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Seishin Habitus: Spiritual Capital and Japanese Rowing

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Seishin Habitus: Spiritual Capital and Japanese Rowing

Abstract.

Sport occupies an important place in educational curriculum, such as club activities in Japanese schools and universities; is it also imbued with what Bourdieu suggests are guaranteed capital properties? That is, can physical education help to accrue capital and can such capital become cultural and economic capital? Further, is this capital similar to that resulting from academic education? Although Western culture recognizes Cartesian differentiation, mind and body are seen as one in the Japanese understanding of the individual, unified by the concept of spirit (this is different to the concept of soul). Recognizing this concept of the body is crucial in addressing the question of transferring educational (in this case physical) capital into forms of cultural capital. This paper investigates the responses of members of a Japanese University Rowing club when addressing questions dealing with various uses of the body in rowing and perceived opportunities for future employment.

Keywords: habitus, rowing, Japan, education, naturalistic

Bourdieu (1984) suggests that educational capital is guaranteed cultural capital. Thus, the accrual of degrees, diplomas, and other educational credentials has, in itself, a certain wealth that can be measured in terms of status, potential earning ability and relevant dispositions in taste. Sport occupies an important place in the Japanese educational curriculum, in the form of club activities in schools and universities. In this paper we discuss the extent to which Japanese university-based rowing is also imbued with similar capital properties. That is, can this particular form of physical education help to accrue capital and can it be transferred into cultural and economic capital?¹ Further, is this capital in the same mode as that of academic education?

The dominant paradigm in Western culture routinely emphasises the Cartesian differentiation between mind and body and, as such, separates the two into exclusive areas. However, the Japanese understanding of the individual does not recognize such dualism. Mind and body are seen as one, unified by the concepts of spirit and harmony which allow bodily practices to improve the whole individual and not just physiology or appearance. This cultivation of the self is found in aesthetic practice, meditation and the martial arts (Horne, 2000). For example, from the 17th century onward, Zen found its way from the warrior classes and into wider secular life. If a man ‘put his heart and soul in his secular profession, then he was practicing nothing but the ascetic practice of Buddhism’ (Nakamura, 1964:507). Thus emerged ‘appellations such as the way of the tea ceremony, the way of flower arrangement, the way of calligraphy, the way of military arts, the way of fencing, the way of jujutsu, etc.’ (Nakamura, 1964:510) All emphasise the concept of oneness with the activity through interaction that serves to accommodate both ascetic and aesthetic

¹ The concept of economic capital through physical education here is not concerned with the prospect of a professional sporting career as a result of this education. A recent Canadian study suggests that there is a relationship between participation in sport and future earning capacity. (Curtis, McTeer and White, 2004) Their results emphasise also the cultural, social and physical capital accrued as an outcome of involvement sport. Although there is opportunity to work for companies that have rowing clubs, these are not professional athletes in the modern sense of the word. Rather they are more like amateur athletes of old who overcame the problem of professionalism by working for a company in undisclosed jobs and also representing that company in their chosen sport. The company rower in Japan may have been recruited for their rowing ability, but they are still required to work the normal hours and job description of other employees.

sensibilities. *Karada de oboeru* becomes the aim of most artisans: ‘to go beyond a purely cognitive level of learning, and to learn with the body.’ (Kondo, 1992:47) As such physical knowledge is seen as permanent. Educating or improving any aspect of the self is seen as educating or improving the whole self. Recognizing this concept of the body is crucial in addressing the question of transferring educational (in this case physical) capital into forms of cultural capital.

