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THE EAST ASIAN FOOTBALL FEDERATION/ASIAN FOOTBALL CONFEDERATION

John Horne and Wolfram Manzenreiter

Introduction: ‘the future of football is Asia’

The governance of world football is no stranger to being subject to heated debates and controversies. The AFC is not unusual in this respect. It has engaged in specific political problems associated with securing adequate representation on FIFA, what to do about Israel and the ‘two Chinas’, additional places at the World Cup Finals and the Presidency of FIFA itself (Weinberg, 2012). In the past decade numerous concerns have been raised about corruption, manipulation and bribery. AFC president Mohammed bin Hammam, the first Arab to be elected to the highest office of football since its inception, was forced to step back from office in 2012. FIFA even banned the Qatari national for life from involvement in football because of alleged conflicts of interest violating its certainly not overly strict code of ethics. His successor, Bahraini Sheikh Salman bin Ebrahim Al Khalifa, has also been making headlines regarding the violation of human rights with the assistance of his office and consultants against players, administrators, referees and clubs who participated in the democracy protests in February 2011.

The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) is a huge and complex football confederation to discuss in detail and it awaits a comprehensive scholarly account (for a general discussion of the AFC, see Sugden and Tomlinson (1998); for a consideration of selected regions, see Dimeo and Mills (2002); Horne and Manzenreiter, 2002; Majumdar and Bandyopadhyay (2006); Manzenreiter and Horne (2004)). The AFC was founded in 1954 in Manila on the sidelines of the second Asian Games. Headquartered in Kuala Lumpur, it contains 46 ordinary member associations and one Associate Member. Next to Europe’s UEFA it is the confederation with the greatest number of affiliated national associations, which are divided into four zones according to geographic location: West, South and Central, East and Asean (see Table 35.1). Being responsible for running football in Asia, the AFC is in charge of regulating and drafting new regulations to promote football, protect the players and to organise a dozen or so major regional competitions. The main competitions governed by the AFC are the Asian Cup and the Asian Champions League from the 14 highest ranked, ‘mature’, national football associations in the AFC (known as the AFC Champions League, and based on the UEFA Champions League). To accommodate the great variety in playing level across the region, the AFC also convenes tournaments for teams from the 14 ‘developing’ FAs (the AFC Cup) and the rest that are
Football in East Asia

Table 35.1 East and ASEAN Regional Federations of the Asian Football Confederation

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<th>East</th>
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<td>Guam (182)</td>
<td>Brunei (186)</td>
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<td>Timor-Leste (186)</td>
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<td>Vietnam (132)</td>
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Notes
a Figures in parentheses refer to FIFA Men’s National Team Rankings in May 2013.
b Australia is discussed in Chapter 38 of this handbook.
c Associate Member.

‘emerging’ football nations and that compete for the AFC President’s Cup. Additionally, in response to outcomes on the world stage, and especially the FIFA World Cup Finals, the AFC explored new ways to improve the quality of play and performances. In conjunction with FIFA the AFC has designed projects to assist in the development of football in Asia. For example, since 2003 ‘Vision Asia’ has established projects in ‘emerging’ football nations, ‘AID27’ has provided financial support to poorer nations and ‘Dream Asia’ has contributed to the growing interest in using sport for social development (Weinberg, 2012).

It is important to make a brief comment about the scholarly approach we take in this chapter. We have written before about the difficulties the ‘East’ encounters when engaging in supposedly universal sporting competitions (Horne and Manzenreiter, 2008, 2012). For example, accounts of football in Asia when written about from the vantage point of ‘the West’, often contain implicit, and sometimes quite explicit, examples of ‘orientalist’ ideology, in which the orient is depicted as a mystical, sensual, exotic and ultimately an inscrutable place (Said, 1978). Such discursive construction tells us as much about the Western gaze as it does about those being described and discussed. It creates a framework of meaning within which the oriental ‘other’ is to be understood, interpreted and defined. So considering the development or lack of development of football in the AFC we need to proceed cautiously and identify what are the real problems, issues and questions that need asking and answering in studying football in the East. This chapter will discuss only football in the context of the three leading football associations in the AFC – those that featured in the top 100 FIFA rankings in the AFC in May 2013 – Japan, South Korea and the People’s Republic of China (CPR). The national teams were ranked 1st, 2nd and 10th (men’s) and 1st, 4th and 5th (women’s) respectively in the AFC at the time of writing. The main focus however will be on the lead football nation in East Asia, Japan, which also reflects our own research and expertise.
Football and its Asian periphery

