

Baseball Fans and Politics: Giants Mania in Japan

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Political Affiliation and Socio-Economic Status of Fans in Two-Team Cities

Shortly after the opening of the new Comiskey Park in Chicago, as White Sox attendance surged, spurred by the novelty of the new stadium, an unusual banner appeared in the stands. Unlike most of its counterparts, which expressed fervent support for the home team or for a favorite Sox player, this one carried a different message: "Go back to Wrigley, Yuppie scum!"

That incident illustrates an interesting but neglected phenomenon of baseball demographics: the socio-economic dimension of fan support in multi-team cities. Initially, the primary distinction between Cub and White Sox fans in Chicago was geographic. The Cubs moved from their original home on the West Side into what is now Wrigley Field in 1916, after the demise of the Federal League Whales, the original occupants of the park. The area had been isolated until the completion of the elevated railway in 1893, but "by the turn of the century the North Side was one of the most desirable residential areas," according to Steven Reiss (1980, p.98).

On the other hand, the South Side neighborhood where Charles Comiskey erected the first Comiskey Park in 1911 was quite different. To quote Reiss once more:

...important changes were taking place in the nearby Douglas community west of Wentworth Avenue. That area was an integral part of the growing black belt developing east of State Street between Twelfth Thirty-ninth Streets. . . . (1980, p. 97)

The presence of a large black community so close to their park may well have hurt Sox attendance. The proximity of a black neighborhood undoubtedly frightened away a number of white fans, especially after the 1919 race riots. People traveling to Comiskey Park probably felt some trepidation getting off the el or a streetcar in the vicinity of a mainly black area (Reiss, 1980, pp. 97-98).

Reiss is, of course, dealing here with a time period when the family car was much less ubiquitous than it is today, when the flight to suburbia was far in the future, and when virtually all fans arrived at the ball park via public transportation. Nevertheless, the social distinctions between Cubs' and White Sox fans which emerged seventy-five years ago survive to a remarkable extent into the present, at least in terms of the public images of the two groups. The typical Cub fan is—or is perceived as—a white collar, middle class suburbanite, whereas the stereotypic Sox aficionado is a blue collar shot-and-a-beer type. Even the shirtless, grubby Wrigley Field bleacher bums are often junior executives temporarily letting their hair down. During the long period when Cubs' management held out against the installation of lights at the ball park, few genuine working class fans could afford to take a weekday afternoon off to attend a game, but spurious grandmothers' funerals were easier for office workers to orchestrate. Ironically, although the Cubs have had many more black stars than the Sox through the years—Ernie Banks, Billy Williams, Fergy Jenkins, Andre Dawson—few black faces are seen in the stands at Wrigley.

A similar situation existed in New York before the departure of the Giants and Dodgers for California, but with an added political dimension which was dramatically

evident in the decade from 1947 to 1957. I'm not sure who coined the famous aphorism, "Rooting for the Yankees is like rooting for General Motors", but its wide currency is testimony to its appropriateness. It is not surprising that Curt Smith, author of the definitive history of baseball broadcasting (Smith, 1989), is both a former Reagan speech writer and a life-long Yankee fan; the same rooting interest was shared by ex-president Richard Nixon and by Roy Cohn, the late right-wing guru of Army-McCarthy hearing fame. This was, after all, the next to last big league team to integrate, after much posturing about finding the appropriate black player who fit the "Yankee image"—suitably buttoned down and conservative. Before the ultimate anointing of Elston Howard such earlier candidates as Vic Power, who went on to a fine career with the A's and Indians, were rejected on the grounds that they were too flamboyant. A cynic might be tempted to substitute the word "uppity" for "flamboyant" here.

On the other hand, the 1947 advent of Jackie Robinson in Brooklyn earned the Dodgers the immediate support of virtually every liberal and civil libertarian baseball fan not merely in New York but in all of North America. As Roger Kahn and Jules Tygiel have both eloquently pointed out, going to Ebbets Field and rooting for Jackie, Campy and Newk—along with, to paraphrase Terry Cashman's "Talkin' Baseball," Peewee, Preacher and the Duke—was, in addition to being hugely enjoyable, a statement of political faith (Kahn, 1973; Tygiel, 1983).

