

“Ninja Catchers and Chivalrous Eagles:
Taiwan Baseball and a Globalized Taiwan Identity”

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On March 25, 2000, Chen Shui-bian chose a special engagement for his first public appearance as Taiwan’s new President-elect. That night, Chen spoke at the Taiwan Major League’s opening game, which also served as the opening ceremony of the new Chengqinghu Stadium in Gaoxiong County (see Figure 1). Before the contest between the Taizhong Robots and the hometown Gaoxiong-Pingdong Thunder Gods began, the capacity crowd heard Chen describe baseball as a “symbol of the Taiwanese spirit,” and pledge to fight the influence of organized crime on professional baseball. The President-elect announced he would designate 2001 “Taiwan Baseball Year,” and promised to consider Gaoxiong County Magistrate Yu Zhengxian’s proposal to designate baseball Taiwan’s national sport. Joking with fans in his customary self-deprecating fashion, Chen told of his childhood fascination with baseball, and how he only decided to be President after he realized he was not athletic enough to succeed in baseball.¹

President Chen’s official attention to the sport marks only the latest chapter in the history

¹ “Chen appears at baseball opening,” *Taipei Times*, 26 March 2000, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/news/2000/03/26/story/0000029457>; Zhang Guoqin, “Taiwan Da Lianmeng kaimuzhan, A-Bian Zongtong de di yi ci geile zhibang” [Taiwan Major League opening game: President A-bian saves his first appearance for professional baseball], *Huaxun Xinwenwang (Taiwan Today News Network)*, *Titan Fengyun*, 26 March 2000, <http://tnn.com/cna/000326/sp14.html>.

Emphasizing his official commitment to baseball, Chen invited members of the Jiayi-Tainan Braves of the Taiwan Major League to perform a skit about Taiwan’s 1969 Little League world championship team at his inaugural celebration. Zeng Wenqi, “Yongshimen bufu A-Bian suotuo” [Braves don’t let A-bian down], *Huaxun Xinwenwang (Taiwan Today News Network)*, *Titan Fengyun*, 21 May 2000, <http://www.tnn.com/can/000521/sp27.html>.

of baseball in Taiwan. In Taiwan, baseball is more than just a sport. It is a colonial legacy, an aspect of Taiwanese culture that was planted and sunk deep roots during the fifty-year Japanese occupation of the island. Professional baseball in Taiwan today is a post-colonial legacy, a reminder of the profound influence of American and Japanese culture, and indeed, of transnational capitalism on Taiwan at the turn of the century. At the same time that the creation of Taiwanese culture is intimately involved with these legacies of the foreign, still other indigenous or “Chinese” factors make the picture even more complicated. Decades of resistance to Chinese Nationalist (Guomintang) oppression and hegemony, combined with the feelings of fear and isolation produced by blustery PRC nationalism, have also made Taiwanese culture one which fervently and enthusiastically celebrates its uniqueness, linguistic and otherwise, vis-à-vis the “Chinese mainland.”

The combination of these different, yet interrelated, legacies has thus given rise to the remarkable and striking quality of contemporary Taiwanese culture, namely, its strong dual emphases on, and blending of, the global and the local. Professional baseball in Taiwan is a perfect instance of this self-conscious and even ideological combination of the global and the local, the cosmopolitan and the provincial, the international and the Taiwanese. The short history of professional baseball in Taiwan, in many ways, is nothing more or less than the story of the effort to create a “baseball culture” that could bring out both of these striking and complementary aspects of Taiwanese life.

These conditions outlined above make Taiwanese professional baseball very unique in the sporting world. Models of colonial sport, such as that portrayed in the film *Trobriand Cricket*, where natives on that New Guinea island transform cricket into a magical, mocking send-up of the

colonial game,² are clearly not useful in analyzing contemporary Taiwanese sport. Since World War II, the global relevance of modern sport, and the emphasis on international adherence to these models,³ has made it impractical or even impossible to imagine wholesale Taiwanese transformations of baseball. Standard models of sport in the post-colonial context, like Alan Klein's study of baseball in the Dominican Republic, also do not seem to apply to the Taiwan context. Dominican baseball is virtually a daily re-creation of American baseball hegemony in the Western Hemisphere,⁴ as it has been totally reorganized by the forces of American major league baseball into a system of academies and teams that funnel the best players directly to teams in the United States. Taiwanese professional baseball is highly reliant on foreign players, but there is no analogue to the direct, systematic and institutional threat that American baseball poses to the Dominican leagues. Finally, almost any standard model of colonialism will simply fail to capture the complexity of Taiwan's recent history under the hegemony of Japanese, Chinese Nationalist, and American colonial and military regimes.

Thus, in this paper, I rely less on established models of colonialism, post-colonialism or cultural imperialism, than on the model I have explained above of the construction of Taiwanese professional baseball as an avenue that leads both to globalization and international acceptance,

² Jerry W. Leach, dir., *Trobriand Cricket: An Ingenious Response to Colonialism* (film produced by Office of Information, Government of Papua New Guinea, 1975).

³ Exceptions to this universal adherence could only really come in ideological attacks on modern sport, or on modern capitalist society altogether. In 1952, American feathers were ruffled when the Russian magazine *Smena* published a piece on American baseball, calling it "beastly battle, a bloody fight with mayhem and murder," a harsh capitalist venture that discarded players "with ruined health and also often crippled ... [to] increase the army of the American unemployed." The game, according to *Smena*, was merely a typically awful American perversion of the Russian game *lapta*, which had been "played in Russian villages when the United States was not even marked on the maps." "Russians Say U.S. Stole 'Beizbol,' Made It a Game of Bloody Murder," *New York Times*, 16 September 1952, p. 1; "The Kremlin on Beizbol," *New York Times*, 17 September 1952, p. 30.

⁴ Alan M. Klein, *Sugarball: The American Game, The Dominican Dream* (New Haven: Yale

and to a local and unique Taiwanese identity. I begin with an overview of the history of Taiwanese baseball, from roughly the midpoint of the Japanese colonization of Taiwan, through the worldwide dominance of Taiwanese Little League teams in the years of Guomindang oppression and martial law. I then trace the development of the Chinese Professional Baseball League, beginning in 1990, explaining the different ways in which the CPBL sought to achieve this difficult marriage of the native and the foreign, the local and the international. Finally, I describe the success of the Taiwan Major League, which began play in 1997, and the TML's more explicitly nationalist and media-savvy strategies to truly create a baseball culture fit for a globalized Taiwan identity.

Baseball in the Japanese Colonial Era

Baseball in Taiwan, introduced by the Japanese colonial regime, has never thoroughly shed its Japanese heritage. From the name of the game, still called *yagyu* in Taiwanese by many (from the Japanese *yakyū*, instead of the Mandarin *bangqiu*), to the Taiwanese-Japanese-English playground calls of “stu-rii-ku” and “out-tow,” baseball’s Japanese “origins” are still an important part of Taiwanese heritage. The sport, well developed in Japan by the turn of the century, first came to the colony of Taiwan in 1906.⁵ Initially played by colonial bureaucrats and their sons in Taipei, the game spread to Tainan by 1910. In 1915, in order to organize the quickly-growing

University Press, 1991), especially pp. 104-120.

⁵ There was no Taiwan exposure to baseball during Qing rule of the island. Chinese studying in the United States (like future railroad engineer Zhan Tianyou and diplomat Liang Cheng) were playing baseball as early as 1873. These student-athletes brought knowledge of baseball to coastal urban China when they returned from study abroad, but the game to this day has never been accepted widely in China. Gao Zhengyuan, *Dong sheng de xuri: Zhonghua bangqiu fazhan shi* [Rising sun in the east: The history of the development of Chinese baseball](1994), pp. 19-22; Zhan Deji, “Woguo bangqiu yundong de fawei yu zhanwang” [The powerful growth and future hopes of our nation’s baseball movement], *Jiaoyu ziliao jikan*

sport, the colonial government formed the Taiwan Baseball Federation made up of 15 (all-Japanese) school teams.⁶

It was not long before Taiwanese youth joined in this new fun. In the early 1910s, Taiwan Governor-General Sakuma Samata encouraged the development of the sport among Taiwanese youth. As he explained it, this was his humble way of repaying the local Taiwanese deity Matsu, who in 1906 had appeared to his ailing wife in a dream and miraculously cured her!⁷ In 1921, a Hualian native named Lin Guixing formed a Takasago (Mandarin *Gaosha*) Baseball Team of Ami Aborigine boys. Two years later, the team changed their name to the High-Ability (Nôkô, Mandarin *Nenggao*) Baseball Team when they all enrolled in the Hualian Harbor Agricultural Study Institute. Lin and his Nôkô team achieved great fame when they traveled to Japan in the summer of 1925 and won five of six games against Japanese school teams there.⁸

The most famous of all Taiwanese baseball traditions was that born at the Tainan District Jiayi Agriculture and Forestry Institute (abbreviated Kanô, Mandarin *Jianong*) in the late 1920s. Under the guidance of Manager Kondô Hyôtarô, a former standout player who had toured the United States with his high school team, Kanô dominated Taiwan baseball in the decade before the Pacific War. What made the Kanô team more special was its tri-racial composition; in 1931 its starting nine was made up of two Han Taiwanese, four Taiwan Aborigines, and three Japanese players.⁹ Kanô won the Taiwan championship, earning the right to play in the hallowed Kôshien

10 (June 1985), pp. 433-434.

⁶ Gao, *Dong sheng de xuri*, p. 45; Zhan, “Woguo bangqiu yundong,” p. 435.

⁷ Gao, *Dong sheng de xuri*, p. 41.

⁸ Despite these successes against the Japanese colonial power, Lin did not survive Taiwan’s “Retrocession” to Chinese Nationalist rule. Lin was killed on 1 August 1947, during the violent aftermath of the 228 Incident. Gao, *Dong sheng de xuri*, pp. 47-50.

⁹ The three Japanese players hit seventh, eighth and ninth in the Kanô batting order. Su Jinzhang,

High School Baseball Tournament held at Nishinomiya near Osaka, four times between 1931 and 1936. The best of these, the 1931 squad, was the first team ever to qualify for Kôshien with Aborigine or Han Taiwanese players on its roster.¹⁰ Kanô placed second in the 23-team tournament that year, their skills and intensity winning the hearts of the Japanese public.¹¹ Amazingly, this 1931 Kanô team is still a very popular nostalgic symbol even today in Japan.¹² This team of Han, Aborigine and Japanese players “proved” to nationally-minded Japanese, in an extremely visible fashion, the colonial myth - that both Han and Aborigine Taiwanese were willing and able to take part alongside Japanese in the rituals of the Japanese state. Of course, the irony is that the six Taiwanese players on the starting roster likely had very different ideas about their accomplishments, perhaps seeing their victories as a statement of Taiwanese (Han or Aborigine) will and skill that could no longer be dismissed by the Japanese colonizing power. But the fact that this Kanô triumph could be understood in such radically different ways is merely proof of the important and liminal position that baseball held in the Japanese colonial administration of Taiwan.

The great Kanô tradition was not Jiayi’s only contribution to the Japanese baseball world; this southern town cemented its reputation as the baseball capital of Taiwan when several of its sons went on to star in baseball in Japan in the 1930s and beyond. The most famed of these was Wu Bo, who as a youngster was recruited by Olympic gold-medal track star Minabe Tadahira to

Jiayi bangqiu shihua [Items from the history of Jiayi baseball] (Taipei: Lianjing chuban shiye gongsi, 1996), p. 10; Zheng Sanlang, ed., *Jianong koushu lishi* [Oral histories of the Jiayi Agriculture and Forestry Institute] (Jiayi: Guoli Jiayi nongye zhuanke xuexiao xiaoyouhui, 1993), pp. 109-115. In the list given in Zheng, p. 115, Aborigine shortstop Chen Gengyuan is listed under his Japanese name, Agarimatsu Kôichi.