Prior to the turn of the century, professional leagues were inaugurated in South Korea, Japan and China. Renowned European club sides have begun scouting the region and hiring young Asian professional players since Asia’s first World Cup Finals were hosted by Japan and South Korea in 2002. The burgeoning popularity of football in the world’s most vital growth region – in terms of population, productivity and consumption power – indicates both the successful integration of the East Asian ‘football periphery’ into global commodity markets as well as changing relations of consumption in areas, where football previously was close to non-existent. Talking to the AFC at its 50th anniversary, FIFA president Blatter flattered the regional representatives of football from the continent with the world’s largest population and highest economic growth rates that the ‘future of football is Asia’. To understand how the modern game of football, known to the Far East for more than a century, came to see a surge of interest at the end of the twentieth century is one of two objectives here. The second concerns the sustainability of the development: how likely will football turn out to remain as a cultural property in Japan, Korea and China?

Although the official FIFA emblem of two footballs imprinted with the map of the world depicts the Far East close to the centre where the two balls intersect, Asia is part of the periphery on the global football map. Members of the AFC accounted for more than 40 per cent of football players in what was colloquially known as The Big Count, a FIFA enquiry among all 204 member national associations. Results were published online. Yet Asian teams are granted only a minor fraction of places at the World Cup, compared to European nations with only half the number of regular football players. South Korea, which has a football population of 0.5 million (including 5,000 female players and 410 professionals), made its seventh consecutive World Cup Finals appearance in Brazil in 2014, while for Japan, which has 3.3 million players (20,000 women and 1,120 professionals), it was its fifth appearance in the ‘Theatre of the Great’. China (7.2 million players, as many as Brazil, 40,000 women and 1,748 professionals) made its debut at the 2002 World Cup finals but has failed to qualify for any other finals since then. These numbers demonstrate that millions of people nowadays are actively involved in the game.

A per capita index model that correlates the athletic production of a nation with the population base of the country depicts a fair idea of the participation rate in East Asia. The model used is derived from John Rooney’s per capita index introduced in his study A Geography of American Sport (1974). The application of the general formula I = (N/P) × (A/1), where N is the number of players and P the total population of this country, and A is the number of people per athlete in the overall field, presents national differences measured against the overall output figure calculated as 1.0. Thus in terms of continental output, in 2000 Europe produced approximately 2.5 times more football players than the world norm, whereas Asia (0.46) spawned slightly less than half of the norm. In global perspective, the only East Asian country that outperforms the world norm is Japan with an index of 1.30. In contrast, all the ‘Chinas’, including the CPR (0.28), Hong Kong (0.18), Macao (0.70), Chinese Taipei (0.19), Singapore (0.71), Mongolia (0.23) and the two Koreas (0.55 and 0.25 for North Korea) are underachievers in the generation of football players. Measured against the continental average (i.e. all Asia = 1.0), outperforming Japan (2.80) is joined by South Korea (1.19), Macao (1.51) and Singapore (1.53), as the four countries in East Asia that exceed the continental average; all others are well below it (see Manzenreiter (2004a) regarding the gendered nature of East Asian football participation).

