

Impact of the Spillover of the Japanese Television on Professional Baseball in Korea

Jieun Kim (*Korea National Sport University/Lecturer*) · Youngsue Han (*Catholic University of Korea/Lecturer*) · Hyunjung Roh (*Sogang University/Graduate student*) · Thomas Whelan (*British Council/Lecturer*) · Jisun Park (*Hankuk University of Foreign Studies/Graduate student*)

Abstract

This paper addresses the spillover effects of Japanese television on the development of professional baseball in Korea in the 1980s. The success of professional baseball in Korea was heavily influenced by Korea's encounter with modernity from Japanese cultural influences. There was an unintentional dissemination of Japanese broadcast television into the Busan area in which was formed a cultural contact zone between Korea and Japan. The people in Busan could indeed watch Japanese professional baseball on television due to the proximity of Busan to the Japanese mainland. We will also draw on Foucault's concept of heterotopia to help explain and contextualize certain elements of Japanese baseball broadcasting and their impact on Korean baseball. We will postulate the idea that heterotopia can emerge even in contact zones that can create a certain level of conflict alongside the role of the propagation of Japanese media and its provision of an exceptional space where what would be considered abnormal human and social behaviors were tolerated.

Key words: Korea baseball players, Spillover, Japanese television, Foucault, Heterotopia

1. Introduction

This paper argues that the spillover effects of Japanese television on the formation of the KBO (Korea Baseball Organization) League in Korea in the 1980s had contributed to creating a cultural contact zone and producing a heterotopia in Foucault's sense. According to national statistical data and a survey of 2016 by Nielsen Korea, a media research group, the popularity of baseball is overwhelming, and dwarfs other major professional sports such as football, volleyball, and basketball in Korea (Statistics Korea, 2020; YTN, 2017).

During the Cold War period, the Korean peninsula was a border region of the Cold War. Many shortwave radio signals like Voice of America, Radio Moscow, BBC World Service, and NHK World Service were available throughout the peninsula (Dickey, 1999). The Korean government strictly controlled the import and distribution of foreign media products to control this flood of foreign culture. Furthermore, the Korean government put a ban on purchasing shortwave radio receivers and jammed the radio signals from foreign states to control the proliferation of foreign radio waves.

However, the Korean government was unable to completely block the influx of foreign culture. Korea saw the rise of two types of media contact zones beyond the control of the Korean government. TV signals from AFKN (American Forces Korean Network) and the Japanese broadcasting companies were, exceptionally, available. These heterogeneous cultural products were freely distributed through television.

Firstly, The AFKN was a broadcasting network for the American forces in Korea. Being traced back to the Korean War (1950–1953), the AFKN began to operate radio and television stations in 1957. They transmitted radio AM and FM radio signals as well as NTSC (National Television System Committee) TV signals that could be received throughout the cities near American Forces camps. The AFKN was available in major cities including Seoul, Busan, Taegu, and so on. The AFKN TV broadcasted a diverse range of world news, sports, entertainment programs from all major American broadcasting stations like ABC, CBS, NBC, and PBS. These American broadcasting companies allowed their programs to be aired on AFKN without any commercials. People could even

watch live broadcasting of the MLB (Major League Baseball) games through the AFKN (Klein, 2012; Park, 2014).

Secondly, until the early 2000s, the spillover of Japanese analog TV broadcasting occurred in the southeast coast of Korea including Busan, Ulsan, and Pohang where Japanese radio and television programming were freely available at a significant level owing to their geographical proximity to Japan (Choi, Kim & Woo, 2006; Kwak, 2017). People in these regions could listen to Japanese radio with normal radio receivers and watch Japanese television with normal NTSC television receivers without installing satellite antennas and receivers. Notably, they could enjoy a large amount of censored sex and violent content from Japanese television that the vast majority of Korean people did not have legitimate access.

