

“Cocacolonization” of the world’s cultures, are deeply flawed. Instead, baseball, “an intensely local aspect of Taiwanese culture, has succeeded most as an avenue of engagement with Japan, the United States, the PRC, and the World” (162). In the final analysis, history, even of a global sport, is always intimately local.

This book will appeal to different readerships. Historians of sport may find in it an interesting alternative to more American-centred narratives of baseball, but only if they can wade through the specificities of Taiwanese history and what may be unfamiliar debates on national identity. Those who will appreciate the book most are readers in the emerging field of Taiwan Studies. In an academic world usually drawn more to the grand civilizations of China and Japan, Morris provides a much-needed view from the margins. A Taiwan-centric history is an appropriate way to understand the tensions and conflicts between these greater nationalist narratives as they encounter one another on the local playing field.

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JAPAN TRANSFORMED: Political Change and Economic Restructuring. By *Frances McCall Rosenbluth and Michael F. Thies*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010. xvi, 243 pp. (Tables, figures, illus.) US\$27.95, paper. ISBN 978-0-691-13592-2.

POLITICAL ECONOMY OF JAPAN: Growth, Challenges and Prospects for a Well-Being Nation. Hōsō Daigaku Kyōzai. By *Toshihiko Hayashi*. Tokyo: Society for the Promotion of the Open University of Japan, 2010. 310 pp. (Maps, illus.) ¥3,990, cloth. ISBN 978-4-595-31207-6.

Every now and then major events transform the underlying research agenda for a region or country’s political economy. This has happened at least twice during the past twenty years for Japan. After the economic bubble burst in 1991, the inquiry into aspects of Japan’s miraculous growth shifted to understanding how it experienced such slow growth for so long. And in 2009, the question of why the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) retained power since 1955 morphed into why it decisively lost power in 2009.

Japan Transformed, by political scientists Frances Rosenbluth and Michael Thies, and *Japan’s Political Economy*, by economist Toshihiko Hayashi, appeared shortly after the 2009 shift. Positioned as introductions to Japan’s political economy accessible to the non-specialist, they provide broad overviews as well as specific, pointed arguments in highly readable prose. Their contrasting approaches make them excellent complements; Rosenbluth and Thies, to overstate slightly, attribute most of Japan’s modern political economic development to incentives created

by the electoral system, while Hayashi, rich in empirical detail, provides economics-centred explanations for a variety of observed phenomena, making hardly any mention of political institutions as causal factors.

Rosenbluth and Thies place Japan in a comparative perspective, framing it as a place from which to study broader political themes: “The story takes place in the exotic setting of an enigmatic country, but the lessons about the causes and consequences of institutional rules are universal to politics” (185). After a historical overview that covers shifts in Japan’s political institutions from the hunter-gatherer period onward, they present an unusually clear and bold argument. In essence, Japan’s postwar political economy was shaped by incentives created by the electoral system from 1925, which, in the postwar era, pitted LDP members against one another in the same district. The LDP responded by building a coalition of “steel and rice” who “bought” protective regulation through campaign contributions. Globalization empowered exporters who wanted to be “cut loose” from domestic-oriented groups such as farmers and small businesses, leading to an electoral rule change in 1994. The electoral rule change restructured political incentives, leading to politicians’ greater focus on majoritarian pressure, less beholden to business interests.

The beauty of Rosenbluth and Thies’ argument lies in its simplicity, which gives extreme prominence to electoral rules: “the hidden ballast undergirding the ‘Japanese variety of capitalism’” (125). The clarity with which they lay out their causal claims provides an excellent opportunity to open classroom discussions to contrasting arguments, since many scholars of Japan would disagree with their claims. For example, some challenge the electoral incentives explanation, pointing to extensive organizational and functional changes within the LDP under the same single non-transferable vote (SNTV) rules (see Krauss and Pekkanen, *The rise and fall of Japan’s LDP: political party organizations as historical institutions*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2011).

Others would take issue with the lack of a “state,” since resource allocations from the Ministry of Finance, Bank of Japan and Ministry of Trade and Industry did not simply go to protected sectors that “purchased” legislation. The postwar rescue of the automobile industry, technological transfers to the semiconductor industry and for consumer electronics firms to commercialize US technologies, are prime examples of government decisions that were not simply “bought” or the result of lobbying. Those in search of alternate explanations than electoral rule changes for a majoritarian pressure on politics may point to the role of media and television transforming the relationship of politicians to the general public, particularly after Prime Minister Koizumi’s savvy media strategy (see Kabashima and Steel, *Changing politics in Japan*, Ithaca, NY, Cornell University Press, 2011). The notion that diverging interests between exporters and domestic protected sectors manifested themselves

in policy preferences has also been challenged by scholars such as Steven Vogel, who note the myriad of ties binding the two groups. Rosenbluth and Thies do not convincingly support the claim that divergent sectoral interests resulted in lower funding for the LDP. They also present the financial “Big Bang” reforms and failure of several small-medium financial firms in the late 1990s as evidence that the 1994 electoral rule change weakened the ability of businesses to buy favourable regulation, moving policy towards the interests of average consumers, but the government-orchestrated mergers of weak banks to create three mega-banks occurred through the early 2000s.

