Winter Sporting Cultures and Japan

Introduction

Winter sports bring together many representations of Japanese society. The Japan National Tourism Organization (2021) depicts the Winter in Japan as "cold weather and warm spirits" to capture the geographical and cultural aspects of the "densely mountainous country, Japan boasts numerous peaks ideal for winter snow sports." A gaze on representations of winter sports and Japan is central to this chapter, as it engages with intersecting national and international views of Japanese winter sporting cultures. This chapter invites readers to consider how winter sporting cultures represent specific Japanese-ness, such as, among other things, connection to the imperial family. Then, representations of Japan and the world are considered, such as the growth in Western-influenced snow sports and twice hosting the most prominent international winter sports competition , the Winter Olympics Games. From these illustartions, the chapter will also show, how patterns of winter sporting cutlures represent Western capitalist tendencies i.e. private accumaltion of capital and free-markets, rather than government regulations. The three authors of this chapter speak to national and global understandings of winter sports and Japan as they have lived, studied, travelled or engaged with Japan and winter sports across multiple decades. However, productively, they consider Japan and winter sports from different standpoints and gazes, leading to a rich set of reflections throughout this chapter.

The ideas of multiple 2ki2tities and imagined communities underpin the conceptual approach of this chapter, adopting ideas on representation from Stuart Hall (1996) and Benedict Anderson (1983) to analyse materials on winter sports and Japan. Hall's writings on cultural identity argue for the use of modern ideas on identity influenced by sociological and postmodern tenets, where identity is viewed as unstable, detached, and self-built. Hall (1996) questions the traditions of lifestyles of individuals and societies in different countries due to global interconnections and the disruption of a traditional sense of fixed nationality and cultural

identity. Consequently, Hall's work influences this chapter as the purpose is to present a series of representations of winter sports and Japan from national and international gazes. Thus, the cultural identity of winter sports and Japan, especially the recent history of winter sports, is not fixed, constant or stable. Notably, there is a shift between pre-and post-WWII Japan in how it engages with winter sports. Further to this, contemporary tourism and hosting of the Winter Olympics create further political and global imaginaries.

The second supporting concept for this chapter is Anderson's (1983) argument that people manufacture and imagined communities. Winter sports through tourism and hosting sporting events has become a mechanism for promoting Japan as a cultural and geographic entity.. In speaking about nationalism and representations of national identity, Anderson clearly states: "nationality, or… nation-ness, as well as nationalism, are cultural artefacts of a particular kind" (1983: 48). This chapter critically considers different influences and bodies involved in nation-building and nationalism, to aid students and scholars to understand the representations of winter sports and Japan in a more nuanced way. In the context of Japan, as, surveyed in this chapter, there are different cultural artefacts across the course of the past century of Japanese winter sporting cultures. For example, the context of the Nagano 1998 Winter Olympics, a central focus of this chapter, will illustrate how representations of winter sports in Japan manifest in domestic and global imaginaries. Beyond events, this chapter also views female and disabled bodies as ways to critically consider Japanese winter sporting culture and how Japanese-ness can be manufactured, ruptured and reproduced based on domestic and external pressures.

The evidence base for this chapter is a mixture of academic, governmental, sports organisational and media sources. The sources were identified and collated using a documents analysis approach (O'Leary, 2004; Bryman, 2016) where steps are taken to plan, gather, review, interrogate, reflect/refine and analyse. The authors used publicly accessible

sources from English and Japanese institutions, including the New Japan Sports Foundation, National Diet Library (Tokyo), SOAS University Library Japan Newspaper Archives (London), Japan National Tourism Organization webpages, the International Olympic Committee World Library, and a variety of travel magazines (such as, *The Outdoor Japan*) . To corroborate the authenticity and credibility of the sources used, the authors ued academic sources to contrast and compare the analysis of the documents. For example, the origins of winter sporting cutlures in Japan are contested. This chapterdoes not attempt to provide a comprehensive or decisive account of history. Instead, it presents a survey of interpretation – gathered around the presentation of different gazes and representations of winter sports and Japan. Accordingly, the reader should reflect on as to how what is shown here has political and economic implications for the portrayals of Japanese society in winter sporting cultures both domestically and internationally.

