Sports sites of memory in Japan's cultures of remembrance and oblivion: collective remembrance is like swimming - in order to stay afloat you have to keep moving

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Sports sites of memory in Japan’s cultures of remembrance and oblivion: collective remembrance is like swimming – in order to stay afloat you have to keep moving

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We have been asked to provide a summarizing article on the role of sports in memorizing the Japanese nation. Each of the three dimensions of memory evoked and revealed in the studies that are contained in this issue demonstrate the promise of, and purchase that, a focus on sport and lieu de mémoire provides to scholars of sport and Japanese society. We draw a tentative conclusion that the articles in this issue demonstrate that historical studies of sports can open a window onto the topology of Japanese symbolism. Amongst the questions we need to continue to ask are to what degree pre-modern societies have actually shared and nourished the ‘living memory’, the loss of which has been bemoaned by Nora. Also we must take issue with the notion of ‘collective memory’ as an absolute, all-encompassing, entity, since it is important to consider opportunities for the investigation of counter-memory and counter-memorialization.

Introduction: ‘lost grounds’ and sites of memory

What could be more appropriate at the beginning of a summarizing article on the role of sports in memorizing the Japanese nation than a reminder of sports people, places and performances on the brink of falling into oblivion, even though they once were regarded as national icons? Such a list, which is inevitably fragmented, would feature the names of Kinue Hitomi (1907–1931), the gifted track-and-field athlete who held several world records between 1925 and 1930 – she also was the first woman to win an Olympic medal for Japan in 1928; Satō Jirō (1908–1934), the only Japanese ever to reach the top three of the world ranking list in men’s tennis; and Igaya Chiharu (born 1931), the first Japanese to win a medal at the Winter Olympic Games, placing second in the slalom event after the invincible Toni Sailer who dominated the 1958 Olympics in Cortina. A fixture on such a list would also be Yoshioka Takatoshi (1909–1984), who was on equal terms competing with the fastest runners of his time, holding seven national records for the men’s 100-metre sprint in the 1930s. Nicknamed by the press as the ‘super express train of the dawn’ (akatsuki no chōtokkyū), the short track specialist even tied the world record in 1935. Five times he repeated his all-time best of 10.3 seconds, which clocked Jesse Owens’ gold medal sprint at the Berlin Olympics in 1936. As a national record, Yoshioka’s time was equalled in Japan only 30 years later. But he equally might be remembered for his failure to qualify for the finals in Berlin, where he was expected to claim the gold medal. The shocked nation found release in Korean Sohn Kee-Chung (in Japanese his name was Son Kitei, 1914–2002) winning the marathon race for Imperial Japan. But is the native

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Korean Sohn indeed remembered for having brought glory upon his Japanese compatriots? Has he ever been? The gold medal, which today is acclaimed both by the Japanese and the Korean Olympic Committee, is still attributed to the then-colonial power Japan in official International Olympic Committee (IOC) listings. As well as bronze-winning Korean Nam Sung-Yong (Nam Shoryu, 1912–2001), Kim Un-Bae (Kin Onbai, 1913–1980) and Kwon Tae-Ha (Gon Taiga, 1906–1971), who finished sixth and ninth respectively in the marathon race at the Los Angeles Olympics in 1932, might equally be considered forgotten sports heroes. Neither Yoshioka’s tragic breakdown nor the triumphant victories by the indented ‘Japanese’ long-distance runners of Korean ancestry seem to be appropriate markers for the collective memory – at least from the post-colonial vantage point of the post-war configuration.