The data indicate that Asia lags behind the FIFA core areas, Europe and South America, not only in terms of numbers of clubs and players, but in most other dimensions, including
the performance of national teams. Attendances at live games and the size of television audiences, and consequently economic activity and income generated by the game, also fall below the levels seen in most of the football centres. The peripheral position of football in East Asia is related to the history of geopolitical structuration and the context of capitalist expansion over the past century. Military officers, sailors and merchants that safeguarded, administered and financed the British Empire first introduced football to the region. The formation of the first Asian football associations took place in two of Britain’s colonies – Singapore, where the game was a popular way of socialising among rival business houses, and India, where the game proved a popular alternative to cricket with the infantry regiments of the occupying forces (Butler, 2001: 3). In Japan, it was Lieutenant Archibald L. Douglas of the Imperial British Royal Navy, who taught the rules of the game, as well as the essentials of naval warfare, to his students at the later naval academy in Tsukiji in 1873 (Horne with Bleakley, 2002: 90). In the 1880s, sailors introduced the game to the Korean cities of Incheon and Seoul (Lee, 2002: 76). In Hong Kong, the British residents organised football matches from the 1890s (Hong and Tan, 2003: 196). The period of introduction concurred with the final chapter of European colonialism and the growing US influence in the Pacific. Missionaries and teachers from Europe and the USA were the most important agents brokering the rules, techniques and values of modern sports to their mostly middle- and upper-class students at the modernising educational institutions. The national branches of the YMCA, particularly in Korea and China (De Ceuster, 2003; Speak, 1999: 78–9), were also key players providing infrastructure, guidance and administrative know-how to the establishment of amateur sport organisations. Hence in these countries football was in keen competition with spectator sports of American origin, most notably baseball, but also basketball, hockey and other team sports. Even after the Second World War, when defeated Imperial Japan democrratised, its former colony Korea was liberated, and mainland China fell under Communist rule, football remained in the shadows of the overwhelming popular support for baseball and other sports. Only recently has it advanced to the position of vying for the first rank.

The rising status of football is inextricably linked to economic forces of globalisation and the commercialisation of the game. Technological change in communication infrastructures and the deregulation of national media markets spurred the concentration of capital ownership and control over cultural markets. Shifting the focus from saturated football markets towards new territories and consumer segments corresponded with the expansionary urge of capitalism. For the consumer industry, the transnational television broadcast of football opened up access to giant consumer markets, providing the football clubs with previously unknown amounts of income from sponsorship revenues and television rights. Awarding the 2002 World Cup finals to Asia clearly served the strategic interests of football and the global aspirations of its corporate associates aiming at a region that within the next five years would be home to the second and third most powerful economies in the world. Already in 1990 half of the estimated total television audience generated by the FIFA World Cup in Italy had been watching from Asia (Miller et al., 2001: 64). During the 2002 World Cup, viewing rates in Asia skyrocketed due to the close geographic proximity. The interest inside of the host countries was immense: more than 14 million people, or 56 per cent of the potential audience in South Korea, tuned in to watch the first game of their national team against Poland. In Japan, 66.1 per cent of the television audience watched Japan’s 1–0 victory over Russia, thereby setting a Japanese record for a football match and the second highest for any sports event. According to a global comparison by Nielsen Media research, Thailand took the top spot among countries with a combined total of 269 million World Cup viewers for the entire 2002 tournament, narrowly
beating South Korea (266 million viewers) and China (263 million viewers) for the largest total audience for all World Cup matches in a single country.²

The connection between Asian football and the global cultural economy industry is much older, since the region’s capital, inter-corporate networks and marketing know-how have always been at centre stage of the commercialisation of world sport. Japan’s largest advertisement agency Dentsu helped FIFA and the International Olympic Committee in selling their exclusive partnership programmes to their sponsors. Japanese corporations, JVC, Canon, Fuji Film and Sony, but also Korean corporations like Samsung and Hyundai as well as Chinese Lenovo and others have been among FIFA’s corporate partners with all rights to use the FIFA emblems.

