WESTERN-CENTRISM IN OLYMPIC STUDIES

AND ITS CONSEQUENCES IN THE 2008 BEIJING OLYMPICS

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The Beijing 2008 Olympic Games will be only the third time the Olympic Summer Games have been held outside the West and its former colonies, after Tokyo 1964 and Seoul 1988. If one adds the 1972 Sapporo and 1998 Nagano Winter Games, these will be the fifth Olympic Games outside the West. China in 2008 is arguably the least Westernized nation to yet host the Olympic Games. It will also be the first East Asian country to hold the Games that is not host to U.S. military bases. When measured by the numbers of Westerners who will be in China, it will be the greatest-ever meeting of East and West in peacetime. The Beijing Olympics mark the moment when the most populous nation in the world, and the one that is located farthest from the political centres of the West both geographically and culturally, becomes incorporated into the global system more than ever before in human history.

As we saw from the protests surrounding the international torch relay and the ultra-nationalist response among some segments of Chinese society, the process of China's incorporation has not been smooth. It seems apparent there is a deep-seated mistrust and fear of China in the West, a fear of an unknown Other. Actually China is not that unknown anymore after 160 years of close interaction with the West. This interaction began on a large

scale with the Opium Wars of the 1840s, and continued into the semi-colonial period when the Western powers forced China to open ports for trade. Missionaries flocked to China in large numbers, found a meaning in their lives that their lives in their home countries apparently lacked. They introduced Olympic sports into China along the way. Western women found a greater freedom in China than they had back home, and, mistakenly thinking that male-female equality was the way of the West, Chinese reformers took up the cause of physical education for women. One of its products was the fact that in 2004, China came second to the U.S. in the gold medal count largely due to the fact that women won 59% of its gold medals, as compared to 33% for the U.S. and 41% for Russia in third. In the World War II period China was a base for British and US operations against Japan and the U.S. led an attempt to form a coalition government of the Communist, Nationalist, and other political parties. This history is just now being rewritten in China after decades of the Communist Party's claiming almost total responsibility for the victory over Japan. A relatively brief period of isolation occurred in the 1950s through the late 1970s due to the West's embargoes against the Communist government, but for the last 30 years the linkages between China and the West have rapidly expanded.

China should no longer be strange to us, but it still is. This strangeness has been manufactured, and we as academics have played a key role in manufacturing it.

The People without Sport History

In his anthropological classic, *Europe and the People without History*, Eric Wolf observed that the Western intellectual tradition tended to view Europeans – the "people with history" - as the driving force of historical change, and "primitive" societies as pristine, unchanging survivals from the past – the "people without history." He argued that if we looked more carefully at the interconnections between the world's peoples, then we would

understand that "The global processes set in motion by European expansion constitute *their* history as well." [1] His book was an ambitious attempt to write the history of the interconnectedness of the world since 1400 by focusing on trade. Olympic history could very well be a history of the interconnection of the world through sport, but the history of the interconnection between China and the West through sport is nearly nonexistent. China got written out of the history of sport in the Western scholarship of the nineteenth century, with the result that when it re-entered the international sportsworld in the 1980s, it was one of the "people without sport history." It was the desire to be counted among the driving forces of history, and among the "people with sport history," that motivated the pursuit of Olympic Games and medals.

If we compare the number of books in European languages on ancient Greek and Chinese sports, we can see that until the mid-1980s, China was literally almost completely "without sport history." Thomas Scanlon's *Greek and Roman Athletics: A Bibliography* lists 186 books and articles on the ancient Olympic Games published between 1752 and 1984. Of these, 100 were in German, 6 were in Latin published in Germany, 36 were in English, 13 in French, 10 in Italian, and the remainder in Danish, Dutch, Hungarian, and Russian. The quantity of scholarship that has been devoted to ancient Greek sports in general is indicated by the total of 1,345 sources on all aspects of ancient Greek athletics listed in Scanlon's bibliography.[2]

The Online Computer Library Center (OCLC) is the world's largest bibliographic database, representing 52 million records in 400 different languages contained in libraries worldwide. At present it is the most advanced database for identifying the location of books in libraries worldwide. Though it is far from comprehensive, and is biased toward North America and toward English-language sources, it might be viewed as a rough measure of the worldwide accessibility of information on a topic in English. In 2005, the OCLC contained

several hundred entries on the ancient Olympic Games and the site of ancient Olympia, in multiple languages. The history with the widest distribution was M.I. Finley's and H.W. Pleket's classic, *The Olympic Games: The First Thousand Years* (1976), which was listed in 1,089 libraries.

