



Resuscitation of Indigenous Games of Africa: Why and How the East African Universities Games Federation Must Take the Lead

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Abstract

Since early 1980s there has been an increasing awareness on the continued marginalization and cultural hegemony of the indigenous African games and sports by the so called 'modern games' brought to Africa from Asia, Europe and America within the last one century. Consequently, desperate words of caution on the need to resuscitate indigenous games of Africa have been documented. For instance, Nteere in 1982 raised this caution in his Master of Education thesis saying deliberate efforts must be made to save the indigenous games of Africa from eminent extinction. Additionally he managed to give a brief highlight of a few indigenous games and challenged scholars to urgently undertake comprehensive research on the same and document them. In the same spirit, Cheska and Van de Merwe & Bressan went a step further and gave

comprehensive documentation on West African and South African indigenous games in 1986 and 1999 respectively. In 1999, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) held the 3rd International Conference of Ministers and Senior Officials Responsible for Physical Education and Sport (MINEPS III) in Punta del Este, Uruguay, and a declaration was passed on the resuscitation of indigenous games of the world. The MINEPS III declaration aimed at preserving and promoting indigenous games as vital cultural heritage of the world. It was therefore agreed that regional festivals of indigenous games shall be started world over. Ever since, passionate decisions have been made during subsequent MINEPS meetings and other UNESCO fora on the need to hold indigenous games festivals as a hallmark of cultural identity through sports. Unfortunately, to date very little has happened towards this noble desire. Time has therefore come when members of the East African Universities Games Federation should understand and appreciate the challenge on the basis of the sportive objectives of the federation and they should do everything possible to ensure festivals on indigenous games of East Africa are held. As a matter of urgency, a special EAUGF committee comprised of like-minded resource persons needs to be established during this symposium to steer the process with the support of member universities and the relevant ministries in the East African Community member states. After these festivals have been started within the East African region by the universities, this trend shall easily spread to other regions of the African Continent. Certainly, this is the time to do it and the EAUGF must take the lead. This paper outlines the need for this action. The paper moves a notch higher by presenting ideas that may be used as a blue print (of course with or without amendments) towards this belated and very culturally enriching regional effort.

Key words: indigenous games, cultural identity through sports, MINEPS III