

# Sport and Identity in Tunisia

Daisuke Sato

Japan Overseas Cooperative Association  
B-101 2-33-7 Tsukushino, Machida, Tokyo 194-0001 Japan  
sato.suke@nifty.com

[Received August 31, 2004 ; Accepted September 24, 2004]

**Under the rule of the Cheikhs, before Tunisia became a French colony, such traditional sports as El Koura and El'Efga took place at the village community level, but after the introduction of modern sports in accordance with French colonial policy, their existence was threatened. On the other hand, modern sports, particularly football, spread rapidly as the only opportunity for the colonized Tunisians to oppose the western European nations, especially France. As a result of the introduction of modern sports, national organizations were born, crossing regional boundaries; this contributed to a consciousness of being "Tunisian," that is, to the formation of national identity. It can even be thought that it influenced the later independence movement. After independence from France, the regime of President Habib Bourguiba introduced policies of modernization and centralization, as well as a modern educational system, in the process of forming a national state, and traditional sports, which included many magical elements, were thrown out as being pre-modern and backward, along with religious cultures peculiar to Tunisia, such as worship of the saints and Sufism. Modern sports, however, came to be positioned as having the function of forming national identity in the international sphere: that is, forming a national identity in awareness of the nation as a part of the international community. However, in 1987, under the new regime of President Ben Ali, a new policy of creating national identity was created, rooted in a unique traditional culture modeled on a pre-Islamic culture.**

**Keywords:** Identity, Sport, Tunisia

[International Journal of Sport and Health Science Vol.3, 27-34, 2005]

## 1. Area of Study

Tunisia is a North African nation, facing north on the Mediterranean Sea. It gained independence from France in 1956. It is a region that has been home to many peoples and cultures from ancient times, and this fact is reflected in its sports.

This research takes up the country's sports, past and present, discussing them in relationship to identity.

To deal with these issues, it will roughly divide Tunisian history into the following periods: pre-French colonial period, French colonial period, the Tunisian Republic under President Habib Bourguiba and the Republic under President Ben Ali, considering sports from the point of view of identity

in each of these periods.

Study of Tunisian sports culture to date has been limited to collecting materials on traditional entertainments and sports by Tunisian researchers or religious study, so that there have been no studies such as this one with the aim of dealing with identity<sup>1</sup>.

The author of this paper spent the years 1995-1998 and 1999-2002 in Tunisia conducting local fieldwork. When supporting notes are lacking, data are based on the author's fieldwork.

## 2. History and Culture of Tunisia

According to tradition, Tunisian history dates back to the ninth century B.C. In 814 B.C., Queen Elissa Didion of Tyre, on the east coast of the Mediterranean

<sup>1</sup> See Abderrahman Ayoub, 100 Jeux traditionnels du sud de la Tunisie, Jeu et Sports en Mediterranee pp13-51, Alif-Editions de la Mediterranee 1991. Ezzeddine BOUZID, Etude des jeux et des sports de deux periodes de l'histoire tunisienne, Jeux, Sports et Societes pp35-53, CERDOJES, 2000.

(now Lebanon), fled across the Mediterranean Sea by ship as a result of strife in the palace and drifted to the site of Carthage, founding Qart Hadasht (meaning "new capital" in Phoenician, the tongue from which Carthaginian developed). The queen requested from the ruler of Carthage only as much land as could be enclosed by a single cowhide, and this was granted. This is said to be the Hill of Byrssa, which lies in the heart of contemporary Carthage. Later Carthage developed into a maritime nation with improvements in navigation techniques, and, as is well known, finally ruled the Mediterranean Sea. It produced the great general Hannibal and the agricultural scholar Magon, eventually exerting great influence on Europe in both infantry strategy and agricultural technology.

After its defeat by the Romans in the Punic Wars, which began in 264 B.C., it lost its dominion over the Mediterranean to the Roman Empire, and Carthage was utterly destroyed in 146 B.C. in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Punic War.

