Olympic movement and sport culture

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Introduction

Modern Olympic Games was started in late 19th century by the leadership of French baron, Pierre de Coubertin. I define here the Olympic Games as a special competition system. I understand that this special competition system becomes a real Olympic Games when the current society set the system in the selected Olympic City.

1. The outline history of modern Olympic Games

Now we go to our next topic. In these hundred years the Games have continued in spite of its many problems and several suspensions. I separate the history of the Games into 3 periods. The first period is the social Olympic Games in which the mainstream of participants are noblemen of western countries.

And the history began the second period in the background of participation of the masses of advanced nations into sport in the era of 1920. For example, Berlin Olympic of Nazis is its type. It was a period of Olympic Games of nationalism and of propaganda for particular political system.

In addition, the history began the third period after the end of oppositions between the east and the west, namely, the breakdown of Berlin wall and disintegration of Soviet Union, collapse of the economic system of socialism. The period is the Olympic Games in the global economic system, and in worldwide publicity of companies and its merchandises.

It is able to be observed that the secular worlds, where the Olympic competition system are set in, have changed as aforesaid. During the period, athlete spirits also have changed its expressions. In the first period, they have the spirit of amateurism, that is to say, the spirit of gentlemen’s excellence. The second period has the spirit of state amateurism, that is to say, the spirit of national excellence. And the third period has the spirit of global amateurism, that is to say, the spirit of global excellence.

2. What are the meanings of the sport culture?

I want to arrange the concepts of sport culture as another theme of my speech. The word sport is an English word and therefore, it has the background of English cultural and language history. I do not receive all the meanings of sport in English dictionary as the necessary ingredient of the concept of sport. It has specific usages and they cause puzzles. So, I understand the concept sport as a cultural field common to humankind.

This means that the concept is not only com-

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mon to English speaking countries, but also common to Asian, African, Oceania, and South American nations. And therefore, I understand the cultural field has been before the origin of the word SPORT. Because of this standpoint, it can easily be understood that there are regional and local sports other than modern sport originated in 19th century England. And it also could not be said that all the sports originated in England or United State have world popularity. For example, the cricket, the national game of England, is a modern sport, but It is not a global sport. It is able to say to be a local sport. And the baseball, it has origin in USA, is also a local sport.

Consequently we must broaden our horizons of the concept SPORT. So many of styles of wrestling spread all over Asia. For examples, Korean wrestling and Japanese Sumo wrestling have longer history than the history of the word SPORT. And if you ascend to the antiquity of Greece, you are able to find all sort of sports, and in ancient China you can find horsemanship and skill of archery, and in ancient Egypt you can find many sports too.

3. The system of nation and the range of extension of sport culture

There are ideas in former Soviet Union and in China that the table games belong to sport. They have administration systems that chess, go, shogi, and also poker are controlled under the name of sport. These countries set the concept of physical culture or physical education as upper concept to sport. There are, however, other countries where the table games do not belong to sport. For example, the names of AAPHERD, KAPHERD, and ICHPERSD mean pluralistic association of elements. They do not control all the games under the single name of physical culture. These social customs and systems interfere understanding of the concept SPORT CULTURE, but present speaker takes the standpoint that the table games should not be contained in the sport area as I discussed later.

4. Sport and art

Sport and art make a clear distinction with their relations to the space and field. For example, dancers create a new aesthetic field from a mere stage space through their dancing. Fine artist creates a field of work of art from mere canvas space by painting. When music begins to play, the room space changes into a musical art field. To create a new aesthetic field from mere space is art. The space is already given, and the artist problem is to make a field from a space. What do you want to create? We are able to say that the art field is the field of creating.