In 2005, there were just four books on ancient Chinese sports in the OCLC database, all of them in both English and Chinese printed side-by-side. The earliest was published in 1984. The book with the largest distribution was listed as owned by 18 libraries worldwide. More books on ancient Chinese sports existed than those listed in the OCLC – but not many. Beyond the books listed in OCLC, I was able to identify eleven more books on ancient Chinese sports that were published before 2006; the oldest was published in 1983.[3] As the Beijing Olympic Games approached, several more books were published.[4] I have considered only books here; the number of articles and chapters in books would still amount to a fraction of the 1,345 articles and books on ancient Greek sports listed in Scanlon's bibliography.

The point is that the amount of paper that has been devoted to ancient Chinese sport history is miniscule compared to the reams of pages devoted to the history of the ancient Olympic Games and ancient Greek athletics. Why is there so much history of ancient Greek sports and so little history of ancient Chinese sports? And what were the consequences of this lacuna for the Beijing Olympic Games?

Classicism and Orientalism

Classicism and Orientalism emerged and developed in tandem as complementary opposites; Classicism was the West's way of defining "who we are," while Orientalism was the West's way of defining "who we are not." Classicism preceded Orientalism, with the result that stereotypes about the East had been laid even before systematic inquiry had begun. Those assumptions were found in the classical Greek texts themselves, and classicists

repeated them and began to elaborate upon them from the eighteenth century on. Herodotus, Hippocrates, Aristotle, and other ancient authors had already set out some of the main themes of Orientalism: Asian rulers are despotic and excessive; Asians do not care about individuals; Asians are faceless hordes of people who live in conditions of servitude.[5] Plato and Aristotle were the earliest to associate Asia with despotic political systems.[6] Hippocrates wrote, "Europeans are also more courageous than Asiatics. …Where there are kings, there must be the greatest cowards".[7] The notion of the clever but physically weak and lazy Asian went as far back as Aristotle, who wrote,

> Europeans are full of spirit but wanting in intelligence and skill; Asians are intelligent and inventive, but wanting in spirit, and so are always in a state of subjection and slavery; but the Hellenic race is situated between them, is intermediate in character, and is high-spirited and intelligent.[8]

In the fifteenth to seventeenth centuries, Europe's movement out of the dark ages in the Renaissance was lent momentum by the re-discovery of ancient Greek texts, and neoclassicism played a central role in the Western European Enlightenment of the late seventeenth century. The close of the neoclassical age was marked by an interest in the Orient. In *Les Orientales* (1820), Victor Hugo wrote that "In the century of Louis XIV one was a Hellenist; today one is an Orientalist. This is a great step forward."[9] Much of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Orientalism was shaped by Europe's rivalry with the Ottoman Empire, Great Britain's colonization of India, and France's colonization of North Africa. China existed on the margins of Orientalism; it was assumed that since it was the most extreme geographically, it must also be the most extremely "oriental."[10]

In *Orientalism*, Edward Said argues that Oriental Studies arose out of the experiences of colonialism, particularly of Britain and France, whose colonies in India and Egypt were the major colonies of the Near East before World War II. After World War II, America dominated the Orient in the same style. Orientalism was shaped by the fact that the Orient was a cultural rival adjacent to Europe, and the site of Europe's oldest and richest colonies.

As such, the Orient served as an image of the Other to Europe; it helped the West to define itself by providing a contrasting image; Orientalism is a style of thought based upon a fundamental distinction made between "the Orient" and "the Occident."

Said's most important point is to argue that this intellectual distinction is part of the Western style of "dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient." Said does not believe that academic texts are "merely decorative;" they are a form of cultural domination that complements political domination. Through studying the Orient, the colonial powers were better able to control it; by dominating the production of knowledge about the Orient they ensured that the natives could only read about themselves through the lens of European scholarship. The West dominated intellectual discussions with the scholarship made possible by its wealth and power; furthermore, the West trained native intellectuals in Western European universities and Western ways of thought, so they saw their own culture through the eyes of the West. In Said's view, Orientalism benefitted European culture by strengthening its sense of identity, while it weakened Oriental culture by limiting what Orientals could think about themselves.[11]