Thereafter Carthage became a Roman province, and the fertility of its soil made it a granary for the Romans. We are able to see a picture of Tunisia in the time of the Romans in mosaics in Roman ruins, such as chariot races and gladiatorial contests in the Circus, but of the life of the native Berbers, whose presence predates even the founding of Carthage, and who preserved their ancient culture, we can find no trace in the mosaics.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, Carthage was subjugated by Germanic tribes, and thereafter ruled successively by the Byzantines (6<sup>th</sup> century), the Arabs (7<sup>th</sup> century), Spain (16<sup>th</sup> century), the Ottoman Turks (16<sup>th</sup> century) and France (19<sup>th</sup> century), resulting in a great mixture of cultures. The penetration of the Arab people in particular, beginning in the 7<sup>th</sup> century, greatly influenced all regions of Tunisia, and together with the Arabization of the land, Islamization also progressed. Of the present-day 9.5 million people of Tunisia, 96% are Islamic Arabs, and the constitution makes Arabic the official language and Islam the official religion. Native Berbers make up less than 2%. In addition, of some 55,000 Jews who dwelled there until independence from France, nearly all have

fled the country. Some 2000 still live in the Isle of Djerba, in the south of Tunisia. Their numbers are so small that they cause little cultural or political friction.

Following independence from France in 1956, the hero of independence, Habib Bourguiba, was inaugurated as the first President, and policies liberal for an Islamic nation were instituted, such as progressive educational policies, freedom for women and family planning. As a result, the present Tunisian birth rate is in the 1.2% range and elementary-school enrollment is nearly 100%, equal to any advanced nation.

In 1987, the present leader, President Ben Ali, took power from the aging President Bourguiba in a so-called "bloodless coup." Basically continuing the former president's policies, while limiting free expression and introducing hard-line policies that have at times drawn criticism from the west as being undemocratic, he has also introduced a multi-party system and undertaken friendly relations with both the West and Arab nations, promoted moderate Islam and policies toward the poor, combining tough and moderate policies, and though surrounded by such unstable states as Algeria and Libya, he has achieved political stability and continued economic growth<sup>2</sup>.

### 3. Sports and Identity in the pre-Colonial Period

The introduction of modern sports such as football and track and field occurred with its colonization by France, that is, since 1883. What kinds of sports were there in Tunisia before this time?

Eloumi Ali has recorded and analyzed 120 different games and sports in the pre-colonial period<sup>3</sup>. The most important of these are Jeu de crosse and Qalif.

Jeu de crosse is a game resembling hockey in which two men with sticks battle each other. One player tries to use the stick to put a ball into a hole in the ground, and the other player tries to prevent him. Whenever a goal is scored, the attacker and defender exchange roles.

Qalif is more like football. Several players kick

2 See the following papers for Tunisian history and culture: La Tunisie, Andre Raymond et Jean Poncet, Que sais-je, 1977. Histoire Ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord, Albert Ayache, Editions Sociales, 1964. Les trois decennies Bourguiba, Tahar Belkhouja, Arcanteres Publisud, 1983.

3 ELLOUMI Ali, Jeux, Sports et Societes Actes du colloque Tuniso-francais pp121-144, CERDOJES, 2000.

a ball and try to kick it into a goal defended by a keeper. Those who score are withdrawn from the game, and the player left at the end is not allowed to participate in the next game. Finally, the one who remains is the winner.

In "Ethnography of physical exercise in pre-colonial Tunisia," Borhane Errais mentions El Koura (a game like football in which two teams try to kick a ball into a goal), El' Egfa (a game like hockey using wooden sticks. However, the aim is not a goal but one's coat), and La Rekla (a game in which competitors kick each other, resembling the French game Savate) in regard to the people's exercise culture in pre-colonial Tunisia during the Ottoman rule<sup>4</sup>.

Furthermore, Elloumi Ali points out as features of pre-colonial Tunisian games, exclusivity (sports took place at the village level, outsiders did not participate), instability (rules not standardized), imbalance (number of team members not equal), game area and gear not standardized and lack of judging<sup>5</sup>.

How were these sports conducted?

