Indigenous Sports History and Culture in Asia

This is the first book in English that adopts a critical socio-historical perspective to examine the important themes and challenges of Asian indigenous culture and sport. Written by leading sport historians and scholars, the chapters in the book contain real-life case studies and comparative studies in Asian sport.

The book examines the history, contemporary governance and management, gender, and ethnic issues embedded in folk sports and physical culture, and the challenges faced by Asian indigenous sports and their evolution. Based on cutting-edge research from China, Japan, Korea, Israel and beyond, this book will be a valuable addition to any course in sport history, sport culture, sport development and sport sociology. It will stimulate those who are seeking ways to promote and develop indigenous sports, from intangible cultural heritage protection to global sport partnership. It will also be of interest to students, researchers, and practitioners, who wish to understand the changing face of Asian society and Asian indigenous sport.

The chapters in this book were originally published as a special issue of The International Journal of the History of Sport.

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Indigenous Sports History and Culture in Asia

Edited by
Fan Hong and Liu Li
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The chapters in this book were originally published in The International Journal of the History of Sport, volume 35, issue 15–16 (2018). When citing this material, please use the original page numbering for each article, as follows:

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Series Editors’ Foreword

Sport in the Global Society: Historical Perspectives explores the role of sport in cultures both around the world and across the timeframes of human history. In the world we currently inhabit, sport spans the globe. It captivates vast audiences. It defines, alters, and reinforces identities for individuals, communities, nations, empires, and the world. Sport organizes memories and perceptions, arouses passions and tensions, and reveals harmonies and cleavages. It builds and blurs social boundaries—animating discourses about class, gender, race, and ethnicity. Sport opens new vistas on the history of human cultures, intersecting with politics and economics, ideologies and theologies. It reveals aesthetic tastes and energizes consumer markets.

Our challenge is to explain how sport has developed into a global phenomenon. The series continues the tradition established by the original incarnation of Sport in the Global Society (and in 2010 divided into Historical Perspectives and Contemporary Perspectives) by promoting the academic study of one of the most significant and dynamic forces in shaping the historical landscapes of human cultures.

In the twenty-first century, a critical mass of scholars recognizes the importance of sport in their analyses of human experiences. Sport in the Global Society: Historical Perspectives provides an international outlet for the leading investigators on these subjects. Building on previous work and excavating new terrain, our series remains a consistent and coherent response to the attention the academic community demands for the serious study of sport.

Mark Dyreson
Thierry Terret
Rob Hess
INTRODUCTION

Indigenous Sports in Asia: Tradition and Modernity

Fan Hong and Liu Li

In Asian history, there are abundant and diverse indigenous, folk, or ethnic sports in various regions or nations. The development of indigenous sports culture in Asian countries in the past decades also reflects the transformation of Asian society in the context of globalization and modernization. In the modern era, various types of Asian indigenous sports and culture have been challenged in unprecedented fashion by the expansion of Western sport cultures. Yet, Asian indigenous sports remain dependent on their own cultures and ethnic customs to foster their national spirits and cultural genes. Despite some changes to forms and contents of Asian indigenous sports in light of globalization and modernization, their key elements remain intact.

Since the 1990s, increasing national, regional, and international interest in the topics of Asian indigenous sports and Asian cultures have culminated in conferences, seminars, and workshops that have given voices to indigenous and ethnic sports and cultures in Asia. Many Asian countries have begun to protect and disseminate national or regional sports cultures as components in the preservation of their nation’s cultural sports heritage at the international level. Indigenous sports in Asia are seeking ways to survive and develop.

This special collection selected eight papers from an annual sport history and culture conference in Asia organized by The International Journal of the History of Sport, Routledge Press, and Bangor University held from October 20–22, 2017. Anhui Normal University, China, sponsored and hosted the conference. It gathered more than 200 young scholars and graduate students from China, Japan, Korea, Singapore, the Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand, as well as experts in Asian Studies and Sports Studies from international academics. Topics varied from the history of indigenous sports in Asia, to mass participation in indigenous sports in Asian communities, to government policy and civil governance toward indigenous sports in Asia, to the commercialization of indigenous sports and tourism development in Asia. The presentations also featured on the heritage and legacy of indigenous sports in Asia, indigenous sports events, and a comparison on indigenous sports cultures in Asia and the West. The conference enhanced our understanding of how Asian indigenous sports played a role in the historical, contemporary, and future development of Asian societies in the context of globalization, commercialization, and modernization.
The opening contribution by Evgenia Lachina investigates the ‘martial’ power of Japan and examines how that nation faces many delicate questions in the process of globalization of Japanese traditional sport in its history. In the next essay, Udo Moenig and Minho Kim build a philosophical framework to understand the linkage between Japanese and Korean martial arts in the Japanese colonial period. The third contribution, by Gwang Ok, Jin-Kyung Park, Hyae-Syn Tae, and Sun Yong Kwon, traces the evolution of a traditional Korean martial art – Taekkyeon – from ancient to modern times.