Orientalism and China on the Eve of the Beijing Olympics

I believe that Said's theories illuminate the anger that many Chinese people felt toward the Western media coverage of the torch relay protests. While it is common in the West to view Chinese nationalist expressions as scary displays of ultra-nationalism, most thoughtful Chinese people recognize that China's main problem is its feeling of inferiority to the West, its 自卑感， due to its years of subjugation. Their anger against the Western media is due to their correct perception they lack what a social theorist might call discursive power, or "the power of speech", 话语权，in global media. One example is Jin Yuanpu, the executive director of the Humanistic Olympic Studies Centre at the People's University in

Beijing, who expressed to me that he was unhappy about a negative article about Chinese popular sports that he felt had misquoted him. On the day that we had that conversation, he was quoted in a McLatchey newspaper article as saying, "We want to tell the whole world that we are a country with 5,000 years of history. We are not just a country that makes shoes and hats." The article continues, "But as the conversation unfolded, Jin grew visibly agitated, saying that many Chinese can no longer tolerate the harsh attitudes of the West toward their homeland. 'I don't believe any American media will publish my words fairly!' Jin said."[12] And yet when I asked him why he did not try to do something about what he felt to be distorted coverage, he said that he felt he and China had no "power of speech" in the English-speaking world.

In an article that uses the Beijing Olympics as a takeoff point to criticize China's human rights record, the Columbia University political scientist Andrew Nathan observes, "Coming to the United States and seeing how things work here does not necessarily shake the faith of Chinese officials, or students, in their country's way of doing things. Quite remarkably, and in general for the better, tens of thousands of Chinese students have returned home from the West to play their willing roles in academia, the media, business, and other sectors, accepting subordination to the ruling party and its national project." Many in the West seem puzzled by the fact that our Chinese students do not return to China and start agitating for Western-style democracy. Is this not a good reason for us to ask ourselves what we are teaching to our Chinese students? Nathan concludes, "When we wondered all these years whether China would modernize or not, Westernize or not, become civilized or not, we were asking the wrong questions, making the wrong distinctions. What we got instead is a China that is both proud and resentful, open and closed, like us yet not at all like us."[13] Why is this?

The answer to this question is complex, but I feel that the fault is partly our own. It has to do with what we teach Chinese people about themselves when they come to the West. Even apart from the issue of negative biases and fear-mongering, a great deal - if not the vast majority - of what is said about China in print, whether academic or popular, presents the message that China is isolated from the West rather than intimately connected with it, different from the West rather than similar, and that today's Western society developed in isolation from any influence from China. Having grown up in one of the most anti-colonialist and anti-imperialist countries in the world, Chinese people sense that this view of the world is not correct, and that it serves a power structure that disadvantages them.

I would like to use the history of Chinese sports and the Olympic movement as an example of the effects of Orientalist biases on the realm of knowledge that most of us are engaged in producing.

Orientalism in Sport History

Neoclassicism was an intellectual trend that led to the construction of what we now call "the history of Western civilization." The Olympic Games provided one of the key symbolic lines of descent from ancient Greece to the contemporary West – and membership in this lineage constituted the people who *have* history, including sport history.

In their search for forms to replace the Medieval Christian practices, associated with the toppled monarchy, French Revolutionary thinkers looked to the pagan practices of ancient Greece. Thus, in the French Revolution ancient Greek sports and their revivals came to be associated with democracy and civil religion. Furthermore, eighteenth-century revolutionary thinkers, particularly Montesquieu, utilized the stereotype of Oriental despotism in opposition to their ideas of freedom and democracy. [14] Implicit in this emerging logical structure was the idea that sports were incompatible with Oriental despotism.

This logic was further elaborated by nineteenth-century classicists such as Ernst Curtius (1814-1896), who led the early excavations at ancient Olympia and was probably the most widely-read and influential historian of classical antiquity in the second half of the nineteenth century. By contrast with the Egyptians and other peoples of the Orient, he described the Greeks as a people who had left behind the other peoples of the world in their restless westward expansion and "chained the course of history to their steps."[15] His view was typical in the nineteenth-century West, which was in the throes of rapid and traumatic social changes wrought by colonialism and the Industrial Revolution, giving the appearance that historical change was happening in the West to a greater degree than in the rest of the world. Western intellectuals sought to understand the driving force behind historical change, assuming that whatever it was, the rest of the world must lack it.

