

Baker, William J. and Mangan, James A., eds. *Sport in Africa: Essays in Social History*. New York: Africana Publishing Co., 1987. Pp. xiii, 309. Pictures, index.

The fact that modern sport originated mainly in England and the North Atlantic community has notably influenced the field of sport studies. Historians and other scholars of sport are concentrated in those metropolitan countries where they research primarily their own sportive cultures. Relatively speaking, the less developed societies have produced few academic students of sport and globally not much is known about modern, and even less about traditional sport and related activities in the Third World. Any hope of constructing valid theories concerning the place of games, sports, recreation, and leisure in individual and societal behavior, thus awaits a vast amount of research and analysis.

Although Baker and Mangan, who both edit this volume and contribute essays, are not known as African specialists, they have assembled a valuable collection which helps fill these voids, while suggesting possibilities for future work. Treating "sport in inclusive rather than exclusive terms, covering a wide range of recreational and competitive activities" (p. viii)-a wise decision in a long-term, non-European context-they and their collaborators illustrate how various sources can be imaginatively exploited to examine selected topics in the precolonial, colonial, and postcolonial phases of principally Anglophone, black African history.

Looking at precolonial African cultural traits and their persistent residual forms, John Blacking provocatively highlights the problematical nature of definitions and categories of play, games, and sport and their meaning apart from a specific context. He concludes that in traditional Africa "there were very few activities that could be described in terms of modern concepts of sport" (p. 4) and calls attention to the African play component as a model for turning modern sport "to more creative social uses" (p. 18).

Less concerned with play, Sigrid Paul examines the old and wide-spread practice of wrestling in terms of its social functions. To the individual, wrestling brought prestige, rank, and status; it was a means of upward mobility. To groups it brought identity and solidarity. Wrestling was also a way to dramatize sex roles. Such attributes, argues Paul, were usually missed by Western observers who wrote about African wrestling.

More removed from the physical and sportive, Thomas Reeve makes "a case for the systematic study of gambling in Africa" (p. 68), something that "has been virtually invisible in the analytical literature about Africa" (p. 48). While gambling has a play dimension, it is also closely linked to economics, religion, status, even law and, again, gender differentiation. One might ask if that pervasive gambling tradition still shapes African attitudes toward life, including politics and sport, as a game of chance rather than a process whose outcomes can be at least partially influenced by specific actions.

The five essays on the colonial era focus as much on the colonizers as the colonized. Anthony Kirk-Greene evaluates the importance of athletic excellence as a criteria for selecting British colonial administrators. Certainly "brawn" was an appealing characteristic in a potential district officer, but no more so than brains and breeding. The object was always to find a better colleague and administrator, not a vehicle for developing athletes among his future black subjects. Perhaps, argues Anthony Clayton, a more direct British impact on emerging African sport was made by military officers who employed athletic activities to promote fitness, develop self-respect, fill leisure time, and channel the male sex drive. In the end, sport probably helped give African armies a sense of elitism, though it may also have stimulated their arrogance and brutality.

Tony Mangan puts the British sport mystique into the larger program of imperial education and likewise concludes that the black pupil was most

selective in what he chose to learn. Africans entering the twentieth century were far more interested in the lessons of the classroom than of the playing field, a situation which seems to contrast with that of the West Indies where cricket was embraced by the subject classes for both recreational and political purposes.

Proponents of hegemony theory should appreciate John MacKenzie's essay which illustrates, especially in Zimbabwe, how the imperial "reserves policy turned game into a spectacle for tourists and a source of sport to the privileged few" (p. 189). The European control of power redefined what were legitimate economic and recreational activities and for which classes. But Terence Ranger, focusing on black boxing bouts in Salisbury in 1938, also shows how the imposition of an alien sport could fail to achieve the desired social control, as the recipient groups adapted the new practices to their own traditional culture and perceived needs.

As Ali Mazrui demonstrates, sport in contemporary Africa derives from indigenous, Western, and, in some places, Islamic influences. Their interaction, specifically in defining the role of women in sports, is one of Africa's dynamic and unfinished processes. So is the relationship between blacks and whites in sport and the larger society, no where more so than in South Africa. Robert Archer reviews how the policies of apartheid prevent the development of a well-funded, socially equal, apolitical, non-discriminatory sport, while, perhaps paradoxically, providing "one of the few areas" where that volatile political conflict "can be engaged publicly" (p. 246).

The book's final chapters look at African sport in the international arena. Not overly impressed by their contribution to improving African sport, Baruch Hazan strongly criticizes the sports relations of the Soviet Union with African countries "as an instrument of political hegemony" (p. 266), one which has aided in extending Soviet influence in other sectors. Bill Baker closes with a perceptive analysis of "the meaning of sport for national identity and unity, for international visibility and prestige, and for pan-African cohesion, and leverage" (p. 274), a situation with parallels in other parts of the world.

As with many anthologies, we might wish for broader coverage and greater thematic unity, perhaps a concluding chapter to integrate the parts. Yet the quality and originality of these essays is so high and the pieces of the puzzle they start to assemble so complex that we should just be grateful they are now available.

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