

---

## Globalisation and management of the National Basketball Association since the 1980s

---

Naoki Chiba

Department of Life Design, Hokusho College,  
23, Bunkyo-dai, Ebetsu,  
Hokkaido, 069-8511, Japan  
Fax: +81 (11) 387-4198  
E-mail: naokic@hokusho-u.ac.jp

**Abstract:** Drawing upon world-system theory this study focuses on international player migration as it is related to the global strategies of the NBA since the 1980s. The findings indicate that the number of foreign-born players in the NBA increased from 57 in the 2000–2001 season to 109 in 2007–2008. This study conceptualises the NBA with respect to the world-system theory such that North America is the centre, Europe is semi-periphery, Central/South America and Africa are periphery, and Asia and Oceania are considered part of the external world.

Improvement in the management of NBA teams included increases of:

- 1 ticket receipts based on new construction and rebuilding of every arena
- 2 broadcasting rights fees
- 3 sponsorships based on sports marketing.

The NBA actively expanded the number of teams in the USA and Canada since the late 1980s and expanded the overseas market by planning the MacDonald's championships and the NBA Japan/China Games.

**Keywords:** National Basketball Association; NBA; globalisation; basketball; David Stern; management; world-system theory

**Reference** to this paper should be made as follows: Chiba, N. (2012) 'Globalisation and management of the National Basketball Association since the 1980s', *Int. J. Sport Management and Marketing*, Vol. 11, Nos. 3/4, pp.143–157.

**Biographical notes:** Naoki Chiba is PhD in Physical Education and an Associate Professor in the Department of Life Design, Hokusho College, Japan.

---

### 1 Introduction

The 2008 National Basketball Association (NBA) All-Star Game was held in New Orleans and broadcast by television companies in 215 countries ([http://www.nba.com/global/allstar2008\\_broadcast\\_tv.html](http://www.nba.com/global/allstar2008_broadcast_tv.html)). Given the relatively unpopular status of the NBA until the early 1980s, television broadcasting has quickly spread all over the world during the last few decades. How did the NBA develop and implement a global strategy

in order to reach international markets? How did the NBA teams improve its deficit financing from 1970s to the present (Andrews, 2006)?

Two hundred thirteen countries are affiliated with the Federation International Basketball Association (FIBA) and it is estimated that there are about 450 million players in the world.<sup>1</sup> Basketball has spread all over the world in terms of the number of affiliated countries and players and now outranks soccer.<sup>2</sup> In the 1980s there were only a few foreign-born players such as Patric Ewing and Hakeem Olajuwon in the NBA. However, the number of foreign players started increasing during the late 1990s including Steve Nash, a Canadian guard, who was selected as Most Valuable Player in 2004–2005 season and Dirk Nowitzki, from Germany who won the MVP in 2006–2007. According to the NBA office, 86 foreign players from 40 countries were registered as of 15 December 2010. Why did the number of foreign players increase drastically during the 1990s? Are these changes related to the wider processes of globalisation in society?

Some scholars have examined the globalisation of sports in various countries since the 1990s (Chiba et al., 2001; Donnelly, 1996; Giullianotti and Robertson, 2007; Jackson and Andrews, 1999; Maguire, 1994; Rowe et al., 1994). In particular, the globalisation of soccer has been a popular topic (Maguire and Stead, 1998; Lanfranchi and Taylor, 2001; Magee and Sugden, 2002). For example, Magee and Sugden (2002) applied world-system theory (Wallerstein, 1974) to analyse soccer migration from Europe to the rest of world. On the other hand, Klein (1989, 1994) made a survey of the development of Dominican baseball from the 1950s to the 1980s and analysed patterns of baseball migration between the USA and the Dominican Republic using the dependency theory. Klein (1989, 1994) indicated that Major League Baseball (MLB) undermined and hampered the development of the Dominican baseball undeveloped because of the foundation of baseball academies in the Dominican Republic and free agency for MLB players.

This study applies world-system theory for interpreting the structure of global basketball player migration. This theory was developed by Wallerstein (2004). He argues for the alteration of the analytical unit from nation-state to world-system and assumes that we now exist in a world-economy which is mutually dependent but centring on parts of Europe and North America since the 16th century. Furthermore, Wallerstein (2004) indicated the manner in which the concepts of ‘core states’, ‘peripheral states’, ‘semi-peripheral states’ are to be used as follows:

“(...) we can talk of core states and peripheral states, so long as we remember that we are really talking of a relationship between production processes. Some states have a near even mix of core-like and peripheral products. We may call them semiperipheral states.” [Wallerstein, (2004), p.28]

In short, Wallerstein used these concepts focusing on the relationships of manufacturing process among countries, and explained that roles such as core states and peripheral states change according to industries such as semiconductor and aviation. For example, he called South Korea, Brazil and India semi-peripheral states as of the early part of the 21st century.