**Player and manager migration**

Foreign capital and global media awareness were not the only external contributions to the rising popularity of football. South American talent as well as European football expertise and American marketing intelligence helped to inaugurate professional football leagues in Japan and China in the 1990s. The American influence was most clearly seen in marketing and the packaging strategy. In terms of football assistance, well-known, albeit sometimes rather aged, football icons such as Gary Lineker and Zico in Japan and Didier Drogba in China were hired to strengthen the league and to improve the quality of the game. Korea had experienced professionalisation already a decade earlier, yet the K-League also relied heavily on foreign players and coaches, since the ban on foreign players was lifted in 1984. China and Japan allowed each club to list three foreigners, while Korean clubs could hire up to four foreigners (plus one from an AFC country). Around 150 foreigners were playing for clubs in the East Asian leagues in the 2000s. In contrast, only a few East Asian players made their debut in overseas leagues. Compared to the 250 Brazilians and nearly 500 foreign players that performed in the J.League during its first decade, only about 100 Japanese footballers in total had gone abroad since the early 1970s, and just a minor fraction made their way into the regular line-up of European clubs (Horne and Takahashi, 2004).

Generating systematic income from buying East Asian players was a common business plan in the 2000s, as the European managers counted on the growing interest in the club, spurred by contracting local players, and new opportunities for club merchandise sales, television deals and sponsorships. In Japan, SkyPerfecTV began showing league games from Belgium and the Netherlands, featuring national team members from Japan. Feyenoord acquired sponsorship from Japan’s leading mobile telecommunication company NTT DoCoMo, and the Japanese industrial equipment manufacturer Nitto supported Racing Genk. Similarly, Everton FC secured a million-pound deal for shirt advertising with Chinese mobile telephone manufacturer Kejian when China’s player of the year in 2002, Lin Tie, was loaned to the club. The attraction of the East Asian market has also drawn the attention of Europe’s big clubs such as Manchester United and Real Madrid. Instead of hiring players alone, they regularly go on promotional tours through the region and run special merchandising shops. Real Madrid shirt sales in Japan alone were reported to have covered about 25 per cent of the transfer fee following David Beckham’s move to the Spanish club and the following promotional tour. The combined interest in clubs with players from East Asia and those with global marketing potential has also enabled UEFA to treble its revenues from Champion’s League TV revenues.
Football in Asia is still struggling with problems from the past and the demands of adjusting to market principles. The strong role of the state is one common notion that characterises the recent past of professional football in East Asia, although the degree of state intervention differs considerably. Forging football as a national project has led to three phenomena commonly observed in China, Japan and Korea: first, interest in the national team is generally higher than in domestic club football; second, the marketisation of football remains underdeveloped; and, third, while women’s football is much more successful than men’s football in international comparison, the men’s game receives comparatively more in terms of public support, popular interest, broadcasting time and sponsorship income.

The professionalisation of football has relied upon a number of social and economic transformations that have heightened the attraction of the sport both for investors as well as for audiences. While the respective framework was set by the Japanese state much earlier than the actual instalment of the J.League, Korea and China have experienced their respective development of capitalist market structures only since the 1980s. Yet even before the first professional league was founded in Korea in 1983, football was played at a semi-professional level throughout the entire region. As in most other Asian countries, club ownership was mainly executed by large corporations, regional governments or the army. These corporate teams played like professional ones, as the players, who were all regular employees of their respective organisations, in reality played football exclusively. More or less all of the clubs that later turned professional were recruited from these former corporate amateur teams. In Korea and China, official team names nowadays openly pronounce the relation to corporate sponsorship. In China the volatility of sponsorship has constantly forced clubs to change those parts of their names that identify corporate support. In the South Korean K-League Jeonbuk Hyundai Motors and Suwon Samsung Blue Wings clearly express first the regional affiliation to Jeonbuk and Suwon followed by their corporate sponsor, which is not necessarily identical with the sponsor of the previous season or the original owner company. The relationship with the company is even more apparent in the K2 League, established in 2003. Busan Transportation Corporation, Goyang Kookmin Bank and Ulsan Mipo Dockyard all had to contend with a visit from and to Daejeon Hydro and Nuclear Power (Lee, 2002). In contrast, J.League clubs in Japan were forced to suppress their main sponsor’s name from the beginning in 1993. Hence Nagoya Grampus Eight or Urawa Reds signify the home location, while the important role of their main sponsors and previous owners Toyota and Mitsubishi is a public secret.