Along the same lines, Li Lu and Dong Pan analyse the modernization of Chinese and Japanese traditional sports from a comparative perspective. They argue that both Chinese and Japanese traditional sports began their modern transformation during the period from the mid-nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century as Western influences spread to the East. The subsequent paper by Lu An and Fan Hong reveals how the collective memory of Chinese martial arts through popular literature and action films are produced and developed, and eventually become part of the consumer culture for Chinese society.

Huan Xiong, Deng Junyu, and Yuan Jiao examine the Ba-mountain dance (a folk dance of Tujia minority in China) to illustrate women’s changing role in folk sports. Their study also discusses whether modernization, especially the secularization of Chinese indigenous folk sports, will contribute to the reconstruction of a gendered culture in sport in which women’s subjectivity could be acknowledged and embodied.

Changing geographic locations, the next contribution by Guy Mor provides insight into the origins and evolutionary singularities of Krav-Maga (a combat discipline) in Israel since 1891 from both historical and global perspectives. By providing solid evidence, it challenges popular conceptions about the historical roots of Krav-Maga and its relation to Asian martial arts traditions and fills the knowledge gaps in the literature of Israeli combat disciplines. Mor also highlights that the development of Krav-Maga is regarded as a reflection of historical and political event that have affected the Jewish people’s survival, destiny, and national identity from the late nineteenth century to the present.

As a type of soft diplomacy, sport has played an effective role in bringing nations together. John Johnson illustrates this theme in the final contribution to the collection on Taekwondo and diplomacy. Johnson sheds light on how a variety of groups used Taekwondo as positive soft diplomacy to promote peace and rapprochement between the Republic of Korea (ROK) and the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK) at the governmental, organizational, and grassroots levels. Johnson contends that while the intention of rapprochement on the Korean Peninsula through Taekwondo has not yet been fully achieved, it has played a significant role in bringing the two Koreas together peacefully.

This special issue shows the complexity of the history of Asian indigenous sports and their evolution in the modern era. We hope that you will enjoy reading these papers and encourage your students and colleagues to submit their interesting and inspiring work to The International Journal of the History of Sport.
Disclosure Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.
Conquering the World: The ‘Martial’ Power of Japan Goes Global

Evgenia Lachina

ABSTRACT
Throughout the twentieth century Japanese martial arts, or budo, in the West grew from a hardly visible practice for Japanese diasporas and a handful of Japanophiles to an integral part of Western culture. Today, when they have been joined by other cultural exports from Japan, and Karate has been recognized as an Olympic sport in the midst of the decline of traditional martial arts and the rise of Mixed Martial Arts culture, the question of what forces produce such powerful ‘waves’ of Japanese cultural expansion becomes relevant again. To answer this question, the article compares the forces behind the spread of three arguably most popular Japanese martial arts – Judo, Kendo, and Karate – in the West, mainly in America and Europe. Here I offer an analysis based on the division of these forces into those which ‘push’ Japanese culture beyond Japan’s borders (pushing forces) and those which stimulate its consumption in Western countries (pulling forces). Based on the results of the comparison, the article argues that there are certain repeating patterns in both types that form a unique mechanism of Japanese ‘martial’ expansion to the West, with the ‘pulling’ forces being just as, if not more, powerful, than the ‘pushing’ forces.

Japanese martial arts, or budo, in the West have come a long way from a hardly visible physical activity mostly for Japanese immigrants and a few Western Japanophiles, to a counterculture, to the realm of the mainstream in the form of subculture. They started in the late nineteenth – early twentieth century mainly as a tool for Japanese diasporas to maintain links with their cultural heritage to grow into a passion for millions of people around the world by the close of the twentieth century. Today, when the presence of budo in the West has been joined by flows of other cultural products from Japan, and the additional martial sport of Japanese origin, Karate, now stands among the official games in the Olympics, the question of what forces create such powerful cultural ‘waves’ arises again.