According to studies to date on the rule of the Ottoman Turks, the Bey, to whom the Sultan had entrusted rule, named Caids (80, as of 1881) to run regional government, who were in turn supported by a network of Cheiks, who were the traditional leaders of their respective localities. Within the area governed by the Cheiks were several villages, where daily life unfolded in common ownership of religious schools and shrines, etc.<sup>6</sup>.

Therefore, Elloumi Ali concludes from the expression "exclusive" that sports in this period developed at the village level under the Cheiks, and that the identity thus formed also ended at the village level. As a reason for the village unit, he brings up the fact that sports were conducted with an almost entirely ceremonial meaning at the village level<sup>7</sup>.

#### 4. Sports Identity during the French Colonial Period

Tunisia became a French colony in 1883. However, they retained the previous Bey, Caid and Cheik system, making the smallest unit of government the Cheikhat, adding the Commune as a new unit encompassing multiple Cheikhats, with multiple Communes bundled into the Caidat, retaining the Bey name for the governor.

Modern sports were introduced under the auspices of the "Youth Sports Department." In point of fact, there were many French people doing business in Tunisia before it became a colony, and the French population played football, but for the average Tunisian, contact with modern sports occurred only after colonization, when they were introduced in schools and regional sports clubs. Football and handball were programs carried out at the decision of the central government, and standardized sports were introduced. As a result, several Tunisian sports organizations were born.

With the introduction of standardized sports, inter-regional contests became possible, in contrast to the old Tunisian traditional games. In other words, the creation of sports organizations made intertribal competition possible in all Tunisia. Competition with foreign teams (primarily French) also became possible, and fighting against foreigners began in a form other than war. Thus a vital moment was born in the budding of national identity among the Tunisian people.

For example, in 1917, the first football club of Tunisians, Esperance Sportive de Tunis, applied for registration with the government, but the French administration deemed it too dangerous and denied permission. The following year, application was made again, and in 1919, permission was granted. Thereafter, Club Africain and other Tunisian clubs were added, until by 1921, there were 43 teams, and a football league, La ligue Tunisienne, was instituted. This league joined the French football alliance, and the league commissioner was to be non-Islamic. In 1928, a Tunisian all-star team was defeated by the

4 Borhane. ERRAIS; BEN LARBI, *Ethnographie des pratiques corporelles dans la Tunisie precoloniales*, Cahiers de la Meditteranee, n32, P3-13, Juin 1986.

5 ELLOUMI Ali, *Jeux, Sports et Societes Actes du colloque Tuniso-francais* pp121-144, CERDOJES, 2000.

6 Seiko Sugita, "Contemporary Mid-East Nations and Regions (I) (Gendai chuto no kokka to chiho [I]) pp29-54, *The Japan Institute of International Affairs*, 2001.

7 Daisuke Sato, *Sports Anthropology Studies (Supplement)* pp25-36, Japanese Sports Anthropology Association, 1999.

French B team 2 games to 3.

Many North Africans under French rule died in WWI (1914-1918). 260,000 Tunisians, Algerians and Moroccans were drafted by the French, and it is said that some 80,000 of them died in the war. After the war, independence movements sprang up all across North Africa, and they were met by violent French suppression. In Tunisia, in 1920, the Liberal Constitutional Party (later Parti Destour) was formed, but the movement was neutralized by French government reform.

In 1934, the future Tunisian President Habib Bourguiba formed the Parti Neo-Destour, with a platform of immediate democracy, against a background of young Tunisian intellectuals demanding independence from France. In 1946 the party inaugurated the "Islamic Football League" in cooperation with several football clubs, but the French government refused to recognize them. However, through negotiations, the league leadership was reorganized, with 5 French members and 5 Tunisians, and this system continued for some time. But league operating policies were decided by the French Football Association, and Tunisian demands were dismissed. Here, too, it could be seen that the French were aware of the depth of the relationship between the independence movement and football associations.

In any case, the one place where 20<sup>th</sup> century Tunisians could fight against the ruling French under the same rules was on the pitch. The repetition of this experience on a daily basis must have contributed in a meaningful way to the later Tunisian independence movement. As proof of this, witness the fact that the French reacted violently to the idea of a league operated by Tunisians and sometimes even involved the government. An intertribal, national association such as a football league must be evaluated as having contributed to Tunisian identity and as underlying the formation of a nation of Tunisians.

