

VOLUME EDITOR PETER J. SEYBOLT



Cultural Sociology of the  
**MIDDLE EAST,  
ASIA, & AFRICA**

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA

EAST AND  
SOUTHEAST ASIA

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ily (e.g., the 1978 one-child policy), inner diaspora control with the *hukou* household registration system, and the like. For instance, after a long period of discrimination, the Chinese government maintained that gender equality would occur under socialism. These effective and improved gender relations would be enforced by the socialist organizations, which would control most aspects of daily life.

After the split in 1953, North Korea took the same path, and a populist Soviet-style government was built. The new state immediately launched several socialistic programs, including land reform, socialization of industrial plants or other properties, equalization of women's rights, and workers' revolutions. This caused the creation of an emerging elite corps in the highly militarized politico-bureaucratic sphere, even though the Confucian nature of social relations has not been fundamentally altered, as shown by the succession of power by Kim Jong-Il from his father. Besides, the proportion of women workers, even in "male" jobs, was higher in North Korea than in South Korea.

During war reconstruction, both Japan and South Korea were occupied by the United States, encouraging the movement toward a capitalist democracy.

### The Emergence of a New Class

After its postwar economic recovery, Japan became eastern Asia's economic flagship during the period from 1960 to 1990. This eventually led to the development of a large middle class and the nation's own intrinsic representation of economic and social similarities. During this period, work and family represented the twin pillars of social order.

In the 1990s, the economic bubble collapsed, causing an abrupt drop in Japanese economic growth, and the country experienced tremendous political, economic, and social problems. As a result, younger generations sometimes turned to new immaterial and spiritual values, or in extreme cases, to social phobias like *hikikomori* (home-bound agoraphobia). A few years later, South Korea followed Japan's economic success and reached a comparable level of industrialization and urbanization. While in the 1970s, South Korean representations of modernization were limited to economic welfare, a decade later people began to experience a shift in their values in response to higher standards of living. They became conscious of a better way of life, which led to the emergence of the middle class.

The 1997 Asian financial crisis slowed development of the middle class for both Japan and South Korea, which allowed China to emerge on the world scene with its rapid economic success. The social change in China since the shift to "market socialism" in the late 1970s has been used as a political means to represent the middle class and to feed nationalist ideology.

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**See Also:** China; China, Economic Power; Japan; Nationalism; Religion.

### Further Readings

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## Sports

Western sports such as soccer, tennis, baseball, and cricket spread to Asia beginning in the mid- to late 19th century. Many had origins in the United Kingdom (UK), like rugby, soccer, cricket, or golf. These pursuits were incubated in UK public schools and were played and taught throughout the British Empire. Others were American inventions (e.g., baseball, basketball, or volleyball) brought to Asia by teachers and missionaries living abroad. Throughout the modern period, sports were seen as symbols of colonialism and were used as tools of national self-assertion. Today, they reflect a global consumer culture that has developed during the most recent surge of increased contact and economic interdependency: what many call globalization.

Sports such as soccer, cricket, and rugby spread throughout the British Empire in places like Malaya, Singapore, Hong Kong, and India. Along the way, the expression "the battle of Waterloo was won on the fields of Eton," falsely attributed to the Duke of

Wellington, was often quoted to show the significant influence that sports at such schools had on the UK's successes abroad. In some cases, they challenged, replaced, or were similar to established local "sports." Although Western sports appealed to many locals, they were met with conflict in other places. For example, after the Opium War (1840) forced China to open its doors to the West, sports were initially seen as "foreign" pursuits, as part of the Imperial Project, and to be avoided.

Colonialism, therefore, left the first lasting impression on sports in Asia, where sports were first a tool of colonialists to assert their superiority over the colonized. In some places, Western sports directly challenged local sportlike practices, as with the indigenously Asian invention of *sepak raga*, which is played throughout southeast Asia and in Japan, where it is called *kemari*, and is sometimes compared to soccer. But the values brought forth to play these Western sports were often complex combinations of indigenous wisdom and Western playing styles and ideas. In Japan, for example, Zen Buddhism and martial arts traditions were adapted to fit Western sports, and it was not long before people were calling themselves "samurai" athletes. This shows that while colonialism may have left a legacy of suspicion toward things Western, including sports, it was not long before many Asians were insisting that Western sports could be played in Asian ways.

Sports were thus soon recast by the colonized to assert their own nationalism. In India (and the British West Indies), cricket allowed this transition. In the diverse archipelago nation of Indonesia, which was unified by the Dutch, sports stimulated national pride and supported visions of internationalism. (They did not, however, challenge the monotheistic religion of Islam, which still dominates, nor did they promote democracy.) In Korea, the Japanese controlled sports during Korea's period of colonization (1910–45). Even after the Korean War (1950–53), political chaos and social instability precluded Korean sports from prospering. As soon as Korea was back on its feet, however, it produced many successful athletes in a variety of sports and used success by Korean athletes in Western sports to sustain its own nationalism.

Today, the increased importance of global capital, the increasing influence of mass media coverage,

and increasingly strong international sports leagues threaten local sports cultures in a variety of Asian contexts. Leagues such as the National Basketball Association (NBA), Major League Baseball (MLB), and the English Premier League (EPL) all have significant presence in Asia. While these leagues view Asia as a source of sustainable profit, they have had the effect of making some of these Asian nations mere supply feeders of athletic labor as their best athletes migrate to the UK or the United States to compete professionally. Moreover, recent "mega-events" (e.g., the 2008 Beijing Olympics) serve to strengthen ties with Asian cities, especially in terms of global capital markets, international communications, and the interdependence of national economies.

There are diverse responses to globalization, and while many aspects of this process of increased contact between east and West are resisted by Asians, sports have been one arena in which shared enjoyment generally keeps such resistance rather silent. For example, even though it once viewed modern sports with suspicion, over time, China has adapted sports to fit its own needs, and they have become a major part of contemporary Chinese popular culture. Indeed, in 2008, Beijing hosted the Summer Olympics and China won more gold medals than any other nation. The important contributions that Asian societies have made to sports in the West must be noted, where sports like polo (originally from Turkey or Iran) and the Eastern martial arts, such as karate (Japan) or taekwondo (Korea) have become very popular.

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**See Also:** Globalization; Modernity; Nationalism; Popular Culture.

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