Jacob Burckhardt (1818-1897), who succeeded Curtius as perhaps the most influential classicist of his time, carried this trend even further. He developed the concept of the "agonal principle" (from Greek *agon,* contest) in the 1880s. He made the agonal principle one of the main characteristics of Hellenic culture, reaching its heights in Greece in the sixth century, B.C., the "agonal age." "The agon was a motive power known to no other people – the general leavening element that, given the essential condition of freedom, proved capable of working upon the will and the potentialities of every individual. In this respect the Greeks stood alone. ...In the Asiatic cultures, despotism and the caste system were almost completely opposed to such activities."[16] Although it has been debated, this notion has been widely influential in classicism, and is accepted to some degree even by contemporary scholars such as Thomas Scanlon and Michael Poliakoff.[17] The concept of Greek agon was carried to an extreme by Victor Ehrenberg in his 1935 work *Ost und West (East and West),* in which he stated that "To the Orient [the agonistic principle] remained alien and antipathetic."[18] As has

been analyzed by Ingomar Weiler, well into the twentieth century, *agon* played a role in racist scholarship that denied the existence of competition and of sport to non-Aryan races.[19]

In late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Western accounts of Chinese sports, the fundamental assumptions of Orientalism are evident. Sports were assumed to be non-existent because of the stereotype of the non-competitive, over-intellectualized Oriental which, as previously mentioned, goes back as far as Aristotle.

One of the few Sinologists to say anything at all about sports was Herbert A. Giles. He began an article on "Football and Polo in China" with the remark that, "It was on the 9th of November 1905, while watching the Cambridge University team make their splendid stand against the famous 'All Blacks,' that I began to wonder if anyone would take an interest in, or even believe, the fact that football was played by the Chinese several centuries before Julius Caesar landed in Britain." [20] For Giles, the historical decline of sports meant a loss of manhood: "The age of manly sport, as above described, has long passed away; and the only hope is for a revival under the changing conditions of modern China." He states this even though it is followed by a list of "some few athletic exercises" which have survived.[21]

In short, the West could be personified as a manly athlete, while China was an effeminate intellectual. After a six-month tour of China, the prominent sociologist Edward Alsworth Ross wrote a thick book on *The Changing Chinese*, in which Curtius's notion of the "somnolent Orient" is evident: "Perhaps the Young Men's Christian Association with its slogan so inspiring to the young, 'all-round development – physical, intellectual, moral, and religious – for myself and for others' is the best physician for the lethargy that lies like an evil spell on the energies of the yellow race." [22]

The Western orientalist view was internalized by Chinese reformers and revolutionaries. In his first published article, "A Study of Physical Culture" (1917), Mao Zedong complained that "Exercise is important for physical education, but today most

scholars are not interested in sports." He stated that this was because they had no personal experience of exercise, felt no need for it, and therefore had no interest in it. They were influenced by the Chinese traditions of "respect for learning" and "a good man does not become a soldier." [23]

Throughout his political career Mao held to the concept that *yundong,* which means "activity" or "movement," was the remedy for the passivity and weakness that ailed China. *Yundong* is also one of the words that can be used for sport. *Yundong* was also the word used to label the endless political "campaigns" of the Maoist period. These debates reveal the Orientalist stereotype of the quiet, still *(jing)* East, which could only become a strong nation by getting into gear like the active *(dong)* West.

Within the context of Social Darwinism, the negative stereotypes about the weak Chinese body crystallized into the label of the "Sick man of East Asia" *(dongya bingfu).* For a century this phrase has loomed in the Chinese imagination as an insulting label applied to China by Japan and the West. Xu Guoqi believes it originated with Yan Fu (1853-1921), who first translated the Social Darwinists T.H. Huxley and Herbert Spencer into Chinese; he called China a "sick man" in 1895.[24] While it is true that images of Chinese opium addicts were popular in the West - the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago featured an opium den with "real" Chinese opium smokers – it is not clear whether the phrase originated in the West or in China. Wherever it originated, it always had more currency among reform-minded Chinese than it did in the West. In China it is commonly said that the Beijing Games will finally erase the insulting label once and for all.