Compared to European football, the dependency on sponsorship revenue in East Asian football is very high, particularly due to the smaller share of TV income. Broadcasting revenues remain underdeveloped due to the harsh competition with other spectator sports, the foreign leagues and the centralised bargaining system of the leagues, which inhibits the marketing power of the more successful clubs. While the appearance of the national team on the TV screen regularly produces record audiences, matches of the domestic leagues yield only moderate or even despairing audience ratings. The scope of live audiences also reflects the difference in collective interest. For example, an average K-League match attracts fewer than 10,000 spectators per stadium, while hundreds of thousands of Koreans followed the national team during the World Cup, either in the arenas or at one of about 2,000 makeshift large screens throughout the country. Public viewing was actively promoted by national and municipal governments who set up the screens and paid the broadcasting fees to FIFA. In Japan and China especially, the economic costs of travelling and the huge geographic distances severely limit the potentials of fans travelling with their team. Live audiences differ considerably according to the
popularity of a team, ranging from records in both countries of more than 50,000 to merely a 1,000 (in China) or up to 6,000 spectators. Over the season, match averages in the J.League come close to 20,000. Audiences decrease the longer a season lasts. While the Chinese downward trend may be explained on the basis of fans feeling cheated by bribed referees or players (the so-called ‘black whistle’ incidents), the Japanese attendance curve probably drops due to increasing competition with alternative sports events at the end of the season.

Prior to the inauguration of professional leagues, football in East Asia was governed by a highly centralised and bureaucratised sport administration, notwithstanding the political system. In democratic Japan, the Japan Football Association, formally an independent organisation, relied heavily on government subsidies and closely followed the directives it received from the ministry in charge of sport affairs. In communist China, football has been part of a state-organised, government-funded and centrally controlled Soviet-type sport system, and in authoritarian Korea, the government adopted a corporatist administrative system, where authority over football was shared by the political, business and football elites. As governments and their agents are likely to adopt a favourable policy towards football when there is a need for the political elite to use it for mass support, in all instances the national team received preferred treatment. As the results on the international level hardly corresponded with the efforts, governmental organisations either induced or at least supported the way towards professionalisation. In post-authoritarian Korea, the Korean Football Association (KFA) continues to act as an agent of government in the management of government programmes from which in exchange it receives considerable administrative and revenue support. Therefore, the KFA is usually headed by influential figures from the world of politics or business (Chung, 2004). Furthermore, the government subsidises the national team by direct payments and diverse financial incentives for the players. Football players are exempted from the ordinary duty of military service, and international achievements bring in points towards entitlement to a national pension.

A similar state of government involvement characterises China, where football struggled to develop even after the government followed the Soviet Union’s example of turning to the international sport arena as a key instrument for promoting national pride and identity. Sport-related investments by the Chinese state that showed a 200 per cent increase over the 1980s, failed to leave positive marks in the field of football. Determined to succeed, even if that meant painful reforms and compromises, the Chinese government’s own sport commission propelled the establishment of a professional league. The commercial knowledge was bought from the International Marketing Group (IMG), a world leader in sport promotion, who also sourced sponsors for the leagues (Jones, 1999). Yet football remained stuck between the market forces that control the clubs, and government that controls the game. Ongoing scandals gave the CFA few reasons to celebrate its 80th anniversary in 2004. Refereeing controversies, player boycotts, walk-offs from the pitch halfway through the game, together with rumours of match-fixing and corruption have continued to tax the most ardent supporters’ patience.