Football, which included youths from all levels, was deeply involved in the Tunisian independence movement, as summed up by Kato: "In contrast to Algeria, also under strong French rule, in Tunisia, the

populist movement was not carried out by military power; the center of the movement was based on moderate constitutionalism. First and foremost, it developed as a cultural movement aimed at awakening a consciousness as a people among the people, bringing new thinking through organized cultural circles such as alumni associations, academic and sports associations as matrices, debating associations, lectures and publications"<sup>8</sup>.

In regard to Morocco, which resembles Tunisia in many ways, geographically, demographically and culturally, Kaach Mohammed sums it up by saying that as a case it is not exactly the same as Tunisia, but similar trends can be identified. Morocco became a French colony in 1912, but in 1913, 7 sports clubs, beginning with Casablanca and Rabat, were founded, and by 1920 there was at least one club in every major city. They were modern sports, including football, rugby, boxing, track and field, swimming, tennis and archery. Schooling began in 1913, and in 1919, the army introduced physical exercise into the school system. At the time, only a few privileged Moroccans could join sports clubs, but by their participation in modern sports, such sports were introduced to ordinary Moroccans, and through sports, they gained access to western European thought and technology. At first, sports clubs were limited to the big cities of Casablanca, Rabat and Fez, but football in particular aroused great interest among Moroccans on occasions such as the Moroccan team facing off against the ruling French, so that interest in modern sports in preference to traditional sports grew rapidly. Thus instead of the original French idea of creating elite soldiers, the young Moroccan elite came in contact with democracy through modern sports, began to harbor opposition to French colonial policy and developed the anti-colonial movement<sup>9</sup>.

Also, in regard to Algeria, which underwent a far more stringent rule as a colony than Tunisia or Morocco, Benjamin Stora argues that there is a connection between football and the Algerian independence movement, stating, "After WWI, football became the most popular sport in Algeria. Children would play football in the streets after

---

<sup>8</sup> Tsugutaka Kato, ed., *History of Western Asia I*, pp445-447, Yamakawa Press, 2002.

<sup>9</sup> Kaach Mohammed, *Ethnographie des pratiques corporelles dans la Tunisie precoloniales*, Cahiers de la Mediteranee n32, P21-35, Juin 1986.

school, but until 1936 all football clubs in Algeria had to be organized under the French, and the number of native players (Algerians) was limited to 5 per team. Furthermore, in 1943, when some Algerian players wore black uniforms in protest against the French government after the arrest of some Algerian independence leaders, the French government reacted strongly, adopting measures banning the appellation of musulman from Algerian sports teams"<sup>10</sup>. Independence trends were strengthened through football, and it is clear that the French government feared the formation of national identity.

### **5. Creation of National Identity through Modern Sports in the Republic of Tunisia under the Rule of President Bourguiba**

The movement demanding independence from France spearheaded by the Parti Neo-destour under Habib Bourguiba grew rapidly, and on 20 March 1956 Tunisia gained independence. Bourguiba was sworn in as Tunisia's first president.

Bourguiba pursued a policy of modernization on several fronts after independence. Structural reform dissolved the old Bey-Caid-Cheik system, and the country was divided into 13 prefectures, furthering centralization of power. In a new constitution that took effect on 1 June 1959, even though the first article stipulates that Islam is the national religion, religious affairs are placed under the Interior Ministry, with no Bureau of Religion, and in the process of adopting policy, there have been successive reforms separating religion from the state.

In sports, which are under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Sport, various competitive organizations have been established, and centralization is well established. Also, much effort has been made on education and promotion. Only days after independence was declared, the Tunisian Football League, which had belonged to the French Football Association, was dissolved, and in March of the following year the Tunisian Football Association was newly established. In 1962, this Association joined

FIFA, and in 1978 it competed in the World Cup..

