivations for coming to Japan. 'Fijian player #3[84]' joined
Yamaha in the 2003 season. In his first season with Yamaha, he was number two on the
Top League try-scoring table, with ten touchdowns. He is a Fijian national 15-a-side
representative, and national seven-a-side rugby star. According to team manager of
Yamaha, player #3 possesses terrific acceleration and has a stunning sidestep that leaves
his opponents grasping at shadows. He has also the leg power to break tackles[85]

Player #3 exemplifies the typical professional migrant rugby player[86]. In 2000, he took
up a three-year contract at Stade Montois in France, and after that expired, came to
Yamaha because of his personal relationship with JR. JR had previously worked as a
(volunteer) physiotherapist for the Fijian representative and Sevens teams, and had

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[84] I interviewed him in the indoor training room of the Yamaha Motors Club on 22 January 2004.
[85] Special programme about Yamaha RFC, featuring its Fijian players, on *Rugby Planet*, JSpors, 18
December 2003.
[86] Player #3 is a 'typical migrant player' in that he is a professional on a fixed-term contract, and that his
primary motivations are money and social mobility.

looked after player #3 when he was injured. According to player #3, the Yamaha team is more professional in its approach to him than Stade Montois.

He felt that he was quite harshly treated in France, despite being contracted professionally. In particular, interpersonal relations with the club officials were a 'concrete jungle'. He found them difficult and unsupportive when he had been troubled by injury. Even so, the pay in France was good, and he explained that he would have stayed there for another year, but the club did not want to re-sign him. Player #3 was thankful to obtain a professional contract with the Yamaha club, and Yamaha has been very good to him, looking after him with much greater care than Stade Montois during his breaks with injury.

There are currently six foreign players in the Yamaha team in the 2003 season, including five Fijian players. Fijian players mostly come to Japan in search of playing opportunities and money. Player #3 commented,

> *Fijian rugby does not have the clear structural organisation that Japanese rugby has. Professional players or company teams do not exist. Nothing is done as a group. I am very satisfied to be playing as a professional at a highly organised Japanese company team like Yamaha. So that I will not disappoint anyone, I am pouring 100% of my energy, passion and power into the team* (interview with player #3, 22 January 2004).

His impression of Japanese rugby, in contrast to the overseas styles he had had much more contact with, was of a style that featured speed and expansive team play. To player #3, this makes for an attractive game, one that makes playing in such a team fun. About Fijian players moving to Japan, he opined that

> *More and more (Fijian) players will be looking forward to coming to Japan. There are many talented young players in Fiji without the chance to shine. However, Fiji unfortunately does not have the rugby environment to satisfy them. If I can, I want to help them realise their ambitions* (interview with player #3, 22 January 2004).

About the influence of foreign (particularly Fijian) players on Japanese rugby, he believes that without doubt, the quality of the game and level of the Japanese players has improved,

> *I think that adding us foreign players to that mix makes Japanese rugby more exciting and thrilling. In the future, if more overseas players come, especially from the northern hemisphere, there will be an even greater variety of styles, and they will bring even more experience and knowledge of advanced rugby"* (interview with player #3, 22 January 2004).

Despite the positive words from players like Player #3, there is a difference in the treatment of and relations with Fijian and New Zealand players. Fijian players are significantly cheaper to contract than the star New Zealand players the company clubs are now recruiting, and can be seen as a form of 'cheap labour' (see Section 3.6). That the Fijians are still happy with their treatment at Yamaha may be a function of them having lower expectations than New Zealand players. Their lower salaries have allowed Yamaha to hire more Fijians for their money – hence the five Fijian players joining in 2003. This is a form of division of labour, in which Fijians are hired to do a narrow job

for lower salaries, compared to the New Zealanders, who are on significantly higher salaries and who are also expected to teach and lead, as well as play. Thus, it could be considered that the Fijians are *suketto*, compared to the *oyatoi gaikokujin* New Zealanders.

4.5 'Japanese Player' – The Local Perspective

The influence of foreign players in the Yamaha club has had an impact on the development and changes in attitude of local players over time. The case of a local star player is a representative example. Player #4[87] is employed as a *shakaijin* player, and has been playing for the Yamaha club for four years. He made his international debut while at university in 1999, and has already become a key player for the full and sevens Japanese national teams. He told me in an interview that

> *The team environment at Yamaha on and off the rugby field has no age-based hierarchical* [sempai-kōhai] *relations, instead featuring strong horizontal bonds between foreign and local players. The Yamaha team is a 'melting pot', because we have different kinds of players from different backgrounds all gathering together* (interview with player #4, 22 January 2004).

Without holding back from addressing the hard issues, the players positively discuss what they have to say, be they Japanese or foreign. Meeting each other halfway and having fun together off the pitch is the source of the Yamaha team's unity, and contributes to improve the teamwork according to Murakami (2004)[88].

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[87] I interviewed him in the indoor training room of the Yamaha Motors Club on 22 January 2004.

[88] The Top League Team Profile: Yamaha Motors on JSPORTS, October 2004. In this programme, Mr. Murakami conducted interviews with team manager, coach, Japanese players and foreign players in the Yamaha Club.

Player #4 sees both good and bad points in the foreign influx. On the positive side, he has learnt much from the foreign players during his rugby career, and describes the role of foreign players in the following manner:

> *The major role of the foreign players at Yamaha has been to show the Japanese what it means to be a professional rugby player. Seen from overseas, Japanese company rugby can be said to have some of the features of a professional team. However, from our point of view as Japanese players, the awareness of being a professional is weak. The foreign players see that as step one in rugby. They are aware of being professionals and fulfill their responsibilities. They really do provide us Japanese with an excellent stimulus for action* (interview with player #4, 22 January 2004).

Player #4's statement that 'the awareness of being a professional is weak' means that the attitude fundamental to being a professional is not strongly ingrained in the players and staff at Yamaha. That is to say, the single-minded devotion to winning and the dedication of every waking moment to being a better player and team member that is characteristic of true professionals (as defined by New Zealand players, and as the Yamaha club aspires to become) has yet to take root. Being a professional means having a responsibility to the team, its owner and supporters to not betray the trust they have placed in you. This requires a high degree of focus on rugby that is arguably lacking from *shakaijin* teams, whose players have other work responsibilities besides rugby. As Yamaha tries to become a more professional organisation, it is the instilment of the professional mindset into every member of the organisation that has been the major role of the foreign players in player #4's opinion.

However, player #4 also commented about the negative impact of foreign players on the team. He believes that

> *The influence of foreign rugby in Japan has been huge, and has lifted the domestic performance level dramatically. Foreign players certainly are top-notch players, strong and fulfill their role on the field in every way. However, Yamaha is still not getting the best out of its foreign players. In tight spots, it relies only on the foreigners, which shows the team's inexperience. For example, our team has player #3, whose strength is scoring tries. But he cannot do things alone – we need to build a team that can more reliably create situations where he can score for us* (interview with player #4, 22 January 2004).

This quote shows that there is still some way to go before achieving a balanced role for foreign players in the team. In particular, if the team always turns to its foreigners in difficult situations, this indicates a likely fundamental lack of confidence among the Japanese players in their own ability. A professional player is expected to take the initiative and the responsibility to do what is needed to win. Also, relying on foreign players in such a way hinders the development of Japanese players. It is only through exposure to tough rugby that players learn to face all the challenges the game has; by 'cushioning' the Japanese players, the foreign players are in effect holding them back.

On balance, player #4 emphasised that the team should select foreign players who fit into the desired team style and tactics, rather than building a team to fit the foreign players. He questioned whether the latter approach was better for team growth and for providing opportunities for young Japanese players. This is a crucial criticism, because even now, the Yamaha team relies on foreign imports to improve Japanese players' skills and techniques, and hence to sustain itself in the élite Top League competition.

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This is a dilemma that company clubs face; how to reconcile the need for quality foreign players to help the team in the short term, which can conflict with the team also needing to cultivate and provide opportunities for young local players for long term performance improvement. For example, a situation may develop where a team has an expensive foreign star and an up-and-coming young player (who has perhaps developed to first-team standard faster than expected) vying for one position. In such a situation, difficult choices must be made about who has priority of selection, and Yamaha's policy in this respect is not yet clear.

What is clear is that they are actively encouraging the growth of young Japanese players. However, the team has yet to establish a comprehensive academy system to enable young local players to gain experience and develop from a young age under the wing of the Yamaha club. Although the team manager expressed to me his hope that one will be established, there are no firm plans for one yet. The club's recruitment methods, of high school and university students, are still much as they were in the *shakaijin* era. Thus, while the club aims to become a self-sufficient and fully professional rugby organisation, there is clearly a long way still to go.

4.6 Summary

In this chapter, I have followed three broad themes. The first was the history of how the Yamaha company team has come to play and organise itself with a new emphasis on full-time professional players and managers. The transformation from amateur *shakaijin* company rugby teams to the professional-style organisations in the Top League has led to significant changes in the structure of games, company club management and player

labour relations. The Yamaha club, with its young history, is a relevant case study in examining how company rugby has been restructured to create a competitive team, work towards a higher quality of game, establish their own club image and sustain Top League status.

The second theme was that of labour relations, in how the club relates to recruits and its players. Player labour relations have changed from amateur *shakaijin* through semi-professional *shakaijin* to a more professional form, and foreign players have had a strong influence in this progression. In my research, I have focused on the professional style of club management and the shifting of labour relations with players in the Yamaha club. This key move toward professionalism has enabled the club officials to exert more control over players' status, contracts and daily training routine. This is especially the case for professional players, which includes all the foreign players, and since 2002, Japanese players. There are now five local professionals in the Yamaha squad, who have given up the security of a guaranteed job after rugby in return for full-time professional contracts.

