

John Nauright  
University of Luton

## **The Ultimate Imperial Sporting Force: The Modern Olympics and Capturing the “Other”**

Historians of sport have long explored the phenomenon of the spread of British sport through the imperial networks of the British Empire and the trade networks set up by the British in the nineteenth century. Historians such as Allen Guttman, J.A. Mangan and a host of others have examined the expansion of sports from Britain into the global arena. In addition, much work has been devoted to the rise of the modern Olympic movement under the leadership of Baron Pierre de Coubertin of France. However, the conceptualization of the modern Olympics rarely involves mention of the word imperialism or discusses the Olympics as a colonizing force.

Following the work of John Bale on the sportization of African body cultures in Kenya and Rwanda and some of the critiques of the International Olympic Committee by John Hoberman, I explore the framing of the Equatorial Guinea swimmer Eric Moussambani at the Sydney 2000 Olympics as evidence of the totalizing imperial forces of the body culture of elite Western sport as housed in the modern Olympic Games. I draw on the historical development of the modern Games and argue for a reconceptualization of the Olympics as the leading

imperialist force in the twentieth century expansion of achievement sport as the dominant form of physical body culture in the world. A critique of the eulogizing of the Olympics among many sport historians will be offered as part of the argument for a need to rethink the role of the modern Olympics in modern society.

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