Shifts in political and cultural topography accentuate the significance of time for the processes of remembering, recollecting and reconstructing memories. Over time, sites are awarded multiple meanings which occasionally interfere with each other, sometimes simply accumulate. Some of the consumers and shopkeepers at the Hanshin Ninomiya Gardens will realize that they are standing on ‘lost ground’, most probably will not. This shopping mall in western Japan has been erected on the foundations of a formerly well-attended keirin (bicycle race) velodrome, feared by cyclists for having Japan’s most unruly and noisy visitor crowds who are reported to have even caused the Hanshin Braves to abandon the neighbouring ballpark. Back at the height of track cycling during the 1950s and 1960s, betting on racing sports like keirin or horse racing was legalized, actively initiated and promoted by local governments all over the country to generate revenues badly needed for the reconstruction of the war-torn municipal infrastructure. For a period of 20 years, keirin was widely appreciated as a cheap and thrilling form of mass entertainment, particularly among male blue-collar workers and the old urban middle class. Governments began shutting down the ovals after the late 1960s when alternative and more respectable streams of income were secured by Japan’s booming manufacturing industries and foreign demand. The world of keirin, with its multiple linkages to working class culture, urban entertainment and organized crime, hardly seems to suit the needs of remembering post-war Japan’s mostly cherished period in dignity. Public opinion prefers to associate the era of the Japanese economic miracle with the merits of diligence, loyalty, indulgence and efficiency. These core characteristics were epitomized in the Tokyo Giants, as William W. Kelly cogently argued. Significantly, Japan’s most successful baseball team is playing its home games nowadays in a facility that literally suppresses the remains of a shabby, less-desirable version of the past. The Tokyo Dome, which opened in 1988, was built upon the now lost ground of Korakuen Velodrome, a cycling track that once recorded the all-time highest spectator turnout of 27,000 at a track cycling event. Whether this buried past is actually of relevance to fans, players or visitors to the Tokyo Dome deserves questioning.

The multiplicity of meanings and references is also evident in the case of historical achievements and spectacular performances. Is the longest recorded solo dogsled traverse of North America by the Japanese adventurer and mountaineer Uemura Naomi (1941–1984) in the mid-1970s – that took him 18 months and some 7500 miles to reach Kotzebue, Alaska, from Jakobshavn, West Greenland – still remembered, and if yes, by whom and for what purposes? Uemura, who also was the first Japanese to conquer Mount Everest in 1970 and the first human being to arrive at the North Pole on a solo journey in 1978, went missing in 1984 the day after he had accomplished the first winter solo climb of Mount McKinley, the highest peak on the North American shelf. In fact, the dramatic – and early – death bestowed immortality upon Uemura. Eternal remembrance
is guaranteed by numerous books and documentary films on the iconic figure. Even a
museum in Tomooka, Hyōgo Prefecture, contributes to keeping alive the memory of
Uemura. But remembering Uemura’s feats nowadays, when travel agencies readily cater
to the needs of tourists eager to taste the Inuit experiment for a day or when climbing the
world’s highest mountains is a commodity available to many, is certainly different from
what he signified at a time when the average Japanese barely owned a travel document,
let alone felt the confidence to leaving Japan or the need to go abroad. From his own
accounts it is known that Uemura’s quests expressed a radical criticism of lifestyle
changes, excessive consumption and environmental destruction that characterized
prospering Japan. Far away from Japanese civilization and its people, he found the
simplicity and serenity that probably not only he was longing for. Notwithstanding his
premature death, his attempts at instilling respect for the grandness of nature and
acceptance of alternative life styles in the minds of younger generations have been without
success in the long run. But arguably memory is fissured and selective, and oblivion rules
where the popular consensus defies inspection.

Memory as a contested object of science

These introductory reflections on the part of sports in memorizing the glory of the nation
have demonstrated – as much as the articles assembled in this issue – that memory, as a
social construction inevitably is fragmented and situational, therefore controversial and
contested. In general, this issue cogently demonstrates that sports have served in Japan
throughout its modern period to provide references for the collective memory and that the
practice of memory aims at fulfilling people with a sense of who they are as seen from the
vantage point of the present. Hence, they resonate with Susannah Radstone’s assertion that
the ‘complexities of past/present relations […] are mediated through the materialities and
processes of public, social and cultural institutions and practices’. 3 In that regard, all the
case studies and examples collected here clearly comply with Pierre Nora’s lieux de
mémoire,4 which provided the common starting point for the overall project. Quite
contrary to the volatile nature of sites of memory, Nora’s original conception of ‘pure
memory’ repudiated fluctuation and flexibility as its core features. What he termed ‘living
memory’, nourished and shared spontaneously within a social group bound by the
collective memory, was neither debatable nor a matter of discourse or externalities:
memory is not to be recollected; rather it is that which returns – in this regard, memory is
fashioned like Marcel Proust’s famous concept of souvenir involontaire. As an unlimited
repertoire too huge in volume to be remembered, involuntary memory is dictatorial and
absolute, while history, based on a form of critical analysis, is by nature antithetical to
spontaneous memory and can only receive the relative.5 With the advance of modern
society, the ‘real environment of memory’ was irretrievably lost but not the need for
cognitive adhesives solidifying unity and solidarity among the modern subjects. Hence,
the demise of premodernity’s milieux de mémoire paved the way for the emergence of
lieux de mémoire.6