This led into the third theme, the question of equality between foreign and Japanese players, in terms of salary, social status and the expectations on them. This was explored through three case studies, of New Zealander Kevin Schuler, a representative Fijian player, and a Japanese star player. Company rugby has been significantly improved by the presence of migrant players on the field, and no doubt the local players have learned from them. More importantly, the influence of New Zealand and Fijian players have enabled Japanese players not only to gain new strategies and tactics, but also to learn the attitude and sense of responsibility expected of full-time professionals. This has helped

to change the club culture from a traditional *shakaijin* style, featuring hierarchical *sempai-kōhai* relations, to that of a balanced and open environment, where the players work together and contribute regardless of age and ethnicity.

Since 1994, the Yamaha club has also relied on imported talent to lift the team's competitiveness and its public profile. The foreign players in the team have been employed to fulfill varying roles, but can be broadly divided into the categories of *suketto* (helpers) or *oyatoi gaikokujin* (employed foreigners), who tend to be teachers and mentors. Kevin Schuler, in his role as player-coach at Yamaha, was an example of an *oyatoi gaikokujin*, as are the star foreigners now being recruited. Foreign players before 1996 and the Fijian players, employed at lower salaries than the New Zealanders to fulfill a narrower role, can be classed as *suketto*. The motivation and depth of commitment of the foreign players can be thought of as varying depending on the role they are employed to play, which perhaps weakens the sense of an environment with all players working equally hard together for common goals.

While it appears that foreign players of both categories have contributed to the improved performance of the Yamaha club, there are some negative aspects to foreign players' presence in the team. Some foreign players have kept promising young Japanese players out of the Top League team. This is the dilemma that the company club faces; as the company club needs to win to ensure they retain their status in the Top League, at the same time, the JRFU wants the teams to develop quality Japanese players for the national team. Since the establishment of the Yamaha club, 'champion of the Top League' and 'the best professional rugby club in the world' have been their goals, but much work remains to be done. In the next chapter, I will look at the Japanese national

team. The influx of foreign-born players into the company leagues have also had major effects on the performance of the national team over the last ten years. This provides another interesting case study of the influence of foreign-born players in Japanese rugby.

Chapter Five: Foreign-born players in the Japanese national team

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter, I will trace and analyse the entry and emergence of foreign-born players in the Japanese national team. The entry of foreign-born players into the company leagues has had a major effect on the performance of the Japanese national team. From 1985, the JRFU began selecting foreign-born players to create a competitive national side and increase the popularity of the game relative to other sports. A total of 32 foreign-born players (see appendix page 139) have represented Japan to date. This discussion pays attention to eligibility criteria in both the amateur and professional periods and considers the debate about the involvement of foreign-born players in the Japanese national team.

This chapter also outlines the changes in role that have occurred since the first selection of foreign-born players, with particular emphasis on the performance of the national team and the attitudes of Japanese players. The main focus of the chapter is on three comparative case studies of the national team; 'Ohnishi Japan' in 1968 (Section 5.4), 'Hirao Japan' in 1999 (Section 5.5) and 'Mukai Japan' in 2003 (Section 5.6). Overall

the chapter highlights the increasing tension between the JRFU and its continued strategy of selecting foreign-born players to the national team, while at the same time requiring the company league teams, which provide the professional player contracts, to limit their recruitment of foreign-born players as a means to protect and encourage local Japanese player development. However, despite the JRFU's foreign-born player selection strategy and its desire to produce a competitive national team, a driving concern for the national team coaches and many commentators has been the ability of the Japanese national team to show a 'Japanese style' on the field.

5.1 Eligibility to represent the Japanese national team

Chiba, Ebihara and Morino (2001:211) discuss how Japanese sporting institutions determine who is and is not eligible to represent Japan in national sports teams. In most sports events, such as in the Olympic Games and the soccer World Cup, eligibility to compete is mainly regulated by nationality[89]. In such cases as the Japanese Olympic team and the national soccer team, foreign-born players cannot play for a country where they do not hold nationality, and must naturalise[90]. However, for the Rugby World Cup, the IRB has deliberately kept national eligibility rules rather vague. Obel (2001:188)

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[89] The national eligibility rules in the major (international) sporting events/competitions state that persons will not be permitted dual representation. Accordingly, any player who is qualified to play for more than one nation will be deemed to have committed him/herself to one nation only when they have fulfilled the requirements of that nation for participation at a national level in this sport (Chiba, Ebihara and Morino, 2001:211).

[90] There have been cases where institutional naturalisation has occurred in the Japanese sporting world. Brazilian soccer stars, Ruy Ramos, Wagner Augusto and Alessandro Santos were helped to naturalise and then selected for the Japanese national soccer team during the 1990s. In 2003, newly naturalised Brazilian-born Tanaka Marcus Tullio played in the Japanese Olympic (under-23) soccer team's qualifying campaign and (ultimately unsuccessful) finals appearance. A Brazilian, Marcos Sugiyama, became the first naturalised player in the national volleyball team. Michael Takahashi was selected for the Japanese basketball team. He was considered a 'half breed' because he was born to a Japanese mother and an American father. Six of the 23 players in the Nagano Winter Olympic ice-hockey side were Canadians of Japanese descent. They were controlled by institutional rules and regulations (Chiba, Ebihara and Morino, 2001:211-13).

notes that prior to 1996 and the introduction of professionalism, players faced limited restriction on their domestic and international movement. A player could represent one country in one year and elect to play for another country the following year so long as he fulfilled the national eligibility criteria. However, in 1997, the IRB changed the eligibility rules (Regulation 7.1) so that a player can play for a country if he meets one of three criteria[91]. In doing so, the IRB sought to halt the flow of foreign-born players in order to ensure and protect the integrity of their international tournament, the World Cup. However, a foreign-born player with three years' experience in Japan can (in most cases) become eligible to play for Japan. New Zealand players like Robert Gordon, Jamie Joseph and Graeme Bachop, after representing New Zealand in the 1995 RWC, were therefore not prevented by Regulation 7.1 from representing Japan in the 1999 RWC.

However, from 1999, the IRB again tightened the rules (Obel, 2001:190). Now, once a player has played for one country he is deemed to be (in rugby terms) a national of that country, and cannot play for another country in his lifetime. This regulation overrides residency and/or citizenship eligibility criteria. However, players who have not represented the country of their origin, such as New Zealand migrant players are still eligible to play for the likes of Japan after satisfying the applicable eligibility criteria of their new country of residence.

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[91] A player could represent one country in one year and elect to play for another country the following year so long as he fulfilled the national eligibility criteria. According to IRB Regulation 7.1, a player can play for a country in the RWC if he meets one of these conditions: '(a) he was born (there); or (b) one parent or grandparent was born (there); or (c) he has completed thirty-six consecutive months of residence immediately preceding the time of playing' (Chiba, Ebihara and Morino, 2001:211).

The JRFU Board laid out its policy regarding eligibility criteria for foreign-born players in its 2003 Year Book, deciding that, in order to be eligible for selection for the Japanese national team, a player must fulfil all of the following three criteria:

1. be eligible under IRB regulations
2. be employed by a company team according to that company's formal rules
3. have been resident in Japan for three years

The requirement for only three years of residency makes it easier for foreign-born rugby players to gain selection to the Japanese national rugby team than to any other national team (Kobayashi, 1998:44). There is no obligation to obtain citizenship or naturalisation as in other competitive sports in Japan. The JRFU introduced the eligibility rules for foreign-born players in company clubs and the Japanese national team in 1992, when the game was still regulated according to amateur regulations, and the rules have not been changed since 1992. As noted earlier, these regulations stipulated that the company teams were limited to two players per company team on the field. By contrast, there were essentially no restrictions at the national level regarding the national eligibility for foreign-born players. Most of the foreign-born players were selected for the Japanese national team because they met the above criteria, rather than by naturalisation. As a result, players like Bruce Ferguson (Fiji), Ian Williams (Australia) and Tupo Faamasino (Samoa) were able to represent Japan after having played in Japan for three years.

The selection of foreign-born players to the Japanese national team has provoked debate both within Japan and within the broader Asian rugby community. The eligibility rules regarding foreign-born players have raised problems regarding consistency between the

company leagues and the national team. There is no restriction on the number of foreign-born players in the Japanese national team, while there is a limit of two on the field per company club. Rugby historian Shinrokuro Kobayashi (1998:48) argues that the JRFU should introduce clear selection criteria through fair competition, where the balance must be kept between 'homegrown' and foreign-born talents. He criticises what he views as a shortsighted strategy of strengthening the national team by using foreign-born players at the expense of developing young domestic players. Yet, on the other hand, the success of the Japanese national team is vital for the development of young Japanese players, and the national team has been strengthened by the inclusion of foreign-born players. Thus, the JRFU's eligibility rules have caused a major dilemma.

The JRFU's foreign-born player eligibility regulations and selection strategies also cause controversy in international tournaments. While the IRB's rules concerning national eligibility limit the presence of foreign-born players in national teams participating in the RWC, eligibility rules for other international tournaments have included stricter criteria. For example, in the 1996 Asian Tournament, foreign-born players were banned, and a wholly 'homegrown' Japanese team was victorious[92]. However, more significantly, recently the Korean RFU has proposed a plan under which, from the 2006 Asian tournament, a player's eligibility would not be based on IRB-RWC regulations, but rather on citizenship. The Asian RFU Board Committee is now considering this proposal[93]. Koichi Murakami argues that the exclusion of foreign-born nationals was imposed in 'fairness' to other Asian national teams, as the Asian

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[92] In the 1998 and 2002 Asian Tournament, the Japanese national team lost both tournament finals to Korea.
[93] http://www.old.rugby-japan.jp/information/2004/040529_asia.html.

