
GUTTMANN, ALLEN AND LEE THOMPSON. *Japanese Sports: A History*. Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2001. Pp. ix+307. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$50.00 cb, \$24.95 pb.

This is one of the first comprehensive histories of sports in Japan published in English or even in Japanese. Topics covered range from the medieval ball game *kamari* and traditional sports such as the martial arts and sumo, up to new sports such as gateball and "soft tennis," and women's sports. Allen Guttmann and Lee Thompson are well versed in the sports and culture of Japan and have made good use of the materials from a number of excellent sources in a wide variety of fields. This book could only have been written by authors such as these.

Using the two key concepts of tradition and modernization, the authors seek to describe the characteristics of Japanese society and culture through the history of sports. Sumo, for example, is a traditional sport observing ancient manners and costumes based on Shinto ceremonies from the eleventh century, while players of the most modern sport of baseball chew gum in the style of the American major leagues and the umpires show their decisions with exaggerated gestures. Both sports are held simultaneously at modern indoor stadiums only a few miles apart and are widely popular; the results of the matches and games are unfailingly reported on the regular news broadcasts of the public television station. Foreign visitors are apparently surprised that Japan does not experience cultural schizophrenia.

Foreign scholars have heretofore proposed a variety of conceptual apparatuses for understanding Japanese culture. The best known is probably that proposed by Ruth Benedict in *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1977), that of Japan as a cooperative, group-oriented culture, and symbolized by the phrase, "culture of shame." In this view, the group-oriented behavioral norms of the samurai have survived into the modern era.

The samurai are thought to have valued above all the honor and preservation of the group to which they belonged, be it family or clan; in the modern era, those loyalties were redirected toward the company or other organization. These behavioral norms of the Japanese are said to be completely different from the individualistic culture of the West.

Benedict wrote during the Cold War, and some parts of her work are difficult to accept for their ethnocentrism and methodology, but it cannot be denied that her ideas are useful for understanding Japanese culture. The work of Robert Whiting takes a similar approach in that he attempts to interpret baseball as it is played in Japan based on the culture and spiritual norms of the samurai. In *Baseball and Yakyudo*, Whiting writes that baseball in Japan is played with the samurai spirit, and this makes it something different from the original form of baseball.

Allen Guttmann and Lee Thompson have successfully and convincingly gone beyond this somewhat simplistic approach that seeks to understand Japanese sports and culture mainly from the point of view of the samurai spirit. In their analysis of the traditional and the new in Japanese sports, they, like Robert Bellah in *Tokugawa Religion* (1957) and Ruth Benedict, place importance on the individual mentality. However, they also make use of the cultural theory of Norbert Elias and Pierre Bourdieu's concept of *habitus* to describe how the sports mentality was formed in the collision of various elements within social and historical structures, sports in Japan being the product of those interactions. This parallels the emergence of conflicting feelings of love and hate towards things traditional and the new aspects of the modernization that took place as the country was forcibly Westernized following the arrival of Admiral Perry's "black ships" in 1853, which shook the country out of peaceful isolation of the Tokugawa period. This point has been made before in the field of Japanese history, but this is its first appearance in the history of sports in Japan.

From this perspective Guttmann and Thompson use the pivotal events of the arrival of the black ships (1853) and the end of the war in Asia and the Pacific (1945) to divide the work into three periods. Japan's traditional sports were formed before the arrival of the black ships, and the history of the development of sumo, *kemari*, the martial arts, *chikaraishi*, and other sports is related in Part 1. Part 2 tells the story of the events that followed the black ships, describing the processes of modernization that took place amidst the love-hate relationship with America and Europe. Topics discussed here include the modernizing transformations of the traditional sports described in Part 1, the introduction and acceptance of Western sports, the flourishing of sports during the Taisho democracy and under fascism, physical education in the schools, amateur sports, and the introduction of professional sports. Part 3 takes up the history of sports in Japan following the end of the war. This section includes a wide variety of topics, including post-war reforms, Olympic participation, the ups and downs of various new sports, the slashing of company sports in response to recession, retraditionalization (created traditionalism) in sumo, and other recent trends.

Except for certain sections on sumo, this is not a product of original, primary research, but it is an academic work with detailed notes and bibliography, and plentiful illustrations, graphs, tables, and statistics. Since it is also a comprehensive survey of

Japan's culture and sports, I have been using it in my course in sports history at Kanazawa University since the fall of 2001. It is an excellent treatise on Japanese society and culture as well as sports history and will be required reading for scholars of Japanese culture the world over.

I would also like to add that Allen Guttmann received the International Society for the History of Physical Education and Sport Award at the ISHPES Kanazawa seminar, held in Kanazawa, Japan in July of 2002.

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