The memory-nation was the last incarnation of the unification of memory and history.
With the advent of society in place of the nation, the nation is no longer a cause, but a
given and memory assumes all qualities of a private affair. Within this figuration, sites of
memory are crystallized symbols of the collective heritage, both material and non-material
in substance, exemplifying collective identity and character. Because the inseparable unity
of idea and practice dissolved, memory is no longer spontaneously evoked. Instead
ritualized memorization, following a script, a master-narrative or a protocol dictated from
the historian’s retrospective vantage point, is required to obtain the underlying understanding of the collective. As neither idea nor practice is to succumb to the other, sites of memory are informed by dynamic forces oscillating between practice and idea, remembrance and recollection. Both history and popular memory are involved in this perpetual project that Nora described as ‘no longer quite life, not yet death, like shells on the shore when the sea of living memory has receded’.7

Nora’s monumental research project has been a major building block within a larger paradigmatic shift within the humanities.8 Whereas social sciences, most notably ethnology and sociological schools in the tradition of Erving Goffman, Pierre Bourdieu or the Cultural Studies Group have always acknowledged the constructive and productive nature of memory and its functionality for forging collective orientations, the mnemonic turn signified a major irritation for the science of history. A new generation of scholars’ mistrust in official records as politically instrumentalized sources of history and the discomfort with writing a history from above sparked the willingness of rewriting history from below by giving a voice to the thus far unheard, the marginalized and the suppressed. The methodological shift towards oral history promised heightened authenticity, though the researchers also faced the challenges of operating with subjective, distorted, perceptions.

There have been four main theoretical approaches to memory, which can be grouped into either ‘top down’ or ‘bottom up’ approaches. Notwithstanding the differences, no one will disagree with the common observation that societies ‘reconstruct their pasts rather than faithfully record them, and that they do so with the needs of contemporary culture clearly in mind – manipulating the past in order to mold the present’.9 The starting point for all research is that every social group develops a memory of its own past that highlights its unique identity.10 French sociologist Maurice Halbwachs was probably the earliest to hint at the impact of the collective on the work of personal memory superseding the role of professional historical scholarship as a distinctive mode of recollecting the past. In his later work he also prepared the ground for the ‘presentist’ main argument stating that we use our mental images of the present to reconstruct our past.11 Collective memory, Halbwachs asserted, is always selective; different groups of people have different collective memories, which in turn give rise to different modes of behaviour. Halbwachs thus elaborated the ‘Durkheimian’ view of the function of remembering in society from a focus on commemorative rituals as a basis for social order to one on collective memory that promotes commitment to a social group by symbolizing its values and organizations. Arguably Nora’s work with its focus on the material, functional and symbolic dimensions of memory is a restatement of this approach, though with the significant difference outlined above, namely that the frames which help constitute public acts of remembrance are also constituted by them.

The best-known example of a top-down ‘presentist’ approach has been provided by the historians Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger in their collection on The Invention of Tradition that sees the past as being used strategically to serve the current interests and needs of dominant groups or classes in society, rather than the needs of a group or society as a whole.12 The ‘popular memory’ approach – to be found in the work of people like Raphael Samuel and Cultural Studies scholars13 – offers a more ‘bottom-up’ attempt to consider how some events form popular, vernacular or unofficial memory and thus create the potential for struggles and resistance to dominant ‘readings’ of historical moments. Finally, the ‘dynamics of memory’ approach argues that memory is subject to active restructuring through time but within limits. Memory is negotiated as a ‘cumulative and an
episodic construction of the past'. Hence battles rage over memory studies as much as over the study of battles, conflicts, and divisions in society.