Tournament is to enable Asian national teams to compete against each other (interview with Murakami, 20 June 2002). From this viewpoint, the high number of foreign-born players in the Japanese national team hinders the development of rugby union in Asian countries. Thus, the JRFU's residency-based regulations continue to cause controversy both within Japanese rugby circles and in international fora. But the controversy does not stop at eligibility – the role and influence of foreign-born players has also been much-discussed.

5.2 History of foreign-born players in the national team

The influx of foreign-born players has had a significant role on the development and the strength of the Japanese national team. The first case of capped foreign-born players to represent Japan was the selections of Hopoi Taione (Daito Bunka University) and his teammate Nohomuli Taumoefolau for Japan, against France in 1986. In the same year, Hopoi was replaced by Sinali Latu who played a key role for the Japanese national team until the 1987 RWC. These powerful Tongans formed the backbone of the Japanese national team's effort to show physical strength on the world stage, and they were well accepted by the Japanese rugby public. Speaking the language and taking on the local customs[94], they were regarded as having successfully fitted into the culture of Japanese rugby and society at large (Suzuki, 1987:40). Their integration was successful to the point that they were not regarded as merely *suketto*, but instead as 'Japanese born in Tonga and more Japanese than the Japanese' (Ohtomo, 1998:36).

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[94] For example, these Tongan players were willing to fit into the hierarchical social structure prevalent in Japanese rugby circles, accepting their place in the hierarchy (Suzuki, 1987:40). This was helped by many of them having attended university in Japan (see Section 3.2), in doing so becoming attuned to the norms of Japanese society.

Participation in the RWC and more international matches has increased the pressure on the JRFU to change their selection criteria for the national team to focus more on the size and power of players. At the inaugural World Cup in 1987, Japan, playing a contact-oriented game[95], was overwhelmed by the physically much larger and stronger foreign opponents. As foreign commentators have pointed out (Tucker, 2003:51), the major problem for the team was (and is still) the lack of size and weight of Japanese players, with their consequent inability to dominate at the lineout and scrums. In order to catch up with the standard of world rugby and to be competitive at the RWC, the JRFU began emphasising the rapid development of a strong forward pack, selecting foreign-born players to this end (Ohtomo, 1998:37).

The strategy was to select foreign-born players as pillars of strength, and to encourage Japanese players to improve their skills, technique, knowledge and international competitiveness around them. In the 1990, lock Ekeroma Luaiufi (New Zealand) (Niko Niko Do) played in the 1991 World Cup qualifying rounds and the Cup finals, arguably making an invaluable contribution to organising the forward unit. He was followed by many more foreign forwards[96], as the JFRU sought to increase the power and impact of the forwards and to compete at lineouts and scrums

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[95] The 1987 team's style of play was similar to that used by Seiji Hirao's team in 1999, see Section 5.5.

[96] In the 1992 Asian Tournament, Sinali Latu (Sanyo) and Lopeti Oto (Daito Bunka University) and Sam Kaleta (Ricoh) gained their first caps in the final against Hong Kong.
In the 1993 tour to Wales, five foreign-born players represented Japan. They were Tongan Sione Latu (Daito Bunka university), Samoan Sam Kaleta (Ricoh) and ex-Samoan representative Tupo Faamasino (Niko Niko Do), Fijian national team triallist Bruce Ferguson (Hino Motors) and ex-Wallaby Ian Williams (Kobe Steel) (Òtomo, 1998:37).
Of these eight players, only Oto and Williams (wingers) were back; the rest were brought in to strengthen the forwards.

At the 1997 Pacific Rim Championship (Epson Cup[97]), seven foreign-born players represented Japan, of who five were forwards[98]. This continued the theme of adding foreign 'force' to the forward pack. The Japanese youngsters were forced to raise their game to meet the challenge of the high standards of their new teammates, and definitely gained much by playing alongside the much bigger, fitter and stronger foreign-born players. As a result, the inclusion of foreign-born players was very much welcomed by the JRFU. However, 1997 saw the peak of reliance on foreign-born players. In 1999, Japan boasted six foreign-born players[99] in its World Cup squad (Ohtomo, 1998:38), and in 2003, the number had fallen to four.

5.3 The debate regarding success and failure of foreign influences in the national team

Rugby commentator Koichi Murakami (2002) argued in his interview with me that the national team does not grow stronger by relying on foreign-born players from the company leagues. That is, what is good for the individual company team is unlikely to be good for the national team as a whole. Japanese company clubs have tended to draw on foreign sources to add new dimensions to company teams, such as technical skills, coaching methods and playing styles in order to secure victory in the company championship. Company teams and the national body (the JRFU) have different interests, which occasionally overlap but frequently do not. This divergence of interest

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[97] The IRB proposed to establish the Pan Pacific Series involving Fiji, Tonga, Samoa, the United States, Canada, Argentina, Hong Kong and Japan. A depleted Pacific Rim Championship with limited media sponsorship began in 1996 involving only Japan, Hong Kong, the United States and Canada in one round-robin series. Not until 1999 did the three Pacific Island nations join, while Hong Kong left the tournament (www.irb-epson.irb.org), (Obel, 2001:196)

[98] The forwards included New Zealanders Rob Gordon (Toshiba), Greg Smith (Toyota Shokki), and Ross Thompson (NEC), plus Fijians Isikeli Basiyalo (Toyota Motors) and Patiliai Tuidraki (Toyota Motors). In the backs, Andrew McCormick (Toshiba) and Stephen Miln appeared for Japan. See appendix page 139 for more details.

[99] The six were McCormick, Smith, Gordon and Tuidraki, and other two New Zealanders, Jamie Joseph and Graeme Bachop.

is highlighted in the two problems outlined below.

The foreign influence in Japanese company rugby has encouraged those in charge of the national team to actively aim to select foreign-born players. The JRFU seeks to create a competitive national team with growing international success, develop Japanese players and increase the popularity of the game to compete with other professional sports (principally baseball and soccer). However, despite this effort, the national team has recorded many poor performances over the last ten years. The losses against key opposition[100] led Japan's national broadcaster, in a sports documentary show, to call the 1990s Japanese rugby's 'lost decade' (NHK, 2004)[101].

In trying to build up the national team, the likes of Murakami (1992:53-5) and Kobayashi (1994:44) have argued that the JRFU has seemingly become over-reliant on foreign-born players and foreign methods (training or playing styles). This could be called management by placing demand on foreign sources, with a simplistic train of thought that 'foreign power and size is good'. In doing so, it has been argued that the distinctive playing style of Japanese rugby at national level has been de-emphasised (see Section 5.4), and the prospects of Japanese players to make their own national side greatly decreased.

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[100] It is important to bear in mind that the JRFU (JRFU Annual Report 2003) and Japanese rugby media (Nagata, Fujishima, Shima, Matsuse, Takagawa, Ohtomo, Tokimi and Murakami, 2003:20-7) measures the team's success or failure against strong Western opposition, and in major global tournaments, principally the RWC. Victories over other Asian nations, such as in World Cup qualifying, are expected rather than celebrated.

[101] This programme argued that since recording its first World Cup finals tournament victory in 1991, Japanese rugby has failed in many respects. In particular, the game's popularity and the national team's relative strength have declined. It posed the question: how can the Japanese national team, with players of an inferior body size, stand up to the rest of the world? The JRFU's efforts at reforming the structure of rugby are also called into question – it is considered questionable whether the new Top League in fact be considered a realistic way to achieve its lofty aims (see Section 2.4).

And judging by results in international events, this reliance has not been successful. As expected of it (see footnote 102), the Japanese national team has managed to qualify for every RWC tournament since 1987. Qualification against less powerful Asian opposition was never in serious doubt; Japan easily beat Korea (90-24) and Chinese-Taipei (155-3) in qualifying for Rugby World Cup 2003. However, Japan has had a difficult path to improve on their dismal record of one win in 17 RWC matches[102].

I have identified two main problems regarding the inclusion of foreign-born players in the national team. The first is that the selection of foreign-born players may have changed the fundamental structure of the Japanese game. Since the late 1970s, Japanese rugby has arguably gone from a 'mono-cultural' playing style to a 'multi-cultural' playing style with many foreign influences. This is illustrated by the case studies in Sections 5.5 and 5.6. The mono-cultural and quite distinctively Japanese style of Ohnishi Japan of 1968 had, through the influence of foreign-born players, transformed into 1999's Hirao Japan, which relied on foreign-born players for on-field leadership and had no one clear playing style.

However, it is difficult to make generalisations over time, as the impact of foreign-born players has differed depending on the individual player, and the role desired of them by the team management. As a result, a very complicated picture has emerged of the harnessing of foreign-born players and their integration into the national team. This is proving to be one of the most significant challenges for Japanese rugby.

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[102] Japan's record at the RWC is – 1987: Lost to USA 18-21; Lost to England 7-60; Lost to Australia 23-42. 1991: Lost to Scotland 9-47; Lost to Ireland 16-32; Beat Zimbabwe 42-8. 1995; Lost to Wales 10-57, Lost to Ireland 28-50; Lost to New Zealand 17-145. 1999; Lost to Samoa 9-43; Lost to Wales 64-15; Argentina 12-33. 2003: Lost to Scotland 11-32; Lost France 29-51; Lost to Fiji 13-41; Lost to USA 26-39.