Early participation in winter sports by Japanese citizens

Mt. Yotei, a small mountain on the west side of Joetsu, Niigata is heralded as a historically important place for winter sports in Japan because Theodore Edler von Lerch, an officer of the Austro-Hungarian Army, climbed and skied down it(pictured below in Image 1). This moment in 1911 was widely published in local newspapers and gained attention from the public and military personnel as it had not been seen before (Hirakawa 2016). With Japanese military personnel experiencing winter sports overseas, such as Nordic skiing, the Japanese Army was interested in the skiing skill von Lerch presented. As a result, he held the first alpine ski lesson in Japan (Ross, 2011). The European and military influence on the origins of skiing in Japan is similar to a number of the sporting cultures described in this Handbook, such as rugby union,

tennis or baseball, where Western or military influences Japan's sport developments. In media articles on von Lerch's visit in the early 1910s, the officer is said to have a military and personal interest in visiting Japan and subsequently introducing alpine skiing (Ross, 2011). The popular history of von Lerch is commemorated with a statue of the officer in Kutchan (wearing skis) in the resort of Niseko and used in many tourist guides to herald the 'beginning' of Japan's relationship with skiing (e.g., Ramat Niseko online; Vacation Niseko online). The media accounts of von Lerch romanticise his influence and represent winter culture as something given to Japan, useful for the country's communities and military activities.

Image 1. Theodore von Lerch(テオドール・エードラー・フォン・レルヒ), an Austrian major, teaching the first skiing for Japanese at Jōetsu, Niigata on 12 January 1911.
日本語: 1911年（明治44）1月12日に上越市で日本人に初めてスキーを教える人レルヒ少佐(テオドール・エードラー・フォン・レルヒ)
小熊和助, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

In academic pieces on the origins and diffusion of alpine sports globally, there are several individuals and periods where skiing was taken to the shores of Japan (Kureha, 2008). Allen (2007), in a comprehensive history of the culture and sport of skiing worldwide, notes how he has heard of an indigenous form of skiing in Japan in the twelfth century; however, there is no substantive record to corroborate it. The author provides a series of descriptions of how Japanese people used skis before the arrival of Europeans but in their own ways, for example, as outriggers when sitting astride a sledge. Around the turn of the nineteenth century, Allen (2007) suggests there was a disaster in the form of soldiers dying in snow blizzards and the necessity during the Russo-Japanese war (1904-05) prompted the Japanese military to employ ski troops in varying degrees of success. As suggested by the image above, the first substantive uptake sking was in the 1910s when several European men taught skiing in Japan. Beyond von Lerch, Egon Edler von Kratzer from Austria was "instrumental in founding the Alpine Ski Club of Japan in 1913" (Allen, 2007: 202). The popularity of skiing in Japan proliferated during this period as von Lerch and von Kratzer (and others) upskilled Japanese officers who, in turn, instructed others, including their regiments, civilians and school physical education instructors. As a result, ski lessons, equipment and activities diffused across the snowy mountainous regions of North-Eastern and South-Western Japan (Kureha 2008). Beyond teaching, other entities were involved in this diffusion of skiing, such as the media who published images and articles on skiing, Japanese companies put pictures of the skiers (such as von Lerch) on chocolate boxes, and skiing was made part of the winter physical education requirement in the school curriculum (Allen, 2007; Hofman, 2012; Thöny, 2019). A culmination of these activities in the 1910s spread skiing in a structured manner to improve military skills, youth fitness and popular leisure activity across Japan.

International influences continued during the following decades up to World War II as a string of military or ski instructors travelled to Japan to teach, advise on equipment advances

and bring knowledge of international competitions, such as the Winter Olympic Games (Allen, 2007; Thöny, 2019). In 1928, Japanese athletes competed at the Winter Olympics for the first time, it was hosted in St. Moritz, Switzerland and sent six male athletes to compete in cross-country skiing events (none of them placed better than 24th). Kureha (2008) notes how skiing became characterised as a new recreational and competitive endeavour for the elite and university students in urban areas, with many visiting hot spring resorts in mountainous regions in Central Japan (such as Nagano) to access the growing amount of ski trails behind hot spring resorts. As with other Japanese sports or leisure activities, such as rugby union or basketball, the growth of skiing and ski resorts enticed Japanese (particularly the elite and university students) to travel to other countries, such as Europe or North America, for either competition, social or education purposes. Notably for skiing, for example, Allen (2007: 204) described how in the 1920s "Japan's crown prince became involved in skiing, and Prince Chichibu was a favourite among the English in Switzerland." The royal connection with skiing further supports the idea that for urban Japanese (such as, those living in Tokyo) skiing and winter sports travel domestically and internationally became a growing fashion and a culture for the elite to embrace.