Memory studies have only recently gained momentum in Japan where they have found a fertile ground for transdisciplinary research. The scarcity of published sources, which usually pay only totemic lip service to the authors that pioneered the realms of memory (studies), comes as a surprise given that the collective soul searching has a long tradition dating back to the pre-modern times of the Kokugaku (‘National School’) which attempted to regain autonomy from the dominant influence of Chinese scholarship in order to rewrite a national cultural and political history of Japan. The quest for defining the national essence was intensified by Japan’s enhanced encounters with the outer world in the late nineteenth century. Books like Nitobe Inazo’s *Bushido – The Soul of Japan* (1900) or Ishihara Shintaro’s *A Japan that Can Say No* (1991) were neither the earliest nor the latest contributions to a public discourse — and an always bestselling book genre of many thousand titles — exhuming and delineating characteristic traits of the Japanese people. Essentialist readings of the national character have also been related to the way sports are practised and consumed in Japan, most notably with regard to the national sports of sumo and baseball, and also in the academic realm of cultural and social study of sports. However, critical deconstructions have been few and wanting.

To the best of our knowledge, this issue represents the first and most detailed attempt at applying Pierre Nora’s conception of sites of memory to sports in Japan. Why we deem this undertaking as a valuable step forward benefitting both the academic fields of Japanese studies and sports studies will be shown below. Referring back and forward to the studies of this issue, we present how the case studies can be ordered in a way suggested by Nora. In addition, we introduce three axial dimensions to grasp the complexities of the linkage between sports and collective memories in Japan. In general, we want to explore to what degree sports can be identified as a suitable field of investigation for a topology of Japanese symbolism. It will be a final task to reflect upon the question whether the study of sports as a site of memory actually perpetuates the official reading of the past at the expense of counter-memory. Applied to the case of Japan, we want to argue that there is a specific way of remembering which is both related to the particularities of sport consumption in Japan and the cultures of remembrance and oblivion.

### A rough guide to dimensions of sites of memory in Japanese sports

Nora himself suggested a number of discretionary pairs and gradient categories that frame and help to unearth the deep structure of collective memory. From his list of classification tools, referring to the functional, symbolic and material dimensions of sites of memory, most reappear throughout the issue. In functional terms, sites of memory may be either concerned with preservation of an incommunicable experience or education; in symbolic terms, sites of memory can be categorized as dominant and dominated sites, which are either visited or attended, and between pure and composite sites in which the commemorative element may be either all-encompassing or just one among more symbolic elements. Memory may appear in all kind of objects, forms and media; it is embodied in historical figures and outstanding athletes, and it may be condensed in certain body techniques like the professional wrestler Rikidōzan’s famous ‘karate chop’ or the Oriental Witches’ ‘kaiten receive’ in volleyball. Memory is circulated through material culture, like in the sports manga that refer to historical figures and success and defeat in real life sport events. Or memory is crafted in graphic design with its numerous connections to placeless modernity and Japanese traditions. Hence Jilly Traganou deciphered typeset, colours and
other visual elements employed by the designers of the Tokyo Olympics 1964 not simply as referents to the concomitant rise in functionality and aesthetics of industrial design ‘made in Japan’. Memory is backed-up in places that are either real or virtual like the press archives that have informed a great deal of the research presented in this issue. Then there is memory of memory, which is packaged in statistical reminiscences of all-time record highs, as in the case of television viewing ratings of a nation collectively tuning in to the first Olympic final of women’s volleyball, and thereby linked with narratives of progress in telecommunications technology and consumption. Finally it is amassed in the infinite depths of the Internet, as Takahashi Yoshio’s account of 2002 Football World Cup memories in the Japanese online archive shows.