The same was true, to a lesser extent, of the Giants. Monte Irvin and Hank Thompson were part of the second wave of black players in the majors (i.e., post-Robinson and Doby), and were soon to be joined by the incomparable Willie Mays. Much as they may have hated one another, Giant and Dodger fans during the fifties were essentially birds of a feather, separated more by geography than ideology, and both were a breed apart from the arrogant, supercilious Yankee supporter. Both National League teams, although they enjoyed occasional moments of glory, were, compared with the Bronx Bombers, losers. Yankee fans were the sort whose favorite college football team was Notre Dame (unless they were virulently anti-Catholic), or who went to the race track and bet two dollars on the favorite to show.

All of this began to change when the Dodgers and Giants decamped for California. The Dodgers in particular increasingly took on both the corporate image of the O'Malley family and the glitz of La La Land and had become, by the eighties, the Yankees of the National League. In 1962, however, the Mets stepped into the breach as the blue collar New York team, uniting former Giant and Dodger supporters in a common new allegiance. Early Mets' management shrewdly capitalized on their image as lovable losers. Fans began to vie with one another to display the cleverest banner, an informal contest which was institutionalized as a "Banner Day" with generous prizes, at a time when all such manifestations of fan support were prohibited in Yankee Stadium on the grounds that they were undignified.

As the Mets gradually achieved respectability on the field and the Yankee dynasty began to crumble, both of these images blurred somewhat. Still, the antics of George Steinbrenner made it easy to go on hating the Yankees even when they were losers, and it was, after all, his illegal contributions to the 1968 Nixon campaign which entangled Steinbrenner with the law. Joan Payson, the original owner of the Mets, may have been a multi-millionaire, but she was also a sweet old lady, everyone's grandmother—a non-abrasive version of Marge Schott.

There are, alas, no Bill Veecks remaining among the ranks of baseball owners nowadays. The economics of the modern game are such that great wealth—often inherited wealth—is a prerequisite for ownership. The Kennedy family to the contrary notwithstanding, that is not an attribute which tends to go hand in hand with Political Correctness. It seems safe to maintain that Steve Forbes is a more typical representative of the Very Rich than Jay Rockefeller, in terms of general political

stance. If today's socially conscious fan depends on the political position of the club owner to decide which team to root for, he will be hard put to make a choice. Who is further to the right, Wayne Huizenga of Blockbuster Video (Florida Marlins) or George Steinbrenner? My own loyalties have shifted over the years from the Dodgers to the Mets to the Atlanta Braves, but I confess to being uncomfortable from time to time with various aspects of Ted Turner's public persona.

There are, of course, far fewer two-team cities in the majors today than there were forty years ago—only New York, Chicago, greater Los Angeles, and the San Francisco Bay area. In each of those cases, there is a fairly clear-cut distinction between the establishment (Yankees, Cubs, Dodgers, Giants) and the anti-establishment (Mets, White Sox, Angels, A's) team.¹ It is somewhat difficult, however, to pin down the precise prerequisites for establishment status. For the Yankees and the Dodgers, a winning tradition certainly plays a part, but the modern-day Cubs are quintessential losers, and other recently successful franchises—Oakland, Kansas City, Pittsburgh, Baltimore—lack the corporate image of the Dodgers and Yanks.²

The political geographers Fred Shelley and K. F. Cartin have investigated geographical factors in fan support and have promised to extend their analysis into the areas of race, ethnicity, religion and political preference (Shelley & Cartin, 1985, pp. 77-95), but until their results are published it would be premature to attempt a definitive statement here. Instead, I will turn to an absolutely unequivocal case: the Yomiuri Giants of Japan.