In the 1930s, there was a shift in international influence as nationalism in Japan began to trouble the paternalism of the West. Examples of this include the changing of the National Ski Association to the *Zen Nippon Ski Renmei* in 1938 or bidding to host the Winter Olympics Games in Sapporo for 1940 (Alleb, 2007; Ross, 2011; JOC, Online). The relationship between Japan, sport and the international community is tumultuous during the 1940s and 1950s. World War II dominates social, political, cultural and economic domestic and international representations (Sakaue and Thompson 2021). Winter sports is significantly impacted by this, not only as Sapporo did not host the Winter Olympic Games, due to be staged in 1940, but also more broadly relationships between winter sporting federations were severed, opportunities for

foreign winter sporting travel decreased and Western influences on winter sports domestically did not sustain. Beyond the wartime period, the fall out continued into the 1950s, Dichter (2017) accounts for the political actions taken by the International Ski Federation and its decision not to readmit the Japanese national federation, nor the ability for them to participate in world championships due to their wartime actions and continued post-war issues. Academics and media sources account for the political fallout of Japan and international sports until the tide began to turn, when in the 1950s the International Olympic Committee readmitted Japan into the Olympic Movement, with many efforts made to build bridges (Barker, 2021). This building of bridges after World War II culminated internationally in Japan hosting the 1964 Summer Olympic Games and the 1972 Sapporo Winter Olympics (JOC, Online; Abel, 2012). Here, winter sports federations and the Olympics represent a way for Japan to be re-admitted into the international community after being shunned for their actions during World War II.

Growth in the tourism industry, sport opportunities and Japanese winter resorts

Japanese citizens' early participation in winter sports illustrates a range of influences and accounts as to how the type of winter sports and popularity of activity grew. The extent of this popularity and growth in particular areas, such as tourism, can be illustrated by the scale of Japanese winter resorts. According to SnowJapan (Online): "Japan is the home to the largest number of ski and snowboard resorts in the world – with over 500 resorts" and this number is down from 700 during the 1990s when there was a "ski boom" across the mountainous country (see Image 2 overleaf). Kureha (2008) described a rapid growth in the 1960s and 1970s for the ski tourism industry in Japan, with the infrastructure and technological developmentssuch as the construction of ski lifts, deriving from the 1940s and 1950s and a culmination of a number of factors. For example, during this period (1945-1952), American occupation authorities

constructed their own equipment to provide recreational activities for service members, including the construction of ski lifts to be able to practice winter sports. Simultaneously, Japanese prefectures developed the railway transport network between regions to improve travel infrastructure. A considerable element in the rapid growth was the economic investment in ski resorts across Japan. Studies on the ski tourism industry demonstrate investment from local communities, such as farmers redeveloping land and buildings for accommodation. And investment from urban regions where capital investment in ski resorts increased to fund varying areas, such as railways or ski lifts or housing (Kureha, 2002, 2014; Nelson & Matthews, 2018).

Image 2. Unazuki ski area in 1937
鉄道省運輸局編、『麗山名水』、1937年（昭和12年）1月、日本旅行協会
鉄道省運輸局, Public domain, via Wikimedia Commons

The growth of ski tourism in Japan did not slow down until the 1990s, with continued aggressive growth in the amount of ski resorts, visitors and investors. Kureha (2002, 2008, 2014) across a series of studies maps this growth, noting that by the 1990s there was a peak of

