

What do we learn from rugby and its history?

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Yokohama. This is a gentleman called Tanaka Ginnosuke who studied in Cambridge at the same time as Edward Clarke. When they came back to Japan, they were teaching it at the predecessor of Keio University and they decided to introduce rugby to the students at Keio. This photograph is 1901, but the first game took place in 1899.

At this stage we leap forward to 2019. CLARK: As I was saying, my name is Reg Clark. I am lucky enough to have the honor of being visiting professor at Nihon Daigaku. And I would just like to take this opportunity to thank President Otsuka for attending today, I would like to thank Dean Koyama for his support, and, of course, I would like to thank Prof. Mashiko for introducing me to this institution.

Mashiko-san has already introduced my old Kobe Steel colleague, Maru Hayashi (Toshiyuki Hayashi). I am very grateful to him for attending. I would just like to point out a couple of other special guests. David Kirk, if you wouldn't mind just standing up, David. David is an old friend of mine. World Cup-winning captain of New Zealand in 1987.

I would also like to thank Koji Tokumatsu for coming, if you could stand up, please. He is a gentleman who did a great deal to bring the Rugby World Cup to Japan and he is a very good friend. And last but not least I am very grateful for my four former colleagues from Kobe Steel, Mr. Komada, Mr. Shiozaki, Mr. Sato, and Mr. Morita, for attending. Please stand up. Thank you very much.

We had better get moving. Let's go. So, Satoshi and I, as Mashiko-san said, are writing collaborators. We write an article every month in Rugby Magazine.

As Mashiko-san said, I was lucky enough to graduate in modern history from Oxford University and I was also lucky enough at the age of 18 to come on a rugby tour to Japan, as a result of which I took a number of options on my history degree and one of my special subjects is the history of Japan and especially the Meiji era and especially the so-called yatoware-gaijin, or foreign experts, who were involved in bringing Western expertise into Japan after it was closed for 400 years.

I lived in Japan from 1980 to '83 and played rugby for Kobe Steel. As well as studying mainstream history, I've always had a hobby concerning the history of sport and the philosophy of sport. When I was here from 1980 to '83 I wrote a series of 16 articles about the history of rugby. The reason I did that was that it was quite clear to me that many Japanese people didn't have a great deal of understanding about the history of rugby.

This was the first article that I wrote and actually it just so happened that I'd been back to England in February 1981. I was born in Sedgfield in County Durham and it just so happens that Sedgfield stages one of the very few remaining medieval folk football matches, which, as usual, takes place every Shrove Tuesday in February. And as you can see from this it involves hundreds of people, it is a thinly

disguised riot, but it is amazing that after hundreds of years this tradition still exists, and this was my first article for Rugby Magazine.

There are two parts to this presentation. Part one is what does the history of rugby in Japan specifically tell us about rugby and what does it tell us about Japan? The second part is, and this is the Webb Ellis part that is relevant to the first video you saw, what does the history of rugby tell us about history itself and specifically the role of truth and myth in history?

There are two parts to the history of rugby in Japan. I'll be very quick about this. The first one is when was rugby first played in Japan? Obviously, by foreigners. This is a very famous print from the London Graphic in 1867, which is used in many books on the history of rugby and in Japan. It is rather fanciful. It shows rugby being played at the foot of Mount Fuji, which obviously wasn't the case, it was played in Yokohama, but nevertheless this is the photograph that everyone uses to show that foreigners first started playing rugby in the 1860s in Japan. And you can see there is "YFC," that stands for Yokohama Football Club.

This is Michael Galbraith. He is an old Japan hand. He has lived in Yokohama for a long time. And this is from the BBC coverage of the World Cup recently. Mike has been banging on for years about the fact that in his belief the YCAC, preceded by Yokohama Football Club, is the oldest rugby club in Asia. There was a lot of opposition to this, but the World Rugby Museum finally accepted his evidence and then finally for this World Cup a plaque has been placed in Yokohama City after a 10-year campaign by Mike to establish this history. I would like to applaud your indefatigable efforts, Michael. A big round of applause for Mike Galbraith.