¹⁰ The Kôshien tournament, begun in 1915 by the newspaper *Asahi Shimbun*, began inviting Taiwan representatives in 1923. From 1923 to 1930, the teams that qualified for Kôshien, all from Taipei, were all Japanese. Gao, *Dong sheng de xuri*, pp. 54-55.

¹¹ Kanô won their first three games by the combined score of 32-9, before finally losing in the championship game. Zheng, *Jianong koushu lishi*, p. 124.

attend Japan's famous Waseda University. Wu decided to stay in Jiayi, attending Kanô and starring on their 1935 and 1936 championship teams. In 1937, Wu signed with the proud Tokyo Giants baseball team, playing for the Giants for seven years. In 1943, under the nationalistic pressures of wartime, Wu took the Japanese name Kure Masayuki (Kure being the same character as his surname Wu). However, the next year he gave the Japanese baseball community a less polite reminder of his ethnic Chinese identity, when he refused to travel to Manchuria with the Giants to arouse Japanese troops stationed there. Wu left the Giants outright, and went on to play for thirteen more years with the Hanshin Tigers and Mainichi Orions before retiring in 1957. In 1995 Wu became the first Taiwanese player selected to the Japanese Baseball Hall of Fame.¹³ Wu Xinheng, another Kanô product, played for three Tokyo-Yomiuri Giants championship teams from 1944 to 1952 under the name Ogihara Hiroshi. There were Taiwan Aborigine standouts in the Japanese leagues as well. Itô Jirô (Chinese name Luo Daohou) of the famed Hualian Ami tribal baseball teams played for the Tokyo Senators from 1936 to 1938. Okamura Toshiaki (Ye Tiansong), another Ami star, played for the Nankai Hawks from 1940-49.¹⁴ Besides playing excellent baseball, these early Taiwanese stars were also unknowingly paving the way for the success of Oh Sadaharu, who endured discrimination against Taiwanese in postwar Japan, going on to become the world home run champion in the 1970s.

Taiwan did not just produce an elite class of standout baseball players. The sport became

¹² Su, *Jiayi bangqiu shihua*, p. 40.

¹³ Wu led the Japanese League in batting in 1942 and 1943, was named League MVP in 1943, and pitched a no-hitter in 1946. He served as player-coach his last three seasons with the Orions, and retired with a .272 batting average over 20 seasons. Gao, *Dong sheng de xuri*, pp. 94-95; Su, *Jiayi bangqiu shihua*, p. 28; Zheng, *Jianong koushu lishi*, p. 121; Ikeda Ikuo, ed., *Nihon puro yakyû rokujunen shi* [Sixty years of Japanese professional baseball history] (Tokyo: Beisubôru magajin sha, 1994), pp. 60, 263.

¹⁴ Gao, *Dong sheng de xuri*, pp. 99-101; Zheng, *Jianong koushu lishi*, p. 121.

popular at all levels, making baseball the dominant sport in the colony as it was in the home islands of Japan. Peng Ming-min would later trade his own second-baseman's mitt for the pen, enduring much sacrifice as he led the struggle for Taiwanese self-determination and independence during the Chinese Nationalist era. But as a boy in Japanese 1930s Gaoxiong, young Peng was the typical Taiwanese schoolboy obsessed with baseball. Peng today remembers clearly huddling around the radio with his brother to listen to colonial broadcasts of the Japanese high school championships at Kôshien every spring. Later, while a student in Japan, Peng even managed to obtain via mail a baseball autographed by the great Babe Ruth, although he later lost the valuable souvenir in the wreckage of Nagasaki in 1945.¹⁵ The enthusiasm of millions of young people like Peng, who played and paid feverish attention to this Japanese institution is what made baseball Taiwan's "national game" some 70 years before President Chen's remarks this spring.

This Taiwanese excellence in baseball, the sport of the colonizing metropolis, reflects an important aspect of the experience of almost any colonized people. Edward Said has discussed the "collaborative" aspect of the life of colonized intellectuals in so many areas, whose long-term strategies for liberation depended on being able to "learn the ways of the [colonizer], translate his works, pick up his habits."¹⁶ C.L.R. James has extended this model to the sporting world in his discussions of West Indies cricket. In this realm, by the early 1900s, black cricketers' participation in matches with white players was accepted, and the inspired performances of standout black players forced white populations to give West Indians a respect they would not have granted otherwise.¹⁷

¹⁵ Interview with Peng Ming-min, 20 July 1999.

¹⁶ Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1993), p. 262.

¹⁷ C.L.R. James, *Beyond A Boundary* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1983 reprint), pp. 232-252;

In Taiwan, baseball likewise was one way in which the colonized population sought to negotiate their relationship with the Japanese colonizing power, on terms that the Japanese could not but accept. There are more explicitly political analogues of this process in colonial Taiwan. One is the Home Rule Movement, where Taiwanese students educated in Tokyo challenged the official rhetoric of authoritarian “imperial benevolence” and sought a colonial assembly for Taiwan in the early 1920s.¹⁸ Taiwan elites’ calls in the 1930s for Taiwanese to be allowed to serve in the Imperial military, and then the military service performed by more than 200,000 Taiwanese during World War II, were also explicitly tied to appeals for equal treatment for the Taiwanese as subjects of the Emperor.¹⁹ Baseball was another such liminal realm where Japanese exclusion of Taiwanese baseball teams or players would have given the lie to Japan’s entire colonial enterprise.

Said characterizes Frantz Fanon’s view of colonized “native intellectuals” as “intrinsic to the colonial system and at the same potentially at war with it.” These native intellectuals were agents who worked within the constraints of the system to “liberate their energies from the oppressing cultural matrix that produced them.”²⁰ Baseball allowed the colonized Taiwanese to pursue these paradoxical goals. Indeed, this physical realm of baseball was one fraught with many tensions and contradictions; participation in Japan’s “national game” allowed Taiwanese to prove

C.L.R. James, “Cricket in West Indian Culture,” *New Society* (6 June 1963), reprinted in C.L.R. James, edited by Anna Grimshaw, *Cricket* (New York: Allison & Busby, 1986), pp. 118-124.

¹⁸ George H. Kerr, *Formosa: Licensed Revolution and the Home Rule Movement, 1895-1945* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawaii, 1974), pp. 113-129.

¹⁹ Kondo Masami, *Soryokusen to Taiwan: Nihon shokuminchi hokai no kenkyu* [Total war and Taiwan: Research into the collapse of Japanese colonialism] (Tokyo: Tosui shobo, 1996), pp. 34-36; Lin Jiwen, *Riben ju Tai moqi (1930-1945) zhanzheng dongyuan tixi zhi yanjiu* [Research into the late Japanese colonial period (1930-1945) wartime mobilization structure] (Banqiao: Daoxiang chubanshe, 1996), pp. 217-227.

and live their acculturation into the colonial order, at the very moment that Taiwanese baseball successes worked to subvert it. This was not a uniquely Taiwanese strategy by any means; elsewhere in the Japanese Empire, the Korean nationalist martyr Yô Un-hyông sponsored athletics in the 1930s as a similarly indirect mode of resistance to the forces of the colonial power.²¹ In the realm of baseball, Taiwanese subjects could use skills and customs taught by the Japanese, even adopting Japanese names, to appeal for equal treatment within the national framework that baseball represented in so many ways. Yet this arena also allowed the Taiwanese baseball community through its many triumphs to offer the final proof, in a “national” language that the Japanese had to understand, that the colonial enterprise that aimed to shackle the Taiwanese population in permanent subservience was bound to fail.

Baseball in Guomintang Taiwan, 1945-1980s

When the Guomintang state took the reins of Taiwan government in late 1945, it set out to effect two related transformations of the Taiwan polity. To truly achieve a Chinese “Retrocession” (*Guangfu*) of Taiwan, the Nationalists would have to strip Taiwanese culture of its Japanese legacies, while at the same time restoring to it an essential and timeless “Chineseness” for which the Taiwanese people presumably had been longing for a half-century.

Mau-Kuei Chang has written on these dual political goals. First, a “cult” of the benevolent and sagely dictator Chiang Kai-shek was developed, where he was to be honored as “Master of the Nationalist Revolution,” “Savior of the People” and “Grand Family Head.” Then,

²⁰ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 269.

²¹ Hugh Deane, *The Korean War 1945-1953* (San Francisco: China Books & Periodicals, Inc., 1999), p. 48.

policies of “de-Taiwanization” were enforced, officially degrading any cultures or customs that were distinctively Taiwanese. These policies were designed not only to cut the colonial links to Japan, but also to nip in the bud any heretical links between a culturally distinctive and politically separate Taiwan.²² These policies were even applied to the baseball realm as well. The Japanese stigma that baseball carried in the late 1940s was so potent that it was a rare Guomintang-fearing school administrator who was willing to accept the presence of a baseball team on their campus.²³

At the same time, however, state agents involved in “Retrocession” efforts also realized what a valuable exception baseball could be to this rule of erasing any and all colonial remnants. The Guomintang state had promoted physical culture in planning the construction of a strong and healthy Chinese populace and state on the mainland for two decades. Official endorsement of baseball thus soon became one method of Sinicizing a cultural realm which still represented a Pandora’s Box of colonial thinking and customs. Baseball was included at the First Taiwan Provincial Games, held in October 1946 at the Taiwan National University athletic field, with 20 counties, cities, colleges and government organizations sending baseball teams to the meet.²⁴ A baseball tournament was held in Taiwan in August 1947, with Fudan University and Shanghai Pandas teams coming to play against teams from Taipei, Taichung, Taiwan Power, Taiwan Sugar,

²² Mau-Kuei Chang, “Middle Class and Social and Political Movements in Taiwan: Questions and Some Preliminary Observations,” in Hsin-Huang Michael Hsiao, *Discovery of the Middle Classes in East Asia* (Taipei: Academia Sinica Institute of Ethnology, 1993), pp. 141-148.

²³ Su, *Jiayi bangqiu shihua*, p. 27.

²⁴ Chiang Kai-shek and Song Meiling, in Taiwan for this first anniversary of Retrocession, visited the meet. Provincial Chief Administrator Chen Yi served as Meet Chairman. Taiwan sheng Di yi jie quansheng yundong dahui xuanchuan zu, eds., *Taiwan sheng Di yi jie quansheng yundong dahui* [The First Taiwan Provincial Games] (Taiwan sheng Di yi jie quansheng yundong dahui xuanchuan zu, 1946), pp. 7, 15-52, 82-84; Su, *Jiayi bangqiu shihua*, p. 27.

and Taiwan Charcoal during that bloody summer.²⁵ In 1949, a Taiwan Province Baseball Committee was formed, chaired by future ROC Vice President Xie Dongmin. That same year, this Committee began holding annual provincial baseball tournaments at all levels of play.²⁶

What is interesting about these Guomintang efforts to promote baseball in Taiwan in the immediate postwar period is that Taiwan was clearly the only region of the Republic of China with any baseball tradition of which to speak. When the Taiwan Province Baseball Team won the championship at the Seventh National Games in Shanghai in 1948, there were only three other teams entered - the national Police and Air Force teams, both of which were stacked with Taiwanese players, and the Filipino Overseas Chinese team!²⁷ In other words, the Guomintang could hardly promote baseball as a “Chinese” custom. Thus, their work to hijack the game’s unique popularity in Taiwan for their own uses still had to be in explicitly Taiwanese terms. The game of basketball soon became fashionable in Taiwan, promoted by the sizable *waisheng* “provincial-outsider” population concentrated in the north. But baseball remained an arena where Taiwanese people could successfully, and without any fear of reprisal, challenge the Guomintang’s policies of “de-Taiwanization” and claims to represent a true Chinese culture which Taiwanese needed for their own good.