Magee and Sugden (2002) interpret the structure of soccer migration using the concepts of centre and periphery based on the world-system theory. They classified Europe as centre, South and Central America as semi-periphery, Africa as periphery and Asia and North America as external world in terms of the political-economy of the soccer world, history of soccer diffusion and player migration [Magee and Sugden, (2002),

p.428]. While soccer gradually spread from Europe to the rest of world, elite professional players tended to immigrate into European countries such as England, Spain and Italy.

There are a few studies of sports globalisation based on world system theory. This may be due in part because there are many criticisms of world system theory itself. However, Wallerstein (2004) responded to some critiques as follows;

“the triple set of critiques – world-systems rather than states as units of analysis, insistence on the *longue duree*, and a multidisciplinary approach – represented an attack on many sacred cows. It was quite expectable that there would be a counterattack. It came, immediately and vigorously, from four camps: nomothetic positivists, orthodox Marxists, state autonomists, and cultural particularists. The main criticism of each has been that its basic premises have not been accepted by world-systems analysis. This is of course correct but hardly an intellectually devastating argument.” (19)

In short, Wallerstein did not offer a multidisciplinary but rather a multidisciplinary theory and considered criticisms as basic differences of academic philosophy. His theory holds appeal because it is easy to understand power relationships among sporting leagues and the structure of overseas player migrations according to region and sport by applying the world system theory to the sporting world. Thus, this study applies world-system theory for interpreting the structure of global basketball player migration.

Some researchers have focused on the globalisation of basketball (Andrews, 1996, 1997; Falcous and Maguire, 2005; Farred, 2006; Nathan, 2008; Wolff, 2002). For example, Andrews (1997) focused on promotional strategies of the NBA from the 1980s to the late 1990s. Falcous and Maguire (2005) also examined fan's consumption of English basketball through ethnography. They considered the broad overview of the political economy of global basketball and labour migration noting that:

“the NBA acts as the apex of the hierarchy of global men's basketball leagues, overwhelmingly recruiting from the US college system, but also increasingly taking talent from other donor countries. Other national organizations are the recipient of surplus players from the collegiate system, but they also suffer deskilling as a result of their best players gravitating to the NBA.” (141)

What this passage makes clear is that the NBA is positioned at the centre of global basketball and local leagues face talent underdevelopment because of US imports. These current indicators explain a stratification of global basketball and the tendencies of professional basketball player migrations. It is easy to understand their indications if we see the structure of professional basketball in the world based on the World System Theory.

However, Galily and Sheard (2002:55) indicated that the term ‘Americanisation’ is more suitable for explaining developments in that sport than the more general term ‘globalisation’. In addition, they argue that: “The ‘Americanization’ of Israeli basketball, we feel, provides a particularly strong example of this one-way influence” [Galily and Sheard, (2002) p.55]. Israeli basketball has recruited US players in order to strengthen domestic teams and the Israel national team since the 1970s. In short, it has been uni-directionally influenced by US basketball in terms of US imports, strategies and tactics.

The situation in Israeli basketball is similar to those in other countries such as Japan, the Philippines and Australia in terms of the one-way influence from the USA. However, this approach uses the term ‘globalisation’ of basketball rather than Americanisation, because the spread of basketball and the NBA into the world did not originate solely from

the USA, but rather was influenced by the changes of the world based on globalisation. For example, the Japanese cartoon, 'Slam Dunk'<sup>73</sup> that was influenced by the NBA, was translated and published in 15 countries including South Korea, Taiwan, Philippines and Italy. It may be too simplistic to understand this phenomenon using the rather limiting term, the Americanisation.

However, *the Basketball Boom* happened in Japan during the 1990s because of the popularity of Slam Dunk and the NBA (Demachi, 2003). Demachi (2003) made a survey of international labour migration in the world of basketball and indicated that there were sporting disparities between the USA and other countries. Furthermore, he pointed out that the NBA influenced directly and indirectly Japanese basketball [Demachi, (2003) p.124]. For example, Japanese basketball historically imported strategies, players and fashions of US basketball and the NBA. Furthermore, NBA players such as Scottie Pippen, Charles Barkley and Spud Webb appeared in advertisements for Japanese TV in the 1990s and contributed to sales promotions of Japanese products.

It is said that the NBA became a global professional basketball league. However, few studies do indicate concrete evidences of globalisation in the NBA. If the NBA becomes a global league, what reasons does it develop into the transnational league? This approach seeks for indicating concrete evidences of globalisation quantitatively in the NBA and explaining its changes based on global strategy of the NBA.

Drawing upon world-system theory this study focuses on international player migration as it relates to the global strategies of the NBA since the 1980s. This approach seeks to clarify:

- 1 the number of foreign players in the NBA based on their birthplaces over a seven year period beginning with the 2000–2001 season
- 2 the global strategies and business reconstruction of the NBA since the 1980s.