Memory may be stored in monuments like the bronze statue dedicated to the swimmer Tsuruta Yoshiyuki – or the statue of former football player, Antlers coach and manager of the national team Zico in front of the home stadium of Kashima Antlers. Memory may be firmly embedded in topographies like the Kōshien baseball park, which owes a lot to being rooted in the area of western Japan, or the World Cup stadia marking the recent appraisal of regional autonomy – as well as the sites and localities surrounding the 219-km round trip between Tokyo and Hakone, being the site of Japan’s most widely watched ekiden relay race staged at the beginning of each new year. Such places actually can create a bridge between past and present. The emphasis on locality can make people forget about the impact of time as it allows a group to organize its actions and movements in relation to the stable configuration of the material world. Halbwachs also has become criticized for laying an overemphasis on the manner in which collective remembrance becomes tied down to particular figures, icons or monuments.

Nora’s differentiation between naturally experienced sites and highly intellectually elaborated sites of memory is a topic that resonates here with Aaron Skabelund’s and Andreas Niehaus’s readings of the Olympic athlete as national icon, either in its modern version of the soldier or its vernacular form of the samurai. Memories of a glory – even if tragic – past are naturally evoked by visiting the exhibition of sport heroes at the Yūshūkan Museum in the precincts of the national shrine commemorating Japan’s war dead, or by the sports memorabilia of athlete students displayed at the Hall of Fame of their former alma mater, or monuments erected in reverence to the athletes that won gold and glory for Japan at the 1932 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. At the same time, the memories enshrined or exhibited at such places, in such symbols, are invisibly linked with different readings of the past. Linked with Confucian principles and traditional values of loyalty and filial piety, they are giving sense and a particular meaning to the sacrifice of the young on the battle field. Autochthonous notions of masculinity, as symbolized by body images and body techniques inherited from the pre-modern warrior, demonstrate alternative non-Western approaches to success in competitions.

Here we briefly want to suggest alternative ways of grouping and positioning these case studies on sports as a site of memory. In addition to Nora’s own dimensions, we have derived three new dimensions. The first is concerned with immediacy and the quest for authenticity; the second with non-interchangeable patterns and forms of continuity; and the third with a functional understanding of rituality. Memory, as suggested by Aleida Assmann, combines the two very distinctive activities of storage and recall. Memory as storage implies a mechanical equation of input and output, thereby promising the kind of authenticity history as objectified narration strives to emulate. In contrast to this, memory as recall is beyond simple control; you may remember or you simply do not, although if yes, images of the past are highly likely to have been bent and distorted by inter-subjective practices of framing, interpreting and communicating, as well as other factors such as time.
and identity. As sites of memory in general attempt to explain the present in relation to the past, authenticity is established by eliminating the semantic distance between storage and recall. Sporting records are a case in point for the site of memory as honmono, or real thing, which acts as its own referent. With the growing degree of distance between referent and its semantics, a site of memory either acquires the character of a nisemono, or exhibition, which shows a desirable image but no longer in intrinsic terms, or of a nisemono, which as a fake is hiding the unwanted truth about false memory.

Hence in the case of Rikidōzan, as retold by Lee Thompson, the Korean-born wrestler continues to be acclaimed as the personification of Japanese virtues, as in the prime time of his career, despite the knowledge about his foreign ethnic origin and his close relationships with organized crime that became widely known during the 1990s. Reoccurring events and series like the All-Japan High School baseball tournament at Kōshien equally oscillate between the poles of presentation and pretension. The very locality of the stadium feeds players and spectators upon memories of a past in which match results are interconnected with particular occurrences and outstanding players’ achievements that wrote history. The sentimental memory of youth, as much as a purified and sentimental recollection of it are of major appeal to most spectators at the Kōshien and reiterated while the baseball tournament develop. At the same time, the arena has contributed to the solidification of mainstream narratives about Japan as a mono-ethnic society by virtue of excluding representatives of ethnic minority schools from the tournament. Even though this pretending memory is historically wrong, there is no such thing as a false memory.