In the late 19th century and well into the twentieth century, this was the vision of China that Chinese people encountered when they were educated in the West, or in Western schools in China. One such person was the International Olympic Committee member in China, He Zhenliang, who spent seven years attending the Ecole Franco-chinoise in Shanghai

during the Japanese occupation. It was there that he learned the French that later enabled him to be a leading figure in Chinese sports diplomacy, but there he also learned his Chinese patriotism and his distaste for Western imperialism. As his wife Liang Lijuan wrote in his biography,

> The French instructors at the school also wanted to convert this student of good character and scholarship to Christianity…in the second semester he had to go to the little chapel at the school and kneel to the statues of the saints, whereupon he stopped going to the religion class because he felt that he absolutely did not want to kneel to foreigners. Some place deep in his heart he harbored resentment toward the way the colonialist education at the Ecole Franco-chinoise damaged the students' national self-respect and personal dignity. Many students hated the French instructors to the marrow of their bones, but they did not dare to express their anger.[25]

Intellectuals Have a Responsibility

The Olympic movement depends on the ideas that give it its significance and meaning. The future success and worldwide acceptance of the Olympic movement will depend on whether the IOC, in collaboration with scholars, is successful in re-thinking and re-working Olympism for the twenty-first century, not simply in marketing terms, but based on solid research drawing from the humanities and social sciences. As scholars, we have a responsibility. We should seek to develop a new vision of Olympic history as a history of the interconnection of the world through sport - and not a history of the domination of the world by Western civilization through sport.

Influence of Chinese Though on Coubertin via the Jesuits

For example, Pierre de Coubertin stated that he had consulted Confucius, among others, in constructing his notion of athletic pedagogy. His *L'Histoire Universelle* demonstrates his interest in world history, and also reveals that he considered himself familiar with the teachings of Confucius. He was educated by Jesuits, who were the first Westerners to live in China (beginning in the 16th century) and to introduce Chinese culture to the West.

Their writings about China had a tremendous influence on the foundational thought of the French Revolution, which was one of the intellectual trends leading to the modern Olympic movement. Scholars writing about the origins of Olympism could pay more attention to the fact that Eastern thought played in important role in the intellectual milieu that produced Coubertin. This would require a shift from the traditional approach to Olympic history as a "History of Great White Men" toward social, cultural, and intellectual history. It would also require that Olympic historians move their attention outside the West and learn about the West's connections with China through the Jesuits who lived there.

Influence of East Asia on the development of Olympic Education via Carl Diem

It appears that formal education initiatives related to the Olympic Games were organized outside of the organizing committee for the first time in the context of the 1964 Tokyo Summer Games and 1972 Sapporo Winter Games. According to Masumoto, educational initiatives for the Tokyo Games were produced by the Ministry of Education, the National Olympic Committee, and private organizations. For the 1972 Sapporo Winter Games, the Sapporo city council published a book entitled *Guide to Understanding the Olympics* that was distributed among all schools in Sapporo.[26]

However, probably due to the problems of Eurocentrism, the extensive effort in Japan has not been acknowledged in the works by two of the major writers about Olympic education, Norbert Müller of Germany and Deanna Binder of Canada. Since the larger program was not led by the organizing committee, it is not reported in the official Olympic report. Müller's summary emphasizes the founding of the International Olympic Academy in 1961, which was a joint German-Greek effort, followed by the establishment in 1966 of the German *Kuratorium Olympische Akademie.*[27] Binder's work likewise ignores Japan's efforts and asserts that the 1976 Montreal Olympics were the watershed in the development of

Olympic education programs outside of the organizing committees. She also claims that while there was no effort to build on the Montreal programs, that finally the 1988 Calgary Olympics became a program that others built upon. If her assertions about the importance of the Canadian efforts are accurate, then it may be that these efforts were built upon because the materials were available in English. Still, Binder's accounts of the history of Olympic education efforts overlook the substantial German and Japanese efforts.[28]

Actually, Germany might have provided a major impetus to the Tokyo Olympic education program. Germany had not only had a fascination with the ancient Greek Olympic Games, including the first systematic excavation of ancient Olympia that started in 1875 and continues to today, but also it had had a close relationship with Japan since the 1830s and provided many of the models and scientific expertise for Japan's modernization. The famous Olympic scholar Carl Diem visited Japan and China in 1929, and from 1959-61 he was an advisor to the Japanese Olympic Committee for the Tokyo and Sapporo Olympic Games.[29] Diem also performed the amazing feat in 1941 of writing 37 pages about equestrian sports in China even though he was unable to read the Chinese texts; he used the few available sources in English and German, studied objects in museums, and had assistants to help him. What is even more remarkable is that these pages were part of a larger book on *Asiatische Reiterspiele [Asiatic Equestrian Games]*, which also discussed the rest of the Near and Far East.[30]