Baseball, then, is also central to the story of Taiwan’s rapid and traumatic transition, from wartime to decolonization to a new oppression delivered in the rhetoric of Retrocession to Chinese rule. In Said’s model of decolonization, he describes how native intellectuals work for the “rediscovery and repatriation of what had been suppressed in the natives’ past by the

²⁵ Gao, *Dong sheng de xuri*, p. 31.

²⁶ Zhan, “Woguo bangqiu yundong,” p. 436.

²⁷ *Di qi jie quanguo yundonghui huikan* [Publication of the Seventh National Games] (Shanghai:

processes of imperialism.”²⁸ However, in Taiwan after February 28, 1947, this process was unthinkable. The hopes voiced by many in support of Chinese rule of Taiwan soon were dashed violently and unmercifully by the actions of hundreds of thousands of carpetbagging Guomintang troops, bureaucrats and hangers-on. Relieved and enthusiastic searching for a “Chinese” Taiwan thus quickly gave way to a yearning for cultural artifacts from the good old colonial days. Baseball was one of these artifacts, and this complicated picture of a Taiwan stuck between a Japanese rock and a Guomintang hard place explains much of baseball’s continued popularity after the Japanese were long gone from Taiwan.

Yet the vagaries of decolonization and Retrocession do not provide the full extent of this history. The Taiwanese people now had to contend with the reality of an invigorated American Cold War imperialism that sought to dictate affairs in Taiwan and throughout Asia as a whole. Taiwan’s baseball history offers a look at this process as well. In 1951, the first ever All-Taiwan baseball team was organized for a trip to Manila for a series of games versus Filipino teams, in the belly of the American imperial beast. The Manila sporting public fell in love with the All-Taiwanese, especially the astounding home run-hitting of Penghu native Hong Taishan. But the young team from Taiwan made an even deeper impression when they volunteered to give blood to American soldiers recuperating in Manila hospitals from injuries sustained in Korean War battles.²⁹ This episode, though anecdotal, thus provided a most profound metaphor to describe life in small Asian nations during the depths of the Cold War. The greatest triumphs which could be won were, in the end, in activities (like baseball) defined and approved by the United States, in

Shenbaoguan, 1948), p. 30.

²⁸ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, p. 210.

²⁹ Gao, *Dong sheng de xuri*, pp. 13-16.

locales dependent on and exposed to American beneficence and greed, and in ways that literally bled these locales dry as they were integrated into America's new imperialist world order.

This incredible tightrope-walk between Japanese colonialist legacies and Guomindang-U.S. hegemony in Taiwan continued into, and was in many ways exemplified by, the international success of Taiwanese Little League baseball (*Shaonian Bangqiu*, or *Shaobang*) teams beginning in the late 1960s. In a tremendous run perhaps unmatched in the history of international sport, Taiwanese Shaobang teams won ten Little League World Series titles between 1969 and 1981, and sixteen in the 27-year period from 1969 to 1995. This success brought desperately appreciated attention to Taiwan in a time when its most important ally, the United States, was gradually shunning the island in favor of ties to the People's Republic of China. But it also allowed the playing-out of a very complicated jumble of national and racial tensions that make a study of Taiwanese baseball crucial to a deeper understanding of Taiwanese society during this important era.

This Little League success began in August 1968, with two great victories by the Red Leaf (Hongye) Elementary School team over a visiting team from Wakayama, near Osaka, Japan. This Hongye Village team, made up of Bunun Aborigine youth representing their tiny Taidong County school of just 100 students, earned the right to play Wakayama after winning the islandwide Students' Cup tournament held in Taipei. They then became superstars after their victories over Wakayama at the Taipei Municipal Stadium. The 20,000 fans who managed to get tickets for each of these historic games were joined by an islandwide television audience treated to more than 13 hours of Taiwan Television broadcasts on the first game alone.³⁰ Unfortunately, the

³⁰ Wang Huimin, *Hongye de gushi* [The story of Red Leaf] (Taipei: Minshengbao she, 1994), pp. 66-74.

jubilant at these victories was soon dampened by several revelations. The Red Leaf team included on their roster of 11 boys, five who had already graduated from Hongye Elementary the year previous, and nine who were playing under false names.³¹ Moreover, the Wakayama team was not, as many believed at the time and remember still today, the 1968 youth world champions, although they had handily defeated, 15-3, the real world champs (another Japanese team) shortly before coming to Taiwan. Nonetheless, these great victories by the Taidong County village youths constitute a tremendous moment in modern Taiwanese sports and cultural history, and announced to the world that Taiwan was ready to join, in this realm of competition at least, the powers of world sport.

The next year, 1969, was the first year in which the Little League World Series (operated by the U.S. Little League establishment and held in Williamsport, Pennsylvania) was opened to truly international competition. The youth of Taiwan spared no time in making this tournament a yearly blowout of any and all challengers. These championships, unfortunately, were also plagued by irregularities. It was common knowledge in Taiwan that the 1969 world champions, who competed as the “Taizhong Golden Dragons,” were actually a national all-star team, a fact which clearly violated the Williamsport charter. Only two of the team’s 14 players actually came from Taizhong, while five of the starting players were from Jiayi, and four players were from Tainan. Star Yu Hongkai, from Wuling Village in Taidong, had played as a ringer for the 1968 Red Leaf team, and was recruited from across the island for the 1969 Golden Dragons. Guo Yuanzhi, who went on to become a legend in Japan, pitching for the Chunichi Dragons for 16 years, was also

³¹ Months after these victories, the Red Leaf Elementary Principal, Coach and Head Administrator were all sentenced to a year’s imprisonment (but with two-year suspended sentences) by the Taidong County Local Court for these gross violations. Wang, *Hongye de gushi*, pp. 5-6, 79.

recruited from far Taidong for the World Series.³² The 1970 “Jiayi Seven Tigers” world champions included only seven Jiayi boys, supplemented by five Tainan and two Gaoxiong players.³³ As late as 1979, the Puzi Elementary School Tornadoes world championship team included two ringers from elsewhere in Jiayi County.³⁴

These teams, and it turns out rightfully so, generated great suspicion on the part of American fans unable to fathom the source of this invincible Taiwan baseball dynasty. In fact, by the end of this run, the phrase “Taiwanese Little League baseball,” like “Texas high school football,” became a standard metaphor for those who would use youth sports to achieve victory with no regard for the rules of “fair competition.” Yet this view of their Little League program mattered little to the Taiwanese public of the time – for these triumphs accomplished many things for a Taiwanese people stuck in the unique situation I have described above. Firstly, the sight of these Taiwanese boys annually making mincemeat of the strong and confident American teams was pure bliss to anyone hoping to make some, any, strike back at the American hegemonic cultural, military and geopolitical presence that sought to rearrange Taiwanese society and Asian balances of power so drastically. The Little League baseball enterprise continued to walk the fine line between Japanese-tinged nostalgia and the required “Chinese” identity. The Chuiyang Elementary School team, always a force in their home city of Jiayi, wore caps emblazoned with an interlocked “CY” that was a dead ringer for the Tokyo Yomiuri Giants’ trademark “YG” design.³⁵

One of the most common and most cherished memories from the 1970s-80s among

³² Many at the time contended that the team should have been called the “Jiayi Golden Dragons” instead. Su, *Jiayi bangqiu shihua*, pp. 3-4, 43; Wang, *Hongye de gushi*, p. 48.

³³ Su, *Jiayi bangqiu shihua*, p. 55.

³⁴ Su, *Jiayi bangqiu shihua*, p. 71.

³⁵ Su, *Jiayi bangqiu shihua*, p. 64.

Taiwanese today was the near-annual ritual of staying up through the early morning hours to watch live American satellite broadcasts of their boys doing battle in the Little League World Series. This rapt Taiwan television audience also became the target of explicit messages of Taiwanese nationalism and independence beamed via satellite from Williamsport, this rare safe haven from Guomintang surveillance. In 1970, an airplane flew over the stadium towing a banner provided by Taiwanese Independence activists in the US. Thanks to the generous and curious ABC cameramen on the scene, the sky-high words “Long Live Taiwanese Independence!” flashed across millions of Taiwan television screens for the first time in history. When the ROC government protested and ABC banned any such shots of these planes, the fans of Taiwanese baseball and independence present the next year carried large balloons with streamers that made the same point to the delirious viewers back home in pre-dawn Taiwan. Balloons were banned from the Williamsport premises the next year, so in 1972 the Taiwanese Independence contingent made sure to cheer conspicuously enough to draw the attention of ABC cameras, and let their Taiwan compatriots see the subversive messages drawn on their Taiwan Independence T-shirts. The contention did not end with the TV broadcasts, however; many Williamsport World Series games were also host to violent fights that broke out between the Taiwan Independence and Guomintang loyalist crowds cheering for the same Taiwanese boys.³⁶ Through the manipulation of satellite technology, and the tweaking of the connection between sports and nationalism that the Guomintang itself had tried to disseminate in Taiwan, Little League baseball became one of the most common (and fun) ways to challenge the hegemony of Chinese Nationalist rule.

Finally, the world of baseball was an important site for the expression of strength and pride among Taiwan’s Aborigine tribes. Many of Taiwan’s early championship teams were from

³⁶ Conversation with Shu Wei-Der, 6 May 2000.

the Aborigine areas of eastern Taiwan. These youngsters and their adult followers could only have taken an ironic pleasure in winning such great honors for, and being feted by, the oppressive Guomintang state which only continued to ignore and impoverish these representatives of a pre-Chinese Taiwan past. Yet clearly, this gratifying annual attention paid to the original inhabitants of Taiwan and their baseball prowess was not enough to truly sustain the Aboriginal populations. It is telling that Taiwan's two greatest exports to Japanese baseball, Guo Yuanzhi (Kaku Genji) and Guo Taiyuan (Kaku Taigen), were both Little League icons of Aborigine descent. Both Guos/Kakus left Taiwan as very young men, settled and married in Japan, and only returned to the Taiwan baseball world in the late 1990s after their careers in Japan came to a close.³⁷

The many jumbled and precarious directions along which Taiwanese baseball developed in the first four decades of Guomintang rule did not resemble in the least the neat white straightness of the baseball diamonds that were home to this movement. In the martial law days of unquestionable and unforgiving *waishengren* domination of the Guomintang party and state, baseball was one realm where Taiwanese people could register their own contributions to Taiwan culture and society. This mixture of mild pro-Japanese nostalgia, resistance against Guomintang hegemony in Taiwan and American hegemony in East Asia, and even Aborigine resistance to the double oppression of the *waisheng* and *bensheng* Han presence could all be voiced in the language of baseball. But what made it safe was the Guomintang's own understanding of the role of sports in modern society. Their standard two-part philosophy, developed when the party ruled

³⁷ Many baseball players of Aborigine background (like Wang Guanghui, Chen Yixin, Yang Jieren, or Zheng Xinsheng) thrived in Taiwanese professional baseball in the 1990s. But old stereotypes die hard, and no matter how much glory these Aborigine players have won for Taiwan, they are still treated differently from Han Taiwanese. A recent example is the Taipei Suns Fan Club's coordinated chants of "Savage (*huan-a*), get out of here!" directed at Jiayi-Tainan Braves pitcher Chen Yixin during the 1997 Taiwan Major League Championship Series. Huang Zhaodun, "Fanzai shijian: Taiyang houyuanhui chengqing" [The savage incident: Suns Fan Club offers apology], *Ziyou shibao*, 3 November 1997, p. C8.