Maguire (1996:342) points to a similar problem in British ice hockey. The success of the Great Britain team was heavily dependent on the roles played by Canadian migrants. They have had a significant impact at both the club and the international levels. In the 1995 World Championship tournament squad, only 15 of 23 players were of British origin. Additionally, British ice hockey is dominated by a Canadian ethos, coaching strategy, and playing style, which reinforces the lack of opportunities for British players (Maguire, 1996:345-6). In this case, the 'Britishness' of the national team has come into question.

The case of Japanese rugby has been quite similar, as New Zealand players and playing styles have come to be highly influential in the company teams, and turn in the national team. In particular, in the 1999 RWC, New Zealand players dominated key starting positions in the Japanese national team, thereby denying Japanese players the chance to perform on the world stage. Murakami argues that 'New Zealand rugby hegemony' has meant that Japan's original technical skills and playing styles have disappeared, producing a playing style emphasising physical contact, but in doing so has become unsuited to the Japanese body size (interview with Murakami, 20 June 2002).

The second major problem has arisen from team selection and tactics. It is argued that it has become difficult to groom Japanese players for certain positions that are dominated by foreign-born players. This is an emerging issue in team sports, such as rugby league and rugby union, and is termed 'stacking'. It describes a situation where athletes from an ethnic minority dominate particular playing positions, notably those with minimal leadership requirement. Collins (1998) argues that black rugby league players may have

greater opportunities to rise to prominence in the game. However, they are restricted by racial prejudice regarding the positions they occupy. According to Melnick (1996), in New Zealand rugby union, Maori and Pacific Island players hold team positions that conform to racially stereotyped notions about 'black players as natural athletes'. These positions tend to be associated with the need for speed and strength.

The issue of selection of foreign-born players in the Japanese national team is once again in the spotlight following the failure of Japan's emerging players to fill gaps created by injury and retirement. For example, most of the No.8s and centres, positions that require size and strength, in the national team over the last ten years have been foreign-born players (see appendix page 139). However, the most glaring example of the 'stacking' problem was in the selection of halfback at the 1999 RWC. This goes beyond the framework of the stacking problem outlined above, in that halfback is one of the key playmakers in the game, controlling the flow of play.

In 1999 former New Zealand representative, Graeme Bachop, was vying with the Japanese player Wataru Murata[103] for the starting position. Although Murata was selected for Japan RWC squad, he was not given the chance to be the starting halfback. Bachop's selection over the very talented Murata sent a negative message to Japanese players that, even in a position that suited the typically smaller Japanese body size and one in which a Japanese player could control the game in a Japanese style of play, they could be overlooked in favour of foreign-born players.

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[103] Murata made his debut for Japan in 1990, and as of August 2004 he had won 36 caps. He played for Toshiba from 1990 to 1999, which won two Company Championship and three All Japan Championship titles during this time. He then took up a professional contract with the French club Aviron Bayonne, earning his return to the Japanese national team in 2001. He is now playing for the Yamaha club, and was again selected for the 2003 RWC squad.

The continuation of the styles of play developed in Japan is said to have been threatened by the introduction of foreign influences and methods. The particular focus of the remainder of this chapter is on the composition and playing style of the Japanese national team at three different times, characterised by different selection criteria, coaches' rugby philosophies and team building methods. The following three sections will aim to ascertain the differences between the three cases, given the varying influence of foreign-born players in the Japanese national team. The following are case studies of the team in 1968, the so-called 'classic era' of the Japanese mono-cultural rugby style, in 1999, perhaps at the peak of foreign involvement and reliance, and in 2003, where team management was looking to rebuild a Japanese style of play with the inclusion of foreign-born players. While foreign-born players were only included to suit specific needs in 2003, their inclusion was still located within a framework of a diversity of playing styles.

5.4 1968 All Japan (Ohnishi Japan)

'Purely Japanese' is the term often used to refer to the original and distinctive Japanese rugby playing style, the one that made Japan known to the rugby world in the late 1960s and the early 1970s. In 1968, Tetsunosuke Ohnishi coached the All Japan team[104] on a tour to New Zealand. He employed what has later been referred to as a distinctively Japanese set of tactics, strategies and coaching methods.   He called the overall method 'out-flanking, contact and continuity'. It emphasised speed and ball movement, and running away from the bulky and relatively slow New Zealanders. By becoming a benchmark style for Japanese coaches to refer to, it made a large contribution Japanese

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[104] In the Japanese manner of naming the team after the manager, the team was called 'Ohnishi Japan'.

rugby's development and push for victories. The national team of the time had a strong

unitary philosophy, with the *seishin* spirit to the forefront. In his book *Rugby* Ohnishi

wrote

> *I would like to explain why expansion, approach and connection were*
> *decided on as the fundamental tactics of the All Japan team. What*
> *you must think of when comparing the Japanese and foreign teams*
> *are the difference in physical strength. That gap is remarkable,*
> *especially in the forwards. Therefore, on receiving the ball we should*
> *expand quickly, avoiding a forward battle as much as possible.*
> *Approach means playing to use Japanese skills to the utmost. Foreign*
> *players' strengths are putting on the speed at a certain gap to the*
> *opposition, while Japanese players' strengths are approaching the*
> *opposition to a close distance where tricky skills come into play.*
> *Connection means continuous play with every player following the*
> *ball. As seen in marathon running, a small body is no barrier to great*
> *stamina. By running faster and for longer than them, and by running*
> *into the holes they leave, we can grab the initiative.*

Employing these tactics, the 1968 All Japan team embarked on its first-ever New

Zealand tour. The highlight of the tour was a match against the Junior All Blacks,

featuring many rising stars, some of whom, such as Laurie Mains, would go on to

become NZ rugby greats[105]. The All Japan players were considered to be at a significant

disadvantage – their average height and weight was only 171.3cm and 72.2kg, against

the New Zealanders' 181.1 cm and 87.5 kg[106]. But, unfazed by their seemingly stronger

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[105] The Junior All Blacks players were (forwards): A. A. Gardiner (Taranaki), D. A. Pescini (Otago), W. C. Japeth (Auckland), G. A. Dermody (Southland), I. Eliason (Taranaki). B. Holmes (North Auckland), I. Turley (Wairarapa), G. J. Allen (Poverty Bay); (backs): I. N. Stevens (Wellington). J. P. Dougan (Hawks Bay), R. Burgess (Manawatu), M. W. O'Callaghan, D. R. Panther (North Auckland), O. G. Stephens (Wellington), L. Mains (Otago).

[106] The average height and weight figures broken down into (All Japan) forwards 175cm, backs 167cm, and forwards 75.1kg, backs 68.9kg, versus (Junior All Blacks) forwards 187.4 cm, backs 173.9 cm and forwards 97.9 kg, backs 75.6 kg. The disparities in the forwards are particularly significant, as a 12cm-plus difference in height and over 22 kilogram difference in weight means that the Junior All Blacks would be expected to dominate both high oriented (such as lineouts) and weight-oriented (such as

opposition, the All Japan team beat the Junior All Blacks 23-19 in a historic victory. Under the same management, the team enjoyed further success. In 1971, on the Rugby Football Union's 100th Anniversary Far East Tour, the All Japan team lost narrowly 19-27 and 3-6 to the visiting English team. These efforts made Japanese rugby known to the world. Japanese tactics, strategies and coaching styles continued to be developed, with expansion-approach-connection as the maxim driving Japanese rugby play forward.

It remained the benchmark playing style and coaching technique for high school, university and company rugby in Japan until the mid-1980s. Around that time, the influx of foreign-born players began. Then, after the 1987 Rugby World Cup and increasing international competition, Japanese coaches, seeing that the prevalent international style was size- and contact-oriented rugby, began to feel that Japan had to follow this trend as well. They began to emphasise size and power over speed and mobility, and tapped the growing number of foreign-born players in Japanese university and company teams to meet these goals. The increasing emphasis on size and power in company teams also flowed through to the Japanese national team, and this approach reached its peak in the 1999 Japanese World Cup team.

5.5 1999 Cherry Blacks (Hirao Japan)

In 1999 the Japanese national team was sometimes called the 'Cherry Blacks', because of the five New Zealand players selected to represent Japan. The team won the Pacific

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scrums and mauls) plays. This would make it very difficult for the All Japan team to compete at set plays, meaning that tactics oriented towards engaging the opposition one-on-one in open play and beating them with agility, as well as constantly moving the ball away from the heavier (and more likely slower) New Zealanders was more likely to be a competitive strategy.

Rim Championship in 1999 and the Japanese mass media began to draw the public's attention to the national team. Media commentators predicted successful results in the 1999 Rugby World Cup in Wales (Morita, 1999:3-6). With the selection of several foreign-born players, the JRFU aimed to capture the attention of the Japanese public by performing well, thereby rebuilding the popularity of rugby and hopefully bringing about a revival of the game.

The national team coach Hirao's inclusion of experienced foreign-born players in key positions helped lift and maintain team confidence. 1990 All Black Jamie Joseph (number 8), Robert Gordon (also number 8) and former Canterbury flanker Greg Smith powered the scrum with Graeme Bachop (halfback) playing a commanding role behind them[107]. Fijian-born winger Pat Tuidraki also featured regularly. In addition, the influence of former All Black trial list Andrew McCormick at centre had grown markedly over the previous two seasons. Fluent in Japanese and possessing strong leadership skills, he carried respect from all quarters as captain and as player.

