

EL MUNDO

Dreams of a United Korea Fade Despite Olympic Spirit

By CHOE SANG-HUN

SEOUL, South Korea — The last time South Korea hosted an Olympics, in 1988, the North not only refused to take part, it blew up a South Korean airliner 10 months before the Games. Yet South Koreans at the time expressed hope that the two Koreas, divided by the Cold War, could one day become a single nation again.

Now, as the South prepares to host its second Games, the Koreans are cooperating in unheard-of ways, including their first joint Olympic team, in women's ice hockey. But South Koreans, especially younger ones, are far less interested in reconciliation, or reunification.

Experts and recent surveys describe a profound shift in attitudes in South Korea, where reuniting the peninsula, and the Korean people, was long held as a sacrosanct goal. But younger South Koreans, in particular, are far more likely to see the idea of reintegrating their prosperous capitalist democracy with the impover-

ished, totalitarian North as unrealistic and undesirable.

"I personally wouldn't welcome reunification because it would create a burden for us, as we would have to help rebuild the North Korean economy," said Park Min-cheol, 22, a college student.

Young Koreans say they are more concerned about pressing domestic issues — like unemployment and whether they can live as well as their parents did — than the costly, complex and hypothetical task of reunifying with the North.

The reunification of Germany in 1990 serves to some as an example of how arduous, and expensive, rejoining two different societies can be, and the economic gap between the two Koreas today is much wider than it was between East and West Germany.

In polls, fewer respond to the old appeals to common ethnic heritage, much less the propagandistic calls for unity put forth by North Korea, whose 34-year-old dictator, Kim Jong-



JUNG YEON-JE/AGENCE FRANCE PRESSE — GETTY IMAGES

A fence near the Demilitarized Zone covered with ribbons calling for peace and unity for Korea.

un, they both ridicule and fear.

A survey last year by the government-run Korea Institute for National Unification in Seoul found that far more South Koreans in their 20s oppose reunification, 71.2 percent, than support it. Across the population, support has dropped to 57.8 percent from 69.3 percent just four years ago.

The skepticism was apparent recently when the two Koreas agreed to field a joint team in the Winter Games in the town of Pyeongchang, and to march together in the opening cere-

mony on February 9.

In the past, such gestures triggered waves of pro-unification sentiment, as in 2000, when North and South Korean athletes marched together at the Games in Sydney, Australia. The administration of President Moon Jae-in, a progressive who has long supported inter-Korean unity, hoped this latest rapprochement would create similarly warm feelings.

Instead, a survey found that over 72 percent of South Korean adults — and over 82 percent of those in their 20s and 30s —

were not enthusiastic about the hockey team. More than 54,000 people signed a petition opposing it. Many expressed anger that some South Korean players would cede their positions to North Koreans.

"I am taken aback," said Kim Sung-hwan, a former South Korean foreign minister. "Young people seem to think of North Korea as strangers who barge into their party bringing with them nothing but empty spoons."

Analysts said increasingly provocative nuclear and missile tests have darkened South Korean perceptions of the North and Mr. Kim, its leader. Mr. Kim's executions of his uncle and his half brother have also made the regime look brutal and grotesque.

Many South Korean conservatives tend to call for the South liberating the North from the Kim family's rule, by force if necessary.

They fear that if Mr. Kim thinks the threat of a nuclear strike on the United States will

keep the Americans from intervening, he may try to take over the South, the dream that his grandfather, Kim Il-sung, the North's founding leader, failed to achieve in the Korean War.

The horrors of the war, which killed millions, bound older South Koreans together. Many still grow teary-eyed when the rival governments allow groups of aging citizens to meet relatives from the other side after decades of separation.

In a town near the Olympic venues, Kang Hee-du, 54, a restaurant worker, wondered how the Koreans could possibly reunify when they have drifted so far apart, economically and ideologically. "It would be nothing but chaotic," he said.

But Choi Sang-hwan, 73, a retired auto-component maker, lamented the new attitude.

"Our generation knows how tragic war can be; it can take everything away," said Mr. Choi, who is also an Olympic volunteer. "It's our duty to let our future generations live peacefully in a unified Korea."



ANDREA BRUCE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES; BELOW, ANDREW RENNEISEN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

In Kenya, Replacing Ritual Cutting of Girls

By JINA MOORE

LENKISEM, Kenya — The first time cutting season came around, Nice Leng'ete and her older sister ran away and hid all night in a tree. The second time, her sister refused to hide.