The Giants and Japanese Baseball

Baseball was introduced to Japan in the nineteenth century by students returning from American universities and quickly gained a popularity rivaled only by that of sumo. It remained strictly an amateur affair, however, until 1934. In that year the *Asahi Shimbun*, a major national daily newspaper, organized the first nation-wide high school championship tournament, and that annual event quickly became the high point of the summer for millions of Japanese fans—a status that it retains to this day (Whiting, 1989, pp. 239-262). Played since 1924 at Koshien Stadium near Osaka, a sixty-thousand seat facility which is jammed to capacity for two weeks in August, it is a single-elimination affair involving forty-nine prefectural champions from all over the country, and the level of public interest is truly remarkable. Three games are played per day during the early rounds, and virtually every television set in Japan is tuned in to the proceedings.

By the 1920s college baseball—particularly the contests of the "Big Six" university league in Tokyo—had become almost as popular as the high school game, and active recruiting of star high school players occasionally extended to Japanese Americans from Hawaii and California; a Hawaiian battery, pitcher Henry "Bozo" Wakabayashi and catcher Yoshio "Kaiser" Tanaka, starred for Hosei University during the early thirties and went on to distinguished professional careers.

The Japanese had been exposed to the American professional game as early as 1908, when an aggregation of fringe major leaguers and Pacific Coast League players sponsored by the Reach Sporting Goods company compiled a 17-0 record against Japanese collegians. In 1913 the New York Giants and Chicago White Sox played the first three games of their famous world tour in Japan. Subsequent visits by mixed groups of major and minor leaguers occurred in 1920 and 1922, and in 1931 the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, one of *Asahi's* chief rivals for national circulation, sponsored a tour by a genuine All-Star team, featuring Lou Gehrig, Lefty Grove, Mickey Cochrane, Frank Frisch, Lefty O'Doul and Al Simmons (Whiting, 1977, pp. 39-41). The Japanese opposition on all of these early barnstorming trips consisted of college all-stars, and they fared predictably badly. The 1922 American tourists lost one game,

but otherwise the hosts were winless. Still, attendance was high and interest in the domestic game was stimulated by the periodic American visits. Japanese fans could console themselves for their players' lack of success with the realization that they were, after all, amateurs playing against professionals.

In the late fall of 1934 the Yomiuri organization planned to sponsor another tour, this one involving an American League all-star team which included the aging Babe Ruth (Ruth had missed the 1931 trip because he was busy making a movie.) The prospect of seeing the Sultan of Swat, even in the twilight of his career, raised Japanese interest to an unprecedented level, but late in the summer the Ministry of Education unexpectedly announced that college students would be prohibited from playing against the American pros. The motives behind that ruling are not entirely clear, but it was undoubtedly connected with the prewar rise of Japanese nationalism. There was great emphasis at the time on the moral and spiritual purity of Japanese youth, and that quality was in danger of contamination by competition—particularly unsuccessful competition—against foreign professionals.

With arrangements for the tour already well in hand, Masutaro Shoriki, president of the Yomiuri company, had no alternative except to hastily assemble a motley collection of recent college graduates, industrial leaguers, and high school players to provide opposition for the visiting Americans. Because the industrial leaguers would be forsaking their company teams and the high schoolers would sacrifice future college eligibility, Shoriki authorized his representatives to offer professional contracts—the first in Japanese baseball—to the recruits.

Predictably, the A.L. stars swept their sixteen games against the new Japanese professionals, most of them by lopsided scores (although seventeen-year-old Eiji Sawamura pitched a one-hitter in a 1-0 loss on November 20.) Nevertheless, on December 26, 1934, the Japan All Stars were officially renamed the Yomiuri Giants, becoming, as the first full-time professional team, the Japanese equivalents of the nineteenth century Cincinnati Red Stockings. For the next year they remained the only professional club in the country, and most of the 1935 season was devoted to a 3 1/2 month barnstorming tour of the United States and Canada, on which they compiled a 75-35-1 record against local semi-pros and an occasional minor league team. On December 10, 1935, the Hanshin company of Osaka, a railroad and department store conglomerate, announced the formation of a second professional club, the Hanshin Tigers, and five additional teams were founded during the winter of 1935-36.

