

## TRIBUTE

### A Modern 'Marco Polo': Pioneer, Innovator, Facilitator: J.A.Mangan and the Academic Exploration of the Politics and Geopolitics of East Asian Sport

*Roberta. J. Park*

No academic journal dealing with the history of sport existed and the books that focused upon the geopolitical, political, cultural and social aspects were few when in 1970 the *Journal of Contemporary History* published the noted historian Eugen Weber's 'Pierre de Coubertin and the Introduction of Organized Sport in France'. The *American Historical Review* then published Weber's 'Gymnastics and Sports in *Fin-de-Siècle* France: Opium of the Classes?' in 1971.<sup>1</sup> Few academics at that time had any realization about how valuable studies that focused upon modern sport and its political, cultural and social associations could be.

Things are very different today. There has been an academic 'awakening'. In June 2014 the *Journal of American History* (ranked by *Times Higher Education* the third most important history journal in the world) declared that 'sports history' was to be included in its 'state-of-the-field' series,<sup>2</sup> which also included eight brief articles that illustrated the importance of academic studies of 'sport'. The mission of the *Journal of American History* is to promote 'excellence in the scholarship, teaching, and preservation of American history'. Therefore, the focus of these articles was the United States. If the *JAH*'s geographical scope had been less insular and more international, it would have been alerted readers to the growth of significant number of *global* historical studies of sport that has occurred since the 1980s.

---

<sup>1</sup> Weber, Eugen. 'Pierre de Coubertin and the Introduction of Organized Sport in France'. *Journal of Contemporary History* 5, no. 2 (1970): 3-26; Weber, Eugen. 'Gymnastics and Sports in *Fin-de-Siècle* France: Opium of the Classes?' *American Historical Review* 76, no. 1 (1971): 70-98.

<sup>2</sup> Amy Bass. 'State of the Field: Sports History and the "Cultural Turn"'. *Journal of American History* 101, no. 1 (2014): 148-172.

Many individuals have contributed to the evolution of the history of modern sport; however, it would be difficult, if not impossible, to find an academic who has done more than James A. (Tony) Mangan.<sup>3</sup> Not only did Mangan establish the *International Journal of the History of Sport* in 1984.<sup>4</sup> He also initiated the journals *Culture, Sport, Society* (now *Sport in Society*) and *Soccer and Society*. Furthermore, he founded the book series *Sport in the Global Society*. On his retirement as Editor in 2010 it had reached over 150 publications. Both *IJHS* and *SGS* have been widely acclaimed as leaders in their field and attracted distinguished scholars from leading universities around the world. J. A. Mangan also encouraged (and often published) the work of young scholars, many of whom are now of national and international prominence. Furthermore, he has authored, co-authored, edited and co-edited more than fifty-five monographs and collections covering geopolitical, political, cultural and social issues associated with modern sport. Several of these have received wide international praise.

Reprise: both the *IJHS* and *SGS* have had a prodigious role in enlightening academia about the importance of the history of sport.

The recent fifteen chapter book *The Olympic Games: Prism for East Asian Politics and Geopolitics: London 2012 and Tokyo 2020*, conceived by J. A. Mangan, offers valuable insights into such matters and also illustrates his close interest in East Asia. This is also reflected in a series of publications on the region (see Appendix). He wrote to me some little time ago that East Asia merits the closest attention as the future ‘centre of the future of the world’.

In 1980 the *American Historical Review* had offered a brief glimpse of the Western World’s influence upon sport in East Asia when it published Donald Roden’s article, ‘Baseball and the Quest for National Dignity in Meiji Japan’.<sup>5</sup> The game had been introduced there in 1872 by the American Horace Wilson, who taught at Kaisei Gakko (now the University of Tokyo). Before long it was on the way to becoming the most popular team sport in Japan. As Roden points out, rather than allowing baseball to ‘Americanize’ their country, the increasingly proficient Japanese players soon were using the game to express their own country’s identity. Among several indications of how proficient that country’s players have become at the game, Japan has won two gold medals and one

---

<sup>3</sup> It increased from three to eighteen issues a year under his editorship.

<sup>4</sup> Its initial title was *British Journal of Sports History*

<sup>5</sup> Roden, Donald. ‘Baseball and the Quest for National Dignity in Meiji Japan’. *American Historical Review* 85, no. 3 (1980): 511-534.

bronze medal in the World Baseball Classic, which has been held three times since the International Olympic Committee's decision after the 2008 Beijing Games that baseball would be terminated as an Olympic sport.<sup>6</sup>

Insights such as Roden offered in his 1980 article would grow rapidly in both number and scope following the initiation of the *British Journal of the History of Sport/International Journal of the History of Sport*. Not only did the *IJHS* have a major role in showing that 'sport' means much more than an athletic activity, which formerly had been the primary focus of most historical studies. The *IJHS* showed readers that 'sport' could and did have a very significant role in social, cultural, gender, economic, political and geopolitical matters: This did much to bring about better, more informative historical studies.