For Maasai families, the cutting ceremony transforms girls into women and marks them as eligible brides. But to 8-year-old Nice, it seemed like a threat: She'd be held down by bigger women, and her clitoris would be cut. She'd bleed, a lot. Most girls fainted. Some died.

Still, her sister gave in. "I had tried to tell her, 'We are running for something that's worth it,'" recalled Ms. Leng'ete, now 27. "But I couldn't help her."

Ms. Leng'ete never forgot what her sister suffered, and as she grew up, she was determined to protect other Maasai girls. She started a program that goes village to village, collaborating with elders and girls to create a new rite of passage — without the cutting. In seven years, she has helped 15,000 girls avoid the cutting ritual.

Her work mirrors national — and global — trends. Rates of female genital cutting worldwide have fallen 14 percent in the last 30 years. Here in Kenya, cases have fallen more than twice that fast. Kenya outlawed female genital cutting in 2011, and a special unit for investigating cutting cases was opened in 2014. But laws made in the capital often have little effect in the countryside.

In Maasai country, male elders enforce the customs, and



Nice Leng'ete, left, convinced Maasai elders to end genital cutting. Top, girls dancing at an alternative ceremony.

the cut has long been one of the most important. The belief has been that women aren't women unless they are cut, which means men can't take them as wives. Christine Nanjala, who leads the unit that prosecutes cutting, said: "Some rural old men asked us, 'What will we call this woman who is all grown up, married, has children and is not circumcised?' They do not have a name for such a kind of woman."

Ms. Leng'ete's grandfather, her guardian, asked her, after her second escape, to explain herself. "When he realized I wanted to run away from him forever, he said: 'Let's leave her. When she wants to go, she will tell us,'" she remembered.

Her grandfather was an elder, so he couldn't be overruled. But the community

still ostracized her. "Families wouldn't let me play with their daughters," she said.

After the cutting ceremony, her sister was taken out of school and, at age 12, married off to an abusive, older man. Ms. Leng'ete, meanwhile, became the first girl in her village to go to high school, and she noticed that younger girls admired her uniform. She told them she had opportunities because she had refused the cut, and soon some turned up at her house, fleeing the ceremony.

Because she helped them, she had to hide — again. She changed her approach. She would bargain with the elders. Traditionally, women aren't allowed to address the elders. Ms. Leng'ete realized she had a chance after the elders sent her to a workshop on adolescent

and sexual health. She told the elders she had to share what she had learned. They gave her permission to address the younger men, but none of them listened to her.

She made such a nuisance of herself that the old men told the young ones to sit with her. But only three would talk with her. Gradually, more came, and the topics expanded — from H.I.V. prevention to teenage pregnancy, to early marriage and, finally, to the cut. Ms. Leng'ete convinced the young men that cutting wasn't good for the community, and they helped convince the elders.

After nearly four years of dialogue, the elders abandoned cutting. She and the elders planned a different kind of ceremony to celebrate girls, and the next year, the number of girls in school soared. Her campaign spread to neighboring villages and eventually to the highest seat of Maasai power, the elders council that meets at the foot of Mount Kilimanjaro. Ms. Leng'ete became the first woman to address them. In 2014, they changed the constitution that rules over 1.5 million Maasai in Kenya and Tanzania, and abandoned cutting.

"It's just the cut that's wrong," Ms. Leng'ete said. "All the other things — the blessings, putting on the traditional clothes, dancing, all that — that's beautiful. But whatever is harmful, whatever brings pain, whatever takes away the dreams of our girls — let's just do away with that."

Breaking the Silence On Rape in Japan

By MOTOKO RICH

TOKYO — It was a Friday night when one of Japan's best-known television journalists invited Shiori Ito out for a drink. Her internship at a news service in Tokyo was ending, and she had inquired about another internship with his network.

They met at a bar, then went to dinner. The last thing she remembers, she later told the police, was feeling dizzy and excusing herself to go to the restroom, where she passed out. By the end of the night, she alleged, he had taken her back to his hotel room and raped her while she was unconscious.

The journalist, Noriyuki Yamaguchi, the Washington bureau chief of the Tokyo Broadcasting System at the time and a biographer of Prime Minister Shinzo Abe, denied the charge and, after an investigation, prosecutors dropped the case. Then Ms. Ito decided to do something women in Japan almost never do: She spoke out.

In a news conference in May and a book published in October, she said the police had obtained hotel security camera footage that appeared to show Mr. Yamaguchi propping her up, unconscious, as they walked through the hotel lobby. The police also located and interviewed their taxi driver, who confirmed that she had passed out. Investigators told her they were going to arrest Mr. Yamaguchi, she said — but then suddenly backed off.

