

A History and Comparison of Sporting Heroes

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- According to Crepeau (1981, 24) modern society needs heroes to

“show us what we ought to be, and we make him a hero because we wish to be what he is.”

A sport without a hero is like Hamlet without the Prince (Holt et al, 1996 in Lines, 2001).

Heroes and the Hero Cult

- Hero originates from the Ancient Greek *Heros*
(Boon, 2005)
- Cult is a “*particular form of religious worship that implies devotion to a particular person or thing*” that is “*less than a religion*”
(Malone et al, 2007, 2)
- Or “*the veneration of a person by a group of admirers*”
(Brunk, 2006, pg 2)

- *“[W]e may become something like the immortal gods through greatness, greatness of mind or greatness of body”;*
- *“[W]e suppose the Gods and Heroes to excel men”*
(both cited in Young, 2005).

Cult Of Hero

- Typically established after the death of the individual
(Price, 1984);
- In rare occasions venerated as such during their lifetime
(Curie, 2002);
- Cults involve a place, context and related paraphernalia;
- Geographically specific in locations which had some connection with the hero or their mortal remains
(Hedreen, 1991; Tripolitis, 2002);
 - Offerings, veneration, display and ceremony
(Malone et al, 2007).

Examples

- Kleomedes of Astpalaia
- Theagenes of Thasos
 - Oibotas of Dyme



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Modern Heroes



Modern Veneration

- Statues;
- Songs;
- Offerings;
- Forgiveness;
- Heroization of footballers predominantly occurs posthumously
(Leisser, 1998 and Johnes, 1998)

Reasons for selection

- Personal Trait
- Pro-social Behaviour
 - Athletic Skill
 - Celebrity Status
- Adhesion for other reasons (Stevens et al, 2003)
 - Local Affiliation (Parry, 2009)
 - Someone similar (Wan et al, 2001)

Conclusion

- Modes of veneration have not changed – statues, odes/songs, offerings;
- Role of Heroes has not changed – search for a saviour?
 - Does a systematic cult still exist?



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