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Dennis J Frost’s *More Than Medals: A History of the Paralympics and Disability Sports in Postwar Japan* is a very comprehensive historiography of this topic, applying the author’s careful review of Japanese primary sources, including literature and interviews. Foreign-language speakers of any language have difficulty accessing the references in the field, as I have experienced as a native speaker of Japanese and with English as a foreign language. Thus, I think Frost has done an excellent job with this historical study.

As you might already know, the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics Games in Tokyo were postponed to 2021 and held in very unusual conditions in order to avoid the worst effects of the COVID-19 outbreak. The games stimulated a lot of controversy in Japan as the host country; people argued that Tokyo should focus on the pandemic response. Still, as I read this well-written historiography about disability sports in Japan, the planning of the Tokyo 2020 Games has a significant meaning in developing the culture of disability sports in Japan.

The book consists of five chapters. Each chapter focuses on the historical events of disability sports in Japan after the Second World War. These include the 1964 Paralympics in Tokyo, the Far East and South Pacific Games (FESPIC) in 1975, the Ōita International Wheelchair Marathon in 1981, the 1998 Winter Paralympics in Nagano, and 2020 Tokyo Paralympics Games, which were delayed until 2021.

The key person mentioned in the first half of this book is Nakamura Yutaka, a doctor who lived in Ōita, a “countryside” prefecture in Kyūshū island of southwestern Japan. Nakamura studied in the UK, where he learned of the existence of games for people with disabilities, and he decided to use sports as a rehabilitation tool. After returning to Japan, Nakamura played a crucial role in promoting disability sports in Japan; however, it was not easy. Some people criticized Nakamura for exercising disabled bodies harshly in the name of sport. However, Nakamura repeatedly argued that sport would help to promote independence for people with disabilities.

According to Frost, Nakamura was a talented and hard-working activist as well as a doctor. He established a work facility for persons with disabilities named Taiyō no Ie (the House of the Sun) in Ōita. He achieved this from inspiration that came from international athletes who played in 1964 Tōkyō Paralympics, but who also enjoyed shopping and sightseeing because they had jobs that
secured their financial independence, a status not enjoyed by the Japanese athletes. Taiyō no Ie attracted the attention of several prominent industrial entrepreneurs in Japan who created collaborative companies in Ōita and some other areas in Japan. This legacy continues even now.

Although Nakamura’s innovations were quite progressive, Frost’s analyses show that disability sport in Japan has subsequently experienced transformation in certain aspects. First, in terms of organizations and policy, Nakamura’s craftsmanship-like approach played a critical role, although the shape of the organization is now different. For example, Nakamura succeeded in negotiations with All Nippon Airways (ANA) to operate international charter flights to Ōita Airport for participants in the Ōita International Wheelchair Marathon, even though the airport did not have international service facilities. However, the organization of disability sports became more systematic and more extensive through attracting many sponsors and procuring collaboration with international organizations, including the International Paralympics Committee and domestic entities such as the Nippon Foundation, a famous private funding agency for social welfare in Japan. Second, disability sport gradually gained attention as an “elite” field as the media grew more aware of disability sports and companies began investing in athletes with disabilities. Disability sports in Japan have become increasingly competitive. Rather than disabled athletes being viewed as objects of pity, they have become heroes or heroines who “overcame” obstacles.

Ultimately, Frost is concerned about matters beyond the 2020 Tokyo Paralympics, especially that funding and public attention toward disability sports will decline. In such a situation, he considers how the legacy of the 2020 Games, and previous efforts for disability sports in Japan since Nakamura’s UK visit, might be sustained in the future. As I read this excellent historiography as a Japanese scholar with specialization in sociolinguistics and disability studies, I am conscious of three points that merit discussion.

First, I would have loved to learn more about media analysis as summarized in chapter 4. Frost identifies diachronic changes in news coverage of disability sports in Japanese local and national newspapers. But researchers should be encouraged to undertake more in-depth analysis of the substance of those newspaper articles, perhaps quoting examples of news text. Readers would then be able to focus greater attention on disability sports in Japan through improved media coverage.

Second, the author might have provided a more socioeconomic perspective. For instance, Japanese citizens consider the era of the 1968 Tokyo Games as a symbol of the great economic miracle (Kōdo Keizai Seichō) in Japan. I suspect that the success of Nakamura’s effort for the Tokyo Paralympics in 1968, the FESPIC Games, and even Taiyō no Ie could only have been accomplished with the solid economic tailwind of that era. Conversely, the 1998 Nagano Olympic Games marked the beginning of much slower economic growth, to the extent that Japanese people could not expect considerable economic growth again in future. I suspect that if Nakamura were active now and sought to promote disability sports in twenty-first-century Japan, his approach would have to be different.

Third, sports with people with diverse disabilities, beyond physical disabilities, might have been discussed. Disability policy in Japan has categorized disabilities into three types: physical, intellectual, and mental. This book mainly focuses on the first one, and the third is rarely mentioned. As we know, some elite athletes have confessed their mental health issues; mental health is unavoidable in elite sports discourse. Moreover, how should we think about participation in sports by people who experience mental health issues? Would the Special Olympics be a key factor? Should the Paralympics, and also Olympics, be
more inclusive of people with mental health issues? These questions might be considered in future discussions among scholars and practitioners in disciplines such as history, sports studies, Japanese or Asian studies, and disability studies.

Overall, this book has outstanding analyses of disability sports in Japan. I encourage my colleagues in disability studies, both in Japan and outside the country, to read this work.

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