Mangan himself also has made many contributions directly to these matters as author, co-author, editor and co-editor of many insightful books. His most famous, of course, is *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: The Emergence and Consolidation of an Education Ideology* (1981). A new edition of *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School*, published in 2000, was reviewed for the Australian Society for Sports History's biennial journal by Martin Crotty (University of Newcastle), who aptly opened and closed with the following observations: 'Twenty years on, Mangan's study remains the benchmark against which other comparable works must be assessed'. 'This remains one of the outstanding works, if not the outstanding work, in British sports history'.<sup>7</sup> *Athleticism* won many similar compliments from distinguished academics world-wide. The noted social historian, Jeffery Richards has written '[Athleticism] is awesomely scholarly and meticulously documented. But for all his scholarly rigour and laudably reiterated horror of oversimplification, Mangan reveals a plumed helmet beneath the mortar board when he talks of his book as 'an attempt to break a lance in the interests of accuracy', unmistakable echoes of that chivalric cavalcade that now gallops ghostly through the pages of history. Mangan soon published another internationally acclaimed publication, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (1986). This reached a wide cultural market. It was handsomely reviewed, for example, in a range of British weeklies and national newspaper as now illustrated: 'Of Mangan's elegant style there can be no

---

<sup>6</sup> Wikipedia. 'World Baseball Classic'. See [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World\\_Baseball\\_Classic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/World_Baseball_Classic). (Accessed 02/03/2017)

<sup>7</sup> Crotty, Martin. 'Book Review: *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School: the Emergence and Consolidation of an Educational ideology*'. *Sporting Traditions* 17, no. 2 (2001), 85-87.

question; his book is worth the money for the final chapter alone' (Brian Rees, *The Field*); 'This is a masterly book which could be important... to anyone with historical curiosity and liveliness of mind' (Isobel Quigley, *The Catholic Herald*); '...learned and entertaining' (Christopher Wordsworth, *The Observer*).

Later his *Making Imperial Mentalities: Socialisation and British Imperialism* (1990), *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (1992); and other publications shed new and important light upon the games-playing ethos that emerged at Eton, Harrow, Rugby and other elite English public schools in the late Victorian era and was taken to many other countries by governors, missionaries, teachers and sportsmen of the expanding British Empire. These publications enabled an ever growing number of international readers to better understand the important role that sport had had in helping to consolidate and control what sometimes had been referred to as the 'Empire on Which the Sun Never Sets'. 'A global obsession' (namely modern sport), was one outcome advanced extensively if not, of course, exclusively by this imperial stimulus and later propelled forward by media advances.

As the twentieth century drew to its end increasing numbers of countries became aware that modern technology was making watching global sports events possible and began to use sport as a way to enhance their social, economic and especially political status. Whereas initially, it was radio broadcasts that brought information about important sports events to people in many parts of the world, by the time of the 1960 Rome Olympic Games television was on the threshold of becoming the major conveyor of such news. In fact, the 1960 Olympics were the first to be broadcast throughout much of the world. Now the internet makes worldwide dissemination of information and images (so important in sporting events) not only possible; it offers numerous ways to script and manipulate the images (hence messages) that broadcasters – and countries – wish to convey.

In 1964 the first Summer Olympic Games to take place in Asia was held in Tokyo, Japan. These also were the first Games to be televised across the Pacific Ocean (by means of communication satellite). The Summer Olympics subsequently took place at Seoul, Korea in 1988 and at Beijing, China in 2008. The thirty-second Games are scheduled to take place again in Tokyo (in 2020). The Winter Olympic Games have been held twice in Japan (Sapporo in 1972 and Nagano in 1998). The 2018 Winter Olympics are to be held in Korea. The 2022 Winter Olympics, are to be held in Beijing-Zhangjiakou, China.