Diem was one of the major scholars to promote the concept of Olympic education, and was the person who originally proposed establishing the International Olympic Academy in Greece in 1938. The first session of the Academy was held in 1961, and so the foundations for Olympic education were just starting to be well-established before the Tokyo Olympic Games. It is possible that his ideas about Olympic education actually found fertile ground in Japan before they did in Germany. The first German-language textbook for

secondary schools, *Olympisches Lesebuch [Olympic Reader]*, was not published until 1971 under the sponsorship of the Germany Olympic Committee in preparation for the 1972 Munich Olympic Games. The timeline makes it possible that this German effort built upon the Japanese experience and not the other way around. Germany did not institute its first nationwide Olympic education program in the schools until the first *Machs mit!* [Participate!] program was initiated by the German Olympic Committee in 1988.

International Linkages in Beijing's Olympic Education Programs

The Western media have tended to portray the Olympic education programs in Beijing's schools as a kind of government propaganda program for propping up the Communist Party. On the contrary, serious research would reveal that their roots come from connections between Chinese and Western scholars. Two of the people who have had a big influence on Olympic Education in China are Ren Hai of the Beijing Sport University and Donnie Pei (Pei Dongguang) of the Capitol Institute of Physical Education. These two academics both received a Western graduate education in Canada. Dr. Ren received a Ph.D. in history from the University of Alberta. Donnie Pei received a Master's Degree from the International Olympic Studies Centre at the University of Western Ontario, Canada, attended the 2001 Postgraduate Session of the International Olympic Academy, and was the first Mainland Chinese to be invited back as a coordinator. Both of them wrote theses on Olympic history. However it is worth noting that although they received a Western education, the Olympic education that they initiated in China was not completely Westernized, but in fact was a "combination of East and West" (中西结合). In 1993 during Beijing's first bid for the Olympic Games, Dr. Ren edited the first college-level textbook for Olympic education, *The Olympic Movement* 《奥林匹克运动》. Actually at that time no such basic overview of the Olympic Movement existed in English. The first textbook meant to be utilized as an

introductory college textbook was not published until 2005; it was Vassil Girginov's and Jim Parry's *The Olympic Games Explained: a student guide to the evolution of the modern Olympic Games.* This is to say, English textbooks did not lead the way in the development of Olympic education, but rather the first Chinese textbook was published 12 years before the first English textbook.

After the success of the bid in 2001, Yangfangdian Primary School initiated the first Olympic education activities in China under the guidance of Donnie Pei. Working together with a P.E. teacher at the school, Zhou Chenguang, he organized a series of activities beginning with a mini-Olympic Games in 2002. One of the annual traditions of the Postgraduate Seminar at the International Olympic Academy is a re-enactment of the ancient Greek pentathlon, which was created by the Austrian classicist Ingomar Weiler. As mentioned above, Weiler has been the leading scholar to critically analyze the biased attitude that the fundamental assumptions of classicism created toward non-Western sports. There is thus a certain poetic justice in the fact that the custom created by him near ancient Olympia initiated the Olympic education programs in China, the largest-scale Olympic education programs ever. In 2005, Yangfangdian was designated the "Pioneer Olympic Education Model School." Building on the model started at Yangfangdian, the Beijing City Education Commission, working together with BOCOG, expanded Olympic education programs to 200 primary and secondary schools in Beijing City and another 356 schools nationwide, a total of 556 schools.

Rescuing Olympic History from the Nation

Why did China seize Olympic education with such enthusiasm? While many people have spent much effort trying to define what the content of Olympic education is or should be, Ren Hai argues that they have missed the larger fundamental point: It is a kind of education

that transcends national education. Olympic education provided something that China's national education lacked:

> [B]ecause of its inherent nature - its goals, field of vision, and content - it is difficult for traditional education, which is based on the standpoint of one nation and circumscribed within the confines of one state, to fulfill the needs of the present era of globalization. Today's world lacks an education that focuses on a global horizon and is firmly based on the interests of humankind as a whole. It was precisely this lack that sparked the emergence of Olympic education. Olympic education aims to cultivate qualified citizens of the "global village," to help them break through the various limitations of their respective societies, to impress the seal of a world citizen on top of the existing identity of a national citizen.[31]