Our particular concern is cultural capital in the form of employment. Japan is a group oriented culture, and belonging to an organization not only provides an income but more importantly, fixes the individual within the security and identity of the group. Doi (1973) suggests that while Western orientation is to the individual, Japanese is to the group. The collective orientation and need for human nexus provides the individual with a sense of social security and mutual assistance. As Kuwayama (1992) suggests, belonging to the group allows individuals to fix themselves within a framework of reference that offers a known template of behaviour and hierarchy based on Confucian concepts. Additionally, Clammer (1997, in Horne, 2000:76) describes a person’s body and self-identity as being developed through a process of ‘uniform individualisation’. It is important to note here, that for the purpose of this paper, it is the feedback of male members that is of interest. The capital that is developed in one's time as a member of the rowing club is indeed gendered as too are the concepts of *seishin*, *budo* and *samurai*. The forms of capital expressed are masculine. Investments made bodily in the accrual of these forms of cultural capital are intended to have value in a gendered world, workplace, family etc.

University Rowing in Japan

The first sports club in Japanese education was the Tokyo University Boat club established in 1877, and the first interuniversity competitions started in 1887 with a rowing race in Tokyo on

the Sumidagawa. (Manzenreiter, 2001)². Further, rowing club activities were established in this period following the 1868 Meiji restoration, a period that saw the rapid modernization of Japan coupled with attempts to maintain a unique Japanese identity. Based on the work of Hobsbawn (1983), during historical periods where the modernity has threatened traditional identity in various communities, there is the development of ‘invented tradition’ or more appropriately ‘ritualistic and symbolic practices that are used to inculcate particular values and behaviours by uniting current practices with a suitable past.’ (Light and Kinnaird, 2002:141)

As evidenced by founder Kano Jigoro’s level of success in propagating both the sport of Judo and the concept of Budo, the elements of invention of tradition are clear (Inoue, 1998). Kano successfully combined elements of the martial arts within a modern games framework to produce a form of activity whose emphasis was on character building whereby the educative aim was to ‘cultivate people of ability who could make a contribution to modern society.’ (Inoue, 1998:84) Although initially achieved through judo, the concept of budo was also applied to western sport. Kiku (in Manzenreiter, 2001) describes the ‘budofication’ of Western sport, initially in educational institutions. In the same mid-Meiji timeframe (late 1880s and 1890s) Kelly (1998) discusses the ethic of ‘muscular spirituality’ expressed through the fighting spirit (*konjo*) of the baseball club of Tokyo’s premier high school. Here, as with Kano’s judo, the emphasis was on the expression of rugged group autonomy, self-imposed discipline, self-sacrifice, commitment and comportment. In the context of physical practices in Japanese universities, rowing was selected for study because we contend that rowing underwent the same process of budofication. As a Western sport assimilated into the education system, rowing was reshaped according to such pressures to reflect an identity appropriated by the now swordless Samurai classes. The repetitious nature of rowing (repetition

² Rowing was actually the first interuniversity sport in most modern education. Oxford met Cambridge in the first interuniversity sporting event in the boat race of 1829. ‘[T]he first intercollegiate sport, in America as in England, was rowing. Yale had a boat club in 1843, Harvard in 1844. The first intercollegiate contest occurred at Lake Winnepesaukee in 1852.’ This was 7 years before the first interuniversity baseball game in 1859. (Guttmann, 1988:70)

being a key component of martial art training) coupled with an emphasis on discipline and self-sacrifice further enhanced the sport's transformation in Japanese culture.

Stable Hegemony

According to Gramsci (1971), the stronger the 'common sense' of groups and individuals within those groups, the stronger the element of hegemony. Common sense must be understood as a 'series of stratified deposits' an 'infinity of traces without an inventory' (Adamson, 1980, 150). The budofication of rowing in Japanese universities suggests that many of these deposits and traces come from the early periods of rowing. Gramsci (1971) argues that 'in short, hegemonies always grow out of historical blocs, but not all historical blocs are hegemonic' (Adamson, 1980, 177-178). The particular form of hegemony at work at the Biwa University Rowing Club (BURC) arises from historical blocs such as the post Meiji restoration. Just as Gramsci suggests that strong (stable) states have strong hegemony and little use of force in maintaining order, likewise the absence of outside regulation, be it from coaches, university staff or alumni indicates that BURC also operates under a similarly strong sense of hegemony. Rowing is a particularly conservative sport and exists for the most part, outside the influence and models of professional sports. Due to its almost exclusive niche existence within high schools and universities³ it offers an opportunity to examine a certain type of physical practice that exists in a different field to some other sports, thereby producing an alternative habitus. The major focus of this paper is the belief systems that operate within the social groups who actively choose the pathway of university rowing.