The Bourguiba regime consolidated religion as well as political power. In North Africa, the cult of the saints (Maraboutisme) and Sufism<sup>11</sup> have long been popular, and before independence, people who lived where there were no mosques would gather at Zaouia (shrines of saints) and Sufi training centers, so that interpretations of Islam or customs and the way of conducting rites varied by locality. These saints were not those named or chosen by a central authority but rather saints who had gained the veneration of the people by miracles, prophecies or fortune telling. Since these organizations venerating the saints or practicing Sufism wielded considerable local political power, the Bourguiba regime nationalized the assets of these holy congregations, building new mosques and employing Imams (religious guides) appointed by the central government to explain the scripture. Maraboutisme and Sufism feature magic and trances, fortune telling, superstition and the like, that is, "pre-modern" things, but for the Bourguiba regime, whose mission was modernization, westernization and centralization, such pre-modern phenomena could not help but be thought of as symbols of backwardness. Before the introduction of modern sports in Tunisia, such traditional sports as El Koura and El'Agfa were practiced, but these were practiced as rites of the original Berber people praying for rain or luxuriance, and they had deep connections to indigenous religious culture. Such traditional sports, surrounded by magical elements, were lumped in with the Maraboutisme and Sufism that the Bourguiba regime were trying to eradicate in their drive toward a rationalized modern educational system, and were discarded as pre-modern and anti-centralization, in favor of modern sports.

After independence, the most important tasks for Tunisia as a member of the international community were internal stability and improvement of the nation's international position, so that the most urgent duty was the establishment of "Tunisian consciousness vis-à-vis foreign nations" and "national identity to deal with internationalization."

10 Benjamin Stora, *JEU ET SPORTS EN MEDITERRANEE* pp143-153, Alif-Editions de la Mediterranee, 1991.

11 Sufism: Islamic mysticism. Similar in ideas to mysticism in other religions. The Sufi seeker is believed to grow closer to god through the practice of mystical training, and he lives a life of chastity, divorcing himself from the temptations of the world. The virtuous Sufi is venerated as a saint after death, in the belief that baraka (the grace of god) resides in his grave. *La Presse* 21, Septembre, 2001, Tunis.

It can be said in this respect that football was a perfect medium for transmitting a sense of national consciousness and the feeling that Tunisians are a part of the international community.

Sports guidance was conducted for local people as a part of healthy cultural activity by adding sports guidance to the school curriculum and in Maisons des Jeunes (Youth Centers) under the jurisdiction of the Sports Ministry. Also, western European-type sports clubs were established all over, and modern sports became popular. Through the spread of television and appearances on the international sports stage, modern sports became indispensable to the formation of the Tunisian people, and have played a major role in promoting and forming a national consciousness.

Centralization of power, westernization, and "top-down Islamization" based on government-led modernist interpretations of Islam, all promoted by the Bourguiba regime, were being pressed for correction by the 1980's.

The influence of Islamic fundamentalism, such as the defeat of the Arab alliance in the mid-east war, the Islamic revolution in Iran, the assassination of the hero of Arab nationalism, Gamal Abdel-Nasser, the Muslim Brothers, etc., in addition to the advance of fundamentalist Islamic parties and civil war in Algeria, were harbingers of an era of violent change.

Even in Tunisia, Islamic fundamentalism was on the rise. Added to the advanced age of the President, corruption in high places and economic policy failures, criticism of the system and anti-government movements grew sharper. President-for-life President Habib Bourguiba's political influence began to wane, until at last on 7 November 1987, then-Prime Minister Ben Ali was named as the new president.

## **6. Creation of National Identity through Sports under the Ben Ali Regime**

President Ben Ali at first adopted policies to cooperate politically with the growing fundamentalist Islamic power, but in the 1990's he turned 180 degrees toward policies to suppress them entirely. In 1992, many Islamic fundamentalists were arrested, and most of those opposing the government fled to Europe.