There was no formal league play in 1936, but the new Nippon Professional Baseball Federation organized two round-robin tournaments in July and September of that year involving all seven pro teams. An eighth team joined the fold in 1937 and league competition began, with a 96-game split-season schedule. That format remained intact with only minor modifications through the Second World War, although the 1944 season was much abbreviated and baseball was canceled altogether in 1945.

Japanese professional baseball resumed in 1946, and took on its current form—two six-team leagues, the Central and the Pacific, with each team playing 130 games—in 1950. Over the years the Yomiuri Giants, in addition to being the oldest professional team and by far the most popular—an issue to be addressed in a moment—have also been the most successful on the field. In the forty-six years from 1950 to 1995 they won the Central League pennant twenty-seven times, and on eighteen of those occasions went on to capture the Japan Series. If pre-war and wartime seasons are included, they can claim a total of thirty-six league championships, twenty-two more than their closest competitors, the Pacific League Seibu Lions. Between 1965 and 1973 the Giants won nine consecutive league and

Japan Series crowns, an achievement that outshines even the Yankee dynasty at its peak.

Robert Whiting devotes a chapter of *The Chrysanthemum and the Bat*, his pioneering work on Japanese baseball, to the Giants' popularity, and makes an explicit comparison with the Yankees:

Suspend your powers of disbelief momentarily and imagine the following: The New York Yankees have won the American League pennant and the World Series eleven times since 1961, including one streak of *nine* years in a row... NBC has telecast every Yankee game nationwide, each evening during prime time for fifteen years, and continually leads all other network's ratings for that time slot. During this same span the Yankees have drawn capacity crowds for every single game they have played: at home, on the road, and even during the exhibition season. One out of two baseball fans in the United States is a devout Yankee enthusiast.

Envision all this, and you have a fairly good idea of how successful and popular the Yomiuri Giants are in Japan. They are, in short, a national institution. Since professional play began in 1936, they have totally dominated Japanese baseball in a way that really has no parallel in America (Whiting, 1977, p. 211).

If anything, Whiting's assessment of the proportion of Giants' rooters among Japanese baseball fans may be an underestimate; my own admittedly nonscientific guess would put it as high as seventy-five percent. The most direct measure of any team's popularity is attendance; the following table presents home attendance figures for the 1994 season:

Japanese Home Attendance, 1994

<u>Central League:</u>		<u>Pacific League:</u>	
Yomiuri Giants (Tokyo)	3,540,000	Fukuoka Daiei Hawks	2,525,000
Hanshin Tigers (Osaka)	2,768,000	Nippon Ham Fighters (Tokyo)	1,721,000
Yakult Swallows (Tokyo)	2,153,000	Seibu Lions (Tokyo suburbs)	1,688,000
Chunichi Dragons (Nagoya)	2,063,000	Orix Blue Wave (Kobe)	1,407,000
Yokohama Bay Stars	1,530,000	Kintetsu Buffaloes (Osaka)	1,133,000
Hiroshima Toyo Carp	1,150,000	Chiba Lotte Marines (Tokyo suburbs)	1,086,000

Table 1

Source: Wayne S. Graczyk: 1995 Japan Pro Baseball Handbook and Media Guide: Tokyo (rounding in original)

There are several noteworthy aspects of these figures. First, it should be borne in mind that they reflect a 130 game season, or sixty-five home dates per team (double headers are never played in Japan.) Thus, the Giants averaged 54,462 fans per home appearance, in a stadium with an official capacity of 55,000. In fact, since a handful of "home" games are annually played at neutral sites in provincial cities with smaller ball parks, they were for practical purposes at or even over capacity. When they play on the road, Giants' supporters often outnumber home team fans in the

stands. Two Central League rivals, Yakult and Hanshin, capitalize on the Giants' popularity by raising their ticket prices when Yomiuri visits.