Methodology

The setting for this research was in Shiga prefecture, located in central Honshu, Japan. BURC is situated on Lake Biwa, the largest in Japan. It Lake Biwa is also the training venue for

³ In the lake Biwa area there is only 1 community based rowing club and three company (semi-professional) clubs (Toray being the biggest). This is compared with 35 to 40 university, high school and junior high school rowing clubs.

University rowing clubs from both Shiga and neighbouring areas, particularly Kyoto and Osaka. The BURC at which the research was undertaken is a fictitious name for a mid-size Buddhist university dating back to the late 1800's.

The absence of literature using naturalistic sociological perspectives of sport in Japan, especially rowing, necessitates the utilisation of grounded theory whereby the modes of analysis of any data gathered actually arise from the data itself (Glaser and Strauss, 1967). It is therefore inevitable that the research design will be, in many ways, emergent (Erlandson, Harris, Skipper, and Allen, 1993). The majority of data collection for this paper relied on participant observation, unstructured and semi-structured interviews, and the use of a questionnaire to provide more detailed demographic data. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with a translator. The authors and the translator discussed the interviews in terms of potential directions they might take prior to undertaking them. After each interview debriefing with the translator and other Japanese colleagues allowed extra clarity in developing thematic codes. Upon returning to Australia, all the interviews were translated a second time by a native Japanese speaker. During this stage various linguistic nuances were discussed and the text was given a more natural feel. This process was very valuable as it provided another opportunity for reflexivity.

Getting Started

Bourdieu (1990) suggests a constructivist approach to the study of the sociology of sport. This approach operates within grounded theory (Glaser and Strauss, 1967), which accepts the existence of multiple realities (Fetterman, 1998; Carspecken, 1996). These realities are constructed in reference to the individual's values, background and beliefs. It is important, therefore, to contextualise the researcher's experience of the subject. According to Agar, (1996:41-42) 'Objectivity is perhaps best seen as a label to hide problems in the social sciences. The problem is not whether the ethnographer is biased: the problem is what kind of biases exist. How do they enter

into the ethnographic work, and how can their operation be documented?' Gaining acceptance into the subculture is the first priority of ethnography. In this case it came about through a common practice, rugby. The first author had previously lived in Japan for 18 months between 1994-1996 working as an English teacher. During this time he played for two rugby teams in Shizuoka prefecture and assisted in coaching the local high school team. This experience led him to become interested in cross-cultural differences in sporting practice and the hegemonies they reflect. The choice of rowing as a setting for this research was purposeful on many levels. The first author had rowed in Australia at varying levels including State representative, for approximately 16 years. During this time he also had extensive coaching experience in school environments and for the past five years has been director of the largest schoolgirl-rowing programme in Australia. He has also had the opportunity to organise and design rowing programmes for touring Japanese universities from Tokyo travelling to Australia for their winter training camps. As noted, rowing seemed an appropriate setting for the expression of a particular form of hegemony. It was the first inter-university competition in Japan and with its amateur background, exists today almost exclusively in tertiary education. It has strong connections with the concept of Muscular Christianity. During the Meiji restoration major educational reform saw the employment of Westerners into Universities and the dispatch of Japanese educationalists into Europe and America. This process coincided with the spread of sport based on the English muscular Christian model throughout education. Both the Western educators in Japan and the returning Japanese educationalists brought with them an understanding of the potential function of sport as a character building exercise, (and later as a increasingly militaristic exercise). As Kusaka (1987) points out, for sports to be adopted into education in the Meiji period these sports had to be useful to the physical, spiritual, and moral development or cultivation of players. Rowing clubs in Japanese Universities offered a small, but unique, subculture for the researcher to enter. It also offered perhaps the most accessible and least resistant entry. The specific involvement with the Biwa University Rowing Club (BURC) extends

over a 4-year period, in particular three visits; firstly as a guest and the second time as a rower. During the third visit the first author spent seven weeks living at the boat shed as a technical advisor in residence.