By comparison with art, the field of sport appears as the resistant against athlete or as conquest of the field. The athletes contest with each other to control the field. For examples, the athletes find value to climb up to the top of the mountain against gravity in mountaineering, and to dominate over opponent in judo. The artistic sport like gymnastics has the difficulty level of the artificial obstacles to conquest by the athletes. They challenge gravity controlling field itself. And in the team sports athletes find value to enter into the opponents’ defending field to control the field. The relationship between sport and field is a process to control, conquest, or win against challenging field. It may be said that the field of sport is the challenging field.
5. The boarder line sports in between sport and art

There are sports in which athletes create beautiful field with his movement forms from the given space like new gymnastics and diving competition. It looks like an art. These sports, however, set the technical merits and they become the artificial obstacles to the athletes. It is also true in figure skating. But once disappear grading of points and the performers are opened to the field of free performance, they become an art alike the dance. Therefore, these sports are situated in the boarder line between the art and the sport. And when the social dance introduces a contest system with points evaluation, it enters into the area of aesthetic sport. A hang glider who start from slope into the air and draw a big circle in the sky, or a glider riding the winds, can be seen as the moving art or moving sculpture in the sky canvas. And they also can be seen as sport for their adventurous challenges to enter into the sky. Floating in the sky with the hot-air balloon also suggest to be in the boarder line between art and sport. It has not competition system but there are context of conquest. Adventure is boarder line case of art and sport.

6. The historical context of the sport

Let's think about skiing on ski run. Almost all the skier believes that I am skiing now. He does not feel particularly that I am doing the sport. But when he is asked what sport are you doing now, he will answer, I am doing ski now. That is to say, even the noncompetitive skiing on ski run belongs to sport because it is a conquest. We can say that to draw a track of skis in the new snow on a great slope is a natural painting. It is transient, but we can say that it is a plastic art. We are not able to say that this interpretation is a complete fallacy.

When some forms of competition are introduced into the wisdom to live with ski in northern countries, the ski becomes a sport. And as the ski run skiing has its meaning relationship to competitive skiing, ski run skiing, even there is no competition, also affiliates to the sport.

A father and a child are playing catch. Does this case belong to a sport or an art? Everyone knows that this behavior is derived from the baseball. But this behavior lacks some elements of general definition of sport. To play catch has historical implication to baseball, and this makes the play catch belong to sport. Historical derivation is the key to decide whether an action belongs to sport or not.

The mountaineering is now in fashion for Japanese middle aged. Many of them do it for keeping health and to prevent aging. They discover a way to keep health and a religion in a sport. But the implication of mountaineering is a challenging modern sport after 19th century. They believe that the mountaineering also belong to sport.

7. Sport: Art of manipulations in challenging field, and formation of sport culture

The horse racing and the dogs are said to be sport. And automobile and motorcycles racing are sport too. The main volumes of these movements are produced by horse, dog, automobile, and motorcycle. Persons, of course, have relations to each performer of these main volumes of movement. Compared to these performers of the main volume of the movements, person's share is rather small.

The person does not perform the major role
in volume of performance, but in its implication and manipulation. The integral of dog and person, or automobile and driver, make each sport. Distinction between dog and person does not make a sport. We can apply the same interpretation to dogfight, cockfight, and bullfighting. In skiing its major role for down hill is gravity. And person’s power is small and mainly for manipulation. The gravity plays its major role. Its person’s share is small but has fatal importance. It can be said in skating, and rowing. The law of inertia and friction plays a major role in these movements. In sport, therefore, we can say that person’s power is deeply concerned with the art of effective use of outside power, for example, gravity or law of inertia utilization.

In archery, the spring of a bow supplies most of the physical volume of shooting power. Person’s power is accumulated in the bow and then changed to the movement of an arrow. But the arrow should meet the target. The difference of movement volume between swerved arrow and hit arrow is very small. There is only a difference of manipulation.

And there are also tools through which person concentrates his power and ball movement is made effective, for examples, by tennis racket, golf club, and baseball bat. Difference of manipulation of these tools produces different effects.

In these meanings, person distributes his power to art such as direction, timing, and power changing. More or less person exercises his power in sport, but it is most important that person is participated in sport field.