Note also the disparity in attendance figures between the two leagues, a difference attributable almost entirely to the Giants' presence in the Central League. Joe Stanka, a star American pitcher for the Nankai Hawks (predecessors of Daiei) during the 1960, recounts (personal communication) that he would periodically check the newspaper attendance figures for the previous night's games, and invariably find that the Giants' game alone had attracted more fans than the three Pacific League tilts combined.

In recent years the Pacific League Seibu Lions have achieved a dominance on the field comparable to that of the Giants during the sixties and seventies, winning nine pennants and seven Japan Series titles between 1982 and 1994. The Lions play in a beautiful stadium in Tokorozawa, a posh Tokyo suburb, and fans can walk from the local commuter station on the Seibu railway line to the ball park in under five minutes. The team is aggressively marketed by the Seibu corporation, which owns several department stores and numerous investment properties in addition to the railroad. Yet, in large part because they play in the wrong league, Seibu's 1994 home attendance was less than half that of Yomiuri.

Through the years, the Giants have benefited from more than their share of favorable calls, both from the umps on the field and from the Commissioner's office. Favoritism by umpires is, of course, a serious charge and a difficult one to substantiate, but, following a notoriously bad ball/strike call in the 1961 Japan Series that cost the Nankai Hawks a win over the Giants, a Pacific League umpire published an article alleging that several Central League arbiters had openly admitted to him that they were biased in favor of Yomiuri. In 1986 umpire Okada was fined 150,000 yen and suspended for a year after publicly stating that he wanted the Giants to score first in any game he officiated (Stanka and Stanka, 1989, p. 206).

The most notorious example of favoritism at more exalted levels of the Japanese baseball hierarchy was the case of pitcher Suguru Egawa and the 1977 amateur draft. The draft was instituted in Japanese baseball during the late 1960s and operates much like its North American counterpart. Egawa, an overpowering right-hander from Hosei University, was clearly a top prospect in 1977. He was drafted by Seibu, but announced that he would not sign for any amount of money with any team except Yomiuri. He spent the ensuing season in the Alaska semi-pro league and threatened to pursue a career in American baseball if the draft rules were not changed to allow him to join the Giants. The night before the 1978 draft, Egawa signed a contract with Yomiuri; both parties claimed that, since 365 days had elapsed since the 1977 draft, the Lions' rights had expired and the pitcher was a free agent.

The following day Egawa was drafted again, this time by the Hanshin Tigers. The case was turned over for adjudication to the professional baseball executive committee, which ruled the Yomiuri contract invalid. The Giants responded by threatening to withdraw from the Central League and form a new league of their own—saying, in effect, "either play by my rules or I'll take my ball and go home." Their status as the top draw in Japanese baseball made this seem more than an empty threat. Commissioner Toshi Kaneko stepped in, pressuring the Tigers to sign Egawa and then trade him to the Giants—a direct violation of a rule prohibiting the trading of draftees. This was too much even for some die-hard Yomiuri fans; Egawa was ultimately suspended for two months and Kaneko was forced to resign as commissioner (Whiting, 1989, pp. 205-207). However, Egawa went on to become the Nolan Ryan of Japanese baseball with the Giants, establishing numerous strike out records.

According to Whiting, emotional attachment to the Giants extends even to at least one rival club owner; Hisami Matsuzono, owner of the Yakult Swallows, "was an

unabashed Giants fan and was frequently quoted as saying that the ideal situation would be for the Giants to finish first and the Swallows runner-up (Whiting, 1989, p. 7). There is supposedly a pecuniary motive for this attitude; Matsuzono's Yakult corporation produces a yogurt health drink, and sales of the product decline sharply whenever the Swallows beat the Giants.