Fictionalised Identities and Amalgamated Data

University rowing is a relatively minor sport where the limited number of participants make it impossible to abide by the guaranteed condition of anonymity. To overcome this problem we used fictionalized amalgams. As Grenfell and Rinehart suggest: 'As researchers, we found that we needed to be clear as to where we stood in relation to those whom we researched. To protect confidentiality and anonymity of the informants, the institutions, and the context of those we studied, fiction seemed an appropriate tool.' (2003, 80-81)

That is, the use of fictionalised identities and amalgamated data provide a method for reporting 'subjective' information, including data based upon their informants' words and actions. Therefore, not only are the informants or informants identities 'fictionalised' in order to preserve anonymity, but their narrative accounts/reports were amalgamated/blended so as to minimize detection of identities and more acutely capture the knowledge. Therefore, although it is important to locate each respondent within the hierarchy of BURC, the informants can be seen as thematic rather than literal. Not only is the university a fictionalised institution for the sake of confidentiality and anonymity, so too are the informants. To this end we use three fictionalised identities to represent the 25 informants. For the purpose of this paper we are only interested in the response of current active male members. The identities were derived from the hierarchical structure of BURC. Hiro represents seniority and leadership, Kobe represents those with experience (not yet senior) but still aspiring to leadership, and Taka represents the freshmen.

Credibility Check

During the design and construction, as well as upon completion of the final draft, the research, questionnaires, interview outlines, draft concepts, were distributed for the purpose of confirming trustworthiness. While several people provided feedback, the principal auditors and advisers were the second translator, a graduate from a Japanese University rowing club, and a Japanese professor from the prefecture where the research was conducted. Not only did this provide a check on ethnocentricity on the part of the authors, but also the elements of confirmability, dependability, and credibility as recommended by Schwandt and Halpern (1988, cited in Erlandson, et al.,1993).

Findings

We present the results in terms of the two emergent themes of club membership, and social positioning.

Belonging to a Club

The following passage is extracted from fieldnotes and exemplifies the everyday experience of being a member of BURC:

“It has been one of those May days in Shiga. It started raining around noon and hasn’t relented since. It’s the constant soft rain that deadens sound and creates a calm, quiet numbness. The rowers from BURC arrive for their evening training session to the darkness of Setakawa, to this muffled world. The occasional Shinkansen crosses the river, like it’s a magic carpet, its momentary impact on the scene noticed only from the sparks from its conduits that briefly shower the river below in

light. The rowers prepare and then head out into the dark, into the millpond. They warm up silently, passing Ishiyamadera, under the imaginary gaze of Murasaki who wrote the Tales of Genji from this spot. They turn and move into full crew rowing, striking out toward Lake Biwa. As they do they pass a dozen or more boathouses similar to their own. Beacons of light in the gloom. Under the Shinkansen bridge, the Tomei - both icons of Japan's moderization after the Pacific war. Under the Seta karahashi, the famous bridge from pre-Tokugawa Japan that formed an important part of the trade route from the old capital Kyoto to the new capital Tokyo. The crew passes or is passed by several other crews, kayakers, fishing vessels and coaching launches. They reach the opening into Biwa ko, turn again and head home.