“17.7 million” skiers. This amount of skiers ranked second behind the USA in terms of the size of the domestic ski markets globally. Commercially, this growth in the market was coupled with investment growth. A number of joint venture companies and arrangements between private companies and local governments were commonplace within the ski tourism industry and seen as fruitful commercial ventures. The scale and pace of the growth in the ski tourism industry is unsurprising when considered in the broader context of Japanese economic development after World War II and across several decades. Flath (2014) articulates how in the late 1940s, the switch from a punitive towards a reconstructive policy of Japan by the American Occupation triggered rapid economic growth. This growth continued across the following decades and was achieved through capitalist market tendencies, re-integration into the world economy and rapid growth in the extent of the public sector and the government’s role in stimulating the economy (Flath, 2014). Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter to thoroughly survey Japan's post-World War II economic rise, it is worth notingthat the growth and investment in sporting cultures, such as mechanisms as seen in the ski tourism market, are aligned to the broader economic growth in Japan during this period.

A specific aspect of this growth in winter sport paricipatio, such as skiing and ice skating, that academics and the media highlight are opportunities for women to participate in winter sports. Whilst (mostly military) male skiers were the dominant representations in the development of winter sports in modern Japan, with more emerging studies and debates, the expression of female bodies has been featuring in discussion of Japanese winter sport (and sport more widely). Concerning women, numerous scholars note the popularity of winter sports for women. Japan sent their first female athletes to the Winter Olympic Games in 1936. Kietlinski (2011) noted the marked increase in the number of Japanese women competing in the Winter Olympics during the 1970s. At the Sapporo 1972 Games, there was double the number of women in the Japanese delegation compared to the previous Games. The trend of

female Japanese Winter Olympians has increased to the point now that since the 2014 Sochi Winter Olympics Japan has sent more female athletes than male (Sochi – 48 male, 62 female; Pyeongchang – 49 male, 70 female) (data available via the IOC World Olympic Library).

Considering medal success at Winter Olympic Games, Japan's women have contributed positively to the nation's total tally of medals. At the 1992 Winter Olympic Games, Japanese female Winter Olympians rose to fame and medal glory, particularly the figure skating silver medal for Midori Ito and the speed skating bronze medal for Seiko Hashimoto. Both women have contined to have illustrious careers in Japan in different ways. Ito is a contender for Japan's most popular athlete (See Monden *Handbook chapter*) and her triple axel jump (one of the most challenging moves in women's figure skating) makes her one of the most prominent visual representation of Japanese-ness femininity and winter sports (Ho, 2015). Hashimoto, after a distinguished dual-athlete career, went into politics and was elected to the House of Councillors of the Japanese parliament in 1995. In 2021, after a string of embarrassing headlines in national and international media about the misogynistic tendencies of the President of the Organizing Committee for the 2020(1) Tokyo Olympic and Paralympic Games, Hashimoto was named as the new President (Palmer, 2021). A prominent political and sporting representation of female role models in Japanese politics, Hashimoto and her appointment to the Organizing Committee represents an interconnection of female empowerment with rife sexism in Japan's political realms. The fact that Hashimoto, one of the role models for women both politically and athletically, had to be appointed as Chair of the Organising Committee in place of the previous Chair is symbolic of both the development of women's empowerment in Japanese society and the prevalence of sexism in the political sphere in Japan.

Historically and concerning mass participation, women have featured in Japanese winter sporting activities. Miller (2021) brings the connection between representations of female bodies, skiing and modern girls during the 1930s. She uses *Nihonga* (neotraditional

Japanese painting) and presentations of women skiing to explore representations of athleticism and womanhood in 1930s Japan. The images offer a glimpse into the period where "women's athleticism was an accepted and celebrated idea, but one that came with conditions" (Miller, 2021: 315). The images Miller uses depict Western influenced ski attire, equipment, hairstyles and movement. Beyond the visual representations Miller contextualises the skiing images to the period where militarisation, international events (1940 Olympics) and increasing popularity of winter sports captivated both Japanese men and women. The modernisation of the female body in Japan is a a significant topic (although mentioned throughout chapters in this Handbook, for instance, see the Merklejn and Macnaughtan, Kietlinski and Ho chapters). And what is pertinent in this chapter is the role winter sports plays in this gendered representation of Japan.