The second part of the history of rugby in Japan is when did Japanese people start playing? Again,

this isn't new. This is a very famous picture. I think it is a wonderful picture. This is a gentleman called Edward Bramwell Clarke who had a Japanese mother and an English father who was a baker in 5 and 2019 when rugby is incredibly popular in Japan. If we look throughout the history of rugby in Japan from 1899 to the present day, with the exception of the recent history of the J.League in soccer, I think it's fair to say that rugby in Japan has been remarkably popular. Obviously, baseball is the most important sport but, to a degree that is slightly intriguing, rugby has always enjoyed a certain resonance with the Japanese nation.

My basic thesis, and I must acknowledge Prof. Mashiko, is that rugby is a game that is defined to a degree that is unusual not by its rules but by its values, and that moreover the reason for the popularity of rugby in Japan is that the values that were behind the creation of rugby actually overlap with a lot of the national values of Japan. By way of example, in recent years there was the so-called Bloodgate scandal in English rugby, and England rugby, in a period of crisis, went back to basics and started to define what rugby is and there was the so-called TREDs: teamwork, respect, enjoyment, discipline, and sportsmanship. This was only a few years ago but it is an example of how the game defines itself by principles rather than rules.

Why does rugby resonate with the Japanese? The process of the Meiji era learning from overseas was a two-way process and this is a very famous and influential book written by a gentlemen called Nitobe Inazo in 1899 and it is called *Bushido: The Soul of Japan*. It was a book that was instrumental in making Western people understand the code of Bushido and the honor code, which I believe is actually very similar to the British public school concept of the Christian gentlemen, especially the one that was

propagated in Rugby School in the 19th century. I was suggesting that there is a shared value system that is possibly one of the reasons that rugby was popular in Japan.

There are certain phrases that you hear again and again when you travel around Japan and you discuss this topic. Actually they are more famous in Japan than they are in England or in France. Partly because of Baron Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympics, who was a regular visitor to Rugby School, the word “noblesse oblige,” the concept of “noblesse oblige,” is very popular in Japan. As is the phrase “no side,” which has actually fallen out of use in England. I remember it from when I was young but it obviously means the “no side” spirit. Everyone in Japan knows that when the final whistle blows you shake your opponent’s hand and you have a beer with them afterwards, unless you are a schoolboy. These are very powerful ideas in Japan.

This is a very interesting sideline. When Japan first held the Olympics in 1964, as the host nation it was entitled to introduce a new sport and it chose to introduce judo. The interesting thing for me was that purist judoka and the old guard of judo were absolutely opposed to this because they actually said that judo and martial arts have nothing to do with winning and losing. Gold medal, silver metal, that is completely contrary to the spirit of judo, which is all about personal development. Now, obviously, they didn’t win out, but I think the fact that they opposed that for those reasons is very similar to the way that rugby has conducted itself over several decades.

Maybe for the foreign visitors here, let me just tell you some interesting and rather romantic stories about the history of Japanese rugby. This is a gentleman called Shigeru Kayama and he accompanied Prince Chichibu on a tour to Europe when Chichibu attended Oxford University. He

played rugby for Richmond and Harlequins and came back and was the first-ever Japanese national coach, was very heavily involved in the creation of the Japan Rugby Football Union in 1926. More importantly he wrote a very famous book about rugby that did a lot to popularize it. That book was not about the rules of rugby, it was about the values of rugby and why Japanese people should play that game.

This is the oldest-known rugby shirt. It was worn by a gentleman from Waseda University against Canada in the 1930s. The thing I would like to point out to you is that Shigeru Kayama, when he founded the Japan Rugby Union, they had, as they do now, three cherry blossoms, but he said that the third cherry blossom would remain closed until Japan could play England on an equal basis, which I find a rather charming idea. This old-style Japan badge has been seen on some of the supporters’ shirts at this World Cup, and obviously we now know that is the current three cherry blossoms. Oxford University embarked on a famous tour of Japan in 1952, at which point it was decided that that was as good as playing England so they adopted the three cherry blossoms, but I think it’s a wonderful idea by Shigeru Kayama.