China in the late 1920s and 1930s, was that popular participation in sport served to integrate a diverse population into a single nation-state, and that outstanding sporting performances on international stages were valuable opportunities to win national face, sympathy and even allies in the ever-changing world of the 20th century. Thus, baseball represented in many ways a table of negotiation, where Taiwanese baseball communities exchanged measures of integration for measures of independent expression, measures of “Chinese” identity for measures of pro-Japanese nostalgia, and measures of the martial-law autocratic Guomintang state for measures of an independent Taiwanese culture and society.

The Chinese Professional Baseball League: Beginnings, 1990-1994

From its very beginnings a decade ago, professional baseball in Taiwan has always been about connecting Taiwan culture and society to the international. This impulse has been the trend in many aspects of Taiwanese life, and is directly related to the acceleration of many processes working around the world: the rise of transnational capital, globalization of markets, the rise of the People’s Republic of China as a world superpower, Taiwan’s increasing diplomatic isolation, and the trend toward (and fear of) a US-PRC alliance that would sacrifice Taiwan for the mutual gain of these two titans.

It is no coincidence that planning for a Taiwanese professional baseball league began in late 1987,³⁸ the year that martial law was ended in Taiwan. The events of this year marked the end of four decades of naked authoritarian rule by the Guomintang, and signaled the beginning of a new era in Taiwan, where there was now space to redefine identities and historical memories

³⁸ Zeng Wencheng, “Zhibang caochuang, bilu lanlü” [The early years of professional baseball – the hard life of pioneers], *Zhiye bangqiu* 167-168 (25 January - 10 February 1997), p. 22.

once drawn along the lines of Japanese, Chinese and American oppression. It was now no longer enough to nurture fond memories of Japanese colonizers as a means of resistance to Guomindang rule, or to claim small victories against symbols of American imperialism and cultural hegemony. Instead, two different movements had emerged – the search for a uniquely “Taiwanese” identity, and the search for Taiwanese inclusion in the new globalized world order. Both of these movements came together perfectly in the Chinese Professional Baseball League (CPBL, *Zhonghua Zhiye Bangqiu Lianmeng*), which began play in 1990.

The new CPBL consisted of four corporate-owned teams - the Weichuan Dragons, Brother Elephants, President Lions, and Mercuries Tigers.³⁹ These teams’ very uniforms clearly demonstrated the CPBL’s efforts to present a product that was a pleasurable mix of the foreign and the Chinese; the teams’ names and parent companies were represented on the jerseys and caps in various mixtures of English and Chinese lettering (see Figures 2-5).⁴⁰ The four corporate-owned teams did not represent cities, as teams do in most professional leagues; instead, the teams toured up and down the island’s west coast together, playing weekly round-robin series in Taipei, Taizhong and Gaoxiong. Each of these cities (plus Tainan, Xinzhu, and Pingdong, where a few games were scheduled every year) had their own fan clubs organized to support each of the CPBL’s four teams. The enthusiastic rooting of these fan clubs (*houyuanhui*, from the Japanese *kôenkai*) could at times very easily turn violent. The sight of angry fans - Lions fans in the President Corporation’s hometown of Tainan are particularly famed for this - hurling bottles, cans, eggs, and/or garbage at opposing players, or even surrounding the opposing team’s bus in a

³⁹ The Elephants, Dragons and Tigers had existed for years as semi-pro teams in Taiwan.

⁴⁰ For the first half of 1990, the Elephants spelled out their players’ names in romanized lettering on the backs of the jerseys (as Japanese major league teams do). After this experiment, they went back to Chinese characters, for both Taiwanese and foreign players.

mob, was not uncommon in the league's early years. Such a display clearly gave the lie to the notion of a united Taiwan cheering on a united CPBL. Yet the ungrounded nature of this arrangement placed definite limits on the possibility of widespread local or regional fan loyalties to teams.

Another important element of the new CPBL was the presence of foreign players (usually called *yangjiang*, or "foreign generals") culled from the rosters of American Double-A minor league teams.⁴¹ 23 players, American and Latin American in origin, went to Taiwan in the winter of 1989-90 for tryouts. Sixteen were selected to join the CPBL (with a league limit of four *yangjiang* per team). The presence of these players was meant not only to add an international flavor to the league, but also to provide an external stimulus for the improvement of the quality of CPBL play. These foreign players also served as "silent coaches" who could share their knowledge of American strategies and training methods with the Taiwanese players.⁴² Their many contributions allowed the Taiwanese game to become closer in strategy to the more open or risky style of baseball played in the Americas, and less like the conservative game that suited Taiwan so well in its years of Little League dominance (see Figures 6-8).

If these players represented a foreign element which could only be good for the development of baseball in Taiwan, steps were also taken to "Sinicize" their identities as well. Each of the players was given a "Chinese name," usually sounding something (if only vaguely) like the player's original name, and one which usually bestowed fine and admirable qualities on the foreigner. Elvin Rivera, a Dominican pitcher selected by the Tigers, became "Li Wei," Li the

⁴¹ Of the 19 foreigners who played during the CPBL's first season, only one, Elephant pitcher Jose Roman (Cleveland Indians, 1984-86), had major league experience.

⁴² Ex-Milwaukee Brewer Juan Castillo, who came to Taiwan in 1991, served officially as the Lions batting coach. Zeng, "Zhibang caochuang, bilu lanlü," p. 24; Interview with Jungo Bears pitcher Tony

common Chinese surname and Wei meaning “great” or “mighty.” Freddy Tiburcio, the Elephants’ star Dominican outfielder, was called “Di-bo,” or “imperial waves and billows.” Luis Iglesias, the Tigers’ home run champion from Panama, was called “Ying-xia,” or “chivalrous eagle.” These players were often photographed for magazine covers dressed in “traditional” Chinese scholars’ caps and robes, as Taiwan’s baseball public was taught that even in the realm of baseball, a game with explicitly foreign origins, the Chinese ability to “assimilate” (*tonghua*) outsiders and barbarians was as powerful as ever.

Many of these foreign players were also “assimilated” in the very crassest of ways, as many of the foreign players’ “Chinese” names were just advertisements for their products sold by their team’s parent corporation. The Mercuries Tigers inflicted names of noodle dishes (*Qiaofu*, *Quanjiayu*) from their chain restaurants onto pitchers Cesar Mejia and Rafael Valdez. The President Lions did the same with the names *Sheng-mai-ge* (San Miguel beer), *A-Q* (instant noodles), and *Bai-wei* (Budweiser) for pitchers Aguedo Vasquez, Jose Cano, and Ravelo Manzanillo. Later, the China Times Eagles resourcefully used names from their minor corporate sponsors, dubbing pitcher Steve Stoole *Mei-le* (Miller Beer), calling the Afro-Dominican outfielder Jose Gonzalez *Mei-le-hei* (Miller Dark!), and infielder Brian Giles *Ai-kuai* (Alfa Romeo). Practices like this served to maintain some distance between the Taiwanese players and these foreign barbarians, “assimilated” or not.

Real outsiders from the larger world of baseball came to Taiwan to endorse the CPBL enterprise as well, as the league in its early years won several valuable publicity coups. Chunichi Dragons and San Diego Padres minor league teams, and then the Los Angeles Dodgers major league squad came to Taiwan for exhibition series against CPBL teams after the 1991, 1992 and

1993 seasons.⁴³ The presence in Taiwan's ballparks of these representatives of the great American and Japanese baseball traditions only boosted further the status of the CPBL in the eyes of the Taiwanese and foreign baseball communities.

Besides this conscious effort to connect Taiwanese baseball and culture to the greater baseball and cultural worlds of the international, efforts were also made to emphasize the CPBL's local composition in marketing the league. The most direct connection was the presence of former Little League heroes who had won such great honors for Taiwan in the 1970s and early 1980s. Dragons Huang Pingyang and Lin Yizeng, Lions Song Rongtai and Lü Wensheng, Tigers Tu Hongqin and Lin Zhongqiu, and Elephants Li Juming and Hong Yizhong had all been famed national stars as elementary or middle school boys. Yet during their prime years in the 1980s, they then could only play in Japanese or Taiwanese semipro leagues. The CPBL was extremely fortunate to have begun play while this group of national heroes still were in command of most of their skills; after a few years of play, it was obvious that the careers of players like Huang, Song and Tu were heading south. But their presence in the CPBL's first years of play is largely what sustained Taiwanese fans' interest in the league and made the CPBL a viable enterprise.

Other accouterments of "traditional Chinese culture" helped cement the league's special Chinese characteristics as well. Fan favorites like Huang Pingyang, Lin Yizeng and Lion Zeng Zhizhen (known as "The Ninja Catcher") were often featured in magazines that told of their pursuits of self-consciously "Chinese" customs, like drinking fine tea, taking in traditional Taiwanese puppet theater, or collecting teapots or paintings of Bodhidharma (Damo), the legendary founder of the Chan school of Buddhism (see Figures 9-10). Popular television variety

⁴³ In 1991, the Chunichi minor leaguers were joined by the big-league Dragons' two Taiwanese stars Guo Yuanzhi and Chen Dafeng. In 1993, Taiwanese teams beat the Dodgers in two of three games.

shows even featured noted numerologists and geomancers using these “traditional” Chinese sciences to predict the results of upcoming baseball seasons.

Thus, the roots of the CPBL’s early success lay in this important effort to combine the local and global. International symbols of sporting culture were carefully balanced with aspects of the local - expressed through the involvement of particular individuals identified with past Taiwanese sporting successes, or through linguistic or cultural particulars that remained a part of CPBL baseball. This strategy, the key to the CPBL’s successes in the early 1990s, is strikingly different from the model by which Tokyo’s Yomiuri Giants became such a powerful symbol of Japanese pride and strength during the late 1960s and 1970s. Anthropologist William Kelly has outlined the history of the Giants’ nine-year run of consecutive championships won from 1965 to 1973, a reign that “precisely mapped postwar Japan’s double-digit boom years that catapulted the country to the first rank of industrial powers.”⁴⁴ The Giants organization insisted on maintaining a “pure” Japanese team, refusing even to allow the great Japanese-Hawaiian star and three-time batting champion Wally Yonamine to remain a Giant. The Giant cult was constructed atop beliefs of “uniquely Japanese” elements of a “fighting spirit” (*konjô*) and strategies of “managed baseball” that mimicked new forms of corporate organization. Their tremendous successes during this decade became an important brick in the wall of an essentialist, culturally- and racially-defined “Japan” that stood to conquer the economic world.⁴⁵

Yet there is literally no analogue between the cult of the Yomiuri Giants and the rise of professional baseball in Taiwan. For an island with a history and a present as politically and

⁴⁴ William W. Kelly, “Blood and Guts in Japanese Professional Baseball,” in Sepp Linhart and Sabine Frühstück, eds., *The Culture of Japan as Seen Through its Leisure* (Albany: SUNY Press, 1998), p. 105.

⁴⁵ Kelly, “Blood and Guts in Japanese Professional Baseball,” pp. 105-107.

ethnically complicated as Taiwan's, this kind of national or racial chauvinism was impossible. Taiwan professional baseball took the exact opposite route, choosing to bet its fortunes on a wise and fun mixture of international and local cultures and details.

The CPBL's Long Slide, 1995-2000

It is difficult to pinpoint exactly when it was that the CPBL peaked and began its decline, or what exactly caused the league to begin to fall from the successes it had achieved in just a matter of years. But a decline is indisputable, as crowd attendance, which peaked at an average of 6878 fans per game in 1992, had fallen by 1996 to 4548 fans per game, to just 1786 fans per game in 1998.⁴⁶ In 1993, two new teams - the Jungo Bears and the China Times Eagles - joined the CPBL, each loaded with seven young, popular members of Taiwan's 1992 silver medal Olympic baseball team. The league also was actively expanding its schedule into the Xinzhu, Tainan and Pingdong markets. So what drove Taiwan's fans away from the only game in town?