Well aware of changes on the horizon, several years ago Mangan initiated, edited or co-edited a number of books that focused upon the rapidly expanding role that sport was having not only in Asia but worldwide. These included, but were by no means limited to: *Europe, Sport, World: Shaping Global Societies* (2001); *Sport in Latin America: Past and Present* (2002); *Sport in Asian Society* (2003); *Beijing 2008: Preparing for Glory – Chinese Challenge in the “Chinese Century”* (2009); *Olympic Legacies: Intended and Unintended – Political, Cultural, Economic and Educational* (2009); *The Asian Games: Modern Metaphor for the “Middle Kingdom Reborn”* (2010); *The Olympic Games: Prism for East Asian Politics and Geopolitics* (2011), *The New Geopolitics of East Asia* (2024). All contained new and important insights as to how various countries used sport to manufacture and promote images and messages to project their growing global power and status. His conceived and co-edited *Japanese Imperialism, Politics and Sport in East Asia* (to be published in 2017), which will be another publication that contributes substantially to the insightful and valuable books that he has produced in a lifetime of creative scholarship.

Finally, no reference to the work of J. A. Mangan would be complete without reference to his ‘swansong’, *Manufactured Masculinity: Making Imperial Manliness, Morality and Militarism* (2012). The acclamations below demonstrate its contribution to the geopolitical, political, cultural, and social and gender significance of modern global sport.

Accolades from noted scholars: (This current book offers) a substantial body of stylish writings that merit special attention. If ever there was a prose style so completely fitted to the subject – a muscular prose not without sympathy, a strong voice not without unexpected sentiment, a direct message but one that appreciates cultural complexity – here it is for all of us to note and enjoy.

*Professor Sheldon Rothblatt, University of California at Berkeley, U.S.A.*

and,

This collection is so rich, so wide-ranging and so intellectually valuable that it deserves additional publication in book form. It would undoubtedly benefit the world of scholarship.

*Professor Jeffrey Richards, Lancaster University, UK.*

and,

The topic of this book goes far beyond the history of sport. It is a contribution to gender-history as well as to cultural, social and philosophical anthropology. It also covers central questions of ... the history of philosophical ideas.

*Professor Dr Ingomar Weiler (Retired), Karl-Franzens-Universität, Graz, Austria*

and

{Professor} Mangan's preeminence in the studies of ...sports and masculinity is undeniable as is his pre-eminence in the study of sports and imperialism. ...Quite a triumphant swansong.'

*Professor Allen Guttmann, Amherst College, Massachusetts, U.S.A.*<sup>8</sup>

Perceptively, in recent years he has increasingly looked eastward. It is most fitting that

**MEDIA, SPORT, NATIONALISM:  
THE POLITICAL AND GEOPOLITICAL RISE OF EAST ASIA:  
SOFT POWER PROJECTION VIA THE MODERN OLYMPIC GAMES**

**ESSAYS IN HONOUR OF J.A. MANGAN'S CONTRIBUTION  
TO EAST ASIAN STUDIES**

will be published in his honour.

---

<sup>8</sup> For further complimentary endorsements, see *Swansong 'Manufactured' Masculinity: Making Imperial Manliness, Morality and Militarism*, J.A. Mangan, International Acclaim for 'Manufactured Masculinity', [www.professorjamangan.com](http://www.professorjamangan.com).

## APPENDIX:

### An East Asian 'Series': Outcome of a 'Pauline' Experience, 1988

Dong Jinxia and J.A.Mangan. *The Olympic Culture: An Introduction* (bilingual text book). Beijing: Peking University Press, 2008.

J.A.Mangan and Dong Jinxia (eds.). *Beijing 2008: Preparing for Glory – Chinese Challenge in the 'Chinese Century'*. London: Routledge, 2009.

J.A.Mangan and Fan Hong (eds.). *Post-Beijing 2008: Geopolitics, Sport and the Pacific Rim*. London: Routledge, 2011.

J.A.Mangan, Sandra Collins and Gwang Ok (eds.). *The Triple Asian Olympics: Asia Rising – the Pursuit of National Identity, International Recognition and Global Esteem*. London: Routledge, 2013.

J.A.Mangan, Marcus C. Chu and Dong Jinxia (eds.). *The Asian Games: Modern Metaphor for 'The Middle Kingdom' Reborn – Political Statement, Cultural Assertion, Social Symbol*. London: Routledge, 2014.

William W. Kelly and J.A.Mangan (eds.). *The New Geopolitics of Sport in East Asia*. London: Routledge, 2014.

J.A.Mangan, Qing Luo and Sayuri Guthrie-Shimizu (eds.). *The Olympic Games: Prism for East Asian Politics and Geopolitics -- London 2012 and Tokyo 2020*. Beijing: Communication University of China Press, forthcoming 2017.

J. A. Mangan, Peter Horton, Tianwei Ren and Seok Won Song (eds.). *Japanese Imperialism, Politics and Sport in East Asia*. Palgrave Macmillan Publishing, forthcoming 2017.