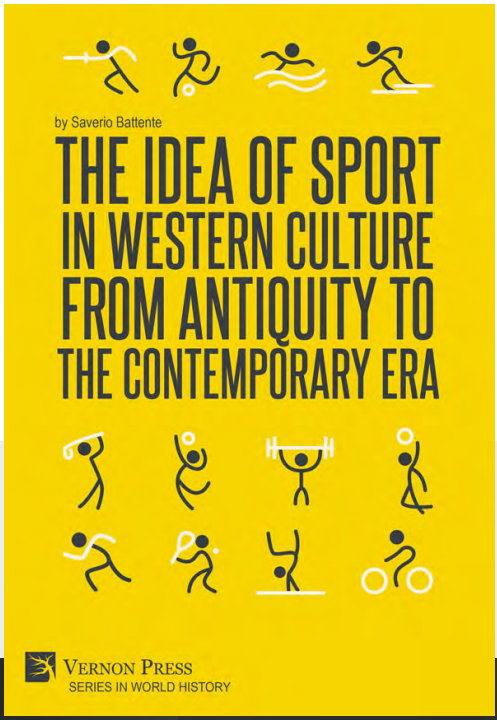
Saverio Battente

The Idea of Sport in Western Culture from Antiquity to the Contemporary Era

SERIES IN WORLD HISTORY

About the author

Saverio Battente is a researcher at the University of Siena, Italy. He deals with the history of the process of nation/state building in Italy and nationalism, as well as the history of sport. He has published three books: "Storia sociale della pallacanestro in Italia," "Sport e società nell'Italia del Novecento," and "Cento Volte il Giro d'Italia," along with numerous articles in journals and multi-author volumes.



Summary

In "The Idea of Sport in Western Culture from Antiquity to the Contemporary Era," Dr Saverio Battente examines the concept of sport as an element of Western culture. Sport has aided in structuring the collective identities that underpin individual civilisations in the West, and, far from being a merely marginal phenomenon, it has in fact been an essential feature of Western civilisation and culture from antiquity, in its various forms.

The starting point of the book is the idea that there is a certain number of universal traits—unchanged across time and different cultures—underlying all sports, even if there are a series of entirely original elements with which sport has been linked over the centuries in specific civilizations. This volume thus makes a comparative analysis of the ancient, modern, and contemporary worlds and various national contexts; longues durées (whose presence transcends anthropological and cultural barriers), divergences, and discontinuities pertaining to the concept of sport are identified and explored.

The book also looks at the link between the rise of civilisation and the educational and training function of sport, as well as the connection between a culture's decline and a growing emphasis on sport as an element of entertainment and spectacle in and of itself.

September 2020 | Hardback 236x160mm | 194 Pages | ISBN: 978-1-62273-938-7

SUBJECTS Cultural Studies, Sociology, History

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