During his time at Tokyo University, Shigeru Kayama became very good friends with a gentleman called Edmund Blunden, who was a very famous English war poet who became professor of English at Tokyo University and befriended Kayama. Blunden wrote this poem on the occasion of the publication of Kayama’s book. I won’t read it all out. I believe it is in your notes. It is perhaps not his greatest poem but it is quite moving and contains the very moving phrase “rugby will refresh the world.” Remember, this is a man who survived the Somme and came to Tokyo. I think it is particularly poignant that he should have chosen

to write this poem.

I'm going to play a video and the interesting fact is that this poem is now still the rugby song of Tokyo University Rugby Club in English. Mainly for foreign visitors, I'm going to show you a video of the teams from Boei Daigaku, the National Defense Academy, and Tokyo University singing their after match song. I think what I would like you to pick up, this will be very familiar to Japanese people but for foreign visitors the format of the idea that after a match you have a drink with the opposition is very stylized and formal in Japan, but it's something that the Japanese people take very seriously.

[0:26:04-0:28:18 SONGS]

CLARK: The image that I take away from that is one that, as we all know, in the 1930s Japan went through a period of slight antipathy to foreign things and actually they decided that they didn't like playing a game with the foreign name rugby so they renamed it tokyu, "fighting ball," and at the same time, despite that, all the way through the '30s Tokyo University Rugby Club is singing this song in English, which I think is rather wonderful.

So part two: what does the history of rugby tell us about history? This part is a complete self-indulgence on my part. I have a very big hobbyhorse about the history of rugby and the fact that it had nothing whatsoever to do with William Webb Ellis.

The first question we ask is how does a sport become named? Why is a sport named what it is? The reason I put this example up is a game called fives, which as you can see is played in something like a squash court with a glove and you are hitting a small ball with your hand. Every form of fives is named after a leading public school. Eaton Fives is one version, Rugby Fives is another, and Charterhouse, another famous school, has its own version of this game.

It's pretty obvious, really, that sports have grown up around the world in many different countries, but the unique thing about Victorian Britons was that they had to claim to invent everything. Badminton is a game that has many precedents, in China, in India, even in the UK a game called battledore and shuttlecock, but it is named after the Duke of Beaufort's house on the somewhat fanciful assumption that they were the first people to think of it.

This is the best example. Table tennis, Ping Pong, or, as Boris Johnson would call it, Wiff Waff. There is a very famous occasion from the Beijing Olympics in which Mr. Johnson, perhaps after a few too many beers, delivered the following speech, which really does sum up the British attitude to sport.

[0:31:47-0:32:40 VIDEO]

CLARK: Just to my foreign visitors I would just like to point out that today is not only Halloween but also the day that Britain was supposed to leave the European Union. I think you all know my political views. My view is that that speech was a) bollocks but b) as much sense that he has talked since he became prime minister.

Right, who owns the history of football and who owns the history of rugby? So we come back to my article for Rugby Magazine. This is a medieval ballgame played in my birthplace of Sedgefield. There is, for example, another one in Ashbourne, Derbyshire. It is self-evident that these riotous, unformed games were the origin of both soccer and rugby. In fact, of the two branches of football that derived originally from medieval football, it is quite obvious that rugby was the rougher one and soccer was a refinement.

Just to prove that this isn't an English-centric thing, this is a game called La soule that was played in Basse-Normandie in France in 1852. In addition to that we see that this is not just a European thing. When I was in China in Nanjing,

three or four years ago, I was visiting a sports goods factory and a video was played. It was about a sport that the Chinese also called kemari and the theme of that video was in fact that Chinese people invented soccer.

Kemari is exactly the same name in Japan and China for this. This was played in the Heian era, which was roughly the 7th to 11th century, of the top of my head, which shows how old it is. All it is is an example of aristocratic people with nothing better to do finding time to mess about with a ball and play really what was a game of “keepie uppie.” But at the Shimogamo Shrine in Kyoto, every year on January 4, this game of kemari is played. So I just want to show you the idea that one country could invent football of any kind is slightly simplistic.

We go back to rugby and we go back to the video you saw at the start, which as everyone says William Webb Ellis was playing a game of soccer and he picked up the ball and invented the game of rugby in 1823. It is a concept that is so laughable that it begs belief. However, where does it all start?

