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RIORDAN, JAMES, AND ROBIN JONES, EDS. *Sport and Physical Education in China*. ISCPES Book Series. London: E & FN Spon, 1999. Pp. xx + 278. Notes and bibliographical references in some chapters, note on pronunciation, map of China, figures, tables, appendices, index. \$37.99 pb.

*Sport and Physical Education in China* is the first publication of the International Society for Comparative Physical Education and Sport (ISCPES) Book Series. It aims to cover "cross-cultural and international aspects of physical education and sport" and to dig deep into "a variety of geographical political" issues (p. xiii). To accomplish these goals, the editors sought to bring together both Eastern and Western scholars, but they were not entirely successful. For, as James Riordan admits in his foreword, the scholars from China and from all formerly communist states have been too long outside the mainstream of world scholarship. "They spoke, if they spoke at all, in shibboleths and arcane formulae, presenting the ideal for the actual, the transitory political line for the last word in science." Failing to find more qualified native Chinese scholars, Riordan admits, the editors turned to "western scholars with a knowledge of Chinese language and culture and who were themselves involved in sport" (p. xvii).

The book contains thirteen chapters covering the subject in the context of historical development; current structure, administration, and finance; educational systems; elite sport; professional training; the Olympic movement; sport sciences; gender issues; and mass fitness. The opening chapter "Sport in China" authored by Robin Jones is a commendable one. For any reader who lacks the minimum knowledge of contemporary China, Jones's chapter is a sound introduction from a perspective of the country's recent political, economic, and social reality. The chapter "Chinese Women and Sport" authored by Riordan and Dong Jinxia is probably the one that best meets the standard set by the series "to provide an analytic dimension [of the issue] rather than mere descriptive narration." By examining the relationship between women and national identity, social class status, communist ideology, and traditional attitudes toward women's sports, the authors not only give a vivid illustration of the subject but also provide a comprehensive understanding of the illustration. Unfortunately, the chapter is flanked by the highlighted discussion of drug scandals associated with some Chinese women Olympians, overshadowing what role sport has played in the continuing emancipation of Chinese women, a more deserving topic. The rest of the book, however, is less than satisfactory. Of the thirteen chapters, only

five have adequate notes or work citations. The three chapters on "Elite Sports," "Professional Training," and "Sports Science," written by Dennis Whitby, are based on the contributor's personal diary, comparing impressions gained at his visits to the same sport institutions at different periods. The writings provide a unique personal insight into the issues but lack scholarly interpretation.

In three chapters Mike Speak skillfully chronicles the 5,000 year history of China and adequately places sport in the larger cultural settings. His narratives, nevertheless, lack critical examination of the materials presented. He states for example, that Chinese soldiers in the state of We (sixth century B.C.) "were required to run the equivalent of 300 *Li* in full armour, carrying weapons, without resting" (p. 27). It is not clear whether Speak was aware of the measurements of a "Li"—an equivalent of a half-kilometer. Three hundred *Li* equals nearly one hundred miles. The Chinese soldiers may have been able to accomplish that feat, but Speak certainly failed to enlighten the reader or to challenge the notion. Speak's notion of "modern sport" in his chapter titled "The Emergence of Modern Sport, 960-1840" seems a bit far-stretched. While Speak does a good job documenting the sophistication of sport activities as a result of the growth of towns, wealth, and the spread of education, he fails to differentiate sophistication from modernization, a concept that requires more than just "the growing sophistication of rules and regulations . . . the increasing number of texts available on sporting activities . . . [and] the formation of special societies" (p. 51). Speak also erred, twice, stating that the Qing Dynasty lasted from 1644 to 1840 (pp. 20, 57). The Qing Dynasty did not end until 1911.

Readers seeking knowledge from the chapters "China and the Olympic Movement" and "Sports Medicine" will be disappointed. The Olympic chapter contains no relevant notes or references. Criticizing western ethnocentrism and commercialization as two major obstacles in the Olympic movement, the author (Hai Ren) suggests that a solution in combating these obstacles may rest in the potential contribution of Chinese culture to the Olympic movement. "A new trend may gradually be taking shape, as human society enters a new century, suggesting that China will contribute more to the Olympics in the next century," writes Ren. "It will be interesting to see how the practice and theories of Chinese sport will contribute to the Olympic movement in the future" (p. 213). The only problem in understanding Ren's message is the unknown qualities of "the practice and theories of Chinese sport," which do not seem to be clear to Ren himself. The sports medicine chapter, authored by Frank H. Fu, represents anything but what the publisher intends to achieve—"to present explanations and/or interpretations so as to provide an analytic dimension rather than mere descriptive narration." Worse yet, the descriptive tasks are hardly complete in content as well as in depth. If Chinese medicine (including that applied to sports) had been a myth to most westerners, it likely remains so after reading Fu's essay.

In general, the book's major problem is not the topics it covers but the uneven qualities of individual essays. There are also other lesser problems. For example, there is inconsistency in Chinese name spellings and in styles of documentation; there is misinterpretation of physical education classes and sports classes; there is reoccurrence of repetitive discussion in multiple chapters; there is a false claimer by the publisher that "each chapter has a summary and a set of inspiring discussion topics." No such topics exist. It is at least sloppy editing by using both "Mike" and "Michael" interchangeably as the first name for

contributor Speak. It can certainly confuse any reader whose mother tongue is not English. The writing and format of many chapters or sections are exceedingly annoying and boring for the text is broken up into small newspaper-sized paragraphs with maimed and fractured language. It is quite apparent that the publisher failed to adequately serve the contributors, providing seemingly no editorial assistance.

These criticisms aside, *Sport and Physical Education in China* is a much-needed text and a valuable contribution to the growing scholarship of comparative sport and physical education. For students of comparative physical education and sport, it will be a useful source of reference. For those with peripheral or related interests, the book could be used as an introductory text, or certain parts of the book could be used as readings for a course in comparative sport. It is, after all, a better text than the one published a decade earlier on the similar subject—*Sport in China*, edited by H.G. Knuttgen, Qiwei Ma, and Zhongyuan Wu (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics, 1990).

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