

The problem of ritualization in sport. An analysis of the evolution of ritual in modern sport.

Abstract

The aim of the dissertation is to analyze the evolution of ritual in modern sport. For this purpose, thoughts and views about the ritualization in sport were systematized. The dissertation presents the results of the polemics on the Olympic Games and sport that were published in monographs and in journals. A leitmotif in the analysis of the ritualization in sport is also an analysis of the mere phenomenon of the Olympic sport, which brings ritualization down to the human level in general: to the meaning and indispensability of sport in human life. Furthermore, the dissertation aims to analyze how ritual in sport changed over the course of time. Finally, it answers the questions related to the following topics: the signs of ritual in the ancient, Coubertin and post-Coubertin periods; the values in the Olympic rituals; the essence of ritual in sport; the relation between ritual and culture; a constant, unchanged character of ritual. The research problem is the result of reflecting upon ritual in sport in cultural, sociological, philosophical, and anthropological terms.

Chapter 1

The first chapter reviews the following concepts: culture, ritual, taboo, symbol, myth, and sanctity. The concepts are placed in the life of societies over the course of time. They are also interpreted by researchers in humanities. This shows how deeply rooted in and significant for human existence the concepts are. The mentioned concepts are multidimensional, interconnected with each other, and fluctuating over time, which has been confirmed by researchers in humanities. The concepts related to ritual were characterized and interpreted by sociologists, anthropologists, and philosophers in order to obtain an overall view of ritualization and to apply this view to ritual in sport.

Chapter 2

The second chapter is an historical overview of ritualization in ancient sport on the example of the ancient Olympic Games held in Olympia. The chapter describes the distinctive nature of the rituals in the ancient Olympic Games – both Roman and Greek. Furthermore, the chapter discusses symbolism of myth, religion, and art as well as their influence on the ancient Olympic idea. The role of symbols and attributes in the cultivation of the values of the ancient Olympism is also presented. The chapter addresses political issues related to the termination of the organization of the Olympic Games. Finally, it presents an axiological summary of sport viewed as a reflection of human existential needs.

Chapter 3

The chapter outlines the reincarnation of the Olympic Games and the revival of the Olympic spirit. The origin of sport rivalry and formation of the concept of sport are discussed. The

chapter elaborates on the process of the revival of the Olympic values. It raises the issues of the multidimensionality of sport as well as the relation between sport and the concepts of myth, festivity, theater, sanctity, and ritual. The chapter discusses the changes that the Olympic ritual underwent from the time of its revival through the whole period of the founding of the Olympic Movement by Pierre de Coubertin.

Chapter 4

The chapter explores the development of sport ritualization before and after the Second World War. It discusses a difficult question of the modern Olympic Truce. The chapter outlines the professionalism during the Olympic Games and the changes that the Olympic ritual underwent during the turbulent times for humankind. The attempts of national and political ritualization to influence the sport rivalry are discussed. The chapter describes boycotts and manifestations during the Olympic Games, provides their causes as well as the means in which the International Olympic Committee dealt with them.

Chapter 5

The chapter elaborates on the essence of ritual in sport. It discusses the functions and values of the Olympic and sport rituals. The chapter describes the changes in the sport ritualization caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. It elaborates on rituals in team and individual sports as well as on the separate ritual behavior of sport spectators. A part of the chapter attempts to determine the impact of the mediatization of sport on changing the perception of rituals in sport. The final part of the chapter discusses the necessity of rituals in sport and the need for new methods of sacralization in athletes and sport spectators.

Chapter 6

The chapter addresses the behavior in sport, explains what ritual means to athletes, confirms the presence of rituals in all sport disciplines. It points out the changes in the rules and regulations of disciplines that impact the ritual behavior of spectators. The chapter discusses the collective, individual, and regional rituals in separate sport disciplines. Ritual in sport, viewed as a field of social rivalry, is analyzed sociologically in terms of interest, knowledge, skills and social distinction in specific regions of the world and in specific disciplines.

Summary

The sport ritual, defined as a set of actions and ceremonies, being of profound significance to athletes and sport spectators, has the power to create identity and community, to form a bond which strengthens the sense of belonging and integrity. Ritual establishes and upholds a tradition and a way of being as well as has a potential for integration of people around a common passion: sport. Ritual can also be a benchmark for the ever-changing and unpredictable reality of sport. The conclusions reached in this dissertation are evaluated through interviews with athletes within the Olympic Movement. The goal of the interviews was not only to enrich this dissertation but also to prove the earlier-mentioned reflections on ritual in modern sport.