Japan, Korea and the 2002 World Cup

By John Horne

In conjunction with colleagues in Japan, South Korea and Malaysia, John Horne (University of Edinburgh) and Wolfram Manzenreiter (University of Vienna) have produced a volume of essays examining the emergent, resilient and dominant influences on the development of the ‘global game’ of football in Japan and Korea. The book, Japan, Korea and the 2002 World Cup, highlights research into the political, economic, social, and cultural dimensions of the 2002 World Cup. Chapters include examinations of the development of professional football in Japan and Korea, and the political and diplomatic significance of the 2002 World Cup, the commercial interests involved in the staging of the first Asian World Cup Finals, the involvement of the sports media, and the impact of the competition on the cultural identities of the consumers - especially Japanese and Korean spectators and fans - of world football.

Three main themes underpin the essays and the book's new importance for the theme relates to the role of the World Cup as a forum for cultural contestation over values, meanings, and identities. Governments, commerce, and governing bodies of sport, on the one hand, and fans and other citizens groups on the other, hold alternative meanings for the event. The 2002 World Cup is composed of world struggles between groups projecting legitimizing (dominant/hegemonic) identities, resistance (marginal) identities, and project (transformative) identities is an issue taken up by several of the contributors. The second theme addressed by some of the authors relates to the role of sports venues and sports ‘mega-events’ in debates about the transformation of urban space in global capitalist cities. The combination of new construction and the actual use of new stadiums has not only a direct impact on leisure and pleasure cultures in different social formations. Papers in the collection provide accounts of the spread of sport and leisure cultures to non-Western social formations, the role of sport in globalization, and the impact of globalization on sport. In varied ways, they demonstrate the need to look at the historical, cultural, and spatial specificity of power relations in understanding the social development and spread of sport. Since the 1990s, professional football has truly emerged as the ‘world’s game’. During the 1994 World Cup Finals in the United States it became clear just how much global interest had been generated by the tournament: over 3.5 million football supporters watched the World Cup on television. However, the 1998 World Cup was seen as the largest ‘mass marketing of happiness’ ever. During the hiatus between these two massive football spectacles, FIFA - the Federation Internationale de Football Association, football’s world governing body - made the unprecedented decision in 1996 to allow Japan and South Korea to co-host the first Asian-based World Cup Finals in 2002.

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