

Abstract of Doctoral Thesis

Title: Relation of Quest for Excitement and Sports

**Equipment: Re-constructing Sportization to Instantiate
Rubber ball Sports**

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The purpose of this paper is to clarify how "equipment," a component of sports, is related to intrinsic values of sports such as interest and athleticism, and how people have accepted and developed these values.

In order to achieve this objective, this paper focuses on "rubber ball". The term "rubber ball" refers to the type of balls used in baseball, softball, and tennis, as opposed to "hardballs" originally used expert for Japan. In this paper, we focus on rubber balls in order to clarify the reality of rubber balls, because 1) they are viewed more as a "starter game" than hardballs, and 2) discussions on baseball, softball, and tennis half-heartedly assume hardballs, ignoring the differences in balls, or based on age-based classification. Moreover, research studies on baseball, softball, and tennis highlighted the problem that discussions on equipment have been put in the background as a result of age-based classifications. These issues are based on the question of how equipment affects sport as a culture in the context of the popularization of sport, or the "leisureization" of sport, and what social context has produced the transformation of equipment. In order to understand the mechanisms by which sports are becoming increasingly popular, we must confront these questions and debates.

In Chapter 1, we reviewed the starting point of rubber ball and the present situation of sports using rubber balls, such as baseball, tennis, and softball (hereafter "Rubber sports"). By perusing the birth of rubber balls in the prewar, the number of players and teams, and the organizational structure of rubber balls, the following issues were identified: the objectives of "safe" and "cheap" at the time of the birth of rubber balls is different from the objectives of "leisure" sports at present. In order to clarify this point, it was confirmed that rubber ball and Rubber sports were appropriate subjects for sociology.

In Chapter 2, the role of rubber ball in postwar Japanese sports was examined based on the "Japan Sports Equipment News (Nippon Undogu Shinpo)" in order to clarify the division between the initial production and the current state of the rubber balls. At that time, rubber baseball in the society was undergoing a transformation under the influence of the GHQ's promotion of "democratic baseball." Thus, in a society transitioning from "democratic recreation" to "leisure management" under the "welfare state sports and leisure policy" influenced by the standardization of working hours and the consideration of a five-day workweek, Rubber sports also became a "leisureized" sport for the masses and gained a "leisureized" aspect.

In Chapter 3, we examined the position and development of Baseball 5, a newly emerged Rubber sports in the midst of popularization and sophistication. With the help of system of sports techniques, we also examined how "interest" as a Baseball-type game was ensured. Baseball 5, an urban sport of baseball-type competitions, was a new sport conceived in accordance with the urbanization of sports by the IOC. "Baseball 5" is positioned as a starter game in Japan and has the potential to become an orthodoxy of baseball-type games worldwide.

In Chapter 4, the relationship between sports equipment and "interest" was examined with the help of discussions on system of sports techniques, focusing on the sports equipment and the techniques in using them. "Functionalist humans" who pursue records as their skills improve due to technological advancements were previously highlighted, and the recent evolution of high-tech and communication technologies has led to the argument that the body is subject to control by data. However, it became clear that athletes experience inherent struggles to control their equipment-using bodies and master their equipment, and that sports also function as an "arena of struggle" over the equipment and body.

In Chapter 5, we examined the possibility to rethink sports from the perspective of sports equipment by referring to the Eliasian thoughts and discussions on modern sports. By examining the arguments of Guttman and Hargreaves with a focus on Elias's exploration of sportization and quest for excitement, it is possible to point out that mimetic is an important aspect of the immersive experience in sport. Sports equipment acts to mimic the performance of athletes and to enable the implementation of similar competitions such as Rubber sports through skillful mimicry. This constant questioning and comparison of modern and new sports is the very sociological work of Elias, who compared pre-sport pastimes with modern sports, and reveals the necessity of continually looking at and questioning new sports.

The leisure and mimetic aspect character of Rubber sports are revealed based on the "interest" created by the equipment, "rubber ball". In other words, the change in equipment modification the intrinsic interest and other elements of the sport and transformed the sport. Rubber sports have a certain "liveness" that anyone can implement at any time, while at the same time provide high-level competition and "interest". Thus, rubber ball continues to be popularized and sophisticated.