Whiting attributes the popularity of the Giants largely to the power of the Yomiuri media empire: The Giants' 'lovability' can of course be partly traced to the fact that the team is owned by the Yomiuri conglomerate of the Shoriki family—a vast media complex well equipped to propagate the Giant legend. It includes the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, one of the largest selling daily newspapers in the world, the *Hochi Shimbun*, a leading sports daily, and Nippon Television, the third largest TV network in Japan. No other club is as fortunate. When the Yomiuri media machine moves into action it virtually buries every other team in baseball. Yomiuri newspapers ensure extra space for photos and stories about the Giants. And the network, besides telecasting their games, inundates its program schedule with shows featuring Giant players. Consequently, the nation often knows more about the Giants' latest rookie than it does about the established stars on other teams (Whiting, 1977, pp. 213-214).

For the first thirty-five years of their existence the Giants were very much the creatures of their founder, Masutaro Shoriki (1885-1969). Shoriki was a flamboyant figure whose remarkable personal history conjures up a sort of cross between former Dodger and Yankee owner Larry MacPhail and British newspaper magnate Robert Maxwell. Born to a middle class provincial family, he graduated from the elite Tokyo Imperial University and took up a career in law enforcement, becoming, by 1923, Chief of Detectives of the Tokyo Metropolitan Police. In December of that year a left wing fanatic made an unsuccessful assassination attempt on the then Prince Regent and future Showa Emperor. Even though the attempt failed, Shoriki felt obliged to resign his position in atonement for having allowed it to take place at all. Borrowing the equivalent of \$14,000 from family and friends, he purchased the *Yomiuri Shimbun*, a struggling publication with a circulation of only about 40,000 at the time. Through a number of innovations, including the first women's page of any Japanese daily newspaper and a greatly expanded sports coverage, he quickly turned it into an enormously successful enterprise; at his death in 1969 circulation was over 3,000,000, and it has more than doubled since then.³

The sponsorship of the 1931 and 1934 American all-star tours, and the founding of the Giants in 1934, were part of Shoriki's campaign to boost circulation. In the light of his later association with ultraconservative politics, it is ironic that an incident during the 1934 tour nearly cost him his life. The largest stadium in Tokyo at the time (still in use, it is now the home of the Yakult Swallows) was located in the grounds of the Meiji shrine, a memorial to the emperor who presided over the modernization of Japan and the glorious victory in the Russo-Japanese War. Several games between the fledgling Giants and the visiting Americans were played at that site. Enraged at what he perceived as a desecration of the memory of the Emperor Meiji, a sword-wielding nationalist zealot attacked Shoriki, severely injuring him and inflicting permanent scars.

In spite of that episode, Shoriki and his newspaper took a consistently militaristic line during the pre-war years—although in fairness it must be conceded that the Japanese press as a whole was under rigid government control at the time and it would have been difficult for him to have done otherwise. In October of 1940, a month after the signing of the Tripartite Pact with Germany and Italy, all Japanese political parties were officially abolished and replaced by the Imperial Rule Assistance Association (*Taisei Yokusan Kai*), which was intended to be a superparty comparable to the Italian Fascists as well as a national propaganda agency (Brown, 1955, pp. 220-221). Shoriki became an official of this new body, a position which

earned him a two-year incarceration after the war as a suspected war criminal. (He was never formally charged.)

After the outbreak of the Korean War in 1950, Shoriki, along with numerous other pre-war nationalists, was officially "de-purged." He became a Conservative member of the Japanese Diet and served at various times as head of the Hokkaido Development Board, Chairman of the Japan Atomic Energy Commission, and Director-General of the Science and Technology Agency, all cabinet-level posts. More significant, perhaps, was his position as co-founder and vice-president of the Martial Virtues Association (*Butoku Kai*). This organization, a new incarnation of a society originally established in 1895, was revived in 1954 with the stated objective of promoting a "healthy military spirit, especially among young people" (Morris, 1960, p. 242), and hence represented the first faint stirring of post-war militarism in Japan.