This is a very famous book, published, I think, in 1856 by a guy called Thomas Hughes. It was a publishing sensation in Victorian England. It contains the first written account of football as it was played in Rugby School in the 1830s. This book was set in Rugby School and the association in the mind of the British public of Rugby School with this type of football was really due to this book.

What happened in the middle of the Victorian period to sport and to rugby and to soccer? At the same time as the English public schools, Eaton, Rugby, Charterhouse, they are all playing their own version of rugby, or football we should call it. A series of acts of parliament, this is the 1833 Factory Act, which was mostly concerned with child labor, but the 1851 Factory Act in the

United Kingdom instituted for the first time a half-day on a Saturday. You couldn't play sport on a Sunday for religious reasons, but for the first time from 1851 working-class people around the country in factories had a window of opportunity to play sport.

So what is this sporting revolution? I think if you look at the first 20 years of the Football Association Challenge Cup in soccer the picture is very clear. Wanderers, London; Oxford University; Wanderers; Wanderers; Old Etonians; Old Carthusians, which is Charterhouse; Old Etonians. Then, all of a sudden, here we have the beginning of a complete revolution. These are all factory workers. These teams are full of factory workers: Birmingham, Blackburn, Manchester. From this point all of the old public school boys who were civil servants and who were lawyers, sedentary jobs, are getting hammered by people who work in mines and are fit. This is a cause of huge consternation to the people who were used to dominating the sport.

As in soccer, although slightly later in rugby, in 1899 England rugby decided to have a county championship and as you can see it was won by Yorkshire and Lancashire all the way through to this point. The reason I point to this is this is the point at which the northern rugby clubs broke away to form a separate sport of rugby league.

After two years following the breakaway of the northern league, Kent win and Yorkshire or Lancashire never win again until 1926. So in one sense the split between the northern union and the rest of rugby in England preserved the control of the game by the governing classes, by public school people. They didn't really like being beaten by a team of miners from a Yorkshire village. They could do nothing about it in football and I sometimes wonder why soccer isn't called Eaton football because the people from Blackburn and Manchester weren't going to hack it.

But all of a sudden in the 1890s a lot of people who think they owned the game because they came from Rugby School, they suddenly decide that they've lost control of their sport. So what do they do? You can read this at your leisure but the bottom line is that in 1871 when England first played Scotland in what is regarded as the first rugby game there was a great argument about what the rules were going to be. The Scottish side wouldn't call the game "rugby," they called it "the great parent code" and they were really kind of resistant to the idea that the English had invented this game.

If you believe the story that William Webb Ellis picked up the ball in 1823 and ran with it, you have to ask the question when was this story first publicized? Was he a famous person immediately after he left Rugby School because he had invented a new sport? Was he famous when he was a vicar? Was he famous when he played in the first Oxford against Cambridge cricket match in 1827? Was he famous when he died in 1869? No, the story was created by the All Rugbeian Society in 1895.

There is the William Webb Ellis statue. There is his grave in Menton on the French Riviera. The English Rugby Football Union have put a little plaque saying "the first-ever rugby player." Well, we know that this is just simply not true and we need to ask ourselves why this happened. The reason it happened was because there was a battle for the ownership of the game that we know as rugby on the part of the people who felt that they had invented it. In 1895, Matthew Bloxam told the story, invented the story, and this was blown by a journalist writing for the Guardian in the 1960s.

This is the eighth article I wrote for Rugby Magazine in my youth, actually this is in 1982, explaining the fact that the Webb Ellis story was a complete invention and why. Look, does it really

matter that the Webb Ellis story is not true? You could say no, it doesn't matter and actually I'm not going to make a big deal of it, except I'm a chippy working-class boy from the north of England and I don't like it.

If you take time to read this, it is in your pack, this is the introduction, I'm not going to tell you who wrote it because I don't want to make a big thing of it, to the centenary history of the Rugby Football Union and it begins "The Russians claim to have invented many things" and it goes on and on like a rat. I think it's actually a disgrace. I cannot believe that the English Rugby Union could have published a book with that introduction. Equally, in 1923, England and Wales played Scotland and Ireland at Rugby School to commemorate the exact 100th anniversary of this non-existent event. I find it really irritating.