The answer to this question lies in the CPBL's mishandling of this important balance between the local and the international that was so crucial in sustaining public interest in the league. If the original architects of the league had perceived the importance of this dual image, of matching the international and local aspects of Taiwanese baseball to the international and local interests of the 1990s Taiwanese population, those in charge of the league seemed to lose sight of this later on.

The CPBL's main problem, in this light, was its inability to maintain this balance, developing a dependence on international networks that has made the league simply less appealing, and a much more potent reminder of the forces of American cultural hegemony.

Perhaps the most visible form of this dependence, which comes in many forms, is the CPBL's reliance on the foreign ballplayers invited to Taiwan to supplement the native rosters. Although most of these foreign players were Double-A minor leaguers who would never reach the American major leagues, many of them were able to excel in Taiwan. And it became apparent in the league's first year that a team's success could depend heavily on the performance of their foreign "supplements." Teams began putting more emphasis on the foreign element of their roster, seeing it as the quickest path to improvement - as it was certainly easier to waive money at a foreigner with proven skills than to dedicate several years to developing a Taiwanese player from scratch. The situation only got worse when the board of CPBL owners raised the foreign player maximum to seven per team. (By contrast, Japanese and Korean teams are allowed to carry three and two foreigners on their rosters, respectively.) In 1995, this ceiling was raised to ten foreigners per team, and in March 1997, the league owners inexplicably voted to eliminate all limits whatsoever on roster composition!

CPBL attendance peaked in the Olympic summer of 1992, and has fallen consistently as the CPBL has become more reliant on foreign players. It is impossible to ignore the fact that the Taiwanese public has simply lost much interest in a league that the last few years has been so dependent on these foreigners, few of whom deny that they are in Taiwan solely for the relatively high salaries that *yangjiang* are paid there. Few would blame Taiwanese fans for having little interest in a league whose team rosters in 1995 carried more than 44% foreign players, and more than 51% foreigners in 1998!⁴⁷ In 1998, commenting on the dominance of foreign pitchers in the CPBL, a *Liberty Times* columnist summoned up ugly images from modern Chinese history in

⁴⁶ See Table 1 for CPBL and TML attendance figures, 1990-2000.

⁴⁷ Table 2 shows the number of foreign players playing in the CPBL per year, 1990-1998.

calling the league's pitching mound a "foreign concession" (*waiguo zujie*).⁴⁸ Indeed, the predominance of foreign pitchers that season reached ridiculous heights. Of the 100 CPBL pitchers who took the mound that year, just 22 were Taiwanese. The 1998 CPBL champion Weichuan Dragons carried 12 foreign pitchers on their roster, with a combined record of 56 wins, 48 losses, and one tie, but just two Taiwanese pitchers (combined record 0-0-0)!⁴⁹ And not only were a great percentage of the players foreign, but many teams preferred to hire foreign managers, who they hoped would have a greater and more worldly grasp of strategy than native Taiwanese managers. The success of Elephant Manager Yamane Toshida, who led his team to three straight championships from 1992 to 1994, made quite an impression on CPBL owners searching for that extra edge. In 1994, four of the CPBL's six teams had Japanese managers, and in 1995, five teams were managed by Japanese helmsmen!

The baseball community's mixed feelings about these foreigners who took over their league were manifested in many ways. Popular baseball cartoons drawn by artist Ao Youxiang demonstrate many aspects of this ambivalence. Some cartoons show foreign players (particularly black players) as simply big and dumb, unable to comprehend any but the most corporeal of sensations. In one (Figure 11), a black batsman (with grotesquely "Negroid" features of big round eyes and fat lips) is hit in the groin by a pitch. As the batter rushes the mound, players of both teams follow, fearful of the damage to be done to the Chinese pitcher by this enraged black behemoth. But all are stunned when he arrives at the mound, evidently unfazed by pain that

⁴⁸ After 38 CPBL games that year, foreign pitchers had won 35 of the games and thrown 81% of the innings. Wu Qingzheng, "Zhonghua Zhibang toudouqi lun wei waiguo zujie" [Calling the CPBL pitching mound a foreign concession], *Ziyou shibao*, 25 March 1998, p. C8.

⁴⁹ Of the second-place Sinon Bulls' 11 pitchers, nine were foreign. The foreign pitchers' combined record was 57-45-2 that year, and the two Taiwanese pitchers' record was 1-0-0.

would fell any normal man, and thanks the pitcher for breaking up his kidney stones.⁵⁰ Another cartoon (Figure 12) shows a black baserunner, another Stepin Fetchit-lookalike who styles himself “the American stolen base king,” vainly assured in his attempt to steal second base. But he is fended off by a wily Chinese shortstop, who turns the silly American scampering back to first base by waving a plate of “stinky tofu” his way.⁵¹ It is unfortunate that resistance to the overwhelming foreign presence in the CPBL had to be delivered in terms of embarrassing racial stereotypes of the clever or rational Chinese vs. the physically-gifted but dim-witted black man. But these cartoons, and the sentiments they conveyed, did serve to show the degree to which many felt betrayed by what was supposed to be Taiwan’s own baseball league.

In an editorial written in March 1997, Taiwan sportswriter Zhang Wenxiong addressed in a different manner the problem of the dominance of foreign players in Taiwan baseball. He credited these *yangjiang* with aiding the development of pro baseball in Taiwan. However, he reminded fans that the use of these foreigners truly came down to one question: Would these “Triple-A [minor league] foreigners (*laowai*)” ever be able to help Taiwan win an Olympic medal in baseball?⁵² In terms of national loyalty, or of the crucial international baseball stage, these foreign players could never truly help Taiwan. Instead, it was up to the Taiwanese baseball community to save itself.

Fans’ own wishes for a more Taiwan-centric CPBL can be seen in voting for the annual

⁵⁰ Ao Youxiang, *Zhibang kuangxiangqu* [Pro baseball rhapsody] (Taipei: Zhonghua Zhibang shiye gufen youxian gongsi, 1994), p. 28.

⁵¹ Ao, *Zhibang kuangxiangqu*, p. 42.

⁵² By that time in the season, 11 CPBL games had been played, with foreign pitchers earning all 11 victories. Editorial, *Minshengbao*, 9 March 1997, p. 5.

All-Star Game. In a 1997 season marked by foreign dominance more than any other,⁵³ fans selected not a single foreigner to the All-Star teams, picking marginal (at best) players like Whales outfielder He Xianfan (season batting average .218) and pitcher Huang Qingjing (1 win and 9 losses, 5.65 ERA) to the teams, over the dozens of foreign players who were more deserving by any statistical standards. From artists to columnists to fans themselves, the CPBL community has for years been making explicit statements about the kind of local flavor they wish the league had retained since its more successful early years. The presence of these foreign players and managers achieved one of the original goals of this *yangjiang* strategy, in that the quality of CPBL play improved greatly over the league's first few years. However, it is telling that as the CPBL improved in technical terms, it simultaneously became a subject of such little interest to Taiwanese baseball fans.

Even the baseball clubs themselves seemed to enjoy taking unsubtle jabs at the foreign players who had overtaken the CPBL game. After the practice had been prohibited for years, some teams resumed in 1998 the awarding of outright, even crudely, commercial Chinese names to foreign players. Al Osuna, who pitched for the Astros, Dodgers and Padres in the American major leagues, was signed by the Mercuries Tigers in 1998, and given the Chinese name *Na-po-li* – the same name as the local pizza restaurant which would be giving away 100 free pizzas every night Osuna started a game.⁵⁴ And the Sinon Bulls, owned by the huge Xingnong Agrochemical

⁵³ Another extreme example can be seen in the case of the China Times Eagles, whose four Taiwanese pitchers did not collect a single victory in 1997. They had a combined zero wins and two losses, while the eight foreign pitchers on the staff were 41-49. The foreign pitchers pitched 758 innings to the Taiwanese pitchers' 94.2 innings.

Another indication of the foreign dominance of the CPBL in 1997 can be seen in the season statistical leaders. In the categories below there were the following numbers of foreigners in the top 10: batting average 8, home runs 8, runs batted in 7, victories 7, earned run average 6.

⁵⁴ *Ziyou shibao*, 28 May 1998, p. C10.

Corporation, in 1997 cleverly named almost all of its foreign players after the conglomerate's best-selling pesticides!⁵⁵

There are other ways in which an overdependence on international parties and networks has hurt the CPBL in the eyes of its fans. The Sinon Bulls management has long-standing ties with Los Angeles Dodgers owner Peter O'Malley, a relationship that originated with the team's original incarnation as the Jungo Bears. In recent years these ties have intensified. Since 1997, the Bulls have held their spring training camps at the famed Dodgers Baseball Academy at Campo Las Palmas in the Dominican Republic. In February 1997, the Bulls announced that they and the Dodgers planned to cooperate in building a Professional Baseball Academy in Xiamen, Fujian Province, China, based on the model of the Dodgers' Dominican facility.⁵⁶ This Dodger influence, however, was viewed by many Taiwan fans as more threatening and destabilizing than this all-American franchise would have liked. In May 1997, when the Bulls decided to fire manager Kim Yong Woon and his coaches, hiring outfielder Wang Junlang as player-manager, rumors flew through the CPBL that a group of L.A. Dodger coaches soon would be coming to take over the team. In fact, Teddy Martinez, a coach in the Dodger system, did arrive soon after to serve as Manager Wang's "special assistant." Martinez stayed well within his defined "assistant" role, but this instance showed just how fragile the public imagined Taiwanese control of the team to be. If the imagined Dodger takeover did not in fact take place, it is still useful to see just how much power the Dodger organization, one of the most fitting symbols of American paternalism and cultural hegemony,

⁵⁵ Xie Daiying, "Libashan, Anshouduo tongtong shi nongyao" [*Li-ba-shan, An-shou-duo* and the rest are all pesticides], *Ziyou shibao*, 11 March 1998, p. C6.

⁵⁶ Deng Zhengdun, "Xingnong Dao-qi lianshou, nichuang zhibang xuexiao" [Sinon and Dodgers unite in planning professional baseball academy], *Taiwan Ribao*, 17 February 1997, p. 9.

A week later, O'Malley attended the CPBL's Opening Night in Tainan and addressed the crowd, calling the game "the 1997 Opening Game for professional baseball the world over." *Taiwan Ribao*, 24 February 1997,

was imagined to have in this Taiwanese baseball league on the other side of the Pacific Ocean. And in fact, this ominous view of the Dodgers proved to hold much truth, when in January 1999 the Los Angeles team signed the 21-year-old Taiwanese superstar Chen Chin-feng to a seven-year contract in apparent violation of all Chinese Taipei (ROC) Amateur Baseball Association regulations!⁵⁷

Other juridical events also demonstrate how pathetically dependent the CPBL had become on symbols of the international. In December 1997, the official agent of American Major League Baseball (MLB) in Taiwan filed suit against the CPBL for copyright infringement, with regard to the CPBL's official league logo. The CPBL logo, which was designed (and approved by ROC government agencies) in 1994, is essentially a mirror image of the famous MLB logo, a red, white and blue silhouette of a batter, bat cocked behind his head (see Figures 13-14). The CPBL's plagiarism was so obvious that the ROC Administrative Court (*Xingzheng Fayuan*) officially criticized the CPBL for having such little regard for the American MLB copyright.⁵⁸

All these critiques of the CPBL's efforts to make themselves into a baseball league integrated into world sporting and cultural networks, are not to say that some in the CPBL did not attempt to appeal to the local sentiment that is such an important part of Taiwanese baseball culture. The old Jungo Bears, owned by construction magnate Chen Yiping, was the first team to explicitly campaign for the loyalties of a specific city - Taichung, the home of Chen's construction dynasty. Bears hats (designed to look like the green and gold caps worn by the then-dominant Oakland Athletics) featured a "TC" (for "Taichung"), and Bears uniforms sported the Chinese

p. 9.