_Same game, different sex, different game?_

Results of state intervention were more noteworthy in Chinese women’s football: seven Asian championships, a World Cup, three champion titles at the Asian Games, FIFA vice world champion in 1996 and many more records make China’s female footballers ‘Number One’ in the region. But international success does not easily translate into popularity at home where the lack of national or regional football programmes for state schools, that in general do not educate girls in football, as well as the scarcity of football resources for female youths are major
problems hampering the progress of women’s football. About ten officially recognised girls’
football schools do not receive public funding but have to rely on private sponsorship and
parental contributions. Hence more than 1,000 boys, but only 30 girls, were enrolled at the
football school in Qinghuangdao, the biggest of its kind in the 2000s (Hong, 2003: 8;
Manzenreiter, 2004a).

Looking at Japan’s junior and senior high schools where football has come to be the most
popular sport of the students, only 20 girls’ teams were counted in 1997, compared with a
total of 7,000 boys’ clubs. These numbers contrast with the fact that Japan was the first
country in the East Asian region with a women’s football league. The league, made up of
company and university teams, started out with two regional divisions (western and eastern
Japan) in the mid 1970s. In the midst of the expansion of registered teams and players, the
Japanese Women’s Football League started up in 1989 with the financial support of several
large companies. By 1994, it was renamed the L-League, with more company-based teams
joining the league. Despite the cutbacks in subsidies for sport-related and other social expenses
during the recessive ‘lost decade’ of the 1990s, the L-League managed to expand further to
13 teams in 2003. As the first of its kind worldwide, the L-League managed to draw foreign
players to Japan just as the J.League did. It also exported its own football talents, for example
Sawa Homare, to the WUSA, America’s women’s football league. Although the L-League
has been no commercial success – matches rarely attracted more than 1,000 spectators, with
averages hovering around approximately 400 spectators per game, which were usually free of
charge – the women’s national team has made it to all the World Cups and eventually won
the world championship title in 2011 and gained a silver medal at the 2012 Summer Olympic
Games (Manzenreiter, 2004a).

In regional perspective, the development of women’s football in South Korea has lagged
behind developments in the other two countries. College and university students were the first
teams that competed against each other in the Queen’s Cup launched in 1993. Korea could
even obtain respectable fourth places at the 1995 and 2001 Asian Cups. When the 1999
Women’s World Cup sparked interest worldwide, the Korean ministry in charge of sports
added women’s football to the programme of the Annual National Sports Event (1999), and
sponsored the foundation of new teams and tournaments for girls’ high school teams, university
teams and company teams. To promote women’s football, the Women’s Football Association
was established in 2001 as an independent organisation in association with the KFA. Yet the
KFA homepage recorded in the 2000s only 1,500 female players in 75 teams that cover the
entire spectrum between elementary and high school, and university and company teams.

Women’s football in East Asia has clearly shown some advances, yet in no way that it might
either be comparable to the men’s game or in line with the principle of gender equality. The
apparent contradiction, arising from the low status of women’s football and the success on the
international pitch, is partially explained by the observation that football is much more than any
other sport the game in which the nation state displays itself to an international audience. Yet
this is primarily true for the men’s game, while the women’s teams are compelled to make ends
meet without balanced media representation and adequate support from the national and
international football organisations. Although the male appropriation of football in Asia is not
so deeply rooted in history and collective memories as in Europe, it nevertheless seems that also
on East Asian fields it is not a woman’s place to represent the nation.
Football in the city

Strong state involvement in sport has been explained with reference to the symbolic role of football in postcolonial relationships and to different degrees of the nation state in crisis. Whereas the strong state in China commands resources to protect and to promote national interests, Japan and Korea have both seen how the devastating impacts of neo-liberal globalisation on their national economies dwarfed central state power. As a consequence, city governments have started increasing competition for private investments into the local infrastructure and amenity values in order to attract business investors, jobs and residents for the ultimate purpose of generating new streams of revenue. Investments into sport facilities and sport events captured a central position in the consumption-based economic development politics of late capitalist society. In Japan, the introduction of professional football has been utilised as a prime mover for regional development. Municipal governments were drawn into public–private partnerships with football teams by the prospect of economic restructuring policies and the fostering of local identities as a counter-weapon against urban concentration and rural migration (Manzenreiter, 2004b). In 2013, the J.League consisted of 18 teams in the first division and 22 in the second division, and the regional spread of hometowns covers all the major islands and some peripheral regions. While most of the first division clubs are located in the area with the highest population density and economic power, the hometown principle seems to have taken roots.