I go back to my article. My ancestors have been playing football in Sedgefield for centuries and in 1987 the Webb Ellis Cup was named as the trophy for the Rugby World Cup. We have seen that in 2015 England Rugby feels that they have to make a video starring Johnny Wilkinson, Prince Harry, and Serge Betsen perpetuating this ridiculous myth. Really why did the IRB decide to call it the Webb Ellis Trophy? It is just not good enough in my opinion.

So I'm starting a campaign, as of today. This is my final slide. I believe that there should be a renaming of the World Cup Trophy, and in an alternative universe, David, that's the trophy you would have been raising in 1987. So the campaign starts now. Thank you.

That is the end of my lecture. I'm just going to take a few minutes to conduct a couple of presentations and give you a rather romantic Rugby World Cup story from 2019. So, John Toppon, please stand up. Johnny is a very old friend of mine from London Japanese Rugby Club

who has complicated roots in Zambia and Ireland and Japan, and actually having lived in London and other places a great deal is now back in Zambia growing his own cotton and making his own shirts. Very good ones. I've got one and it even makes me look cool.

Now, Johnny decided, he is a very emotional guy, and he decided that he would pick out six people who meant a great deal to him in rugby and he would present them with a shirt and these are the shirts that he made. So that's one video. This is the next one. These are all clubs that have meant something both to Johnny and to the people that he is giving the shirts to. So Johnny has already given a shirt to Koji Tokumatsu. He has already given one to Keiko Kato, who is a good friend of both of ours who played Japanese women's international and lived in London for a year. And I'm proud to say that yesterday I met Dan Carter and I gave him a shirt that he is personally going to pass on to Seiji Hirao's son. In addition to that, this morning I had the honor of visiting the Oku family and I passed on one of the two jerseys that were given to me to give to Mr. Oku. But the other jersey we decided should be presented to Itami High School, which is the old high school of Katsu Oku and it just so happens that we have here today his old teammate Shin Sakamoto who is going to accept it on behalf of Itami High School.

And finally, we are very lucky that Maru is here. Maru, would you please come up and receive yours from Johnny?

Finally, everybody, I would like to acknowledge the sponsorship of this event by Takahashi Shuzo. Is Mr. Shimizu still here? Mr. Shimizu has come all the way from Kyoto to supply us with their world-famous Mio sparkling sake at the after-lecture party, which I think is on the sixth floor. So please would you all please join us for the after-party and have a glass of Mio sake

courtesy of Takahashi Shuzo. Thank you very much.

0:56:59-1:03:12

AUDIENCE(A): Reg, I thought I might as well volunteer to show up to your lecture. Thank you very much for your very interesting talk. I wasn't surprised but I was still impressed by the division that festers within England between the classes, as well as geographical. Just a question that now that the England team is captained by a northerner, and one remembers a great captain such as Bill Beaumont who is now leading the IRB, do you think England should forever be led by a northerner like yourself?

CLARK: Yes, of course. I think all of these class divisions have moved on, but, yes, I am a fan of Beaumont. The north of England is very strong in rugby still, even with the division into rugby league. But I still find it amazing that the Webb Ellis story continues and I think it is slightly insulting to certain people who represent different demographics in the game.

I just wonder how popular soccer would be if it was called Eaton football, which could have happened, actually. Especially when you consider that the United Kingdom is currently being brought to its knees by a series of Old Etonian prime ministers, but you don't have to translate that.

I think we should go and drink some sake. If any of you would like one of these magnificent signed T-shirts, please take one. Thank you.

AUDIENCE(B): JAPANESE

CLARK: I'll maybe answer that. A lot of people in this room knew Katsu Oku very well. He was a great man and I am determined that his role in bringing the Rugby World Cup to Japan should be recognized, but he wasn't the only person. Koji-san did a lot of work. A lot of people

contributed a great deal but I am determined that no one should forget what he did it. It is as simple as that. And I know that he would be very proud and pleased of what has happened in the last six weeks.