Despite the rowers being on the water the boathouse is humming with activity. The managers have been there since mid afternoon preparing the evening meal. The windows of the dining room are totally steamed over and on entering the boathouse one is instantly welcomed to a sense of warmth and comfort. The gentle fragrance of miso, rice and chicken fill the space. The rowers return, via the shower, to the dining room, to the background of managers in conversation. The rowers plough into their meals with gusto, animated conversation and joking, the Hanshin Tigers are playing arc rivals the Yomuri Giants on the rather enormous TV which sits next to the small Buddhist shrine. The managers depart without fuss to appreciative nods and grunts. The game on the set enters the 9th innings and it's still close. The Tokyo team prevails and for those not already there, bed calls. Outside the rain continues to fall and inside the effect is soporific. Upstairs to the bunkrooms. Within moments all is silent and dark and sleep comes effortlessly.

The following morning at 5am it's up again for training. Within minutes of the captain's rounds of the dorms, he goes past each room only once, the whole boathouse has mobilised. Five minutes after the wake up call all the rowers are running along the river warming, and waking, up. On return to the boathouse every member begins stretching rituals. Blankets are brought out of a large box and each rower places his on the ground in two lines starting at the front of the boat storage

boathouse and working toward the back. The captain always positions himself at the front left hand side with a variety of 3rd and 4th year students taking the other side. With the exception of the golden boy Taka, who always is directly behind Hiro, the 1st year students are all positioned down the back. However whilst the BURC rowers engage in their own personal preparation experience, it is always only once Hiro has finished that the others finish. Whilst the stretching is going on the two coxswains prepare the breakfast that was made the previous night by the managers. Once Hiro has finished stretching the group breaks into its respective crews and, after a short crew briefing, its hands on the boats and training on the water begins.

After training, debriefing, stretching and breakfast it's off to university or, in most cases, back to bed, many rising only after noon. At 4pm the boathouse fills again with managers and rowers and the preparation for the next session begins again.⁴ (Fieldnotes)

Whether real or imagined, it is the belief in the worth of belonging to a sports club in Japan, in this case rowing, that is paramount. As Bourdieu (1984:212) suggests;

'Variations in sporting practices are due as much to the variations in perception and appreciation of the immediate or deferred profits they are supposed to bring, as to the variations in costs, both economic and cultural and indeed bodily.'

It is the 'perception and appreciation' of the profits of being a member of BURC that are of interest. In many ways these profits are discovered via two questions; 1) Do you think that being a member of BURC (that is the experiences had and lessons learnt) will help you attain a job?⁵ and, 2) What are the most important aspects of your rowing experience? In answering these questions it

⁴ The competitive rowing season is really only during July and August. For the university boat clubs this season culminates with the National intercollegiate regatta held in late August in Tokyo on Toda, the site of the Olympic rowing course in 1960. Whilst the season proper is only short, training continues most of the year round. Freshmen join the club in April shortly after the beginning of the academic year and remain members of the club until the National intercollegiate championships in their senior year. Training continues during university holidays often in the form of rowing camps where members travel to training venues in Japan or overseas in order to increase their workload and hone their skills.

⁵ This question does not assume a direct transference from sporting capital to employment. Rather there is an indirect relationship between the various cultural and physical capital accrued whilst rowing and this capital's ability to hold it value outside of the educational setting and in other settings such as the work place, family etc. As such the profits of rowing are therefore the accrual of various forms of culturally specific and significant capital.

is important to recognize the Japanese understanding of the body as being inseparable from the mind. In fact, both mental and physical action can be seen as an expression of one's spirit.

When asked if he thought being captain of BURC would help finding a job, Hiro answered:

Yes and no. Directly no, the Alumni will not get me a job. However, the experiences here will help me. For example, living here has taught me many things. When I go for a job interview I will be able to respond to the questions, such as: 'Were you involved in clubs?' with confidence that I was the captain. That the team I belonged to was really traditional and strong. I will be very proud of my position in the rowing team. Even though it is a small club, the skills to lead the team are really important to lead in society. Because I was a leader once I know both sides (of hierarchy). Once I work for the company, even if I am a lower employee I will know how the leader feels to the employees. Both sides, how leadership works and how other people work. I will understand how the boss feels or what the boss expects and I understand how to work as a team.