Both academic and popular discourses recognise the significance of winter sports in both sporting and gender debates in the Japanese context. The modernisation of both Japan and women can be traced and illustrated by developments in winter sports and the rise of winter sporting trends and athletes in Japan, both historically and during the decades of the ski tourism boom. From a cursory gaze on the contemporary era, there is a continuation of this trend. With elite winter sport, Japan's Youth Winter Olympic team at the most recent Games (2020 hosted in Lausanne, Switzerland) had 42 female athletes competing compared to 27 male athletes. Out of the 42 competing, the Japanese female athletes scooped gold medals in ice hockey, snowboarding halfpipe and snowboarding big air. Mitsuki Ono, the winner of the snowboarding halfpipe competition, is a rising star in the international women's snowboarding scene with lucrative Red Bull and Burton sponsorship deals. As Ono moves into the senior competitions, time will tell if she rises to similar fame or success as Ito or Hashimoto. What is notable is the change in recent decades in the women's sporting landscape; no longer it is figure skating, Nordic skiing or speed skating which are traditionally associated with Japanese female

winter sport habits and success, but non-traditional snowboarding and ice hockey where Japanese young women are excelling and participating. Unlike the point Miller raises on the 1930s modern Japanese women who had controlled conditions and gender norms, contemporary female athletes engage with non-traditional winter sporting cultures, such as snowboarding. As will be discussed below, the diffusion and influence of Japanese and global imaginaries play a role here, as winter sports can be a site of conditional and unconditional representations of female bodies, sporting participation and national imagery.

Use of the Winter Olympics Games: Nagano

Hosting major winter sporting events is an important element of representations of Japanese winter sporting culture. Throughout the chapter so far, there have been links and mentions of endeavours to promote Japan's Winter Olympic and Paralympic presence . Japan's zeal for hosting can be demonstrated by the city of Sapporo, which has bid to host the Winter Olympics a total of five times (1936, for the 1940 Games which were subsequently cancelled; 1964 for the 1968 Games which was an unsuccessful bid; 1966 for the 1972 Games which was a successful bid; 1978 for the 1984 Games which was unsuccessful; and an official bid in process for the 2030 Games). Sapporo and Japan's connection to the Olympic movement is essential and covered in more detail in chapters throughout this Handbook (e.g., the Tagsold, Symons & Obayashi, and Aramaki & Kohe)) and elsewhere (e.g., Abel, 2012; Sakaue and Thompson, 2021). The focus of this subsection and the remainder of this chapter is a discussion around the 1998 Nagano Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games.

In several media and unofficial sources, there is a reference to the regional politics of Japan and Nagano's bid to host the Games; as Sapporo is situated on the Northern Island of

Hokkaido, the Nagano bid represented the Central part of Japan. In the official records, Nagano had lost out to Sapporo in the domestic selection process for the 1940 and 1972 bid campaigns, but their triumph for the Games in 1998 meant their "long-standing dream [to host the Olympics] was finally realised" (JOC, Online). In contrast to previous notions of privilege, military or prestige, the Nagano Winter Games were prefaced on the idea of the environment, with the motto for the Games being "Coexistence with the Nature" (JOC, Online). Environmental concerns within the Olympic Movements, such as misusage of the natural enivironment to build extraordinary venues to host the event.The Winter Olympics were a signficant part of a global debate and Nagano hosted at a time of intensifying globalisation (Chappelet, 2008; Essex and de Groot, 2021). Then, the local debate as the context of the Nagano bid campaign and hosting in the 1980s and 1990s is the ski tourism boom in Japan (Kureha 2002, 2008, 2014).

Essex and de Groot (2021: 74-75) place the hosting of the Nagano Games between phase four (large scale transformation 1984-1998) and five (sustainable development and legacy planning 2002 onwards) of the broader development of the Winter Olympic Games. The characteristics of phase four revolve around significant growth in the scale and income involved in hosting a Winter Olympic Games. For example, the first three Winter Olympics had less than 500 athletes competing, whereas Nagano had over 3000 athletes (Tajima, 2004). This rise in athletes, is coupled with commercial development of the Olympic movement as "television revenue rose from $91.5 million in 1984 to $513 million in 1998" (Essex and de Groot, 2021: 73). Although the increasing amounts of people and money meant growing demands on the scale of the host city infrastructure, by the early 1990s, these demands were resisted by hosts and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) through a growing awareness and recognition of environmental issues connected to hosting (Chappelet, 2008). By 1996, the IOC formally recognised and added an 'environmental commitment' to its Charter and

expectations for hosts beyond Nagano to have a formal environmental plan in their bid documents (IOC 2007). Therefore, Nagano, in the context of the Olympic movement, was hosted towards the end of a significant period of growth and at the start of environmental concerns and scepticism. This growth, therefore, pertains to both the event's scale and the scepticism and responsibility to environmental and sustainability issues.