Throughout Shoriki's career, then he was publicly and very visibly associated with various nationalistic causes. That association, I would argue, may be a significant factor in the popularity of the Giants. While he lived, Shoriki was linked as closely with his ball club in the public mind as was, say, Tom Yawkey with the Red Sox or Walter O'Malley with the Dodgers. Overt manifestations of Japanese nationalism were severely frowned on during the post-war period, even after the American Occupation had ended, but nationalistic sentiments did not miraculously disappear in August of 1945. Harumi Befu has argued persuasively that the rise of *Nihonjinron* scholarship in contemporary Japan—studies purporting to demonstrate various aspects of Japanese uniqueness—represents a socially acceptable and intellectually at least quasi-respectable way of expressing nationalist feelings in a non-political context (Befu, 1992, pp. 26-46). Rooting for Shoriki's Giants may have satisfied comparable yearnings.

There is some irony in the fact that the Yomiuri Giants were not only the first professional baseball team in Japan, they were also the first to employ a foreign player. Victor Starfin, a Russian émigré, was a member of the original 1934 team and a star during the late thirties and forties, the first pitcher in Japanese baseball history to win 300 games (Thompson & Ikei, 1987, pp. 4-19). Furthermore, when Japanese baseball returned after the war the Giants featured two Japanese American players, Wally Yonamine and Andy Miyamoto. During the glory years from 1961 to 1974, however, Yomiuri was the only team in the Japanese majors which disdained the use of Americans. That period coincided, of course, with the beginning of the Japanese "Economic Miracle" and the growth of a new national pride out of the ashes of military defeat. Donald Roden has pointed out that the initial Japanese embrace of baseball in the nineteenth century was part of their "quest for national dignity" (Roden, 1980, pp. 511-534); that quest was resumed after the end of the Occupation, and for many Japanese it was symbolized by the success of the "ethnically pure" Giants.

The late Ivan Morris, an astute British observer of Japanese culture, published an insightful book in 1975 called *The Nobility of Failure: Tragic Heroes in the History of Japan*. Beginning with the semi-legendary fourth century Yamato Brave and concluding with the kamikaze pilot of the Second World War, Morris chronicles the careers of ten heroic figures from Japanese history, all of whom fought valiantly against insurmountable odds, and all of whom ultimately failed. What is quintessentially Japanese about this is that the failures are admired and cherished to a much greater extent than their more successful counterparts.

Consider, for example, the contrast between Minamoto Yoshitsune, a twelfth century heroic loser, and his elder brother Yoritomo, the first military ruler of Japan:

Minamoto no Yoshitsune, who after a series of brilliant military victories spent his last years as a fugitive implacably hounded by his elder brother until he was forced to commit

harakiri at the age of thirty, is the perfect example of heroic failure. If he had not actually existed, the Japanese might have been obliged to invent him...

Though Yoshitsune made not the slightest contribution to the advancement of society or culture, his is one of the most illustrious and beloved figures in Japanese history. Even in the 1970s, when samurai ideals are in eclipse, his story is relished by schoolchildren, and the peculiar poignancy of his downfall evokes an immediate response from people of every age.

Yoshitsune's historical fame is due mainly to his military achievements, but the real reason for his lasting popularity as a hero is that his brief career was shaped in a dramatic parabola of the type that most appeals to the Japanese imagination: after suddenly soaring to success he was undone at the very height of his glory and plummeted to total disaster, a victim of his own sincerity, outwitted by men more worldly and politic than himself and betrayed by those whom he had trusted. So faithfully does Yoshitsune conform to the ideal of heroism through failure that the term *hoganbiiki* (which literally means "sympathy with the lieutenant" and came from his rank in the Imperial Police) has become fixed in the language to describe the traditional sympathy with the losing side. By contrast his elder brother, Minamoto no Yoritomo, who happens to have been one of the most important leaders in Japanese history, paid for his worldly success by being relegated to the background of the legend, where he hovers murky as a suspicious, vindictive character consumed with envy of the resplendent hero whom he ruthlessly pursues and destroys. (Morris, 1975, pp. 67-68)

Morris argues persuasively that this sentiment of *hoganbiiki* pervades Japanese ideology, and his case is a powerful one. But if this is so, then we would expect Japan to be a nation of Giants haters rather than Giants lovers. How can we explain this anomaly?