The fact that Hiro perceives BURC as being traditional and emphasises his leadership role cannot be understated. Rohlen (1986) examined the spiritual education of bank employees, the basis of which was the bank's desire to educate its employees in the correct groupthink to best enable them to fit into the company. The fact that the bank engages in this process also indicates a lack of faith in the education system to provide graduates with this knowledge. 'At a formal level, major companies hold intensive training sessions for several weeks for new employees, in an endeavour to infuse company policies and practices into their minds.' (Sugimoto, 1997:92) As a traditional club, BURC provides members with the development of spiritual capital as defined in various tenets of Confucianism and Buddhism and in particular the development of one's *seishin*. These core tenets revolve around the *sempai/kohai* (senior/junior) or *jogenkankei* (hierarchical) relationships, the concept of self-sacrifice and learning through *kuro* (hardship), the concept of *cho wa* (harmony) and *kyo cho* (cooperation), and the qualities of patience, endurance, perseverance,

and discipline. As described previously, the rowing club environment, social set up and practice routines are all relatively traditional stemming from a conservative sport. Members of BURC have no doubt about the benefits and significance of living in such a 'proper, disciplined way.' (notes)

The captain for the next year, Kobe, adds to Hiro's sentiments:

'Yes, the experiences here will help in a job. As a member here sometimes you have to be very very patient, but this skill will help when it comes to get a job. I have confidence in what I have done in rowing, compared to the normal university life I have learnt trust and cooperation with other people and I think these skills are useful in getting a job. I will express these things at the job interview.'

Kobe also makes the significant statement of differentiating himself from the 'normal' university student. It is clear that many of the members at BURC are members because of their desire, not to be the same as their peers, but to be different from them.

'Compared to other people who don't do club activities I think I understand more about physical strength, *jogenkankei*, and *ningenkankei* (human relationships) and I can sell those skills at the job interview.'

Hiro adds:

The ordinary university student goes to class and has a routine. However, I am learning something that university cannot teach me. I have a special experience here that after graduating or in the future will make sense, maybe not now but later it will help. The skill to make the teamwork together cannot be acquired just from studying at university.

Social Positioning

Although few informants see future employment, or the belief that the alumni network will assist in this quest, as their primary motivation for joining the rowing club, there is the belief that being a member of BURC will in some way give them an edge in the highly competitive job market. Certainly, in the case of some sports, success at a high school or college level can greatly assist one's chances of employment. Pempel (1998:131) offers: 'a talented baseball player or volleyball player who has gone to a mediocre high school or college can often land a job at a prestigious company anxious to capture his or her athletic talents for the company sponsored team. Indeed many of the BURC members received encouragement to attend the university based on their high school rowing, and sporting scholarships do exist in the university system. However in rowing, as with many clubs (not just sporting), there is no professional league to aspire to. There are some companies that have rowing teams, but these are few in relation to the number of graduates. Unlike Pempel's (1998) example, graduates would rarely be employed solely due to their sporting talents. Nevertheless members see the potential in gaining social positioning through rowing. Here social positioning does not refer to a rise or shift in class status, as most Japanese people refer to themselves (perhaps falsely) as middle class. (Sugimoto, 1997) Rather it is the important step of moving from *gakusei* (student) to *shakaijin* (person in society) and therefore positioning oneself in the social nexus. Individuals who become members of the BURC are indeed making an investment through physical sacrifice in their *seishin* (spiritual) capital. The strength of this capital is not, however, measured by results in any regatta or championship, nor in the ability to row a boat. The boat and boat club are merely the environment which facilitates the development of *seishin* capital and, as such, the actual rowing is of peripheral importance.

I think that the process to win is most important so if I don't achieve the goal but the process is good then I am happy. Even if we lose the race but we do our best then I will be very satisfied. So far I have been happy with the process. (Hiro interview)

'Not only rowing but also from other sports I think people understand *jogenkankei* and live in proper disciplined way' – notes

'I have *seishin* because I have continued with rowing and I can sell that at the job interview' - notes

As with martial arts or secular forms of Buddhism, the actual activity is only a vehicle to allow the tempering of one's spirit and the mastering of oneself. As Hiro puts it above, it is the 'process' that is paramount. Therefore, as the opportunity to engage in the activity is removed, it is believed that the *seishin* developed endures. As with most of the informants, they saw little, if no, opportunity for rowing once they graduated from university, nor did they seem particularly disappointed about this.