⁵⁷ *Taiwan ribao*, 6 January 1999, p. B7; *Taiwan ribao*, 7 January 1999, p. B7.

⁵⁸ Huang Bochuan, "Shangbiao zhan dashu: Zhonghua Lianmeng dei chongxin sheji" [Defeated in the battle of corporate logos: The CPBL forced to design anew], *Ziyou shibao*, 30 December 1997, p. C8; Wu Qingzheng, "Zhonghua Lianmeng shangbiao mingnian huanzhuang" [CPBL corporate logo to change next year], *Ziyou shibao*, 31 December 1997, p. C8.

characters for their home city. No small amount of local enthusiasm was generated for the Bears in Taizhong and nearby Zhanghua. However, the team's perpetually lousy performance, directly related to owner Chen's penny-pinching, control-mad and condescending ways, effectively killed this chance for the CPBL to make a meaningful local connection.

Jiayi, described earlier as the home of Taiwanese baseball, became another focus of the CPBL enterprise. Jiayi's new 14,000-seat municipal baseball stadium was completed in 1997, with 24 CPBL games scheduled there for that summer. The new China Trust Whales, the CPBL's seventh team, were to be based in this city, which happened to be the hometown of Whales manager Li Laifa, another young 1970s star who played pro ball in Japan and managed Taiwan's 1992 Olympic team. These events, and the publication of a book on the history of Jiayi baseball, all served to bring Jiayi back into the forefront of the Taiwanese baseball world. Unfortunately, the gambling scandal that broke in late January 1997, and that brought domestic and international disgrace to the CPBL, was centered in Jiayi. This scandal revolved around the fixing of games by ballplayers in return for huge payoffs – often double or triple a player's monthly salary! Three China Times Eagles players from Jiayi - Zhuo Kunyuan, Cai Minghong and Zhang Zhengxian, all members of the 1992 Olympic team⁵⁹ - were at the core of that team's game-fixing plans with powerful Xiao family crime gang of Jiayi.⁶⁰ Jiayi native Jiang Taiquan, 1992 Olympic captain and a former President Lions star who was to join the Whales for their inaugural season, was indicted for fixing his team's games, also for the Jiayi Xiao clan.⁶¹ Lions

⁵⁹ Cai and Zheng were also members of the Puzi Tornados team which won the 1979 Little League World Series. Su, *Jiayi bangqiu shihua*, p. 72.

⁶⁰ The three Xiao brothers Dengwang, Dengshi and Dengbiao served as Jiayi City Assembly Speaker, Jiayi City Agricultural Cooperative Manager, and Jiayi County Assembly Speaker, respectively. *Lianhebao*, 14 February 1997, p. 3.

⁶¹ In one game (Lions vs. Bulls, 28 August 1996), the Xiao gang lost some NT\$200 million (US\$7.3

outfielder Wu Linlian, another Jiayi native, went missing without a trace after he became a target of investigation in the scandal.⁶²

This pathetic scandal, which was later found to be linked to gambling interests in Hong Kong and Macao as well as southern Taiwan, led to the near unraveling of the league as the baseball public learned the sordid details of this enterprise. Some of the game's greatest and most popular stars were implicated for accepting NT\$300,000-500,000 (US\$11,000-18,000) per game that they threw for the local gangs handling the "gambling" on each team. The China Times Eagles, dubbed the "Black Eagles" after it was revealed that the whole team was involved in the game-throwing (for a single team fee of NT\$7.5 million, or US\$270,000, per game), was suspended from the league in late 1997.⁶³

This scandal, and the defection of many of the CPBL's remaining stars to the rival Taiwan Major League (below), were a tragic one-two combination for the league. The CPBL tried over the next two years to find new ways of appealing to Taiwan's increasingly inattentive public. Yet neither new slogans for the league ("Continuing our traditions and looking to the future," "Exciting and good baseball, extremely lively"),⁶⁴ promotional events with movie star Kevin Costner and Vice President Lien Chan,⁶⁵ nor even plans for the Sinon Bulls and Weichuan Dragons to play a round-robin series with the PRC National Team in Xiamen,⁶⁶ were enough to

million) when the Lions "accidentally" won the game, after pitcher Guo Jinxing and outfielder Jiang Taiquan assured the gamblers that the Lions would lose. *Taiwan ribao*, 14 February 1997, pp. 3, 9; *Lianhebao*, 14 February 1997, p. 3.

⁶² *Taiwan ribao*, 12 February 1997, p. 9.

⁶³ *Taiwan ribao*, 2 February 1997, p. 1; *Ziyou shibao*, 17 November 1997, p. C8.

⁶⁴ *Taiwan ribao*, 6 February 1999, p. B8.

⁶⁵ *Huaxun xinwenwang (Taiwan Today News Network)*, *Titan fengyun*, 20 January 1998; *Ziyou shibao*, 6 February 1998, p. C6.

⁶⁶ *Taiwan ribao*, 31 July 1998, p. 20; *Ziyou shibao*, 1 August 1998, p. C8.

convince Taiwan's baseball public of the league's relevance. By the 1999 season, fan attendance for most games was below 1000. One day in October 1999, the two scheduled CPBL games (Lions vs. Elephants in Taipei, Dragons vs. Tigers in Xinzhuang) drew 176 and 116 fans respectively!⁶⁷ During the winter after the 1999 season, the league lost two more teams, as the Mercuries Tigers and three-time defending champions Weichuan Dragons both cited financial pressures in folding their baseball operations.⁶⁸

This, then, is the story of the fall of the once-promising Chinese Professional Baseball League, now reduced to just four teams. Having been established at an important turning point in modern Taiwan history, the late 1980s, when Taiwan's society, culture and Taiwanese identity itself were being radically redrawn, the CPBL originally was able to capitalize on and define the trends of the times. It held great appeal for many in Taiwan, who sought both to explore and learn more about the world that was now so much more accessible to them, and also to finally establish, without fear of government reprisal, what it really meant to be "Taiwanese." The league's attempt to establish connections with international baseball and cultural networks, while at the same time retaining a self-consciously local identity, was exactly the touch needed at that time. However, the league's popularity went into decline when this fine balance was lost by careless and short-sighted team owners. Teams became too dependent on foreign players, who were unknown to Chinese fans, often had condescending attitudes toward life in Taiwan, and made little secret of the fact that they were there only for the high salaries. This overdependence on the foreign only served to make the CPBL seem a slave to the hegemonic forces of American

⁶⁷ *Shijie ribao*, 8 October 1999, p. B6.

⁶⁸ If nothing else, the downsizing to four CPBL teams has solved the problem of foreign players' dominance of the league. Where there were too few good Taiwanese players to fill seven CPBL team rosters, prompting the need for so many *yangjiang*, there are enough to fill four. As of the 2000 season,

sport which the CPBL was supposed to mediate and resist in the first place. Local municipal connections, which were originally tenuous at best, due to the fact that teams did not play a majority of their games in a particular city, were pursued as a solution to the league's declining population. But this answer was soon buried by poor management, the increasing power and reach of local gangster activity in Taiwan, and the corruption of players willing to sell out their team, their fans, and their sport by throwing games for these local mob figures.

Taiwan Major League, 1996-2000

In December 1995, a new chapter in the story of Taiwan baseball began. A group of investors, led by Qiu Fusheng and Chen Shengtian of the Era Communications and Sampo Electronics dynasties, announced the formation of a new Naluwan Corporation that would operate a Taiwan Major League (TML, *Taiwan Da Lianmeng*) to begin play in 1997. Qiu had been a major player in the Taiwan baseball world ever since his television network TVBS began broadcasting CPBL games in 1994, bringing nightly baseball action into Taiwan homes for the first time ever. While his network still had a year left on its contract with the still-popular CPBL, Qiu began putting into effect plans to create a new kind of professional baseball league for Taiwan's fans.⁶⁹ And it did not take long for Qiu to convince the baseball community in Taiwan, skeptical at first of what sounded like merely another rash publicity stunt, that his TML was for real.

What Qiu proposed was not just another baseball league for Taiwan, a copycat CPBL Part

CPBL teams only carry two foreign players at a time.

⁶⁹ Gao Lisan, "Yong mengxiang ji xinxin, dazao di er ge wangguo" [Using dreams and faith to build a second kingdom], *Naluwan zhoubao* 5 (4 January 1997), p. 2; Jiang Dongqu, "Qiu Fusheng jiaoluan yi chi chunshui?" [Has Qiu Fusheng mixed up a once-pure pool of water?], *Zhiye bangqiu* 167-

II. Instead, his vision for the TML was based largely on his observations of what the CPBL had done wrong since its peak in 1990-94, determining to build the TML via several important measures that the short-sighted CPBL owners had never taken. In short, the Taiwan Major League has managed to combine quite well the important combination, which I have described above, of the local and the international. The commercial success which the TML has enjoyed since its inaugural season of 1997 is clearly due to the careful balancing of these two realms, a balance which reflects closely the dual trends in contemporary Taiwanese society of globalization and the search for a “Taiwanese” identity.

I would suggest that the dialectic between these two trends of globalization and a local Taiwanese identity is the main force that drives contemporary Taiwan society and culture. Attention to, and pride in, the unique aspects of Taiwanese life and culture, and to the unique contributions that Taiwan can make to today’s world, justifies a place for Taiwan in the international community. Likewise, the pursuit of international (and often specifically American or Japanese) trends and symbols can also be understood as solidifying a status for a Taiwan independent of the PRC and its threats of reunification. In these ways, then, a mastery of the balance between the uniquely Taiwanese and the international or universal is necessary for the success of any cultural, social, commercial or political enterprise in *fin-de-siecle* Taiwan. And the Taiwan Major League, an endeavor that fit all of these categories, was built upon this important balance.

Contacts to foreign baseball networks, as with the CPBL, have been an important priority for the TML. In April and May 1996, Chen Shengtian and other top TML officials traveled to Japan and the United States, meeting and making important top-level connections with

representatives of both country's league offices, and top individual teams like the Orix Blue Wave and the Atlanta Braves.⁷⁰ A deal made with the International Division of America's Major League Baseball (MLB) has sent distinguished coaches like Bill Plummer, Greg Riddoch, Fernando Arroyo and Jim Lefebvre to serve as official MLB advisors to the league's teams. The TML sent all eight of its umpires to the MLB-approved Brinkman-Froemming Umpire School in Florida for a 31-day training session.⁷¹ Similar arrangements were made with the Japanese major leagues, via the connections of Guo Taiyuan, the 1970s Taiwanese Little League star who pitched for 12 years for Japan's Seibu Lions, and who now works for the TML as a "high-level consultant."⁷²

The TML has worked to avoid being overwhelmed by the American influence that came to plague the CPBL so. To be sure, TML teams have employed dozens of American and Latin American players in their quest for championships, and the league does make the most of its connections to American baseball, even playing "Take Me Out To the Ballgame" during the middle of the seventh inning of each TML game. Yet the league has also made no secret of its preference for what it calls a "Japanese way" (*Heshi fengge*) or "Oriental wind" (*Dongyang feng*) in recruiting Japanese coaches and players.⁷³ In recruiting foreign players, TML team officials admit their fondness of Japanese players as well, praising their skill and personal discipline that make them "more manageable" than Latin American ballplayers.⁷⁴ In this way, these gestures to a

⁷⁰ Gao, "Yong mengxiang ji xinxi," p. 2.

⁷¹ Seven of them were former CPBL umpires. *Taiwan Ribao*, 5 February 1997, p. 9.