There has been much academic research done on various aspects and implications of the global diffusion of Oriental martial arts in general and Japanese styles in
particular. For example, explaining the popularity of Asian martial arts in the West, Max Skidmore identifies the following reasons: their frequent appearance in the media; the rise of tournament culture; their self-defense and aesthetic appeal; the search for identity, which can be assisted by the practice of martial arts; a strong sense of accomplishment and of control over personal destiny that they can provide; and finally, ‘the mystic element’, which expresses itself in the phenomenon of ki-energy.\(^1\) JeongMyung Gim explores the attributes Eastern martial arts have gained and lost in the process of their adaptation to American culture.\(^2\) Wojciech J. Cynarski, Lothar Sieber, and Artur Litwiniuk analyze the perception of Asian martial arts in the West and their adaptation to Western culture from the perspective of cultural and sport sociology. They show how ‘traditional’ \textit{budo} are commercialized, sportified, and mythologized while being consumed by Westerners, paying special attention to the styles born within Western culture under the influence of Eastern tradition.\(^3\) Examining martial arts as a popular culture product in the global market, Yong Jae Ko and Jin Bang Yang discuss the economic, political, and cultural implications of their globalization for the martial arts industry.\(^4\) Finally, in his numerous works in the field of martial arts studies Paul Bowman addresses various issues, one of them being the role of mass media and popular culture in the dissemination of martial arts.\(^5\) There are also a number of scholarly works on specific styles, such as Judo, Kendo, and Karate.\(^6\) These and many other studies, however, focus on either specific implications of the global dissemination of Asian martial arts in general or on the spread of singular fighting systems without drawing comparisons between styles in terms of their internationalization. Thus, even though much is already known on the subject of export of Japanese Martial Arts to the West, the actual socio-cultural mechanisms behind this phenomenon remain to be discovered. To fill this gap of cultural knowledge and to structuralize the whole process, the present study aims to identify and systematically represent the most significant forces behind the spread of Japanese martial arts beyond the shores of Japan since the second half of the twentieth century. By doing so it seeks to answer the question: are there any repeating patterns that form a unique mechanism of Japanese ‘martial’ expansion to the West?

Three martial arts of Japanese origin were chosen for analysis: Judo, Kendo, and Karate-do (hereafter shortened as Karate). Judo is the martial art that not only had a deep impact on the fighting tradition of Japan and many other countries, but also became the first sport of Asian origin to be introduced into the Olympics; Karate is arguably the most popular Japanese martial art in the world and has currently become an Olympic sport as well. Kendo was included as an example of an essentially different martial art which has a similar history of interactions with the Japanese state, and has been present outside Japan as long as Judo, but is far less popular today. Nonetheless, according to estimated numbers of practitioners to be shown later, Kendo can be conditionally qualified as the third popular Japanese martial art worldwide, albeit well behind the former two.

As Max Skidmore and other scholars have shown, the factors which have enabled the globalization of Asian martial arts in general and Japanese styles in particular are numerous, but at a closer look it can be seen that some of them originate from Asian culture and society, the ‘transmitter’, while others have to do rather with socio-cultural
processes in the West, the ‘receiver’. Therefore, to systematize the whole process I suggest dividing this variety into two basic types: ‘pushing’ and ‘pulling’ forces. The first group comprises forces which ‘push’ one’s cultural heritage beyond the initial boundaries of its influence or national borders, such as the attractive potential of this heritage itself (cultural content), institutional architecture and state policies aimed to facilitate its domestic and international promotion. The ‘push’ of the cultural content originates from the inherent ability of a cultural phenomenon to generate people’s interest and create following. Its degree of integration into various national and international institutions and structures creates unique institutional architecture which shapes its wider dissemination. Finally, as the most resourceful actor, the state possesses the highest decisive power to foster or deter cultural promotion. There are no distinct boundaries between these forces, they are overlapping and interdependent. Cultural content can be and very often is shaped by institutional architecture constructed by the state, especially in authoritarian regimes; state policies can be and frequently are influenced by the former two, especially in democracies. However, this nominal division is essential to the understanding of the main forces behind Japanese ‘martial’ expansion since the second part of the twentieth century.