In Korea, too, the government has for some time been investing public money in the construction of municipal sport facilities to provide regional cities with revenue support (Chung, 2004: 123). Over the past 20 years, the K-League has expanded from its original five to 14 teams. In addition, a second division, the K-League Challenge is operated with eight teams. Because of the high dependency on main sponsors, clubs have been traditionally associated with the effective owner company rather than with the home city. As the K-League adopted the American franchise model, teams were occasionally relocated in order to avoid over-concentration in the area around the capital of Seoul and to maximise monopolist revenues in their own reference space. Yet since the late 1990s, K-League clubs have been gradually detaching from the large companies to integrate more deeply into their cities. The construction of Korea’s ten World Cup stadiums corresponded with the geographical hierarchy of Korean cities as well as the future needs of the K-League. Cities with the largest population size were equipped with the football facilities, but since only five were already home to a professional team, the K-League oversaw the establishment of two new teams in 2003 and the relocation of Anyang LG Cheetahs to become the capital city’s FC Seoul in 2004 (Ravenel and Durand, 2004: 29–35).

Largely due to the influence of the centralised sport system, intercity competition in China has not featured the same promotional effects as in the liberal market economies of Japan and Korea. Gains in autonomy from the former national sport bureaucracy were offset by the increasing dependency from non-governmental funding and the centralised redistribution structure of the league. Even after the league reform that eliminated the former divisions A and B and brought the size of the new China Super League to 16 teams, most of the income brought in by TV broadcast sales and league sponsorship is kept by the CFA. The remaining funds that are channelled to the clubs according to their performance over the season cannot cover expenses but have a negative impact enhancing the potential for bribery and corruption. Hence football in China is partly subjected to market forces, but the administrative power embedded in the CFA and its associated sport industry watchdog, does not want market forces to dominate, as these might dampen efforts to mobilise sports resources for national success.
Football has come to stay

In each of the three societies under the spotlight responses to the challenges of globalisation have been diverse, as indigenisation, reinvention of tradition and creolisation have all taken place in football in various forms. In the case of professional football in Japan, for example, indigenisation involved the special allowance by FIFA at the beginning of the J.League which meant that the result of matches was resolved by ‘golden goals’, tradition (of the most popular team sport in Japan, baseball) was reinvented by the division of the J.League season into two halves, with a play-off match to resolve the final overall champion team, and creolisation occurred through the explicit drawing upon of both North American and European models of professional sport in the construction of the organisational framework of the J.League (for some theoretical considerations of these processes see Horne and Manzenreiter, 2004). Due to the mediatisation of sport and the sportification of the media, globalisation provides football supporters in East Asia with all the icons, brand names and products of the global cultural economy. The socio-economic changes giving rise to entrepreneurial initiatives, cultural and service markets, leisure industries and consumer capitalism, provided the foundations on which football could be priced and sold as a commodity. The increasing dematerialisation of the commodity form as well as the concomitant growth of ‘experiential commodities’ reflect a general economic ‘move to make the various opportunities and moments of consumption’ more flexible and fluid (Lee, 1993: 135–7). Ultimately, the fans’ capability and willingness to spend on football and those consumer products advertised through the game have provided the economic base for professional football. The state has been willing to underwrite the risks for capital of moving into the field of football (Horne and Manzenreiter, 2004: 7). Without these pillars, professional football would not have gone East and would not have reached its current significance for many of those living in the region. Football has gone East to stay.

Notes

2 Data according to Nielsen Media Research and FIFA Marketing available online at www.nielsenmedia.com/newsreleases/2002/WorldCup_Final.htm and www.fifa.com/en/marketing/newmedia/index/0,3509,10,00.html (last accessed 14 September 2006).

References