The well-known China historian Prasenjit Duara has analyzed the notion of "nationalist history" as it has developed since the eighteenth century. Nationalist history typically approaches the history of a nation as a narrative of a particular race of people that has evolved over time from a worse condition to a better condition as it progressed towards the liberated state of being a modern nation. It is thus tied up with modern notions of unlinear progress. He proposes that historians need to "rescue history from the nation" by finding other ways to write history that do not simply reinforce national divisions.[32]

Olympic history has this capability. And to write Olympic history in this way is also a kind of political action toward the ideals of international friendship and world peace that the Olympic Games claim to embody. After three hundred years of fixation on China's differences form the West, let us now focus on our commonalities. Let us focus on the flow of ideas and people and practices between the West and the East, which made possible the world that we all live in today. Let us celebrate the Beijing Olympic Games as the beginning of a new era and finally leave behind the colonial and imperial legacies of the 19th century.

[1] Eric R Wolf, *Europe and the People Without History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 385.

[2] Thomas F. Scanlon, *Greek and Roman Athletics: A Bibliography* (Chicago: Ares Publishers, 1984), 55-65. These numbers are based on a count by the author.

[3] The first book in Chinese on Chinese sports was Guo Xifen, *Zhongguo tiyushi* [The History of Chinese sports] (Shanghai: Shangwu Press, 1919). Works in English include Ren Hai, *A Comparative Analysis of Ancient Greek and Chinese Sport* (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 1988); No author/editor, *Sports and Games in Ancient China* (Beijing: New World Press, 1986); Olympic Museum, ed., *5000 Years of Sport in China: Art and Tradition* (Lausanne: Musée Olympique, 1999) is an art book in English and French with some essays. Large format art books with captions and some commentary in both Chinese and English include Shao Wen-liang, ed., *Sports in Ancient China* (Hong Kong: Tai Dao Publishing, 1986); Xiong Xiaozheng, Liu Bingguo, and Zhang Tianbai, eds., *Illustrated History of Ancient Chinese Sports* (Beijing: Yanshan Publishing House, 1990); Liu Ji, ed., *5,000 Years of Physical Culture and Sports in China* (Beijing: Beijing University of Physical Education Publishing House, 1996); Cui Lequan, ed., *Album on Ancient Sports Art in China* (Beijing: Zhonghua Shuju, 2000). Books in Chinese include Bi Shiming, ed., *Zhongguo gudai tiyushi* [The History of Ancient Chinese Sports] (Beijing: Beijing Institute of Physical Education Publishing House, 1990); Ren Hai, *Zhongguo gudai tiyu* [Ancient Chinese Sports] (Beijing: Shangwu Press, 1991, 1996); Ren Hai, *Zhongguo gudai wushu [Ancient Chinese wushu]* (Beijing: Shangwu Press, 1991, 1996); Ren Hai, *Zhongguo gudai wushu yu qigong [Ancient Chinese wushu and qigong]* (Beijing: Shangwu Press, 1996); Xu Yongchang, *Zhongguo gudai tiyu* [Ancient Chinese Sports] (Beijing: Beijing Shifan daxue chubanshe, 1983).

[4] Bing Mazhao, *Zhongguo chuantong tiyu [Traditional Chinese sports]* (Beijing: Capitol Normal University Press, 2006); sections in Lou Xiaoqi et. al., eds., *Aolinpike yu Zhongguo/Olympic and China* (Beijing: Civilization Magazine, 2005); publication of revised editions of Ren Hai, *Zhongguo gudai tiyu* and *Zhongguo gudai wushu*.

[5] Andrew L. March, *The Myth of China: Myth and Theory in Geographic Thought* (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1974), 27-28.

[6] Franco Venturi, "Oriental Despotism." *Journal of the History of Ideas* 24(1)(Jan-Mar 1963): 133.

[7] March, *The Myth of China*, 29.

[8] March, *The Myth of China*, 30.

[9] Raymond Schwab, *The Oriental Renaissance: Europe's Rediscovery of India and the East, 1680-1880* (New

York: Columbia University Press, 1984 [1950]). Translated by Gene Patterson-Black and Victor Reinking, p. 11.

[10] Andrew L. March, The Myth of China: Myth and Theory in Geographic Thought (New York and Washington: Praeger, 1974), 34.

[11] Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978), p. 3, 25.

[12] Tim Johnson, "With a month to go until Olympics, China grows anxious," *McClatchy Newspapers,* July 7, 2008. www.mcclatchydc.com/227/v-print/story/43368.html

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