⁷² For example, Kakenuno Masayuki, famed "Mr. Tiger" of Japan's Hanshin franchise, served as "visiting coach" for the TML during spring training 1998. Also, the Seibu Lions came to Taiwan after the end of the 1998 season to play a three-game exhibition series against TML teams.

⁷³ *Taiwan ribao*, 14 August 1998, p. 20; *Taiwan ribao*, 30 December 1998, p. B7.

⁷⁴ Zhang Guoqin, "Ri qiuyuan haoyong, Naluwan zhidao" [Taiwan Major League knows the value

shared Taiwanese-Japanese past and future thus can also serve as a marker of the TML's cosmopolitan distinctiveness.

Unlike the CPBL, however, the TML has by no means allowed these important and productive connections with the international to overshadow the league's explicitly "Taiwanese" character.⁷⁵ Where the CPBL clung to dry stereotypes of "traditional China," the TML's identity is squarely based in Taiwan's unique culture and history. The name of the Naluwan Corporation which runs the TML, and the names of the four teams - Agan (*Jin'gang*, Robots), Fala (*Leigong*, Thunder Gods), Gida (*Taiyang*, Suns) and Luka (*Yongshi*, Braves) are taken from the languages of Taiwan's Aborigine tribes who, as described above, have made such great contributions to the history of Taiwan baseball. Team uniforms were designed to reflect "the special characteristics of the Aborigine peoples," but also only after "consideration of the colors and design of professional baseball uniforms of other nations" (see Figures 16-17).⁷⁶ In case these measures did not make the Taiwan-centric flavor of the league distinctive enough, the TML chose as its 1999 league slogan: "Focus on Taiwan, The Local Comes First" (*Taiwan youxian, Bentu di yi*).⁷⁷

Another important choice made by the TML was to follow what it calls a "territorial philosophy" (*shudi zhuyi*), where each team has a city or region which it calls home, unlike the CPBL, whose teams never enjoyed a true "home team advantage." The TML teams, like teams in

of Japanese players], *Huaxun Xinwenwang* (*Taiwan Today News Network*), *Titan Fengyun*, 13 June 2000, <http://tnn.com/cna/000613/sp09.html>.

⁷⁵ Like the CPBL, the TML suffered from a glut of foreign players in 1997, with 42.7% of the league's players coming from abroad. But unlike the CPBL, who have put their limit at 12 foreign players per team for 1998, the TML wisely lowered this limit to seven *yangjiang* per team for 1998, which lowered the ratio of foreign players on TML rosters to less than 30%. *Ziyou shibao*, 13 October 1997, p. C8.

⁷⁶ "Qiuyuan quan chong mote'er: zhanpao shanliang xianshen" [Ballplayers moonlighting as models – battle gear unveiled in its glory], *Naluwan zhoubao* 7 (1 February 1997), p. 3.

⁷⁷ *Taiwan ribao*, 4 December 1998, p. B6.

any conventional pro sports league, play one half of their games in their home city or region - the Suns in Taibei, the Robots in Taizhong, the Braves in Jiayi-Tainan, and the Thunder Gods in Gaoxiong-Pingdong. The “territorial” doctrine of *shudi zhuyi* dictates that teams take these “home” connections seriously. Before the 1997 season, teams took part in New Years’ ceremonies in their home cities, and took oaths before city officials to serve as loyal and morally upright representatives of these cities. The Robots’ team oath, taken on 17 January 1997 before Taizhong Municipal Assembly Speaker Guo Yansheng and Vice Speaker Zhang Liaogui, went as follows:

1. We will love and cherish Taizhong, and will work together with our Taizhong neighbors to promote the baseball movement.
2. We will sink roots in Taizhong, and will join together with our Taizhong neighbors in working for the public good.
3. We will have the fervent spirit of a rainbow, and are determined to win the highest glories in this first baseball season for our Taizhong neighbors.
4. Our hearts are full of sincerity, and we will work together with our Taizhong neighbors to create a healthy baseball movement.
5. We will play conscientiously and diligently, vowing to work with our Taizhong neighbors to make this the new home of “power baseball” (*qiangli bangqiu*).⁷⁸

The Jiayi-Tainan Braves took their municipal vows seriously as well, cancelling one of their 1997 preseason games against the Thunder Gods, so that players could attend *miaohui* temple festivals in Beigang, Xingang, Puzi, and Dongshi during the Lantern Festival in late February.⁷⁹ In March 1999, the TML itself cited its loyalty to the “home-team” philosophy by purchasing 100,000 pounds of coconuts from Pingdong’s Yenong Corporation to distribute to fans at that week’s games in Gaoxiong, Jiayi and Taizhong.⁸⁰ And these hometown loyalties took on more significance with the

⁷⁸ “Jin’gang chuan qing, xiangqin xian’ai” [Robots profess their devotion, local folk present their love], *Naluwan zhoubao* 7 (1 February 1997), p. 6.

⁷⁹ *Taiwan ribao*, 12 February 1997, p. 9.

⁸⁰ *Taiwan ribao*, 24 March 1999, p. B6.

tragic earthquake that struck central Taiwan in September 1999. The Taizhong Robots quickly dubbed themselves “The Disaster Area Team,” and set up their own Robots Van that delivered disinfectants, vitamins and medicines to the residents of the epicenter at Zhongliao Village, Nantou County.⁸¹

The TML has also made efforts to connect itself directly with the existing baseball networks and communities in Taiwan. In its first season, the Naluwan Corporation established a *chengbang* (semi-pro) team to serve as a minor-league feeder team to TML clubs, something the CPBL had not done in its eight years of existence. The TML also has publicly criticized the CPBL for what it saw as the unjust and wrongful releases given by the league to 39 former players, including several former Little League heroes like Tu Hongqin, Deng Yaohua and Huang Shiming.⁸²

Another important, and controversial, way in which the TML has set down a firm foundation is via the league’s explicit ties to local and national politics. From its very beginnings, the TML has made clear its intentions to use the power of local politicians, and the “authentic Taiwanese” credibility that this would afford, to its advantage. In February 1996, the TML named Jian Mingjing, Taiwan Television chairman and former Taiwan Provincial Assembly

⁸¹ *Shijie ribao*, 8 October 1999, p. B6.

The Robots were not the only team that contributed to the earthquake victims. Jiayi-Tainan Braves Manager Du Fuming auctioned his 1997 championship ring for NT\$100,000 (US\$3200), and Taipei Suns infielder Lin Kunhan auctioned off his 1992 Olympic silver medal, both donating the proceeds to earthquake charities. “Naluwan mukuan baiwan yuan zhenzai” [TML donates one million NT to relieve earthquake victims], *Huaxun Xinwenwang (Taiwan Today News Network)*, *Titan Fengyun*, 27 September 1999, <http://ttnn.com/cna/990927/sp05.html>. The CPBL also held a fundraiser exhibition game against the Taiwan national baseball squad, donating 2.55 million NT (US\$82,000) in proceeds to earthquake charities. “Zhibang vs. chengbang zhenzai yisai, mukuan yu erbai wushi wan” [CPBL vs. National Team disaster benefit game nets over 2.5 million NT], *Huaxun Xinwenwang (Taiwan Today News Network)*, *Titan Fengyun*, 3 October 1999, <http://ttnn.com/cna/991003/sp14.html>.

⁸² *Taiwan ribao*, 16 November 1996, p. 9.

Speaker, as League Chairman, and also named Legislative Yuan Vice Chairman Wang Jinping as the TML Vice Chairman.⁸³ These explicit connections continued, and even intensified, during the TML's inaugural 1997 season. ROC President Lee Teng-hui threw out the ceremonial first pitch at the TML's Opening Night, held in Jiayi on 28 February. For the next two weeks, the league's inaugural games in Taiwan's other baseball cities were graced by the presence of, and their first pitches thrown, by political heavyweights like Provincial Governor James Soong, Gaoxiong Mayor Wu Dunyi, DPP Chairman Xu Xinliang, and Taibei County Magistrate You Qing. As one *Liberty Times* writer summed up these connections, indeed "Politics + Baseball = Taiwan Major League."⁸⁴

It did not take long, in this important election year, for an even more powerfully symbiotic relationship to develop between the TML and Taiwan's ambitious city- and county-level politicians. As early as April, more than seven months before the elections were held, politicians began "chartering" (*baochang*) TML games held in their local baseball parks, buying up large numbers of game tickets and distributing them to their constituents. Taizhong DPP mayoral candidate Zhang Wenying was the first to use this strategy, and she was quickly followed by Zhanghua County Magistrate Ruan Gangmeng, who treated more than 1000 potential voters to a Robots-Thunder Gods game in nearby Taizhong.⁸⁵ Politicians all over Taiwan used this tactic in order to cash in on the votes of the island's baseball fans, and also to "show their power" (*zaoshi*) by their ability to fill a ballpark with their supporters. Even two of the TML's Championship Series games were chartered, one by Taidong County Magistrate Chen Jiannian, who happens to

⁸³ Gao, "Yong mengxiang ji xinxin," p. 2.

⁸⁴ Xu Zhengyang, "Zhengzhi + bangqiu = Naluwan" [Politics + Baseball = Taiwan Major League], *Ziyou shibao*, 8 November 1997, p. C8.

be the son of Taiwan baseball legend Chen Gengyuan, a star of the 1931 Kanô team. Magistrate Chen even included in his successful 1997 election platform the goal of rebuilding the once-proud Red Leaf Elementary School baseball dynasty that brought such glory to Taidong County 30 years ago. Other successful candidates, like Gaoxiong County Magistrate Yu Zhengxian (now known as “The Baseball Magistrate”) and Taipei County Magistrate Su Zhenchang, also made great political hay in 1997 of their efforts to build new professional baseball parks in their home districts.⁸⁶

The baseball/politics connection in Jiayi was even more intense. Jiayi County Magistrate Li Yajing decided early on in his re-election efforts to link his campaign squarely to the success of the Jiayi-Tainan Braves, the TML’s charter franchise. (It is owned by TML founder Qiu Fusheng’s Era Communications.) Braves Manager Zhao Shiqiang registered as an official member of Li’s KMT campaign team, and he and his coaching staff put in tireless hours drinking with, feting and entertaining Jiayi County’s many power brokers, and participating in local religious festivals.⁸⁷ The Braves’ capturing of the TML championship in early November certainly did nothing to hurt Li, who weeks later also captured the Jiayi County election by a slim margin over his DPP opponent.⁸⁸

The most spectacular demonstrations of the TML’s distinctively “Taiwanese” character come in two of the league’s trademarks. The first was its “tradition” of holding its season openers on 28 February at the Jiayi Municipal Stadium. Little explanation needs be given of the

⁸⁵ Xu, “Zhengzhi + bangqiu,” p. C8.

⁸⁶ “‘Bangqiu xianzhang anquan shanglei,’ Bangyun zhanshang defen weizhi” [“The Baseball Magistrate safely reaches base,” Baseball movement moves into scoring position], *Huaxun Xinwenwang* (Taiwan Today News Network), *Titan Fengyun*, 1 December 1997; Xu, “Zhengzhi + bangqiu,” p. C8.

⁸⁷ Xu, “Zhengzhi + bangqiu,” p. C8.

colossal significance of this date in Taiwan history. But the TML stripped the powerful date of the anti-Nationalist/*waishengren* venom that marked observances of the 1947 massacre for almost five decades, instead, transforming “228” into a celebration of everything that is truly “Taiwanese.” As mentioned above, President Lee Teng-hui threw out the first pitch at the 1997 Opening Game, after ignoring the CPBL’s repeated invitations for him to appear at their opening game, as he had the previous season (see Figure 18).⁸⁹ Leaders of Taiwan’s nine Aborigine tribes also took part in the game’s opening ceremonies. The decision to honor Jiayi with this tradition (and with the TML’s marquee team, the Braves), was a very conscious one as well, as the TML pays its respects to this “baseball capital” of Taiwan. The game itself, between the hometown Braves and the Taibei Suns, featured a matchup between starting pitchers Chen Yixin and Huang Pingyang, the CPBL’s two finest pitchers during the 1990s.