In total Andrew McCormick was capped 25 times for Japan and was the national team's first foreign captain. He told me about captaining Japan:

> *I found it very natural to play for the Japanese national team. It doesn't matter what team I'm playing for. We (Kiwi players) considered ourselves as one player in the national team, nothing else really. We're always going to give 100% with our responsibilities. But because I'd been in Japan for so long, I didn't want to let anyone down. I always got a buzz when I heard the Japanese anthem played. I was honoured to be able to be the captain, and did feel pressure sometimes. The Japanese*

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[107] After the 1999 RWC, the IRB changed the eligibility regulations for national representation to prohibit players with dual eligibility from representing more than one country in their career.

players paid so much respect to me as the captain. We had a good rapport and mutual respect. This was definitely the biggest part of my rugby career until now, playing at the World Cup, playing for Japan and being the captain... huge for me. I will never forget it (interview with Andrew McCormick, 20 June 2002).

When McCormick first joined the Japanese national team, he tried to work on the mental attitudes of Japanese players. He instilled in them, urged them to communicate more, to express themselves, and to make decisions by themselves. It was not something that the collectivist, seishin influence on Japanese rugby usually encourages. McCormick wanted to make his players make individual decisions and to be leaders, to make them ready for the tough competition at the World Cup. McCormick also felt that the Japanese players did not show the necessary aggression and strong will to win, and thus tried to develop a confidence in their ability to win (interview with Andrew McCormick, 20 June 2002)

McCormick and other New Zealand players, hired by Japanese company teams, were welcomed into the national team as they were not only eligible after three years in Japan, but also fitted the coach's desired style. Hirao rated the presence of foreign-born players highly in his interview with Murakami (1999:11-4):

> *They are at the core of the team's seishin (spirit), and not merely gaijin suketto (helpers) adding skills and abilities. If we add their mental strength to the finely turned skills of the Japanese players, we can build a team the likes of which has not been seen in Japan before. In summary, we are not using the Meiji-era philosophy of 'wakonyosai' (Japanese spirit and Western technology) but 'yokonwasai' (Western spirit and Japanese technology).*

With this comment Hirao (Murakami, 1999: 11-4) meant that in a team with foreign-born and Japanese players integrated together, a balance can be achieved that

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other teams find very difficult to match. He believed that the Japanese national team should accept Japanese talents, while preserving the foreign (Western) fundamental attitude and values. This is the exact opposite of most Japanese approaches to learning from the West. Ever since the Meiji Era (1868-1912), 'wakonyosai' or 'Japanese spirit and Western technology', has been the dominant mindset. The characteristics of Japanese modernisation were symbolised by such phrases as 'wakonyosai', which means the Japanese active acceptance of Western technology while preserving the fundamental Japanese mindset and attitudes, including the *seishin* spirit (see Section 2.2).

This idea of 'wakonyosai' has shaped the adoption of Western political, economic, military and educational systems (Light, 1999:109), and its influence can still be clearly seen today. However, Hirao's national team interestingly employed a reverse approach, which is using Japanese talents under the strong influence of the 'Western spirit'. The open use of the exact opposite approach to that used throughout modern Japanese history shows the depth of foreign domination in Hirao's national team.

The team was touted as the strongest Japanese team ever, but at the 1999 World Cup in Wales, it lost all its games. Despite having a total of six foreigners in the team to 'strengthen' it, the team failed to make an impression at the World Cup, and was derisively named the 'Cherry Blacks' by the foreign and Japanese media (interview with Mr. Murakami, 20 June 2002). Hirao, having built up expectations among the media and supporters, resigned to take responsibility for the team's failure.

5.6 2003 Brave Blossoms (Mukai Japan)

In 2003, national coach, Shogo Mukai led Japan into the World Cup tournament with a different philosophy again. Mukai's motto was 'speed attack', and he certainly had some speedy men in the backs, able to execute his design. He aimed to use foreign-born players who would contribute to "Japanese rugby for the Japanese" (interview with Shogo Mukai, 12 September 2003). Mukai formulated techniques and tactics were to aim for a faster, more fluid running style deemed more suited to the Japanese physique.

The crucial criterion for selection was not outstanding individual skill, but rather their ability to fit into Mukai's desired team style. Four foreign-born players were selected to represent the Japanese national team for the 2003 RWC in October. Two New Zealanders featured at centre, George Konia (NEC) and Reuben Parkinson (Sanix). The other New Zealand-born players were at lock, Adam Parker (Toshiba) and Andrew Miller (Kobe Steel) at halfback. Mukai explained the main reason for the selection of foreign-born players in his national team:

> *Japan is one of the smallest teams in the World Cup competition. The team needed to attack low and hard to counteract big foreign players. Our game is based on turnovers and quick counter-attacking. The slogan 'speed attack' fits the Japanese players more than any other national team. The strategy to select foreign-born players in the team is to add much-needed steel to the Japanese pack (as the relative lack of size among the forwards puts them at a considerable disadvantage) and to provide spark for the team. To win shows the world that Japanese rugby is on the way up. It is time to create a new history for Japanese rugby. I hope that we can perform better than we did at the last four World Cups* (interview with Shogo Mukai, 12 September 2003).

Mukai also spoke about the problems with declining aspirations for the national team. In his three years as coach of the national team since Hirao's resignation, Mukai observed changes in the attitude of Japanese players towards the national team compared to when he represented Japan:

> *At the 1987 World Cup, when I was in the national team, I was very aware of the pride in the cherry jersey and the importance of the national team. At the time, you could only play in the Japanese jersey a mere three times a year. Players selected for the team now do not show their happiness and thanks through their loyalty to and identification with the team. On the contrary, they tend to be more aware of the colours of their company team. I want the players to feel the pride in wearing the Japanese jersey* (interview with Shogo Mukai, 12 September 2003)

According to Mukai, Japanese players now grow up used to rivalry between company teams in the company and All Japan Championship and define their rugby-playing identity as such. Thus, even when called up for the Japanese national team, he found it hard to stimulate a sense of shared national identity among them. As a result, his players tended to have less pride in the Japanese jersey than they did in their own company's 'brand'. There has been a value shift away from aspirations of making the national team, as the company clubs have control over players' (employment) contract, mobility and availability for the national team. From the players' point of view, they there are at an inferior position in the hierarchy of power relations (see Section 2.3), and must usually bow to their company's wishes.

As a first step to resolving this issue, in 2003 the JRFU suspended the entire domestic company competition during the period of the World Cup, and introduced professional contracts with players. However, even if there is no company competition during the period when national team matches take place, the JRFU cannot yet require company clubs to release players; the company clubs retain ultimate control over player participation in national team matches. Moreover, the contracts were of a low value relative to the average company player salary, being more of a 'minimum guarantee' than a serious financial inducement. Also, the value of the contracts depended on the number of caps a player had earned, so were less attractive to younger and foreign-born players[108]. Thus, there is still a clear tilt in the structure of Japanese rugby, in which the company game takes precedence. And, as opined by Andrew Millar and Kevin Schuler (see Section 2.5), as long as this situation continues, the competitive standing of the Japanese national team is unlikely to improve significantly.

Despite these problems, Mukai worked hard to instil the pride, tradition and history of the national team into his young players. Mukai implemented a three-year plan from 2000 to cultivate his distinctive style of rugby. Even though some foreign-born players were selected for the team and technical advisors imported from Australia[109], Mukai believed that, fundamentally, the Japanese national team should be recognisably Japanese. However, despite this new direction, the Japanese national team continued to

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[108] Although foreign-born players and Japanese players were contracted on the same pay scale, crucially, the pay varied based on the number of caps a player had earned before the 2003 RWC. Foreign-born players, who in the main had played less caps for Japan, thus received less.
[109] To move towards Mukai's ideal vision of rugby over the three years, the team needed higher levels of fitness, higher quality of defence and a stronger front row. In 2000, the JRFU hired Gary Wallace (fitness coach from Queensland Reds) on a three-year contract, and in 2003 appointed former Wallabies Mark Ella (defence coach) and Mark Bell (scrum coach) as technical advisors.

perform badly on the international stage in 2002 and 2003[110]. At the 2003 RWC Japan

was put in Pool D (with Scotland, France, Fiji and USA), where they were in winning

contention in every match, only to come up short each time, and unable to progress past

the group stage.

However, the team did succeed in showing 'Japaneseness' to the world (Yoshihiro

Sakata, 2003[111]). There were three key perceived attributes of the 'Japanese qualities' on

show. They were, firstly, a never-say-die spirit in the face of strong opposition (Scotland

and France), secondly, solid tackling, making 431 tackles from 554 attempts (77.8%) in

the four games, and thirdly, a sparklingly distinctive Japanese playing/attacking style.

This 'Japaneseness' fascinated the rugby world, and impressed media commentators

described the courageous Japanese team as the 'Brave Blossoms' (Freeman, 2003). My

father Yoshihiro Sakata also viewed the performance of the Japanese national team in

the World Cup positively, saying:

> *Japan cannot beat other strong national teams in a simple match of
> strength. Even if foreign-born players are selected for the Japanese
> national team, they should be chosen to fit Japanese tactics and
> strategies. Winning or losing is but one aspect of the overall situation.
> Either way, the team must show off Japanese rugby. Even despite loses,
> if the team plays in a manner that surprises its opponent and allows it to
> stand proud, it can make true Japanese rugby appeal to the world. At
> least, I believed that Mukai Japan proved it at this World Cup* (interview
> with Yoshihiro Sakata, 18 October 2003)[112].