The Ben Ali regime appeared to be reasonable

toward religion, even promoting the Bureau of Religious Issues to the Ministry of Religion from its place under the Interior Ministry, and reopening religious instruction at EzZitouna (the Great Mosque), Tunisia's greatest religious school, which had been closed since soon after independence. Further, by permitting telecasting of Friday mosque sermons, for example, forbidden under the Bourguiba regime, developing more flexible and unified religious policies, and appearing on television actively attending the mosque at religious festivals such as Ramadan, he did not impart to the people the anti-Islamic appearance of the former President Bourguiba. In addition, he established the "National Solidarity Fund" as a policy toward the poor, who are the backbone of Islamic fundamentalism, and collected semi-compulsory contributions. The Ben Ali regime has carried out many projects for improvements in the lives of those in the most backward regions. On the other hand, he kept political movements in the mosques under thorough surveillance and strengthened the spread of government-sponsored moderate Islam, keeping check on fundamentalist power by such measures as watching and suppressing men who wear full beards by treating them as fundamentalists, for full beards are a sign of fundamentalist Islam. Furthermore, with the purpose of strengthening opposition to the doctrinaire monotheistic power of Islamic fundamentalist organizations, he has relaxed regulations on the activities of Maraboutisme and Sufism, which have polytheistic features, activities that were restricted under Bourguiba. Rather aggressively adopting policies to revive their holy festivals as government-sponsored local festivals (mahrajan), he is emphasizing the uniqueness of Tunisian culture.

The present government of Tunisia is sponsoring various cultural events with the purpose of promoting tourism and inspiring Tunisian culture. In addition to international music festivals that use the Roman ruins, such as the International Festival of Carthage and El Jem, the International Festival of Symphonic Music, he is introducing Berber music and folk dance at the International Festival of Sousse and Tabarka, the International Festival of Jazz. And at festivals in the desert town of Douz and the oasis of Tozeur,

in addition to Berber music and dance, the main events are camel races and Fantasia (horse riding competition).

Fantasia is a horse riding competition that is also to be seen in Morocco, occurring as an event at the Berber festival of Moussem. Males (on rare occasions, females, too) in native costume astride decorated horses lined up side-by-side, carrying pistols, together gallop their horses at full speed. After riding some 50-60 meters, they fire an empty round into the air and at the same time bring their horses to a sudden halt; the contest is in riding technique and bravery.

Also, at the Douz Festival, children play a hockey game that is thought to be a re-creation of El' Agfa<sup>12</sup>.

In November of 1989, the Mediterranean Sports Culture Society held a conference in Tunisia titled, "Games and Sports in the Mediterranean," in order to reevaluate traditional sports, and research results were published concerning traditional Tunisian games. Later, in May of 2000, an international symposium, "Games, Sports and Society," was held in the city of Tunis, with CERDOJES (Centre d'Etudes, de Recherche et de Documentation de la Jeunesse, de l'Enfance du Sport), an arm of the Tunisian Ministry of Youth Sports, at the center. The 2<sup>nd</sup> 3-day symposium was held in April of 2001, "Traditional Games and Modern Sports," in the southern city of Tataouine, where many Berbers live.

Furthermore, in the same city of Tataouine in 2000, the 7<sup>th</sup> "Traditional Sports Festival" was held, and, in addition to native music and the Traditional Sports Society, actual traditional sport contests were held (shooting and a hockey-like contest). The 4<sup>th</sup> time this festival was held, there were participants from 7 nations, including Morocco, Mauritania and Djibouti, so that even though the scale is small, it has developed an international flavor<sup>13</sup>.

The policies of the Ben Ali regime are neither Western European nor Islamic, but call on the Carthaginian period or pre-Islamic times. Proof of this can be seen in deliberate policies to reevaluate the Carthaginian general Hannibal. Reevaluation of Carthaginian culture in Classical studies, publications centering around Carthage and Hannibal, "Folk

Costume Days," when public officials are under orders to come to work in folk costume and the President himself appears on television in folk costume, all these policies are devised to prevent the people from excessive Islamic leanings and to build a moderate and international system of government. We are led to think that the reevaluation of Berber culture and Sufism, the promotion of tourism and all the cultural events that have been held are in this vein.

We can see that the Ben Ali regime has learned from the things that have made society less stable, such as the reaction to the Westernization and modernization policies of the Bourguiba regime and the growing influence in the Arab world of the radical Islamic movement, and has taken creative steps to build a national identity rooted in a unique Tunisian folk culture by reevaluating Carthaginian culture and reviving Berber culture.