We address the impact of Japanese television on the development of the KBO by focusing on the fact that the success of the KBO League of the 1980s was more influenced by Japanese baseball on television in spite of the prevailing anti-Japan sentiments on the Korean peninsula. Those who were involved with launching the KBO League consulted with the NPB (Nippon Professional Baseball), the highest level of baseball in Japan, and with the Japanese broadcasting of the NPB for guidance. Many Korean baseball players from Busan like Choi Dong-won (1958–2011) and Kim Yong-chul (1957–), and Kim Yong-hee (1955–) explained that they obtained a great deal of knowledge on baseball from Japanese media (Kim, 2011).

Hence, we argue that a cultural contact zone between Korea and Japan formed through the spillover of Japanese television media into coastal cities on the southern Korean peninsula, which contributed to the rise and development of the KBO League itself. To expound on this, we will make use of Michel Foucault's concept of 'heterotopia' explaining the role of the spillover of Japanese television in making KBO the national "pastime of Korea".

As to our research strategy, we adopted qualitative methods. First, this paper presents the concept of Foucault's heterotopia. Second, we gather information on the formation and development of the KBO League from the newspapers and interviews with baseball players and staff who worked on the initial forming

of the KBO. Finally, this paper analyzes pictures and videos portraying baseball in the context of Foucault's heterotopia.

II. Theoretical framework and methods

1. Foucault's heterotopia

Heterotopia is a word of Greek origin which literally means "other places". Drawing on the "otherness" of certain spaces in a society, Michel Foucault coined "heterotopias" in his radio discussion with a group of architects from 1966 to 1967. He defined heterotopias as "places that are outside places, though they are actually localizable... as opposed to utopias" which are unreal places (Foucault, 1998).

He regards a utopia as an idealized or perfected society but that lacks any real place in space. He saw a utopia as "fundamentally unreal spaces". On the other hand, heterotopias are real places that are "a kind of effectively enacted utopia." It is a space where we can often identify a specific location of where it begins and ends, but they are "absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about". Foucault characterized heterotopias by six principles with real world examples as follows:

1) First Principle

All cultures in the world constitute heterotopias, and these can be classified into two main categories: crisis heterotopias and deviation heterotopias. For Foucault, "crisis heterotopia, i.e., there are privileged or sacred or forbidden places, reserved for individuals who are, in relation to society and to the human environment in which they live, in a state of crisis and gave examples of such individuals as: adolescents, menstruating women, pregnant women, the elderly, etc." (Foucault, 2008).

According to Foucault, an example of the crisis heterotopias are the boarding school in its nineteenth-century form, or the military service for boys. These places play a role in establishing the first manifestations of male or female sexuality.

Deviation heterotopias are "those in which individuals are placed whose behavior is deviant in relation to the mean or required norm" (Foucault, 2008). Foucault saw that they were replacing the crisis heterotopias.

Examples of these are rest homes and psychiatric hospitals, the prisons, and retirement homes.

2) Second Principle

Heterotopias have a historically contingent function that is a reflection of society's needs. Foucault noted the changing roles of the heterotopia of the cemetery over time. The cemeteries moved from the center of a city to the outskirts of cities as social perceptions about the dead changed.

3) Third Principle

The heterotopias have "the power to juxtapose in a single real place several spaces, several emplacements that are in themselves incompatible". Examples of this principle are the theater or cinema which create various spaces on a stage or screen at one end of the room.

4) Fourth Principle

Heterotopias are most often "linked to slices of time" and will often absolutely break with their traditional time. The museums, the libraries; museums and libraries are heterotopias where time, in a very real way, attempts to "stop" or pile up.

5) Fifth Principle

Heterotopias have "a system of opening and closing that both isolates them and makes them penetrable. In general, one does not access a heterotopian emplacement as if it were a pub". One can only enter the heterotopias with a certain permission. Moreover, heterotopias require activities of purification as shown in religious places like the hammam of the Muslims, or the act of showering before entering Scandinavian saunas.

6) Sixth Principle

Heterotopic spaces have a role of unfolding two extreme poles like a space of illusion or a space of compensation.

2. Data and Methods

This research makes a qualitative analysis by performing a literature review of writings and oral

interviews by baseball players, coaches, managers, journalists, and administrative faculty through the lens of Foucault's heterotopia.