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[110] Japan Test Results 2002-03: Beat Russia, Tokyo, 59-19; Lost to Tonga, Kumagaya, 29-41; Beat Korea, Tokyo, 90-24; Beat Chinese Taipei, Tokyo, 155-3; Beat Korea, Seoul, 55-17; Beat Chinese Taipei, Tainan, 120-3; Lost Korea, Ulsan, 34-45; Lost to Korea, Bangkok, 20-22; Lost to United States, San Francisco, 27-69; Lost to Russia, Tokyo, 34-43; Beat Korea, Osaka, 86-3; Lost to Australia A, Tokyo, 15-66 and Lost to England A, Tokyo, 20-55.

[111] I interviewed him at his living room after watching the RWC match between Japan and France on 18 October 2003.

[112] This opinion has parallels in the Pacific Island, especially Samoan and Fijian rugby, has been regarded by the world rugby media (Wyatt, 1996). That is, even in defeat, the teams can retain their popularity and

Since its establishment in 1987, the Rugby World Cup has come to be the defining moment of a national team's performance, and the high point that teams spend four years building for (Jones, 2003:7-9). It is at the World Cup that teams have the chance to shine at the highest level, and to show off the special features of their nation's play. (Thus Hirao Japan until 1999 and Mukai Japan until 2003). Thus, even in defeat, at the World Cup a team can succeed in impressing the rugby world's media and spectators. Player #4 can relate to the cycle of building up for the World Cup, as he has now experienced it under two different coaches.

Player #4 played for the Japanese national team in 1999 and 2003. He has already made himself into one of the local stars of Japanese rugby, and will likely grow to be a strong leader in the national team. He explained to me (interview with player #4, 22 January 2004) how he has a mostly positive view of the roles and objectives of foreign-born players in the national team. In particular, he appreciated the five New Zealand players who, he said, brought admirable qualities to the national team:

> *I felt that the influence of the foreign players on Hirao's team four years ago was amazing. Even though it is the Japanese national team where pride and the will to win should be in clear view, it was the foreign players leading us. They showed us what the Japanese national team means to us. Under Mukai in 2003, rather than relying on the foreign players, during the game they were working hard for the rest of us as members of the team. We were made aware that there is a great deal of interest in and respect for Japan. We have shown a lot of commitment and dedication thanks to them* (interview with player #4, 22 January 2004).

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appeal to their national and global rugby public.

Other Japanese players and coaches believed that those foreign-born players in Hirao's team not only helped by supplying the lacking strength, skill and international experience, but were also responsible for the strong leadership on the field. Player #4 attributes his newfound knowledge and experience of physical aggressiveness and mental toughness in the game to those foreign-born players. The foreign-born players in Mukai's team did not have as strong an influence on the style of play as in Hirao's team in 1999, but their influence on the teams' better performances were unmistakable. According to player #4, they encouraged their Japanese team-mates to perform at a higher level, and the Japanese national team now had a solid core and promising team dynamic[113].

Foreign-born player #2[114] makes invaluable contributions to both his company club and the Japanese national team. He had played for Canterbury Crusaders (Super 12) and Bay of Plenty (NPC second-division) in 1997. He decided to move to take up his contract with Kobe Steel club in Japan in 1998 as a 26 year-old, after he missed out on a Super 12 contract with the Waikato Chiefs. After six years in Japan, player #2 is considered an embodiment of a player making an invaluable contribution to the quality of Japanese company rugby[115]. He has a thorough knowledge of the strengths and shortcomings of

[113] To encourage the growth of young players, Mukai selected 21-year-old prop Ryo Yamamura- while he still lacked top-level experience, he had power and raw talent in abundance. His spark added to an ever-stronger forward package, featuring the likes of Hajime Kiso, Naoya Okubo, Takeomi Ito, Yuya Saito and Takuro Miuchi (captain) as the main force. The backline featured Toru Kurihara, Daisuke Ohata, Hiroki Onozawa and Yukio Motoki, and the top-level experience they have accumulated is a major encouragement for the national team.
[114] I interviewed him at Kobe Bay Sheraton Hotel on 14 November 2003.
[115] He came to believe that the Japanese players could actually play the game with their own distinctive style, and helped to develop it. His efforts at Kobe Steel were bolstered by two other New Zealand imports, ex-All Black Blair Larsen and Waikato NPC player Dean Anglesey. Kobe Steel's Kobe Steel's premier team competed at the highest level, winning All company Championship titles in 1999 and 2000, All Japan Championship titles in 1990 and 2000 and Top League Championship title in 2003. He showed his guile, deception and a change of pace into the games. In those five seasons until the World Cup, he

Japanese rugby, and fills a strategic role that fits into the Japanese playing style. He took on board and put into practice the original tactics and strategies the team was trying to use, reliably marshalling the team.

Having served a three-year qualifying period between 1998 and 2003, player #2 was eligible to appear in the Japanese national team. From the perspective of the national coach Mukai, the presence of player #2 was vital. The coach and all of the players trust player #2 absolutely, seeing him as the on-field nerve-centre of Japanese rugby. As the first-five eighth, they look to him to control a game and help to bring out the strengths in the Japanese players in the backline outside him. The players are relieved to see him in the game, helping the entire team to relax and focus on their own performance.

About being selected for the Japanese team, player #2 comments:

> *The World Cup was definitely a highlight. I am proud to wear the Japanese national jersey. I have never played for a national side before. I am 31 years old, and there will not be many more exciting moments in my playing career. I have fitted into the Japanese national side well, and we all work together as the Cherry Blossoms. Therefore, I have really enjoyed playing for the Japan national team with Japanese boys from different company teams. I tried my best to bring steadiness and confidence to games. We pulled together really well since coming to Australia and have a really good team atmosphere that has allowed us to become more confident and competitive* (interview with player #2, 14 November 2003).

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scored an incredible 1067 points for Kobe Steel, including 40 tries and 294 conversions (http://www.kobesteelrfc.com).

The highly competitive performance of the Japanese national team in the 2003 World Cup showed the ability of Japanese rugby to surprise its opponents. Player #2 believes that for Japanese rugby to take the next step it needs more exposure to higher fitness levels, and to play more games against the best eight nations in the world, including France, Scotland and Wales More importantly, he argues that the Japanese national team should keep its own original ideas and not copy New Zealand and Australian styles of play at the national level. He urges that the Japanese natural talents will go undeveloped if Japan fails to cultivate its own distinctive style of rugby coaching. He used the example of the success of Kobe Steel club with a good blend of elite Japanese players and imported players. The team has had a clear vision and approached competition with a different playing style (flat-line attacking) under the influence of a Japanese coach, compared with the failures of the national team.

5.7 Summary

This chapter has examined the case of foreign-born players in the Japanese national rugby team. Since the 1980s, foreign-born players have had a large impact on both company rugby and the national team, and this chapter has discussed both the history and current issues surrounding their selection into the national team.

The chapter first considered the rules for eligibility to represent the Japanese national team for foreign-born players. Whereas most major sports require participants in international tournaments to hold citizenship of the country they represent, the IRB does not impose such a regulation, instead delegating the detail of eligibility criteria to the national unions. The JRFU requires only three years of residency in order to become

eligible for the national team, and these criteria have caused controversy both within Japan and within international rugby circles. Also, the JRFU is unable to require company clubs to release players for national team representation, illustrating the tilt of power relations in Japanese rugby towards the company clubs (also discussed in Chapter Two).

Chapter Five also examined the history of foreign-born players in the national team. The first case was in 1986, and as of July 2004, a total of 32 foreign-born players have represented Japan. They have had a variety of influences and roles in the team, both positive and negative. Positive influences have included making a clear contribution to raising the standard of the game, both through their physical ability and mental toughness. In particular, the foreign-born players selected until the mid-1990s were mostly forwards, adding size and power. After that, more backs came to be selected, as team management looked to add leadership and inspiration.

However, there have been negative aspects to the inclusion of foreign-born players. There has been an element of 'New Zealand rugby hegemony', in that imported players have come to dominate key positions such as number eight and centre, a trend often called 'positional stacking'. This deprives home-grown talent of opportunities and is therefore detrimental to the overall development of the national team. This is the dilemma caused by the need to be strong to win in the present set against the need to build local players for the future. Also, team management, especially under Seiji Hirao until 1999, aimed to make powerful and skilful foreign-born players the centrepiece of

the team, raising the question of whether or not the team was in fact a truly Japanese team any more.

The key analysis of this chapter has come through three comparative studies of the national team at different points in time; 'Ohnishi Japan' in 1968, the so-called 'classic era' of the Japanese mono-cultural rugby style, 'Hirao Japan' in 1999, perhaps at the peak of foreign involvement and reliance, and 'Mukai Japan' in 2003, where team management was looking to rebuild a Japanese style of play with foreign-born players included only if they fitted team management's philosophy. Through these case studies, a number of themes have emerged, but two topics of particular significance are of the playing style employed, and the changing in attitudes and aspiration towards the national team.

There is a clear difference in playing style between Ohnishi Japan of 1968 and the latter-day teams. Ohnishi's Japanese-developed style emphasised 'expansion, approach and connection', with speed and ball movement as the keys. However, as the number of international matches and information flows increased during the 1980s, Japanese coaches came to instead emphasise contact play, with size and power the keys. This approach is naturally suited to generally larger foreign-born players.

In the 1960s, the low number of international matches meant that being selected for the All-Japan team was a rare honour. Wearing the cherry jersey was a privilege that players were proud to have received, and it inspired loyalty. However, with the rapid development of company rugby since the mid-1980s, a number of heated domestic

rivalries have emerged, and many players now feel a greater affiliation to their company team. Additionally, company clubs control player availability, and many are reluctant to release their players for fear of injury. This weakness of the JRFU in the power relations with the company teams continues to cause problems for the development of the Japanese national team.