Hayashi’s volume best complements Rosenbluth and Thies in the areas of economy and economic policy, which the latter oversimplify in readable but debatable prose such as a “house of cards,” contending that “the dirty secret behind Japan’s rapid economic growth was the unsustainable means by which it was produced...” (97). As Hayashi shows, the rising income levels with low inequality following the wartime devastation provided Japanese with great prosperity, which certainly did not evaporate after the bubble burst in 1990—hardly a house of cards—and it is not at all obvious that truly sustainable long-term growth is possible anywhere.

Hayashi’s volume has predictable and data-rich chapters that cover Japan’s growth, bubble and aftermath, fiscal reconstruction, savings and lifetime employment. Some were contributed by economists such as Takeo Hoshi. It also contains some interesting sections that explore topics on information-based economy, energy and sustainability, and a somewhat philosophical chapter raising the question of whether GDP is what countries should maximize (chapter title: “Isn’t it happiness that counts?”). The book ends with a quote from Keynes in a radio interview, that mankind is now confronting his real problem of “how to use his freedom from pressing economic cares, how to occupy the leisure... to live wisely and agreeably and well” (297), a fresh new departure from the common pessimistic, or “Japan at crossroads” conclusions.

The volume lacks the coherence and focused narrative of a single integrated book, and it shies away from simple explanations for Japan’s rapid postwar economic growth. Hayashi humorously characterizes the variety of factors for which he provides data with a race car analogy: external conditions such as the road and weather (a favourable international trade regime, record-low natural resource prices, a low fixed exchange-rate yen), internal mechanics such as the engine (a young, well-educated labour force, high savings rates, bank-centred finance, etc.) and finally, why the driver wants to go so fast (a nationwide focus on growth, partly likely driven by disillusionment following the war). Hoshi’s chapter investigates the causes of Japan’s economic bubble, attributing it to partial financial deregulation that allowed firms to depart from the bank-centred system to raise capital, but limiting household savings mainly to banks, leading banks to pursue

ever riskier borrowers, since their best customers left for capital market. He also points to a series of policy blunders by the government that worsened the effects of the bubble, such as the interest rate policy, avoiding cleanup of nonperforming loans, the ill-timed introduction of a consumption tax in 1997, and doing too little too late in the late 1990s stimulus.

With their contrasting approaches and very different analyses, particularly of Japan's postwar political economy, these two books provide effective entry points into interesting classroom and graduate seminar discussions.

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BUILDING NEW PATHWAYS TO PEACE. *Edited by Noriko Kawamura, Yoichiro Murakami, Shin Chiba.* Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2011. xii, 262 pp. (Figures.) US\$30.00, paper. ISBN 978-0-295-99103-0.

This collective effort to advance our knowledge on peace deserves many accolades. *Building New Pathways to Peace* is a welcome addition to the field of peace studies, and is a notable improvement of the preceding volume produced by the same editors: Yoichiro Murakami, Noriko Kawamura and Shin Chiba, *Toward a Peaceable Future: Redefining Peace, Security, and Kyosei from a Multidisciplinary Perspective* (Pullman, WA: The Thomas S. Foley Institute for Public Policy and Public Service, 2005). While the previous edition makes very important contributions by introducing the Japanese concept of *kyosei* (English translation: conviviality) as a peace-oriented existential modality, the 2010 volume is more focused in terms of theorizing and themes.

As peace is a holistic concept, the field of peace studies is multidisciplinary in nature. This open-endedness is a blessing and a challenge in conducting systematic research, for three primary reasons. First, the existing disciplinary boundaries hinder effective cross-fertilization among pertinent themes. Without the usage of common vocabularies and sharing of core assumptions, the field can entail any topic of, for, and about peace. The wide array of topics ranging from hard-core security strategies to philosophical contemplation of human existence makes a systematic study difficult. Its inclusivity can be a double-edged sword. Second, the academic community has yet to reach a consensus on the definition of peace. Like the air we breathe in, we are supposed to know what the state of peacefulness feels like. Peace as a felt experience exists at an intuitive, not analytical, level. It, again, entails a broad range of analytical levels starting from an individual's state of mind to the normative trajectory that the human race as one unified entity should aspire to. This aspect