Elsewhere, her allegations might have caused an uproar. But here, they attracted only a smattering of attention.

Ms. Ito's story is a stark example of how sexual assault remains a subject to be avoided in Japan, where few women report rape to the police and when they do, their complaints rarely result in arrests or prosecution.

On paper, Japan reports relatively low rates of sexual assault. In a 2014 survey, one in 15 women reported experiencing rape, compared with one in five women in America. But experts say Japanese women are less likely to describe nonconsensual sex as rape than women in the West. Japan's rape laws make no mention of consent and date rape is a foreign concept.

Instead, rape is often depicted in manga comics and pornography as an extension of sexual gratification.

The police and courts tend to define rape narrowly, pursuing cases only when there are signs of both physical force and self-defense and discouraging complaints when either the assailant or victim has been drinking. Even when rapists are prosecuted and convicted, they sometimes serve no prison time; about one in 10 receives only suspended sentences.

"Prejudice against women is deep-rooted and severe," said Tomoe Yatawaga, a lecturer at Waseda University.

Ms. Ito, 28, has filed a civil suit against Mr. Yamaguchi.

Mr. Yamaguchi, 51, denied committing rape. "There was no sexual assault," he said. "There was no criminal activity that night."

Beyond the Ito case, last year Parliament passed the first changes to Japan's sex crime laws in 110 years, expanding the definition of rape to include oral and anal



JEREMIE SOUTEYRAT FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

Shiori Ito says the police dropped an investigation of her rape accusation.

sex and including men as potential victims. Lawmakers also lengthened minimum sentences. But the law still does not mention consent, and judges can still suspend sentences.

The allegations against Mr. Yamaguchi did not affect his position at the Tokyo Broadcasting System, but he resigned last year under pressure from the network after publishing an article that was seen as contentious. He continues to work as a freelance journalist in Japan.

The book that Ms. Ito published has received only modest attention in Japan's mainstream news media.

"I still feel like I have to be strong," she said, "and just keep talking about why this is not O.K."

Apostrophe Anguish in Kazakhstan

By ANDREW HIGGINS

ALMATY, Kazakhstan — In his 26 years as Kazakhstan's first and only president, Nursultan A. Nazarbayev has managed to keep a resurgent Russia at bay and navigate the treacherous geopolitical waters around Moscow, Beijing and Washington, keeping on good terms with all three capitals.

The authoritarian leader's talent for balancing divergent interests, however, suddenly seems to have deserted him over an issue that, at first glance, involves neither great power rivalry nor weighty

matters of state: the role of the humble apostrophe in writing down Kazakh words.

The Kazakh language is currently written using a modified version of Cyrillic, a legacy of Soviet rule. But Mr. Nazarbayev announced in May that the Russian alphabet would be dumped in favor of a new script based on the Latin alphabet.

The shift, to be completed by 2025, has been widely cheered as a long overdue assertion of the country's full independence. Far less popular, however, has been a decision by the president to announce a system that uses apostrophes to

designate Kazakh sounds that don't exist in other languages written in the standard Latin script.

The Republic of Kazakhstan, for example, will be written in Kazakh as Qazaqstan Respy'bli'kasy.

"This is the basic problem of our country: If the president says something or just writes something on a napkin, everybody has to applaud," said Aidos Sarym, a member of a language reform commission set up last year.

Mr. Nazarbayev, he added, deserves credit for turning Kazakhstan into the most stable



ANDREA BRUCE FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES

A linguist illustrated how one sound in the Kazakh language could be spelled in different ways.

and prosperous country in a region that has been battered by political upheaval and economic decay. But language, Mr. Sarym noted, "is a very delicate sphere that cannot be dictated by officials."

Linguists, who had recommended that the new writing system follow the example of

Turkish, which uses umlauts and other phonetic markers instead of apostrophes, protested that the president's approach would be ugly and imprecise.

Others complained the use of apostrophes would make it impossible to do Google searches for many Kazakh words or to create hashtags on Twitter.

But Mr. Nazarbayev has said he did not want Turkish-style phonetic markers because "there should not be any hooks or superfluous dots that cannot be put straight into a computer."

Others thought Mr. Nazarbayev may be eager to avoid any suggestion that Kazakhstan is turning its back on Russia and embracing pan-Turkic unity.

"Nobody knows where he got this terrible idea from," said Timur Kocaoglu, a professor of international relations and Turkish studies at Michigan State University. "Kazakh intellectuals are all laughing and asking: How can you read anything written like this?"

The proposed script, he said, "makes your eyes hurt."