A recent paper presented an example of employment of heterotopia in sports science. Kim's study examined Lloyd Newson(1957-)’s dance film work based on Michel Foucault(1926–1984)’s concept of heterotopia(Kim, 2023).

There are numerous previous works on KBO that employed the methods of qualitative analysis of literature and oral interviews. Detailed lists of literature in Korean that used narrative analysis is found in(Kim, 2018).

These reliance on oral interviews have common problems. Most of them rely on personal memory without providing any reliable references. Due to the time gap, they are not always accurate. In addition, they tend to exaggerate their personal performances.

To alleviate these problems, this research cross-checked multiple sources. Furthermore, to get integrity of interviews, we put priority to peer-reviewed academic articles and publications from the KBO, and documentaries produced by public broadcasters such as EBS and KBS(EBS, 2011; KBO 2002; KBS 스페셜, 2011).

III. Background

1. Influence of Japan' baseball through Zainichi baseball players on Korea

From 1956 to 1970, the Hankook Ilbo, a Korean newspaper, invited Zainichi (Koreans residing in Japan) baseball players recruited from secondary schools in Japan to their home country for regular annual national baseball exchanges during the summer holidays.

This invitation served as the starting point for the launch of the Bonghwangdaegi Baseball Tournament. Launched in 1971, the Bonghwangdaegi Baseball Championship is an annual nationwide high school baseball tournament held during the summer vacation where the Zainichi baseball team are invited to participate.

It is the only competition in which all high school baseball teams across the country gather in one place to compete without regional preliminaries.

The Zainichi baseball team had been the driving force behind the growth of Korean baseball in the 1970s(Sung, 2016).

Some of the invited Zainichi boys to Korea decided to leave Japan permanently in order to live in Korea like Shin Young-kyun(1938-), Kim Young-duk(1936–2023), and Kim Sung-keun(1942-). At that time the Japanese NPB used a draft to assign amateur baseball players from secondary schools, colleges, and other amateur baseball clubs to professional teams(Hong, 2001).

If Zainichi players failed to be listed to be picked in the draft by the NPB, some of them chose to maintain baseball careers as amateur players and coaches in Korea. Zainichi players played a significant role in developing the KBO as managers and coaches of the KBO. When the KBO was launched with six teams in 1982, two managers, Kim Young-duk and Kim Sung-keun were Zainichi Koreans(Cho, 2015). Baek In-chun(1942-) was a manager of MBC Chunyong, a club of the KBO who had played for more than 20 years in the NPB. Furthermore, Zainichi baseball players were allowed to play in the fledgling South Korean professional league from 1983(Lie, 2008).

2. The abrupt formation of the KBO League under military authoritarianism

After the unexpected demise of President Park Chung Hee and his authoritarian regime, Korea underwent turbulent times. Another military coup led by general Chun Doo-hwan ensued. Korea saw the failure of the Gwangju Democratization Movement in 1981 in a bloody massacre. Chun Doo-hwan took certain liberalization measures in order to distract the public from politics. Broadcast of color TV was initiated throughout the nation in 1980. The night curfew, lasting for 36 years, was abolished in 1982 due to the success of Korea's bid for the 1988 Seoul Olympics(Kim, 2023).

According to the popular view outside of official documentation, the 3S(Sex, Sports, and Screen) policy was introduced as a set of cultural policies under Chun Doo-hwan to divert the public's attention from political goals to sex, sports, and cinema screens, also featuring sex scenes. Censorship on sexuality in film was alleviated along with the emergence of overnight

cinemas owing to the lifting of the night curfew(Park, Lim, & Breutherton, 2012).

Alongside the 3S policy, the KBO League was inaugurated by a large governmental push in 1982 with six teams: MBC Chungyong, OB Bears, Lotte Giants, Samsung Lions, Haitai Tigers and Sammi Superstars. The working groups for launching the KBO consulted with the NPB and emulated many of the same regulations of the NPB. They were influenced by the NPB on Japanese media available in Busan(Nam, 2023).