Reflections about one’s own past thereby are not happening by chance; they are determined and determining, following an invisible script and bowing to identical rules. In the 1000-fold bio-context of generational life-paths and life careers narratives assume determining power and occasionally dominating position. The Yasukuni Shinto priests weaving a web of memories of Olympians ‘not merely as talented athletes but as Olympians who died in the war, who through their deaths had demonstrated the most venerable form of patriotism’ is another example of the intended will to remember in a particular fashion for a particular objective. Alternatively, the linkage between the successes of Japanese swimmers at the Los Angeles Olympics 1932 with the Japanese as a nation of swimmers, which Niehaus has reconstructed, has been nothing more than a manipulation of the past. It can be argued that the memory of the 2002 World Cup as Japan’s encounter with cultural globalization is also a misrepresentation, as the emphasis on festivity and hospitality overshadowed the widespread xenophobia and rigid immigration controls that usually secludes Japan off from the rest of the world.

Second, sites of memory in the articles collected here are associated with different types of continuity or moments in time. We differentiate between sites that arouse memories of a past directly linked with the present without having changed. The unbroken lineage suggests statics, solidity and security. Discontinuity is highlighted by places that remember an end of an era and the radical break with the past, the change for a new continuum, or even the introduction of a completely new condition without an immediate predecessor. With respect to the former, Robin Kietlinski found both on the colourful pages of the candidature files for Tokyo 2016, and the responses from her interview partners elicit references and a seemingly unbroken link to the past Tokyo Olympics. Continuity since a much older past has been also attested to by physical memories of traditional virtues which are engraved into the body, both voluntarily and subconsciously. Learning with the body, acquiring skill by imitation and repetitive training patterns are only some of a traditional way of learning most Japanese are familiar with since preschool times. These patterns that many Japanese learnt in physical education classes are often
mystified in esoteric training methods and fighting techniques that are characteristic of the sports comic books analysed by Abe Ikuo, and they also appear in popular biographic accounts of Japanese sport heroes. Meanwhile samurai and bushido remain powerful tokens of manliness and an athletic ethos regularly referred to in sports club practices and publicly demonstrated during the annual high school baseball tournament, but by no means there alone, as the research on pre-war sports has shown.

Gender roles are another memory in which continuity with the past seems to dominate. Traditional gender relations are unearthed by the study of sports manga or a gender-sensitive analysis of the 1964 Olympic volleyball team trainer–athlete relationship, which reflected the worker–boss relations in modern enterprises. Its vivid replication in the media and popular culture show that most were willing to acknowledge the double discrimination of women; they were subordinated because of gender and this positioning was reinforced by severe limitations in economic opportunities and roles to select from.

As for discontinuities, several of the articles draw attention to breaks away from an unwanted past or the new directivity as a corrective to what went wrong in the past. In his chapter, Niehaus identifies pre-war swimming contests as a symbolic stage for Japan’s challenge to US hegemony. Similarly, Thompson remarks on the collective eagerness for resistance to humiliation by the western powers and ultimate revenge in the figure of Rikidōzan. There is no continuity to hail on but a new opportunity and way to embark on. The use of technology and inventiveness helping to overcome the physical disadvantages of Japanese athletes is also part of this dimension of memory. In addition, we note that ruptures in temporality also feature in sport-related episodes. Those ruptures are more than discontinuities setting the mark for a new practice or memory. In that instance, we refer to the ‘henrys’ Korean pop culture boom in Japan that would have been unthinkable without the improved Japan–Korea relationship after the co-hosted Football World Cup 2002, or the decentralization processes in Japan which saw the stimulation of local regions as a re-memorization of regional identity. Traganou argued, with reference to the apparent newness of modernist Japanese design at the Tokyo Olympics, that subscription into the more abstract, non-iconic, principles of the modern movement actually has been possible because of the de-traditionalization of Japanese visual languages. The twisted relationship between modern Japan, its origin, past, and competitors in the global arena is a common point of contention in rupturing sites of memory.