In these circumstances, foreign-born players have played an interesting role in reviving Japanese pride in their national team. Players like Andrew McCormick, who captained the team, and player #2, who played a pivotal position, not only brought their own talents to the team, but also tried to set an example to instil pride and loyalty to the jersey, while inspiring their Japanese team-mates to higher performance. This has been a slightly ironic, and in a sense unexpected, benefit of the presence of foreign-born players in the national team.

Chapter Six: CONCLUSION

The transformation of rugby from an amateur to a professional sport since 1996 and the influence of foreign players have led to significant changes in the structure of Japanese rugby over the past few decades. This thesis has a dual focus on both the development of Japanese rugby and the influence of foreign players on it over time. I have employed analytical and empirical work in the area of sports sociology that is specific to the structures and objectives of Japanese rugby. This therefore has given a clearer understanding of the cultural influences, organisational structures/competitions and labour relations in the Japanese game, and its relationship with migrant players in the company leagues and the national team.

I provided a brief historical overview of the development of rugby in Japan. Japanese rugby created particular forms of identity such as styles of organisation, competitions, playing styles, team philosophy and behaviours through their interpretation in a specific

cultural context. Rugby in Japan developed within institutions of education, notably élite universities. As a physical game that allows players to use their whole bodies, rugby is an ideal medium to promote the development within players of a sense of collective responsibility, self-discipline and endurance. Furthermore, as Japanese rugby developed in relative isolation, local cultural practice blended with the introduced 'form' of the game to produce original Japanese playing styles.

Focussing on the organisational structure and relations of Japanese rugby, I explained how the JRFU institutionalised domestic competitions (at high school, university and company level) as an amateur game, with the ultimate aim of creating a strong national team. The National Inter-High School Tournament has maintained ideals of amateurism since its establishment in 1918. The three traditional universities (Keio, Waseda and Meiji) and their alumni developed a strong rivalry and attracted popular support, strengthening their cultural identity. The JRFU has built on their popularity by promoting the All-University Championship, attracting more universities, which recruited more high school players, and sometimes foreign players.

In-depth scrutiny of company rugby enabled me to explain how the shift from amateurism to professionalism in 1996 has caused major upheavals. I outlined the changes in labour relations (from lifetime employment through the *shakaijin* amateur model to professional contracts) towards a more professional-style competition. During my father's rugby career in the 1960s and 70s, the game was strictly amateur, with full-time work commitment required. In the late 1980s, the emphasis shifted to a unique *shakaijin* amateur model, allowing players to mix work and play. As companies tried to

increase their public profile through rugby, they attracted foreign players and élite university players; even in rugby's 'amateur' era, some players were paid as semi-professionals. After 1996, who is amateur or professional is largely a matter of personal interpretation. In the new Top League, some teams could well be considered 'professional'.

The JRFU presented a structural reform, establishing the Top League competition in 2003 to promote a higher level of rugby, and to build a stronger national team. However, there are inconsistencies in the Top League structure, as the JRFU treats it as an amateur company competition, while the company teams playing in it understand the new league to be a major step towards professional rugby. It could be said that the establishment of the Top League spelt an end to the control by the JRFU over the top 12 company teams[116]. In the power relations of Japanese rugby, the élite company clubs now dominate, having control over players' contracts, status and availability for the national team. As seen in the case study of Yamaha RFC, the introduction of the Top League has also led to a change towards professional-style club management and labour relations between players and the club officials. However, because company clubs are dependant on their parent companies for funding, and because of the growing financial and competitive differences between company clubs, some companies have become unable to support their teams at a competitive level, and drop out. More than 200 company clubs such as Kevin Schuler's Nisshin Steel were suspended or closed between 1997 and 2001.

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[116] The same situation is apparent in the UK, with the top club teams seemingly always in conflict with the English RFU about players, competitions and the national team demands. Sir Clive Woodward, ex-coach of the England national team, recently resigned his position, saying that 'I am could not get the RFU and the clubs to co-operate' (http://www.sanspo.com/rugby/top/rg200409/rg2004090402.html).

In Chapter Three, I examined the company game, the arrival of foreign players and the influence those players exerted on the sport. The influx of foreign players has been demonstrated to be closely linked to the major shift in playing standards in the company clubs and competitions over the last 20 years. The migration of foreign players to Japan is primarily dependent on the demand of Japanese company teams, as they form the most economically powerful leagues in Japanese rugby. Company clubs have tended to draw on foreign sources (mainly New Zealand players) to strengthen their company teams, such as technical skills, coaching methods and playing styles. In 1991, the JRFU restricted the number of foreign players allowed on each team to only two on the field. However, this official condoning of foreign participation (as first effective acknowledgement of influence of foreign players) saw more and more companies begin to employ foreign players under the then-amateur regulations to raise the profile and standards of their company club.

The registration system has (until 2004) encouraged company teams to employ Southern Hemisphere players, in particular New Zealand players. However, not all players have played similar roles in their teams. Some have been *gaijin suketto* (foreign helpers), employed to fill a narrow role, such as adding power to the forward pack. More recently, others have been more like *oyatoi gaikokujin* (employed foreigners), who have been highly respected as teachers and leaders for their team-mates. Many have successfully contributed to their teams, and some, such as Kevin Schuler, have stayed for many years. However, there have been some notable failures, mainly through the inability to adjust to and functionally integrate into the Japanese rugby environment.

There is a cultural gap on and off the field that some players have been unable to bridge. In particular, the case of Rua Tipoki shows the importance of self-discipline, because in Japanese rugby, individual misdemeanours cause loss of face for the entire organisation. Like many company clubs, the case of Yamaha RFC, considered in Chapter Four, is a relevant example of how foreign players are accepted on their merits and what they can bring to the team. Here, as elsewhere, foreign players promote higher standards of play, help local players learn skills and fitness techniques, and set a professional example for them. I looked at the Yamaha club from three main angles; its history, labour relations (between the club and players), and the degree of inequality between players. Yamaha is a relatively new team, which has tried to establish its own identity and culture. It has become much more focused on rugby, with players and administrators devoting most of their working day to improving the team's performance, and in doing so, also breaking away from the traditional Japanese hierarchical style of rugby organisation.

Yamaha has aimed to build a new strategic relationship with foreign players, reducing the division between them and Japanese players, in order to strengthen a culture of all players working together for each other. This is a major break from the traditional age-based hierarchical model of Japanese interpersonal relations. However, there is still a high degree of inequality between players, based on career status. Some foreign players, especially New Zealanders, are on very high salaries, and play leading roles as teachers and motivators, as well as star players. However, others, notably Fijian players, receive lower pay, and are employed as *suketto* to fill narrower roles. Among Japanese players too, there are divisions, primarily between those few on professional contracts (who still receive less than foreign professional players despite having given up their

long-term job security), and the majority, who are aiming to be company employees for life. In this way, the discrepancies in salary, status and hence expectations from team management have not been erased, and the team is far from its goal of being 'the best rugby organisation in the world'.

In Chapter Five, I analysed the presence of foreign-born players in the Japanese national team. I considered the history, roles and various contributions of foreign-born players. I began with their eligibility, but the chapter's main analytical method is through historical comparative case studies of the Japanese national team at three different stages, 1968, 1999 and 2003. Unlike many other professional sports and rugby-playing nations, which require citizenship, since 1992 foreign-born rugby players have been eligible to represent Japan after three years playing for a Japanese company team. This is a controversial regulation; while foreign-born players have clearly contributed to a raise in the team's mental and physical strength, they have arguably denied Japanese players opportunities to represent their country through 'stacking' of key positions. Other parts of the Asian rugby community also disapprove of Japan's eligibility criteria.

The first foreign-born player represented Japan in 1986, and as of July 2004, a total of 32 foreign-born players have worn the cherry jersey. As more and more foreign players began to be employed by company teams, the management of the national team, looking to add size and power to compete in international tournaments such as the Rugby World Cup, was keen to select foreign-born players. However, this may have come at the cost of the loss of original Japanese coaching methods and playing styles.

This became clear during my case study analysis, of *Ohnishi Japan* in 1968, *Hirao*

Japan in 1999 and *Mukai Japan* in 2003. I looked at the different selection criteria, coaches' rugby philosophies and team building methods, and regarding aesthetic and tactical changes, could periodise these cases into 'original', 'the peak of foreign involvement and reliance' and 'revival of original'. The coaches have gone from emphasising speed and ball movement (Ohnishi), to stressing size and power (Hirao), to 'speed attack' (Mukai). These marked changes have paralleled the changes in foreign influence.

Moreover, Japanese players' sense of affiliation to the national team has also changed significantly. In the 1960s, the rarity value of national team matches meant that they were an honour and a privilege; by the late 1990s, the faster pace of development of the company game meant that many Japanese players, particularly given the company clubs' control over player status and labour relations, feel more loyalty to their company club than to the national team. Interestingly, it is foreign players in the national team who have helped to revive the sense of pride and loyalty to the cherry jersey.

In summary, there have been many changes in Japanese rugby over the last 30 years. The growing popularity of company rugby and the coming of professionalism in 1996 are notable changes, but it is perhaps the influx of foreign influences that has stood out. The presence of foreign-born players in company teams and the national team has gone from a novelty to the norm, and the effects on Japanese players and coaches have been many and varied. However, their contribution to the raising of standards in Japanese rugby cannot be denied.

The three factors above and other subsidiary trends have produced a complex interplay of forces, the results of which are not yet clear. Japanese rugby is at a crucial stage of its development. However, uncertainty also means opportunity, and while Japanese rugby faces many pressing issues, we can look to the future with optimism.