The relationship between the Berbers and Sufism correlates to the relationship between agricultural rites and mysticism, and the reevaluation of Sufism goes hand in hand with the reevaluation of Berber culture. Berber culture was discarded as pre-modern and heretical by the Bourguiba regime, but under President Ben Ali there has been a trend toward reevaluating Sufism as a new medium for forming Tunisian national consciousness, and we can even say that Berber sports culture is being used in the same way as a national policy.

## 7. Conclusion

Traditional Tunisian sports before the French colonial period were confined to the intra-village level under the rule of the Cheiks, but their existence was threatened by the introduction of modern sports in accordance with French colonial policy. On the other hand, modern sports, particularly football, spread rapidly as the only opportunity to oppose the French and other European nations. Thus, as a result of the introduction of modern sports, national organizations cutting across tribal boundaries were born, such as football associations, and these contributed to a sense of belonging, that is, the formation of a national

12 La Presse 21, Septembre, 2001, Tunis.

13 Ammar LASSOUED, Jeux, Sports et Societes Actes du colloque Tuniso-francais pp261-267, CERDOJES, 2000.

identity, and in turn influenced the independence movement from France.

In the process of forming a nation under the regime of President Habib Bourguiba after independence, traditional sports, with their generous admixture of magical elements, were considered pre-modern and backward, and were discarded along with the unique Tunisian religious culture of Maraboutisme and Sufism. On the other hand, modern sports were positioned to function in the formation of a national consciousness, that is, a national identity as a member of international society, to deal with internationalization.

However, under President Ben Ali, this changed to a policy of creating a new national identity rooted in traditional culture modeled on pre-Islamic culture. In this political vein, traditional sports are also expected to play a role in building a new Tunisian identity.

## References

- Abderrahman, A. (1991), 100 Jeux traditionnels du sud de la Tunisie, Jeu et Sports en Mediterranee, Alif-Editions de la Mediterranee.
- Andre, R. & Jean, P. (1977), La Tunisie, Que sais-je.
- Ayache, A. (1964), Histoire Ancienne de l'Afrique du Nord, Editions Sociales.
- Belkhodja, T. (1983), Les trois decennies BOURGUIBA, Arcanteres Publisud.
- Benjamin, S. (2000), JEU ET SPORTS EN MEDITERRANEE, Alif-Editions de la Mediterranee.
- BOUZID, E. (2000), Etude des jeux et des sports de deux periodes de l'histoire tunisienne, Jeux, Sports et Societes, CERDOJES.
- Elloumi, A. (2000), Jeux, Sports et Societes Actes du colloque Tuniso-francais, CERDOJES.
- ERRAIS, B & LARBI, B. (1986), Ethnographie des pratiques corporelles dans la Tunisie precoloniales, Cahiers de la Mediteranee.
- Kaach, M. (1986), Ethnographie des pratiques corporelles dans la Tunisie precoloniales, Cahiers de la Mediteranee.
- LASSOUED, A. (2000), Jeux Sports et Societes Actes du colloque Tuniso-francais, CERDOJES.
- Sugita, S. (2001), The State and Regions of the Modern Middle East(1), The Japan Institute of International Affairs (in Japanese)
- Sato, D. (1999), Japan Journal of Sport Anthropology, Japan Society of Sport Anthropology (in Japanese)
- Sato, T. (2002), The History of West Asia, Yamakawa Publishing Company (in Japanese)



---

**Name:**  
Daisuke Sato

**Affiliation:**  
Japan Overseas Cooperative Association

**Address:**  
B-101 2-33-7 Tsukushino, Machida, Tokyo 194-0001 Japan

**Brief Biographical History:**  
1989-1991 MA Graduate Schools of Education, Niigata University  
1999-2002 Special Researcher of the Embassy of Japan in Tunisia

**Main Works:**  
• Jeu Traditionnel du Maghreb, Japan Journal of Sport Anthropology Vol.1 December, 1999

**Membership in Learned Societies:**  
• Japan Society of Sport Anthropology

---