Third, we want to suggest that the articles contained here are also helpful in uncovering the ritual functionality of memory in sports. Sites of memory may either be rooted in festive stages of the non-ordinary (hare) or in the longer routines of everyday work and rest (ke), which are basic points of orientation in folkloristic belief. The strict binary dualism was flexed and bended after Namihira Emiko had added a third category of kegare to the meaning system. Following Sakutai Tokutarō, we do not take hare and ke as simply contrasting principles, but as two discrete conditions mediated by the third one of kegare. Within this triad, ke (probably identical with the better known notion of ki, or chi) refers to the energy of life; hare thus are purifying ceremonies needed to counter the ‘withering state’ (kegare) of ke.

Rituals provide place and time for collective reorientation; they employ forms and gestures of varying complexity to empower the members of a collective to reflect about the group. In Japanese ritual terminology, the Tokyo Olympics, the summer events at the Kōshien baseball park and the World Cup Finals are prototypical of states of hare restoring the vital energy of the community. More profane sports sites of memory, such as the real life figure of Rikidōzan and the sports manga, are rooted in the principle of ke and open to permutation to kegare.
These also include the regional rivalry played out between a Kansai (and any other region)-based baseball team and ‘Japan’s team’, the Tokyo Yomiuri Giants, whilst (once again) Kōshien ‘signals the noble challenge but inevitable failure of the regions to contest the dominant power of the national center’. We can discern the polluted/kegare in the form of the murky world of puro resu (professional wrestling), which is countering public norms, and the liminal/kegare spaces alluded to in the discussions of the Football World Cup as a compo-site of regional revitalization efforts and the Yasukuni display of the war dead – ‘portrayed as interconnected selfless acts completed on behalf the nation, which the population at large ought to emulate’.

Conclusion
Each of the three dimensions of memory evoked and revealed in the studies that are contained in this issue demonstrates the promise of, and purchase that, a focus on sport and lieu de mémoire provides to scholars both of sport and Japanese society. We draw a tentative conclusion that the articles in this issue demonstrate that historical studies of sports can open a window onto the topology of Japanese symbolism. Kelly’s article identifies three of the most important aspects that make sports so central for collective memories in twentieth century. His exploration of the Kōshien stadium is an example par excellence that research into sports indeed is a valuable field for deconstructing the way sports proliferate notions of Japanese-ness and renders them intelligible for domestic and foreign consumption.

The particularities of sports consumption in Japan are also helpful in symbolically reiterating Japan’s specific and sometimes contradictory positioning in its path towards modernity: that is, sports and its very own paradoxes of nationalism and internationalism, of competition and playfulness, of body and mind-oriented patterns of movement, help Japan to see itself simultaneously as being modern like the West and to be modern like Japan; to strive simultaneously for equal and a quite superior ranking, and to be the same and yet also different. The study of design enables us to see this ‘echoing Japanese society’s fluctuation between tradition and modernity nationalism and internationalism, past and future’. Investigation of sites of memory also enables investigation of the way Japan is coming to terms with the real or imagined trauma of defeat, the experience of subordination (in international politics as well as in sports) and in this way reminds us to give considerations to the ethics of memory and the ethical turn in memory studies.

Emotions attached to memories can be both positive and negative, involving shame and losing face, as much as glorifying one’s sense of self and belonging to a greater (even if imagined) collectivity. But the ethical dimensions of memory are also bounded and framed by imperatives, often imposed by dominant social groups. Our discussion has shown how strict the Japanese approach has been. Certain matters must be remembered in a particular way, and others are not to be remembered at all. Precisely because of the susceptibility of sports to the varying interest it has to serve, sports sites of memory are a comparatively safe haven in troubled waters with regard to the troubling relationships between Japan and its neighbours. In this respect, it is important to retain a degree of self-reflexive awareness and be critical of the turn to memory, partly evinced by Nora’s ambitious project. The medium of a scholarly journal and the English language may in fact be major obstacles impeding the refuelling of public memory in Japan. Any critical analysis of sites of memory arguably also actually contributes to the separation of sports memory from sports history. Memories are often only accessible to investigation when they have become texts, and as such are already shaped into the material of history. Amongst other questions, therefore, we need first to continue to ask to what degree...
pre-modern societies have actually shared and nourished the ‘living memory’, the loss of which has been bemoaned by Nora. Second, we must take issue with the notion of ‘collective memory’ as an absolute, all-encompassing, entity, since we must also consider opportunities for the investigation of counter-memory and counter-memorialization.