The spiritual capital accrued through rowing is believed to be stable and enduring across various fields. One of the primary reasons for the strength of this capital is the level of investment required. Being a member of BURC requires total commitment for four years of the student's life. This includes living for over half of that time with a group of people who never previously met, in the less than spacious living arrangements at the boat shed. There is very little time to be involved in anything else. The concept of committing to one task or activity is fairly standard throughout Japanese education, regardless of what the club activity it might be. However, at university the level of adherence to this model usually weakens. University is often described as 'leisure land' (Sugimoto, 1997) and is generally considered an opportunity to relax after the 'exam hell' of high school and prior to entering the work force. Rowing is intentionally brutal and tough in practice. In part this is due to the nature of the sport, but also to the the acquired understanding that the greater the hardship, the suffering and the pain, the greater the challenge to endure and to persevere, the

greater the *seishin* that is developed. As there are so many clubs within the university, BURC intentionally positions itself on the extreme end of the scale. This is in part to achieve a sense of difference or distinction from other clubs by being the toughest or hardest. It is also to demonstrate to any potential members that the rowing club is not for the fickle or fainthearted. If you are not prepared to operate under the collective rules of the club and adhere to a strong kohai/sempai relationship then this is not the club for you.

The belief in the power of one's *seishin* is also clearly expressed. The more conservative the environment, the stronger the belief in *seishin*. Taka is a freshman, rows in the number one boat and was described by the translator as having the 'Samurai spirit'.

'You must have the desire to win, the winning spirit (*seishin*) and to show that feeling through performance. Spiritually wanting to win, heart, plus of course amount of practice, these are the most important aspects of rowing.'

'The most important components of rowing are strength, coordination, a strong mind, and *seishin*.' (notes)

'Try hard whatever situation you are in, improve yourself little by little.' (notes)

'Cooperation (*kyocho*) with other people, wanting to win, and.....?; (notes)

Taka's perspective is clearly not unique and there are relationships between what are seen as the important components of rowing, the sense of difference to the average university student, and a belief in *seishin*.

One of the key tenets of developing *seishin* is the need for a good *sempai/kohai* relationship as this is the foundation of learning through observation. The Confucian concepts of hierarchy or *jogenkankei* are particularly clear and accepted at BURC. Of course this is not to say that this is in

any way unique to the rowing club, in fact such concepts are normal through social organization in Japan. However, it is the intensity of the experience, the absence of members older than 23, and the voluntary nature of BURC that makes the *jogenkankei* so important and strong. At BURC there is a close relationship in the understanding of *ningenkankei* (human relationships) and *kogenkankei* (upper and lower relationships). Of his goals at BURC Kobe suggests:

‘I want to win the inter college championship. Also I want to make more friends here and when I graduate I will have to go into the community so I hope I understand people more. I want learn human relationships (*ningenkankei*) by living with other people because that’s really important in society. I want to learn the skills of living with other people.’

Interestingly there is variation in the perception of how strong the *jogenkankei* is or should be.

I had no expectations. Before coming here I knew nothing. It is very different from high school particularly from the point of view of being more individual and self motivated. At university you are more independent, the *sempai/kohai* relationship is stronger because you have to learn more from your sempai, as there are no coaches. (interview with Taka)

Living at the boat shed is more fun than living by yourself. However I would change some things as captain. For example lights out time. The previous captain was stricter with lights out than Hiro. Recently it has become slacker. We don’t go to bed and be quiet. I want to bring lights out back to the old fashioned way, stricter. I think that *jogenkankei* is very important so it should become stronger again. Hiro is too gentle. More discipline is needed. (interview with Kobe)

The *sempai/kohai* relationship is not necessarily one of strict obedience to one’s elder. In many ways at BURC it operates more as a mentoring system, as Taka suggests the relationship for him is actually one of greater freedom and genuine interaction.