The second group includes forces related to the processes within the receiving society that inspire the consumption of an alien culture, such as new cultural demands, reproduction of otherness and previous ‘waves’ produced by the same alien culture in the host (Western) society in the past. Cultural demands are shaped by numerous factors, one of them being social, political, or economic crises that cause dissatisfaction with the existing values and conventions, inspiring the search for new ideas and meaning systems in alien cultures. Reproduction of otherness is often fuelled by commercial forces striving to maximize profits by imitating the exotic character of an alien culture, therefore making this culture more ‘native’ and comprehensible. Finally, previous ‘waves’ facilitate the indigenization of new elements from the alien culture in the host society. All the above forces are interconnected and interact with each other in multiple ways, which makes it hardly possible to draw clear distinctions between them. The purpose of this paper, however, is not to delineate distinct boundaries, but to outline the main forces that gave birth to the first post-war wave of Japanese cultural expansion, which cannot, and should not, be examined independently.

In addition, there are so-called channels of cultural diffusion, namely, migration, tourism, trade, mass media, etc., which deliver one’s culture to different parts of the world and promote its further consumption.7 Hence, I will first discuss the ‘pushing’ forces separately for each martial art under examination and then the pulling forces, which are grouped together due to their universality not only for martial arts, but for other Asian physical and spiritual practices as well. Finally, I draw conclusions as for what constitutes the mechanism of Japanese ‘martial’ expansion and which forces have been more central than others to producing such a powerful cultural ‘wave’.

Pushing Forces

Humiliated by the disgrace of defeat in World War II and the subsequent occupation, the Japanese not only had to rebuild the country economically and
physically, but also to restore their shattered sense of national dignity. Martial arts
turned to be instrumental in serving this purpose: they played the role of a spiritual
tool to help Japanese society recover from economic and social devastation, which
required from its people, exhausted by war, much energy and new sacrifices. Thus,
Judo, which was regarded as the embodiment of the Japanese soul, became the source
of inspiration and one of the media to channel this ‘patriotic’ spirit. In a similar
vein, Karate ‘grew to become part of efforts by a Japanese national identity that
sought to reassert itself by reimagining its past’, which projected itself domestically
and abroad in the form of mythical representations of Japanese martial tradition
associating it with ‘a former golden cultural age’. Thus, even though Japan was
defeated, it maintained its glorious warrior tradition, albeit in a metaphorical way.
This spiritual drive can be seen as an underlying force that nourished Japan’s postwar
desire for cultural promotion.

It must be also noted that the martial arts as an element of Japanese culture were
taken beyond Japan and brought to the West by people, primarily by martial artists
or at least martial arts practitioners. The state policies towards physical education in
Meiji – early Showa Japan made it possible, if not desirable, for every young man,
and sometimes women, to practice budo. As a result, there was a large concentration
of martial artists in pre-World War II Japanese society, which potentially increased
the ratio of people experienced in martial arts among Japanese nationals residing
elsewhere. Indeed, prior and after World War II many Judo masters arrived from
Japan in the United States in search for better life than they would have had at
home, to say nothing of those who were dispatched by martial arts organizations,
such as the Kodokan or the Dai-Nippon Butokukai. To maintain links with their
cultural heritage they practiced or taught martial arts. It is therefore not surprising
that the majority of early practitioners was made up of people of Japanese origin.
The conspicuous growth in immigration from Japan, especially following the decision
of the US government to repeal the Asian Exclusion Act in 1965, only facilitated
the indigenization of Japanese martial arts in the States.

Judo

Cultural Content

Judo, ‘the gentle way’, is a wrestling-oriented combat style, founded by Jigoro Kano
(1860–1938) in the late nineteenth century on the basis of different jujutsu, or ‘soft
techniques’ that had existed in Japan earlier, and Western approaches to and
concepts of sports. However, it took several decades before a clear distinction was
drawn between Judo and the traditional Jujutsu styles.

Judo was introduced to the West in the early twentieth century, but it wasn’t
until the 1950s that its popularity started to grow rapidly, culminating in Judo’s
inclusion in the Olympic Games in 1964, which in itself is an indication of the
highest level of international recognition as a sport. Since then the number of Judo
practitioners and athletes has been constantly increasing, and although the exact
figure is hard to determine, on November 6, 2017 the CNN reported that there were
about 28 million judoka in more than 200 countries. More often than not Judo is