There are contests of maneuvering model plane or model car with radio control. These lay a special emphasis on maneuvering tools by person. As he must account window direction, its strength and weakness, and also gravity and centrifugal force etc., and as he participates in the sport field like kite flying contest, he is playing sport. We are able to find sport culture in the art of maneuvering.

8. Are TV game and table game sport?

The game field of the TV game is in the screen and outside of it the player is. He does not control physical power, but manipulates signs and symbols. Therefore, these games are situated outside of the sports category.

The table game has no relation with gravity. It is reason why the table game is outside the category of sport culture that the person whose physical power does not participates in gravity control for the game and physical process has no concern with game process. The objects of the manipulations are signs and symbols, these are the reason why the table games are excepted from the category of the sport culture in many countries.

9. Animal domestication and sport

The horse racing and horse riding are sports. A person and a horse are in the center of sport field. They, a horse and a person, are doing a sport. In the horse riding the rider is a part of the horse and also the horse is a part of rider. The integrated, is the subject of horse riding sport. Because there are keepers and jockey, the horse racing becomes a sport. In the case of the dogs, these run against gravity. The persons domesticated dogs like that. Persons have seat in the stand. Or they train dogs as their trainers. These persons manipulate the behaviors of dogs. The manipulated results consist of sport field. There is a contest of flying disk catch by the dogs. It is also a turn into sport from animal domestication. We can say this as
the sport domestication.

The bullfighting, dogfight, and cockfight are understood that each of them consist a sport field as results of sport domestications. The rodeo is contest of a typical skill of the horse and cattle domestication. There are know-how to control animals. And there are sport domesticators who share the field with animals and live with these animals. The race of homing pigeons is the same construct. These domestication sports are on the boarder line with boast of his belonging and also with gamble.

10. The difference between the modern sport and the mere sport

It can be said that the characteristics of modern sport is that their systems and organizations reach to a nation and competition reach into inter-nations. For example, the Kodokan judo has created and established in 19th century by Jigoro Kanou who organized the judo skills from many jujitsu skills. And as you know, it is now an international modern sport. Compared with judo, the sumo wrestling is not enough to be international and keeps deeper traditional culture. It is a feature of modernization to arrange institutions. It can be said that the institutional arrangement is a technology of social control. The modern sport system has a common feature to division of labor system and also arrangements of social institutions, for examples, police system, factory system, school system, etc. And such a combined unification of social technology and sport is a indication of modern sport. And if there is no such social technological element, it is a mere, local, and personal sport.

11. Olympic and sport culture

We have discussed each of the two premises of this theme. Now we will discuss relationships between these two premises. I want to talk about survive of the element of the first period: aristocratic and social period of modern Olympic games and sport culture

Until now, we find throughout the sport world the survives of ideals and spirits of the first period of modern Olympic Games. Many of IOC members are elite of their society. Some of them have status of nobleperson. Each of sports has tendency to reflect social class. So called white sport, for examples, horse riding, yacht racing, tennis, golf, etc., keep aristocratic and social character of polite society. Contrast to them, it is said that the soccer has spirit of commoner, American football has the spirit of immigrant coal miner’s son. It was told that Baron Coubertin get inspiration from English young men’s school sport life. That is to say, the modern Olympic Games had been triggered by elite school sport culture of English society, and realized by the French lord. From the sport culture of England and French then, Coubertin revived the form of ancient Olympic Games in which many sports competitions simultaneously carry out by delegates from many countries on the land of historical Greece.

Modern Olympic Games has been profiled against background of global sports culture and had the strongest highlight in 20th century sport culture. In this meaning, a part of global sport culture had been selected for modern Olympic Games. The value standard of selection of Olympic sports was, we can say, aristocratic. The Europe nobleperson is nobleperson who get over the wall of nations. The athletes participated in the Olympic Games was mainly amateur from western world where the noblepersons lead happy existences. The Games had some objectives, as you
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shows their identity. It is an entrance on world society for the group, or people. To have a position in the world may be to secure profit of its foreign policy.