IV. Heterotopia's elements in the baseball park in Japanese media

1. Representation of Heterotopia in Japanese baseball through Japanese Media

The Japanese baseball park shown on television as a deviation heterotopia can be characterized as a colorful otherness, violence, and arousal of sexual lust. Sigmund Freud enumerated the tensions between civilization's repression of individual instincts and the individual's quest for aggressive and sexual satisfaction(Freud, 1962). However, deviation heterotopias in Japanese media is consistent with Freud's thought on civilization. The unique characteristic features of Japanese baseball in media are as follow:

1) Trespass of color into the private place

Alvin Toffler saw the baseball park as an abrupt trespass into private life through television. In the United States, the arrival of spring is marked for most urban dwellers not by a sudden greenness – there is little green in Manhattan – but by the opening of the baseball season. The first ball is thrown by the President or some other dignitary, and thereafter millions of citizens follow, day by day, the unfolding of a mass ritual. Similarly, the end of summer is marked as much by the World Series as by any natural symbol(Toffler, 1970).

Due to the geographical and climate conditions of the Asian monsoon area, Korean has a very hot and rainy summer and a freezing and dry winter. Hence, it is difficult to maintain a green turf on Korean baseball parks. <Figure 1> shows the inauguration of



Figure 1. The opening of the professional baseball season at Dongdaemun Stadium, Seoul on March 27, 1982.

the KBO at a Seoul Stadium on 27 March 1982 on a yellow dusty ground. This Seoul stadium had a natural turf on the outfield area but it looks yellow due to the cold weather.



Figure 2. Gudeok Baseball Stadium.

<Figure 2> is a sky-view of the Gudeok Baseball Stadium in Busan which was used for the Lotte Giant franchise from 1982 to 1985. The stadium was built initially in 1928 and remodeled in 1971. Surprisingly, this stadium for professional baseball had no natural turf at all. Moreover, it didn't have any lighting facilities until the summer of 1982. For a long time, late evening or night games were impossible at the stadium.



Figure 3. Meiji Jingu Stadium.

<Figure 3> shows the Meiji Jingu Stadium which is a baseball stadium in Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan. It opened in 1926 and holds 37,933 spectators. It is the home field of the Tokyo Yakult Swallows professional baseball team.

In contrast to the yellow ground of the Korean baseball park, the greenness of the Japanese baseball parks had natural or artificial turfs with black volcanic soil. Evening baseball games played on a green field were continuously broadcasted to baseball watchers in Busan through Japanese television. The landscape of Japanese baseball thoroughly impressed baseball audiences in Busan,

2) Toleration of violence: bench-clearing brawl

Korean people were not familiar with aggression and violence in baseball, while baseball in the MLB and NPB had certain codes on what are known as beanball and bench-clearing. In the 1970s, the most popular baseball events were the high school championships. Due to this academic aspect, the student baseball championships did not have any codes involving beanball and bench-clearing, violence of any kind was simply prohibited. Beanball is a baseball term for a ball thrown at an opposing player with the intention of striking them to cause harm. At times it has even hit the heads of players, causing injury(Turbow & Duca, 2011).

Beanball usually caused bench-clearings in baseball, caused by violent escalation from a player hit by a pitch. Unlike most other team sports, baseball indeed had codes on beanball and bench-clearing and this aggression and violence in baseball became rituals that were tolerated in the park and aired by the media. Korean baseball players and fans eventually learned about the regulations on performing these violent rituals on the grounds of the baseball park(KBS 더레전드, 2016; Kim, 2020).

3) Cheerleader Oendan (応援団)

In the 1970s, the dictatorship in Korea was concerned about the issue of public skin exposure. The government made stipulations on the length of women's skirts in order to control girls who showed excessive bare skin in public places. The police arrested any women wearing skirts shorter than 17 centimeters above the knee(Epstein & Joo, 2012).

Against this backdrop, an Oendan, the cheering squads of Japanese baseball clubs, which were shown in Japanese media were a cultural shock for the Korean people. While there are no cheering squads

in the MLB, the NPB teams have their own cheering squads clothed in uniforms partially exposing their bare legs, shoulders, and breasts. The teams continue to exploit a certain sexual fetishism though these cheering squads in the park throughout the game(Whiting, 2006).