Part of the answer, I think, lies in the circumstances already described: Shoriki's prominence, and the chronological coincidence between the initial success of the team and prewar Japanese nationalism, as well as between postwar Giants' glory and the beginnings of nationalistic resurgence. A colleague points out that Giants' fans are often collectively referred to as *Kyojin Gun* (the Giants' troop), a phrase that evokes a highly militaristic image in Japanese (Kuni Miyake: personal communication.)

It is also the case that in contemporary Japan, *hoganbiiki* to the contrary notwithstanding, nothing succeeds like success and bigness is often equated with goodness. Ezra Vogel's comments concerning the "double structure" of Japanese society, originally made in 1963, remain valid more than three decades later; ambitious young Japanese invariably seek careers with large corporations rather than small enterprises because salaries are higher, security is greater, and regular promotions are assured (Vogel, 1963, pp. 708). In contrast, although "Small enterprises concentrating on the domestic market form the backbone of the economy, they offer lower wages, far fewer fringe benefits, and have less of the security associated with employment in blue-ribbon companies" (Buckley, 1990, p. 44). Each spring when graduates of the nation's elite universities enter the job market the Japanese press polls them to determine the most desirable employers. The results vary slightly from year to year—communication and "high tech" companies are currently more popular than heavy industry, for example—but the one constant is size. The now massive Honda corporation may have begun in 1945 as a back yard bicycle repair shop, but few young Japanese seem interested in getting in on the ground floor of comparable fledgling enterprises. The distinction between Establishment and Non-establishment is clear cut and unequivocal, and the lure of the Establishment is strong.

In baseball, the Giants are the counterpart of Sony or Matsushita Electric. Just as those companies dominate the electronics industry, the Giants—even in a bad year—dominate Japanese baseball. The public may empathize with losers rather than winners in their national history, but they prefer to be winners themselves; they

aspire to work for Sony, and in overwhelming numbers they root for the Giants. Both are symbols of the success for which they strive.

Still, there are a few faint rumblings of dissent. If I may inject a frankly personal note into what has hardly been a dispassionate discussion to this point in any case, it must be clear by now that the author, a life-long Yankee hater, has an equally intense dislike of the Giants. I was therefore delighted when, during the 1991 season, the *Japan Times Weekly* ran a brief item announcing the formation of a national organization of Giants' haters. I wrote to the listed address and received no response. However, I attribute that to the vagaries of the international mails, and I still consider the emergence of such a group to be a healthy sign. To the delight of millions of North American baseball fans, George Steinbrenner's Yankees have recently fallen on evil days; one can only hope that a similar fate awaits the Yomiuri Giants.

Notes

¹ The case of the Angels is more ambiguous than the others discussed here. At first glance it seems almost ludicrous to label a franchise located in Orange County, California, one of the richest and most politically conservative areas of the United States, as "anti-establishment." However, one must remember that they shared Los Angeles with the Dodgers for several years before moving to Anaheim and have never lost the stigma of younger and weaker siblings that they acquired then. Moreover, while long-time owner Gene Autry is a millionaire many times over, he began as a railroad telegrapher who taught himself the guitar to while away long lonely nights in the telegraph office and, unless "Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer" is viewed as an instrument for the exploitation of small children, came by his wealth honestly. In any case, the recent purchase of the team by the Disney organization will almost certainly change all of this.

² The Dodgers lost their lovable underdog status and became part of the establishment at the precise moment when they ceased being "dem bums." Whether that happened simultaneously with their move to Los Angeles or was postponed until the retirement of the last of the old "Boys of Summer," I'm not certain.

³ Unless otherwise attributed, biographical details on Shoriki are drawn from his obituary in the *New York Times* (9 October, 1969: p. 47).

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