Notes
1 Rigney, ‘Divided Pasts’, 94.
2 Cf Kelly, ‘Bloods and Guts’.
3 Radstone, ‘Memory Studies’, 33.
4 Coming to terms with the notion of lieu de mémoire, or sites of memory, is a daunting task indeed. Jammed between the two equally complicated and complex constructs of history and memory, the sites of memory defy any easy attempt at clarification. Nora’s own exploration proceeds along the dialectics of classical Greco-Roman rhetoric, although in his attempt at pinpointing the meaning as a composite of similarities and differences, his own narrative arguably rewinds and rebounds without exactly hitting the middle ground between history and memory.
6 Nora may have been seduced by the stylistic elegance suggested by the phonetic similarity of lieu and milieu. This would explain his unease with restricting the applicability of sites of memories to places of remembrance or other topographical dimension and the translation as realms of memory in later editions. The German version of Erinnerungsorte emphasizes the local dimension.
7 Nora, ‘Between Memory and History’, 12
8 Sturken claims in her Tangled Memories that the instability of memory is not specific to postmodern times. While we agree with her that fragility and fluidity are what makes memory political and subject to debate, we argue that the recent fascination with memory studies has been triggered by broader social changes of the risk society, or what Zygmunt Bauman refers to as the consequences of liquid modernity. Solid modernity followed its unquestioned rules and dynamics; knowledge about the past as the origin of the present was as much seen as established as the directivity of future developments. The age of uncertainty has lost its teleological foundations, hence the increased nostalgic turn towards a retrospective examination of an individually memorized past.
9 Cf Kammen, Mystic Cords of Memory.
10 Misztal, Theories of Social Remembering, 51.
11 Cf Halbwachs, ‘Historical Memory and Collective Memory’. Twenty-five years prior to this essay, published posthumously in 1950 after his death in a Nazi camp, his book on The Social Frameworks of Memory had argued that social and individual memory alike are shaped by social processes with the groups the individual belongs to.
12 Cf Hobsbawm and Ranger, The Invention of Tradition.
13 Cf Samuels, Theatres of Memory; Popular Memory Group, ‘Popular Memory’.
15 The inauguration of the journal Memory Studies in 2008 is a significant factor in the continuation of academic debates on the nature of memory that once started as a fierce turf war between French historians and sociologists. On the pros and cons of the autonomization of this new research field, see Olick, ‘Collective Memory’.
16 Robert Whiting’s extensive work on baseball in Japan (The Chrysanthemum and the Bat) and Eugen Herrigel’s study of archery (Zen in the Art of Archery), among others, are well-known examples written for international consumption that have adopted the conventions of essentializing and auto-stereotyping from the Japanese discourse.
17 Assmann, ‘Speichern oder erinnern?’, 15.
18 See Skabelund in this issue.
19 Cf Kelly, ‘Learning to Swing’.
20 Cf Yanagita, Kaijō no michi. Yanagita Kunio’s discretionary pair was later combined with structural analogies developed by sociologist Emile Durkheim (the opposition between sacred and profane) or anthropologists Mary Douglas and Edmund Leach (pure and impure).
21 Cf Namihira, Kegare no kočō. Namihira argued that kegare combined the non-ordinary of sacred times with the impure. However, Kegare has different meanings and functions for different strands of anthropologists. Miyata Noboru, for example, argued that kegare as a subcategory of ke designates a liminal area. The circle of life is characterized by contrasting developments from ke
to kegare and from kegare to hare. Over the 1980s, the relationship between these principles dominated the attention of anthropologists in Japan.

22 See Kelly in this issue.
23 See Skabelund in this issue.
24 See Traganou in this issue.

References


