

**How Baseball Was Understood by the Japanese
in the Early Stage of Its Diffusion in Meiji Era**

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Abstract

This study was intended to investigate the way in which the Japanese people interpreted American baseball in the early stage of its diffusion in Meiji Era. Materials used were baseball rules published in Japan in the period from 1883 to 1900 and those of American rules in corresponding years. Eighteen Japanese literatures were listed in Bibliography No. 1 and those of American literatures in No. 2. Critical comparative analysis was made on the arrangement, content and meaning of each article between both American and Japanese baseball rules. Following conclusive remarks could be made on the basis of the analysis.

1. According to the years of publication and the contents of rules the period should be divided into two periods; (a) from 1883 to 1887 and (b) from 1895 to 1900.

2. Corresponding relationship between Japanese and American baseball rules in each period was following:

a. First period. Corresponded to the American rules in 1860s-70s. Main features were; (1) a pitcher uses an underhand-pitch, (2) a batter is out when a fair hit is caught flying, or when the third strike and a foul hit are caught either flying or on its first bounce, (3) the umpier must warn a batter or a pitcher before he calls a strike out or a base on balls, (4) a batter has a right to call for either a "high ball" or a "low ball", and the like.

b. Second period. Three stages were observed. (1) first, corresponding to the afore-mentioned rules; (2) second, corresponding to the American rules in mid 1880s, which included as main features, 1) a pitcher is permitted to use an overhand-throw, 2) a batter is out when a fair hit, a foul hit or the third strike is caught only flying, 3) the umpire must call a ball or strike in the order of delivery, and a base on balls or strike out without warning; and (3) third, corresponding to the newly developed systematic and "scientific" baseball strategy in the late 1880s and '90s, following rules were added, 1) the infield fly rule, 2) a batter is out when three strikes are called while the first base is occupied by a base runner, except when two men are already out, and 3) rules for sacrifice hit, a bunting and an intentional foul hit.

3. It was also observed in the second period that so called "Japanese rules", which were not seen in any American rules at all or, if any, their meanings were far different from those of American rules, were codified; e.g. a lost ball, a passed ball, etc. These were hardly seen in the rules in the first period. This seemed to be brought into existence and codified through the process of inter-school matches developed in each local district during this period.

4. Most generalily applied baseball rules in the second period were those mixed American rules in mid 1880s with "Japanese rules"

5. Although it might not be said that rules reflecting the systematic baseball strategy were generally applied in the second period, they were coming to be understood and adopted to their matches.

6. Those literatures which were published in Japan and seemed to be influential and made correct interpretation on American baseball rules were Tanaka and Tsuboi's KOGAI-YUGI-HO (A Manual of Outdoor Games)in the first period and Chuma's YAKYU(Baseball)and Y. Takahashi's YAKYU- SODAN(A Baseball Digest)in the second period.

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