In the political context of Japan, hosting the Nagano Games offered high risk and high reward for the human resource, economic investment and natural environment. Tajima (2004: 241) argues that the Games represent a form of "amoral universalism" as amid global pressures on the host city and nation, local communities lost control as well as numerous aspects of as to how maximise benefit or ways to account for the event in the long term. Economic figures to account for the total expenditure, return on investment or direct/indirect costs are a form of contested representations around Nagano. Tajima (2008: 242) described how a prefecture-level political election had a shock result as an inexperienced candidate defeated an incumbent Vice Governor, who was questioned during the election on "the prefecture's deteriorating post-Olympic economy and the destruction of the accounting books for Nagano's bid for the Games." Ishizaka (2018) interrogates these illusory economic figures and tallies in further detail, noting how official representation of costs neglected to include the indirect costs and upkeep of infrastructure connected to the Games, such as maintenance fees of stadia and construction of Olympics-related roads. Ishizaka (2018: 153 and 156) estimates the Nagano Olympic Games had around 250 billion yen direct costs (approximately $2.2 billion) and 200 billion yen indirect costs (approximately $1.8 billion), with maintenance fees of approximately 2 billion yen every year since (approximately $18 million per year). Both Tajima (2004) and Ishizaka (2018) do acknowledge the legacies connected to hosting the Games, but for them, the cost to the local community's power and economy is not outweighed.

In a contrasting perspective, Nakamura and Suzuki (2017) produced a study on Hakuba, one of the five host municipalities for the Nagano Games, considering the long-term legacies managed by the host community. The authors acknowledge that there was an immediate and dramatic downturn in the region's economy after hosting the Games. However, their analysis of strategic planning by the political and business communities in the area suggests there is a transient manner according to which legacy is planned and enacted over a long period. In particular relation to Hakuba, the area used "strategic planning and interplay of soft- and hard-infrastructural legacies" to become a "high performer in inbound tourism" (Nakamura and Suzuki, 2017: 313). Tourism and inbound tourism suggests that the Nagano Games promoted areas connected to the event and subsequently attracted people into the region. A significant portion for any event is the presentation of nationa, regional and local image through the Opening and Closing Ceremonies.

Yamashita (2006, 2007, 2011) positions the Opening Ceremony for the Nagano Games as a site to explore representations of Japanese-ness and the global imaginary. The Ceremony can be split into two contrasting halves, with the first part and second part summarised as:

> [First part] The dominant representation of Japaneseness can be seen as a particular emperor-centred Japanese order, which is articulated by intricate ties between imperial authority and Shintoism, the structure of the family-state, and finally, the tenet of an ethically homogenous nation.
>
> The second half of the Nagano Olympics Opening Ceremony created a connection with the global imaginary through its presentation of Olympic ideals and other universal discourses of peace, goodwill and sportsmanship (Yamashita, 2011: 2331).

> The seemingly paradoxical representation of Japaneseness in the Opening Ceremony of the Nagano Olympics reflected both the conflict between domestic centred capitalism and global capitalism, as well as the appearance of a new hierarchy in the world order. In the Nagano Opening Ceremony, this was born out during the first half that focused on the cultural forms of nationalism/Japaneseness/Emperorism and was concluded with the second half of the Ceremony that emphasised internationalism/globalism (Yamashita, 2011: 2334).