Appendix

Table 1: The Team Profile in the Top League (the 2003-4 season)

	NEC	Kintetsu	Kubota	Kobelco	Suntory	Sanyo
Nickname	Green Rockets	Liners	Spears	Steelers	Sungoliath	Wild Knights
Company	Electric	Railways	Industry Co.	Steel	Beverage	Electric
Establishment	1985	1929	1978	1928	1980	1960
Home	Chiba	Osaka	Tokyo	Kobe	Tokyo	Gunma

Team	Secom	Toshiba	Sanix	Yamaha	Ricoh	World
Nickname	Rugguts	Brave Lupus	Bombs	Jubilo	BlackRams	Fighting Bulls
Company	Security	Electric	Home sanitation	Motors	Printer, Fax &Scanner	Apparel
Establishment	1985	1948	1994	1984	1953	1984
Home	Tokyo	Tokyo	Fukuoka	Shizuoka	Tokyo	Kobe

The Structure of Top League Competition

The structure of Japan Rugby Top League

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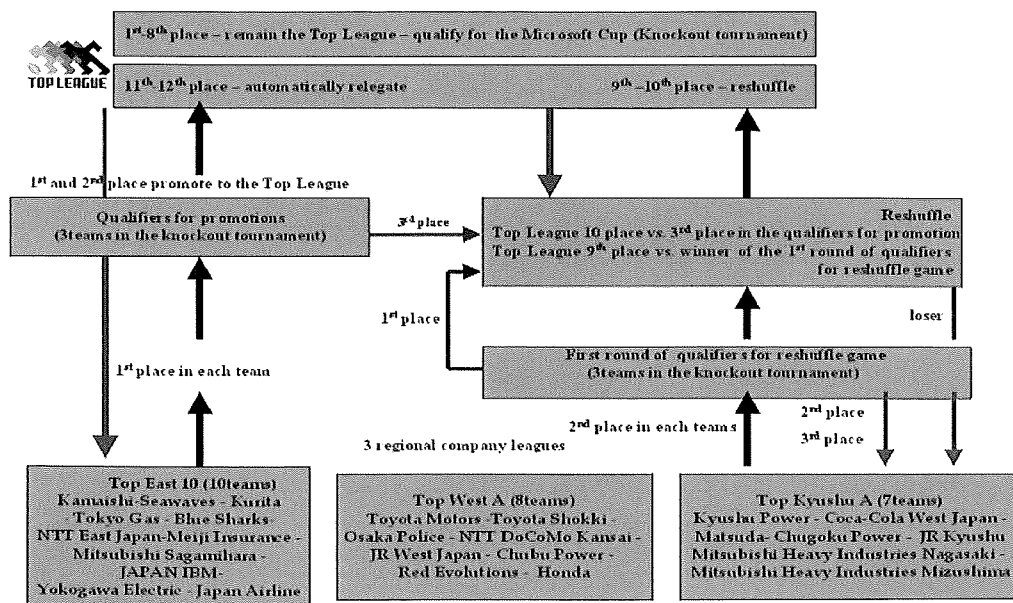
Table 1. Distribution /Total Number of Foreign Rugby Players in Japanese Company teams (1978-2002)

	NZ	AUS	FIJI	TONGA	SAMOA	KOR	CAN	OTHER	Total
1978/1979								2	2
1987/1988				2		2			4
1988/1989	3			2		2			7
1989/1990	1	1		2		2		3	9
1990/1991	9			3		4		7	23
1991/1992	10			3		5		2	20
1992/1993	12	1	1	2	1	6	2	4	29
1993/1994	17	2	2	2	1	3	2	6	35
1994/1995	20	5	7	4		3	2	7	48
1995/1996	23	5	7	4		3	2	7	51
1996/1997	30	12	11	9			3	10	75
1997/1998	36	13	15	14		1	2	8	89
1998/1999	30	12	11	9			3	10	75
1999/2000	49	11	9	17	3		3	4	96
2000/2001	50	18	6	14	4			7	99
2001/2002	50	15	6	12	10			4	97
2002/2003	46	11	13	16	7			3	96

(Rugby Almanac of Japan by *JAPAN RUGBY MAGAZINE* 1987-2002)

Table 2: The list of foreign-born players in the Japanese national team

Number	Year	Name	Position	Nationality	Club	Previous International appearance
1	1985	Nohomuli Taumoefolau	LO	Tonga	Sanyo	
2	1986	Hopoi Taione	CTB	Tonga	Sanyo	
3	1987	Sinali Latu	FL	Tonga	Daito Bunka Uni	
4	1990	Ekeroma Luaiufi	FL	NZ	Niko Niko Do	
5	1992	Lopeti Oto	WTB	Tonga	Daito Bunka Uni	
6	1993	Samuel Kaleta	LO	Samoa	Ricoh	
7	1993	Sione Latu	NO8	Tonga	Daito Bunka Uni	
8	1993	Bruce Fergason	LO	Fiji	Hino Motors	Fiji
9	1993	Ian Williams	WTB	AUS	Kobe Steel	AUS
10	1993	Tupo Faamasino	FB	Samoa	Niko Niko Do	Samoa
11	1996	David Bickle	LO	England	Kobe Steel	
12	1996	Andrew McCormick	CTB	NZ	Toshiba	
13	1997	Isikeli Basiyalo	LO	Fiji	Toyota	
14	1997	Robert Gordon	NO8	NZ	Toshiba	NZ
15	1997	Patiliai Tuidraki	WTB	Fiji	Toyota	Fiji
16	1998	Greg Smith	FL	NZ	Toyota Shokki	
17	1998	Ross Thompson	NO8	NZ	NEC	
18	1998	Stephen Miln	CTB	NZ	Kaneka	
19	1999	Jamie Joseph	NO8	NZ	Sanix	NZ
20	1999	Graeme Bachop	SH	NZ	Sanix	NZ
21	2000	Carl Todd	LO	NZ	IBM	
22	2001	Luatang Vativei	NO8	Tonga	Daito Bunka Uni	
23	2001	Andrew Miller	SO	NZ	Kobe Steel	
24	2001	Brendan Neilson	FB	NZ	NEC	
25	2002	Richard Coventry	LO	NZ	Toyota	
26	2002	Dean Anglesey	FL	NZ	Kobe Steel	
27	2002	Errol Brain	NO8	NZ	Toyota	NZ Maori
28	2002	Adam Parker	LO	NZ	Toshiba	
29	2003	George Konia	CTB	NZ	NEC	
30	2003	Reuben Parkinson	CTB	NZ	Sanix	

*Note: As of the Test match against Italy on 4 July 2004, 32 foreign-born players have played for the Japanese national team.

YAMAHA

Revving Your Heart

Company Profile: YAMAHA MOTOR

Founded   July 1, 1955

Capital   43,439 million yen (as of March 31, 2004)

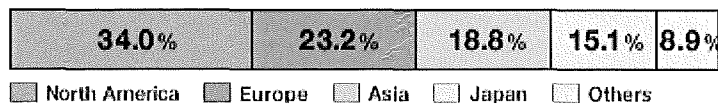**Headquarters**   Iwata-city, Shizuoka Prefecture

Employee Consolidation   33,694 (as of March 31, 2004)

Parent : 8,078 (as of March 31, 2004)

Sales Consolidation   Sales Consolidated:

1,020,266 million yen (from April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004)

Parent:

585,044 million yen (from April 1, 2003 to March 31, 2004)

Sales Distribution   Sales by product (%) (Consolidation)

52.5%	20.6%	17.8%	9.1%

■ Motorcycles   ■ Marine Products   ☐ Power Products   ☐ Others
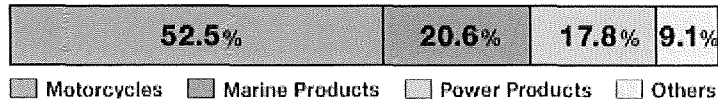
Sales by region(%) (Consolidation)

34.0%	23.2%	18.8%	15.1%	8.9%

■ North America   ■ Europe   ☐ Asia   ☐ Japan   ☐ Others

Business   Manufacture and sales of motorcycles, scooters, electro-hybrid bicycles, boats, sail boats, Water Vehicles, pools, utility boats, fishing boats, outboard motors, diesel engines, 4-wheel ATVs, racing karts, golf cars, multi-purpose engines, generators, water pumps, snowmobiles, small-sized snow throwers, automotive engines, intelligent machinery, industrial-use remote control helicopters, electrical power units for wheelchairs, helmets. Import and sales of various types of products, development of tourist businesses and management of leisure, recreational facilities and related services.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Regulations relating to foreign players
JRFU:

Amateur Guide Book 1991

Regulations   Handbook 2003

Regulations   IRB 2003

Regulations   Top League 2003

JAPAN RUGBY MAGAZINE:

The Rugby Almanac of Japan (Year Book) 1978-2003

Completed Guide HANAZONO 2003:(the 83rd Inter-High School Rugby Tournament)

JRFU:

The Test Match Statistics for the Japanese National Team: 1930-2003

The JRFU Annual Report 2003-4

The JRFU Annual Financial Statement 2003-4

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Asahi Newspaper (JPN)

Yomiuri Newspaper (JPN)

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RUGBY MAGAZINE (JPN)

RUGBY WORLD (JPN)

NZRUGBY (NZ)

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Sports Graphic: Number (JPN)

RUGBY WORLD CUP PREVIEW (JAN)

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www.chugoku-np.co.jp

www.irb.com/laws-regs/regs/index.cfm

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Radio:

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