Figure 4. Oendan.

V. Formation of heterotopia and abnormal behaviors in Korean Baseball

1. The influence of Lotte Giants baseball team

The Lotte Giants, a semi-professional baseball team played a leading role in introducing culture of the NPB to Korea. Lotte Group which is well known for being as one of the largest confectionery manufacturer in Korea and Japan operates baseball teams in both Korea and Japan. It acquired a professional baseball team in the NPB in 1969 and changed the name of team to Lotte Orions. Then it founded the Lotte Giants as a semi-professional team as one the Korea Business Baseball(한국 실업 야구) in Korea in 1975. Lotte Giants learned know-how on managing a baseball team from the Lotte Orions.



Figure 5. Lotte Angels.

Lotte Giants introduced much of culture of the NPB to Korea by inviting Zaninich players and coaches. Furthermore, it imported the culture of Oendan from

the NPB. In 1976, it established Lotte Angels, cheering squads consisting of 23 women selected through a beauty pageant as shown in Figure 5(Dong-A Ilbo, 1976).

Along with the spillover effect of Japanese television, the culture of the NPB introduced by the Lotte Giants gave an considerable impact on Korean baseball(Kim & Ha, 2014).

Formation of heteropia in Korean baseball was the product of representation of media and interaction between Korea and Japan in a business sector.

2. Crowd disorder

The KBL eventually became notorious for crowd disorder in the 1980s and 1990s as the deviation heterotopia from Japanese baseball. The players often performed similar rituals of aggression and violence based on implicit and tacitly understood regulations. Korean baseball players learned about beanball and bench clearings from foreign leagues.

Along with the introduction of the baseball codes, Korean fans produced unique activities of deviation. In the 1980s, a crowd of fans jumped over the fences of the park and rushed to the pitcher's mound at the end of games. Their behaviors seemed to resemble heterotopias as systems of opening and closing. Sometimes they became violent to the extent that they would set fires in the park or even hit players and umpires.

3. Cheerleaders and Karaoke

A baseball park in Busan is sometimes called as one of the largest karaokes in the world(Joongang, 2008). The culture of the Korean baseball park is in parallel with the Karaoke place. Karaoke is a Japanese term meaning a way of dining with interactive entertainment in which people sing along to a recorded music video using a microphone.

Fans in the park support their teams by singing and waving torn newspapers along with cheering squads. The cheering girls wore short skirts exposing their long legs and shoulders. Their dances were exciting enough to make many of the fans go crazy. Many of the fans were drunk from smuggled alcoholic beverages and became violent. After the game, fans would enjoy more rounds of entertainment with

alcoholic beverages at other venues, became violent or underwent a heavy hangover.

VI. Conclusion

This paper has explored the contact zone where Japanese media provided Korean society with an archetype for the formation of a space for deviation through the lens of Foucault's heterotopia. We have contributed to extant works on Foucault's heterotopia by presenting a example of the media's role in producing a heterotopia in reference to intangible properties, like media in general, but in a physical space.

Our use of heterotopia as a guide to understanding the role of sports has the advantage of shifting away from the conventional focus on non-normative lifestyles scrutinized by society.

We have shown the culture of the KBO resulting from the emulation of the Japanese NPB, as representative of the sought-out adventures, challenges, and experiences of achievement of a democratic people's desire to lead lifestyles deviating from those oppressive societal norms.

In spite of our contribution, this research is limited from its heavy reliance on the narrative analysis of oral interviews and individual writings. Currently, it is difficult for individual researchers to fully establish research integrity due to failures in cross-checking personal interviews.

Regretfully, we have found that many relevant people to this research have become deceased. Hence we argue that it is urgent for research in sports science to take advantage of the opportunity to pursue such comprehensive and extensive research projects before it is too late.

Finally, in future we can encourage further research. Our use of Foucault's heterotopia could be extended to other sports outside of baseball as well.

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