As discussed throughout this chapter the points articulated here by Yamashita relate to the representations and influences on Japan's modern winter sport culture. On the one hand, there is an emergence of culture and imageries of Japanese-ness in the connection to Japanese historical traditions; on the other hand, the influence of this culture and imageries by Western policy, technology, ideals and trends. The effect of the Olympic ideals in the Nagano Olympics Opening Ceremony could be compared to the influences of the European military figures in the 1910s or the American Occupation in the 1940s on how winter sports in Japan have developed (Yamashita, 2006, 2007, 2011).

Image 3. Team Japan. Super-G day at the 2013 IPC Alpine World Championships in La Molina, Spain.
Raystorm, CC BY-SA 3.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/3.0>, via Wikimedia Commons

Another site where this national and international dynamic converges is around the often neglected aspect of Nagano's hosting duties and Winter Olympic debate: the Winter Paralympic Games. The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) and para-sport are distinctly separate to the Olympic Movement, as depicted in Image 3, where a recent IPC competition featured a team from Japan. This offers another illustration of Japan's balance during this period between Japanese-ness and the international community. Notably, in the context of the Paralympic games, Japan had been significantly engaged with several United Nation-based initiatives and projects linked to international disability awareness and rights, allowing for a conducive context in which there was a step-change in the winter sports' embrace of para-sport and the Paralympics (Frost, 2021). The step-change included positive increases in public awareness, media coverage and event infrastructure for the Games. As quoted in Frost (2021: 143), Kotani Naomichi said in 1998:

> The Paralympics to this point have received limited newspaper and television coverage. This time was different. Our newspaper and television company dispatched some 40 journalists to Nagano and provided extensive daily coverage on the front pages, the society pages, and the sports pages. Television coverage was considerable, too, and it was increased further in response to view requests.

As with the previous subsection and points around gender, this coverage and attention was given to both male and female para-sport athletes. A notable female athlete to compete in Nagano was Miki Matheson, who won three gold medals for Japan in ice sledge speed racing. Beyond sport, Matheson is now involved in the para-sport legacy of the Tokyo 2020(1) Olympic and Paralympic Games and IPC's global education, I'mPOSSIBLE, which seeks to place the Paralympics and sports equality into classrooms around the world (Uthman, 2020). As an activist, Matheson has spoken at the United Nations, commercial events involving high-profile sponsors, such as Toyota and public events across Tokyo and the international community (Japan Times, 2015). Matheson personifies the impact of hosting the Paralympic Games in Nagano in 1998, with Japan at the forefront of tackling deep-rooted issues for disabled people across societies globally. Matheson also represents the continued tie to Japanese identity and the sense of global community that emanates from hosting an international event. As Yamashita (2007, 2011) illustrated, Nagano was remembered for showcasing both Japanese-ness and global imageries. This dual representation continues into the dynamic of the Paralympic Games and Japan's relationship between hosting and furthering the Paralympic movement (further detail of this is discussed in Frost's chapters in this Handbook).

Representations of Winter Sports in Japan – where to next?

The survey of winter sporting cultures in Japan has been a whistle-stop tour of over hundred years of rich history. There are considerable similarities and links between the past and present. For example, this chapter explored the rise in sporting cultures in the 1910s through the government and foreign expertise putting winter sports into the national curriculum, over a century later a Paralympic athlete turned activist is using the same education mechanism to raise awareness of the Paralympics and the agenda of equality in sports into classrooms in Japan and beyond.

However, there are also considerable differences between the early iterations of winter sporting cultures and there is further work needed around the distinct periods before and after World War II. After the war, the political, human and economic changes saw a decline in winter sports being militaristic and the onset of technological advances to focus more on the ski tourism industry. Coupled with rapid economic growth domestically and international ties to capitalist economic tendencies, the development of ski resorts rapidly increased. Turning towards the 1990s and the present day, a cultural and economic representation of the environmental costs of winter sports has been demonstrated in the hosting of the Winter Olympic Games and the reduction in ski resorts.

The many gazes onto Japanese winter sports in this chapter highlight that there is a need for further research into this topic area. Particularly around periods earlier than the twentieth century and indigenous forms of winter activities used by different Japanese communities prior to Western influences. The period after World War II and the adaptability of Japanese sporting culture and its role in imaging up a post-World War II global Japan. Then the contemporary period where the role of gender and disability in the Youth Winter Olympic Games as they continue to destablise traditional representations of winter sports in Japan.

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