

Review

The idolization of Chien-Ming Wang and social psychological factors in Taiwan

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This study aims to explore the relationship between the idolization of Chien-Ming Wang and the social psychological factors in Taiwan. Documentary analysis was applied to analyze the time and political background of baseball development in Taiwan. Also in-depth interviews with sports journalists in Taiwan, the CEO of the World Games 2009 in Kaohsiung, and Wang's fans were conducted. It was found that Wang's image of a baseball superstar in Taiwan is related to the colonization of Taiwan by the Japanese. Because baseball was brought to Taiwan by the Japanese, as one of the colonized people, the outstanding baseball player Chien-Ming Wang's appearance in the major league, the highest level of baseball, represented a way the Taiwanese people released their pressure from the complex about being colonized. Besides, in the aspect of political background, after the war, baseball was not recognized by KMT, the ruling party. However, under the pressure from the international environment, the government started to use baseball as a tool to consolidate its regime. In addition, with the complex political background and economic recession in Taiwan, people's lives were difficult. Wang's outstanding performance in baseball fields thus made the Taiwanese people to place hopes on him. Therefore, mass media had paid quite a lot of attention to Wang, further making him a superstar in Taiwan.

Key words: Chien-Ming Wang, baseball, sports star, endorsement marketing, news coverage, political turmoil.

INTRODUCTION

In competitive sports and, consequently baseball, the level of performance is determined by a set/number of a

complex set of variables intercorrelated: Technique (coordination abilities, kinetic skillfulness), Tactics (cognitive and planning abilities), Psychological factors (motivation, desires, willingness) and Fitness. Chien-Ming Wang is an important link in the Taiwanese society and a significant symbol of nationalism in Taiwan. Hayes (1928)

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talked about the importance of groups in human society, "the national consciousness is inherent like a birthmark. It has been existing since the dawn of human history. A group of people develop certain connections because of similar language, history, and culture. This is how they distinguish themselves with others" (translated by Dung, 2004). Klapper (1969) proposed a similar ideal that formation of group behaviors and participation of the general public are results of searching for identification with a group in hopes of reconstructing their selves. Andrews and Jacksons (2001) indicated that, in the global cultural economic system, the roles sports stars play include labors in sports fields, marketable sports products, role models, and political images. In addition, Liao and Lo (2005) believed that sports heroes' values lie in playing the roles of leaders and anti-society characters, showing social cultural values, being targets of imitation, and developing cohesion in society.

Lin (1995: 11-12) believed that the most important meaning of sports is to create representation of identification with a nation, including signification and symbolic systems. Through symbolic systems, meanings are produced. Representation generates meanings. Through representation, we can our life experiences and find out "who we are."

The fact that Chien-Ming Wang has become a sports star of Taiwan is highly related to the sport he does, baseball. The cultural and historical meanings baseball has carried are the key social psychological factors of the idolization of Chien-Ming Wang.

THE NATIONAL SPORT OF TAIWAN - BASEBALL

At the beginning of the present century, sport was described as 'the most important thing in the world' (Beck, 2000: 62), because of the neo-liberal free-market economic policies had a great change in the world. In 1939, the report of mass observation pointed out that the sport as a key social institution and sport-related economic activity represented "the biggest English industry" (Kuper, 2003: 147-148). In the closing decade of the century, the founder of NIKE commented that sport was at the heart of contemporary culture and increasingly defined 'the culture of the world' (Katz 1994: 199).

In mid-eighteenth century, baseball evolved from older bat-and-ball games and was played in England. Further, this sport was brought by British and Irish immigrants to America and became the national sport of the United States in the late nineteenth century (Smart, 2007). Baseball also ever is a contest of Olympic Games. Baseball is a representative sport in Taiwan and its popularity also equal to basketball and soccer. Like as a passage was written in Cina times (Yang, 2007) "Baseball is a sport we are familiar with. The US has a great influence on Taiwan, plus Taiwan was once a colony of Japan, thus from old people who had been through the Japanese colonial period to young kids

nowadays, everyone knows how to play baseball. What "strikeout" and "walk" mean" is well understood.

THE HISTORY OF COLONIZATION AND BASEBALL

Japanese people once ruled Taiwan as superiors. Colonizers always rationalize unfair relationships between colonizers and the colonized by saying that the colonized are weak and uncivilized. There are two ways the colonized can change their situations. One is to revolt, and the other is to turn themselves into the like of their noble colonizers. In order to be reborn, the colonized over and over again depreciate themselves while accepting "grace" from their colonizers. Once the grace gets into their minds, they would be willing to destroy themselves. For example, Michael Jackson, a superstar in the US, tried to turn himself into a white man. Tiger Woods, a famous golf player, married a white woman. The reasons behind their actions are the same (Wei, 2004: 33-40).