These sort of self-claim apply to Olympic supporting companies too. To get the official sponsor position is to become spotlighted body that demand identity by the audiences. The customer wants also to identify with some companies. By becoming a world company, it can attract world wide customers.

An athlete can rises from obscurity to renown by virtue of Olympic medal. He has a spotlighted close-up body. When a team gets a gold medal, how many teammates have close-up? Yes, some of them, but not all of them. Contrast with them, the gold medal winner in individual contest has definitely his identification. Olympic has the agency of close-up for the name of individuals, nations, peoples, and regions.

Because the modern Olympic Games was opened by the western noblemen, it has a feature to be a private organization. This private and aristocratic organization supervises nations and regions. So to speak, there is a world wide private organization to control nations and regions. Then there is little difference between IOC and a world scale company except the latter’s official objective is to seek interest.

The Olympic embraces, for example, Christianity. It influences world by traversing the frame of nations and regions. It is not an official organ. These characteristics can be applied to most great religions. And also these are applied to art and fashion. In general, cultural areas, for examples, hobby and the creed, pass across the border. The frames such as nations and regions are political frames. There are other areas that are not desirable to punctuate by political frames.

They are global, for examples, global industry, global art, global fashion, global science, and the global sport.

13. The global culture

We can ascend history to the prehistoric times of mankind. And what’s more, we can ascend to the occurrence of mankind. It is said that the ancestor of homo sapience lived in Africa. A group of ape lived in special natural environment. For example, they lived in grassland with two foot erect walking and two hands using to manipulate things. These were their cultures. In these pressures of environment, one of ape had experienced genetic mutation. The transformation descended to her descendant. And the group increased population. And homo sapience spread from Africa to Europe, Asia, Oceania, and also through Siberia to Alaska, and then to South America. They traversed sea by ships and spread to islands. The Japanese island was once border on Asian Continent. We can know it from many kind fossils. There were coming and going of homo sapience too.

In the life of such primitive mankind, there were culture of sport and dance mixed with religion. That is to say, the mankind who had common ancestor spread with their common culture such as sport and dance. After they settled down each region on earth, they developed their cultural independence. In fact each regions has both of the common and the independence. We can understand it through observation on wrestling methods and martial arts of Asian Continent. We may find that these have similarities and diversities. And there are many methods of dance in Asian Continent. These have similarities and diversities too.
From the background of sport culture, the modern sport was spotlighted in 20th century. One may think only the modern sport on television is the sport, but he is just looking at one side of the matter. The mankind’s love of sports culture offers a field of mutual communication among nations. Eventually its love offers the chance of peace and friendship. The modern Olympic Games recall the oldest common memory of mankind, that is the sports culture, to participants, spectators, and audiences. That is the significance of Olympic Games.

If you compare the relation of sport culture and Olympic Games with paper and letters, the good paper, good sport culture, assures fine calligraphy, fine Olympic Game. We should treasure sports cultures in each region and nations. Each of them has traditional expression of high spirit, for example, original fair play spirit of the people. The diversity of expression in Olympic Games, and the balance between global similarity and local diversity will prevent corruption of Olympic Games. The paper and letters, namely good harmony between sports culture and Olympic Games functions to promote peace and friendship, and eventually produce power to stop probable destruction of this animate earth in 21st century.

The Olympic is a competition system and sports culture is, so to speak, an educational system to make athlete. The former is global and the latter is local. The latter affords the former the educated athlete. The former teaches the latter the courage and justice of other peoples. And the former makes cultivate the latter to respect and regard for other nations. The former recalls our oldest memory of common origin of mankind. To be relative to the West, it is very important to cooperate with each other of Asian nations, where we have developed diverse sports cultures. We, the East have rich and pregnant imaginations of sport culture. You need them to feel for the way to live life to the full in 21st century. I have the conclusion that the researches of sport cultures and physical educations in the East are very important for our future and for the future of Olympic Games and all the creatures in the world.

（付記：この原稿は、2000年ソウルにおけるアジア体育・スポーツ科学学会シンポジウムの招待講演で発表したものである。）

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