I have a much greater fondness for the *sempai* at university than at high school. At the freshmen's party I was really moved by the gesture of the *sempai* pouring my drink. (Taka interview)

Similarly when discussing his leadership style Hiro says:

Since they are not children I let them think for themselves and respect their individuality and let them take responsibility for their actions, however when we have to be together I have to be quite tough. They are part of the team so depending on the case I need people to concentrate or give effort so I have to direct also.

The accrual of spiritual capital for members at BURC does not begin with their joining the rowing club in university; rather BURC can be seen as the continuation and intensification of the *seishin* building process. With few exceptions, members of BURC rowed at high school and those who did not engaged in some other club activity with similar commitment requirements (questionnaire). As a result, the spiritual capital developed at BURC is particularly strong. It has its roots in traditions that have changed little over time. As an organization it is almost completely autonomous and member driven. For the members, it is the most important part of their lives at this time:

Rowing has been my university life, all of it. I have been rowing for a long time; it's my university life. (interview Hiro)

My high school teacher recommended that I go to BURC. I didn't know much about the teaching here but I was aware of their rowing programme. I came to BURC to become a member of the rowing club not to be a BU student. I don't care about university only rowing. (interview with Taka)

Conclusion

This ethnographic research permits insight and interpretations of the ‘fuzzy logic’ of Japanese sporting activity in tertiary education. Multiple philosophies and ideologies assimilated to a Japanese format suggest a historical practice of concealing hegemony in the dominant doctrines of Confucianism, Buddhism and Shinto (Nakamura, 1964; Van Wolferen, 1989). These influences produce an understanding of the body that is unique within the constructs of this hegemony. Just as the body may be viewed differently, so too may bodily activities such as sport.

Spiritual capital is expressed in what Bourdieu (1984) would describe as habitus. As such habitus:

‘function below the level of consciousness and language, beyond the reach of introspective scrutiny or control by the will. Orienting practices practically, they embed what some would mistakenly call values in the most automatic gestures or the apparently most insignificant techniques of the body.’ (Bourdieu, 1984:466)

Spiritual habitus is constructed at BURC; it does not result merely from being a member, but emerges / develops at every level of existence, or as Bourdieu (1984:466) suggests ‘below the level of consciousness and language’. These practices include such elements as; the type of meals made by the managers, for example the daily breakfast of rice, soup and fish (never any deviation); the small Buddhist shrine in the corner of the dining room where the bowl of rice is replaced each day; the long prayers before and after meals; the option for traditional and not Western style toilets – even though the boatshed is only about 25 years old a choice has been made as to the type of toilets used and therefore the daily act of defecation is in a way a reaffirmation of traditional values; the collective water bottles, frozen and wrapped for each crew, the stretching routines and the individual positioning of each member according to a clear understanding of the *jogenkankei*; the

living arrangements, cramped and exposed to the other members, constantly under surveillance. All of these practices contribute to the *seishin* habitus.

In all of the responses it was impossible to differentiate between the rower's experiences of the sport as a physical activity and the rower's engagement with the sport as a living, 24-hour a day experience. This suggests that the activity is experienced holistically in keeping with a Japanese conception of the body where the development of one part of the individual is seen as the development of the whole. Indeed the important themes of *ningenkankei* and *jogenkankei* appear to be developed predominantly outside of the boat. Therefore, it is the complex social nexus of the club, in its physical and spatial relationships, that effect the greatest appreciation of the *seishin* habitus. There is clearly a physical investment made by members of BURC in their future spiritual capital. In choosing to be members of BURC, these students hope to graduate with an identity that will strike a chord with prospective employers - that they are ready to operate in the highly socialized world of *salari-man* employment.

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