In the early days, baseball in Taiwan was controlled by Japan. Baseball was an educational tool used by NDRs to tame Taiwanese people. However, the Chiayi Agricultur Vocational School baseball team with both Japanese and Taiwanese players had kept on winning in Japan and eventually won the second place of the National High School Baseball Championship in Japan. Taiwanese people's great mass fervor for baseball therefore began. As the colonized, Taiwanese people could be as good as their superior colonizers, Japanese people, in baseball fields. This fact enhanced their self confidence and had become a nod to the decolonization.

BASEBALL AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

After Japan lost the war, the National Government took over Taiwan. Baseball was then marginalized because basketball and soccer were rather hot in mainland China. In 1968, the Maple Leaf Baseball Team from Taitung had defeated the JR West All-Star Team, a world champion team, twice. Back then, Taiwan was about to leave the UN. The country was in turmoil. The Golden Dragon Little-League Baseball Team and the Giants Youth Baseball Team both had done well in international competitions. The rulers utilize the empathy effect of baseball culture and made baseball the most noticeable sport in Taiwan. Although baseball had been ignored once by the ruling class, the baseball fever and the success in three baseball championships had been highly related to the ruling class and the atmosphere in the society. Because of the folk temperament, baseball got to go beyond the ruler's prohibition policies and became stronger and stronger. Therefore, it is fair to say that the rise and decline of the development of baseball are an epitome of the wrestling between the regime and the people.

It is observed that, as a part of the assimilation policy,

baseball in Taiwan had been rooted since the Japanese colonial period. On the one hand, baseball had been in the spotlight in Taiwan; on the other hand, it had had competitiveness in international competitions. With advantages in both emotions and techniques, it was when the nation was questioned or when the people were suspicious and fearful for the future, baseball could stand out to fill the people with emotions and as a tool used by the government to promote its legal regime.

All in all, the development of baseball in Taiwan started since the Japanese government brought baseball to Taiwan. After the 60s, with the diplomatic situation of Taiwan getting worse, the National Government which had once been recognized by the international leaders suddenly lost its backing and turned to the Taiwanese people for support and confidence, in order to rebuild its foundation of dominion. The government also manipulated heroism to build a relationship between the nation and baseball. The media exposure and non-exposure policies were also adopted to create heroic images of the players. The players' statuses and the meaning of baseball had been upgraded through event arrangements such as government officials picking up players in a grand manner, street parade, setting up a meeting with the president, or holding a banquet to honor players. Therefore, baseball is like a stimulus for the confidence of the nation in a complex age. The executive officer of the World Games 2009 in Kaohsiung, Chen, said "Baseball is the sport Taiwanese people want and care the most. Let me put it this way, everyone in Taiwan knows about baseball. Baseball represents the tiny dignity we have left in the world. You probably have heard a story of people getting off beds to watch kids playing baseball (Williamsport). You may wonder what was so interesting about kids playing baseball. Even now there is nothing attractive about it. But that is what Taiwanese people need; this is why baseball and Chien-Ming Wang are so important to Taiwanese people." It is fair to say that baseball is a synonym of the national sport of Taiwan.

THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL TURMOIL IN TAIWAN

In 2006, the Taiwanese government's accountability had been questioned for there had been scandals involving the government or the president, ugly wars between parties, exhausted economic growth, and bald media reports on domestic suicide cases. Also the cross-strait relation and foreign relations had all been in difficulty. The people had been in a tumultuous social atmosphere. At this time, Chien-Ming Wang became the most important representation of the national sport of Taiwan. Therefore, media had found a new target to write stories about. Like some humans, such as Yang, point out that "Chien-Ming Wang is the same! He is ingenuous with not-bad looking and great performance, of course everyone wants to be like him. However, it does have something

to do with the political atmosphere in Taiwan...".

When audience are cheering for Chien-Ming Wang's winning and sighing for his careless pitching, they have already created the most real experiences of sports life in their lives. These natural experiences are realistic and not faking. Compared with chaotic political arguments in Taiwan, audience are more likely to favor these experiences and get involved. In the recent years, the political atmosphere in Taiwan has not been good. Many people are tired of continuous fighting between the two major parties in Taiwan. The rise of Chien-Ming Wang happened to draw the spotlight. This fact seems to reflect the people's tiredness of turmoil in Taiwan.

CONSUMERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL FACTORS

In the recent years, due to factors such as political turmoil, hike in prices, and economic recession, Taiwanese have been living in a tumultuous atmosphere. In the field of the national sport of Taiwan, baseball, which is very meaningful for Taiwanese, Chien-Ming Wang had stood firm and tall with outstanding performance, more or less offering Taiwanese something to place hope on while they feel lost.

There are two comments which are written by Chien-Ming Wang's fans, Yen and Kao. Yen said "Because he is Taiwanese! ... I still have great hope for baseball in Taiwan. And in every after-game interview, Chien-Ming Wang always gives just a brief speech. His friendly attitude makes me believe that he is not conceited and arrogant though his performance is outstanding. These are the reasons why I like Chien-Ming Wang.", and Kao believed that "I hope Taiwanese people can stand tall on an international stage. I wish Taiwanese people can make a good showing in the US. Tell you the truth, when that comes true, the feeling is just great. Chien-Ming Wang is now making Taiwan well-known by standing on the greatest baseball stage in the world. His amazing performance makes me feel proud to be Taiwanese." We can discover the people of Taiwan that they hope their nation more famous and respected.

In sum, Chien-Ming Wang is much more celebrated than other athletes because of the complex and tight relation between baseball and the society in Taiwan. In the recent years in Taiwan, the society has been in straits with economic recession. The rise of Chien-Ming Wang has somehow released the people's negative emotions and he has become an emotional attachment which is accepted by consumers.

CONCLUSION

Baseball is not only the national sport of Taiwan, but also a relic from the Japanese colonial period. Chien-Ming Wang's outstanding performance in baseball has led Taiwanese people to a way out of the reduced international status, economic recession, and bad

political atmosphere in 2006. Through Chien-Ming Wang, Taiwanese people have found their national confidence again and identified their values.

We can discover that a nation almost have its own representative sport in the world, and this sport also have a representative star. Based on the aforementioned, a sport star is created in the times that relate to its history and nationality and is not accidental absolutely. On the other hand, the sport star must satisfy the expect of human and become an emotional sustenance of the people. The Chien-Ming Wang's success is the best example. Moreover, advanced techniques in soft computing and artificial intelligence have been successfully applied to various fields, such as robot manipulation (Hsiao et al., 2005a, b, c, d, e; Chen et al., 2011a, b; Chen and Huang, 2011; Shih et al., 2011), engineering application (Amini and Vahdani, 2008; Chang et al., 2008; Chen, 2006; Chen et al., 2008d, e; Trabia et al., 2008; Tu et al., 2008; Yang et al., 2008a; Shih et al., 2010b; Lee et al., 2010c; Tseng et al., 2011; Tang et al., 2011), architectural engineering (Hsieh et al., 2006; Chen et al., 2004; Chen et al., 2009; Chen et al., 2010; Chen, 2010; Chen, 2011a; Chen, 2011b; Chen et al., 2011a; Chen et al., 2011b; Hsu et al., 2010; Liu et al., 2011; Lu et al., 2003; Yeh and Chen, 2010; Yeh et al., 2011), satellite observations (Lin et al., 2009a, b, 2010c), marine research (Chen et al., 2005a, b, 2006a, b, c; 2007, a, b, c, d, e, f; 2008a, b, c, 2009c, 2011a, b; Tseng et al., 2009; Chen, 2009b, network optimization (Chen and Chen, 2010b; Shih et al., 2010a, c), system development (Chen, 2009a; Chen et al., 2009a, b, d, e, f; 2010a, c, d, 2010f; Lin and Chen, 2010; Shen et al., 2011; Shih et al 2011c; Lee et al., 2011), educational improvement (Chen et al., 2010b; Shih et al., 2010d) and managements on leisure and tourism industries (Yildirim et al., 2009; Zhao et al., 2009; Tsai et al., 2008; Yang et al., 2008b; Yeh et al., 2008; Chen and Chen, 2010a; Chen et al., 2010e, g, h; Tsai and Chen, 2010; Tsai and Chen, 2011; Kuo et al., 2010; Kuo and Chen, 2011a; Kuo and Chen, 2011b; Kuo et al., 2011; Lin and Chen, 2010; Lin and Chen, 2011; Lee et al., 2010a, b; Chiang et al., 2010). Finally, this study could be easily generalized to other collective sport education. Future research should extend advanced techniques in soft computing and artificial intelligence by including other factors that may affect the extent of knowledge management. In any case, much remains to be learned regarding knowledge transfer within baseball teams, and we hope this study provides an impetus to future researchers in this area.

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