The symbolism of the TML’s new “228 Opening Game” tradition is powerful and complex. The TML’s 1997 opener showed off the league’s international connections, with official representatives of the American, Japanese and Korean major baseball leagues, and stars like Jackie Chan, in attendance. But the chief emphasis of the “228 Opening Game” is clearly on the local, the “Taiwanese.” Where the CPBL, perhaps constrained by the politics of the late 1980s and early 1990s, presented itself as a “Chinese” baseball league, the TML did everything it could to be a truly “Taiwanese” league. Local politics, local religion, tribute to the aboriginal tribes of Taiwan, and even modern Taiwanese history’s most sacred date, 28 February, were all included in the elaborate rituals of the new Taiwan Major League. Participation in the

⁸⁸ *China News Digest* (Global News, No. GL97-162), 1 December 1997.

⁸⁹ “Zhonghua Zhibang kaiqiu zhao A-bian” [CPBL after Mayor Chen Shui-bian to throw out first pitch], *Huaxun Xinwenwang* (*Taiwan Today News Network*), *Titan Fengyun*, 21 January 1998.

international sport of baseball, and impressive connections to powerful baseball networks all over the world, created a cosmopolitan image for the TML that the CPBL, for all its attempts to do so, could never cultivate. Yet the celebration of the local that each TML game is, is what guaranteed the success of the TML. The league started with a few big-name players, but a lower general quality of baseball than the old CPBL. The TML has consistently outdrawn the CPBL, however, one random (but telling) example being one night in September 1998, when 14,385 Jiayi fans attended a TML Braves-Robots game, compared to crowds of 629 and 1113 that showed up for CPBL games in Taipei and Gaoxiong!⁹⁰ In today's Taiwan, where people are clearly aware of the stake involved in creating a uniquely local and particular (yet internationally recognized) Taiwan, this attention to the local, this "Focus on Taiwan," is required of any social, cultural, political or commercial enterprise. Much more than just a baseball league, the TML is very much all of these things, and has designed a Taiwan identity for the early 21st century that grasps and makes use of the local and the global, the Taiwanese and the international.

Finally, the Taiwan Major League's official theme song, "Naluwan - True Heroes" (*Naluwan - Chéng-keng ê Eng-hiông*) is perhaps the finest example of the fascinating mixture of historical and cultural legacies that makes Taiwan society so unique and dynamic, and so difficult to fit within most standard models of historical, economic, cultural, social or political development. The TML anthem, supposedly based on rhythms and patterns of several types of Aborigine tribal songs,⁹¹ consists of lyrics (see below) in Mandarin, Taiwanese, English, Japanese and Aborigine languages:

⁹⁰ *Lianhebao*, 23 September 1998, p. 29.

⁹¹ The official recording of the anthem, which was made into a baseball music video, and also sold in stores on a Naluwan CD, was performed by seven Aborigine singers. "Zhenggang de yingxiong' qianguang xuanchuan tantou" ["True Heroes" attacking the publicity beachheads], *Naluwan zhoubao* 5 (4

“NALUWAN -- True Heroes”

Take charge - the fervent spirit of the rainbow,
 Our hearts are filled - with great fire shining bright,
 Struggle on - with hopes that never die,
 Start anew - a space for us alone.
 Fight! Fight! Fight, fight! Speed just like the wind,
 K! K! K! Power stronger than all,
Homu-ran batta - truly strong and brave,
 Aaa ... Na-Lu-Wan, the true heroes!⁹²

One could say that each singing, each playing of this league anthem becomes a neat and tidy re-creation of the last several centuries of Taiwan history and culture. To be sure, little room for critical analysis of, or retrospection on, this history is allowed in a short and rousing theme song like this. But with all aspects of its enterprise, including this theme song, the TML has sought to portray itself as the true heirs, and “the true heroes,” of the complicated history of Taiwan and the proud “Taiwanese” identity that it has produced at the end of the 20th century.

Conclusion

Recent events have only seen more confirmations of the centrality of baseball in modern Taiwanese history and culture, and also understanding Taiwan’s place in the international community. Following their ventures into Japanese and Korean baseball worlds, the American major leagues have discovered Taiwanese baseball as another new source of talented players. Outfielder Chin-Feng Chen and pitcher Hong-Chih Kuo are, respectively, the first- and third-ranked prospects in the Los Angeles Dodgers rich minor-league system. The Colorado Rockies have very high hopes for their young Taiwanese pitcher Chin-Hui Tsao (see Figure 20), and the

January 1997), p. 5.

⁹² The first four lines of the anthem are in Mandarin, the fifth in Taiwanese, the sixth in English and Taiwanese, the seventh in Japanese and Taiwanese, the eighth in “Aborigine” and Taiwanese. Huang Jianming, “‘Naluwan -- Zhenggang de yingxiong’ (Naluwan Zhibang Lianmeng zhuti gequ)” [“Naluwan –

New York Yankees just this May signed Taipei Physical Education College star pitcher Chien-Ming Wang to a \$2 million contract.⁹³ Taiwan also recently was selected to host the 2001 International Baseball Association amateur championships, a development that speaks to the weight that Taiwan carries in the world baseball community despite efforts by the PRC to shut down this type of international Taiwan presence.⁹⁴

Within Taiwan, despite the disappointing gambling scandal, baseball continues to stand as an important aspect of Taiwanese culture. The sport has been at the center of a new Taiwan nationalism and project of redefining Taiwan's self-image and its history, a perfect example being the new NT\$500 bill. As the sagely visage of the iron-fisted Generalissimo Chiang Kai-shek is removed from Taiwan's currency for the new millennium, what better indigenous symbol to replace him than an image of the young Little Leaguers who won his regime so much fame in the 1970s? Taiwan's central bank announced in March 1999 that the new NT\$500 bill would feature a healthy and inspirational image of Taiwan's "world-renowned" youth baseball champions.⁹⁵ Taiwan's baseball heritage has the attention of the art world as well. Taiwan's 1999 Golden Horse Award for Best Documentary went to Taidong director Xiao Juzhen's "Red Leaf Legend" (*Hongye Chuanqi*), a film about the men who made baseball history for Red Leaf Elementary School, Hongye Village, Taidong County, and all of Taiwan so many decades ago.⁹⁶ And as

True Heroes" (Taiwan Major League theme song)], *Naluwan zhoubao* 5 (4 January 1997), p. 5.

⁹³ David Rawsley, "Los Angeles Dodgers Top 10 Prospects [2000]," *Baseball America Online*, <http://www.baseballamerica.com/leagues/mlb/dodgers/top10.html>; Tracy Ringolsby, "Colorado Rockies Top 10 Prospects [2000]," *Baseball America Online*, <http://www.baseballamerica.com/leagues/mlb/rockies/top10.html>; *Shijie ribao*, 7 May 2000, p.C14.

⁹⁴ "Taipei wins bid to host 2001 baseball World Cup," *Taipei Times*, 4 November 1999, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/news/1999/11/04/story/0000009344>.

⁹⁵ "Baseball to Replace Chiang on Taiwan Banknotes," *Inside China Today*, 3 March 1999.

⁹⁶ "HK director, actress honored at Golden Horse," *Taiwan News*, 13 December 1999.

stated above, baseball always maintains a significant presence in Taiwan politics, even prior to new President Chen Shui-bian's great attention to the game. Former President Lee Teng-hui granted a high-profile audience in late 1999 to the Taiwanese-Japanese home run king Oh Sadaharu, the third such official audience Oh has enjoyed with Lee. Discussing topics ranging from Lee's theory of Taiwan's "special state-to-state relationship" with China, to resolving the contradictions between Taiwan's rival CPBL and TML baseball leagues,⁹⁷ these two men perhaps unwittingly proved how very crucial baseball is to the ever-changing notions of identity and nation in today's Taiwan.

More than one century ago, Mark Twain wrote that baseball was the perfect expression of the American society of his day, declaring that the game had become "the outward and visible expression of the drive and push and rush and struggle of the raging, tearing, booming nineteenth century!"⁹⁸ Robert Whiting and William Kelly have both seen Japanese baseball as the perfect symbol of different elements of that nation's modern history and culture.⁹⁹

I have tried to theorize here that a history of Taiwanese baseball is just as appropriate a window on the complicated histories and cultures of modern Taiwan. Starting with the game's Japanese origins, and then the high-profile successes of Taiwanese Little League baseball from the 1960s to the 1980s, baseball was an important avenue by which Taiwanese people navigated the

⁹⁷ Chen Zhixiang, "Li Zongtong jiejian Wang Zhenzhi, zhi zhengfu ying qiangli zhenghe zhibang" [President Lee greets Oh Sadaharu, explains how government should take strong steps to rectify professional baseball issues], *Huaxun Xinwenwang (Taiwan Today News Network)*, *Titan Fengyun*, 24 December 1999, <http://w3.ttnn.com/cna/991224/sp10.html>.

⁹⁸ Quoted in Allen Guttman, *Games and Empires: Modern Sports and Cultural Imperialism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), p. 79.

⁹⁹ Where Whiting has privileged essential "Japanese" or "samurai" qualities like "unity and team spirit," Kelly concentrates on the postwar invention of racially pure or authoritarian categories that were part and parcel of the 1960s-1970s Japanese rise to economic dominance. Robert Whiting, *You Gotta Have Wa* (New York: Vintage Books, 1989); Kelly, "Blood and Guts in Japanese Professional Baseball,"

histories of colonial and military oppression at the hands of the Japanese, the Chinese Nationalists and their American allies. Now, at the turn of the century, the search for a uniquely Taiwanese identity is now not only tolerated for once, but is given official sanction.¹⁰⁰ As Taiwan's consumers, film directors, politicians, and of course, baseball fans would agree, a study of Taiwanese professional baseball is an extremely appropriate model for understanding this search for a "Taiwanese identity," and for understanding many of the cultural and societal issues in general that contemporary Taiwanese face today.

pp. 102-108.

¹⁰⁰ A recent example is President Chen Shui-bian's public statement that Taiwanese culture should not be a marginalized segment of Chinese culture, calling it instead a substantial and unique civilization of its own. Lin Mei-chun, "Chen lauds local artists," *Taipei Times*, 5 August 2000, <http://www.taipeitimes.com/news/2000/08/05/story/0000046514>.

Table 1: CPBL and TML Average Attendance, 1990-2000¹⁰¹

<u>Year</u>	<u>CPBL Attendance</u>	<u>TML Attendance</u>
1990	5000	-
1991	5836	-
1992	6878	-
1993	5928	-
1994	5954	-
1995	5488	-
1996	4548	-
1997	2041	2041
1998	2191	3442
1999	1786	3296
2000	1674 (thru 8/28)	3922 (thru 8/13)

Table 2: Number of foreigners and total players on all CPBL teams, 1990-98

<u>Year</u>	<u>Foreign players</u>	<u>Total players</u>	<u>As % of total players</u>
1990	19	99	19.2
1991	24	100	24.0
1992	33	111	29.7
1993	48	153	31.4
1994	58	169	34.3
1995	78	177	44.1
1996	61	172	35.5
1997	93	221	42.1
1998	116	226	51.3

¹⁰¹ “Zhonghua Zhibang Lianmeng jianjie” [Brief introduction to the CPBL], <http://www.cpbl.com.tw/html/cpbl.asp>; personal communications with Naluwan Company Public Relations Department, 2 May and 18 August 2000.