With respect to the latter interviews were held with David Stern, Commissioner of the NBA.

## 2 Methods

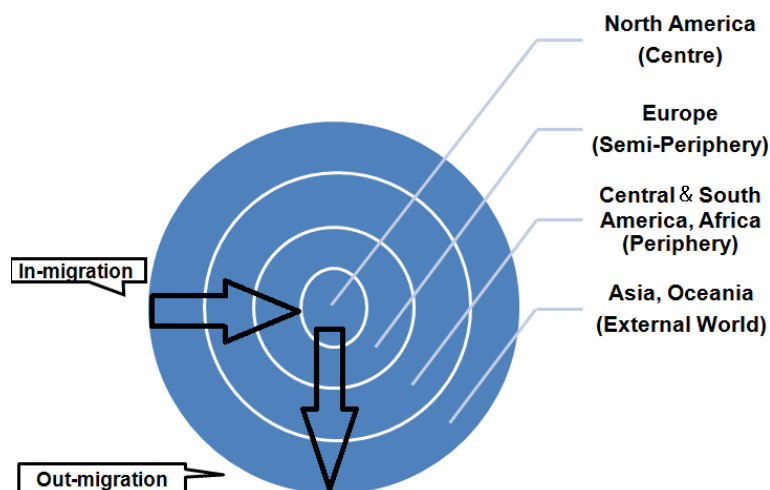
This study analyses the number, birthplaces, playing positions and educational background of foreign-born players in the NBA from the 2000–2001 season to the 2007–2008 season (Walton and Hares, 2000; Reheuser, 2007). In addition, the study includes an interview with David Stern (Commissioner of the NBA) on February 2008 which lasted about one hour. The focus of the interview questions was on both the globalisation and management strategies of the NBA since the 1980s, the increase of foreign players, the hosting of NBA games abroad and the global effects of NBA players.

## 3 World-system theory and the globalisation of basketball

This approach applies world-system theory for interpreting the structure of global basketball player migration. To help illustrate the power relationships between centre and periphery in the world of basketball and tendencies of professional player migrations a figure is offered (Figure 1). In this figure, North America is at the centre, Europe is

semi-periphery, Central/South America and Africa are periphery, and Asia and Oceania are considered to be part of the external world.

**Figure 1** Structure of global basketball player migrations (see online version for colours)



However, basketball was invented by a Canadian teacher, James Naismith in 1891 at Springfield, Massachusetts in the USA. Since then it has diffused from the USA to the rest of world. US basketball occupies a central position revolving around the NBA and in recent years has attracted elite players from around the world. On the other hand, US players (who could not establish themselves in the NBA) tend to move to European and Asian leagues because of relatively better salaries compared to those in US minor leagues such as the NBA development. In fact, there are 6,717 US players,<sup>4</sup> who have been playing professional basketball overseas in last five years as of 1 June in 2010 (according to the homepage of USBASKET By Sports IT, available at <http://www.usbasket.com/>).

If we assume the USA to be the centre, the flow of basketball players into the USA is called 'in-migration' (Arbena, 1994). On the other hand, immigration that is out of the USA is regarded as 'out-migration' (Arbena, 1994). This study focuses on 'in-migration' into the US basketball, particularly the NBA.

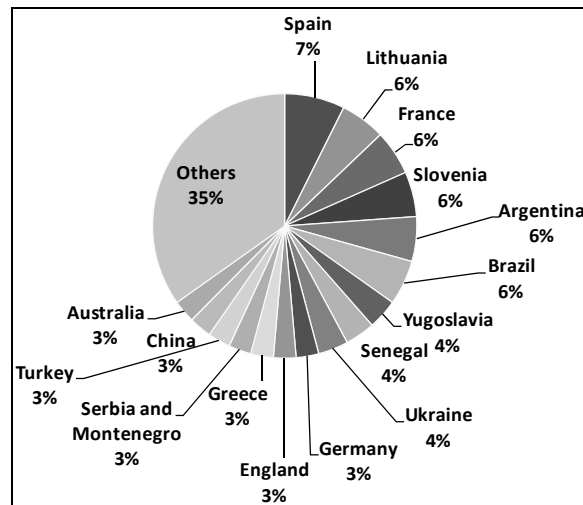
#### **4 Transitions in features of foreign-born players between the 2000–2001 and the 2007–2008 season in the NBA**

The number of foreign-born players registered in NBA teams drastically increased from 57 (out of 31 countries) in 2000–2001 to 109 (out of 44 countries) in the 2007–2008.<sup>5</sup> The rate of foreign-born players within the total players in the NBA also increased from 11.3% to 19.8% during this seven year period. This result means that the NBA is becoming an increasingly more global league.

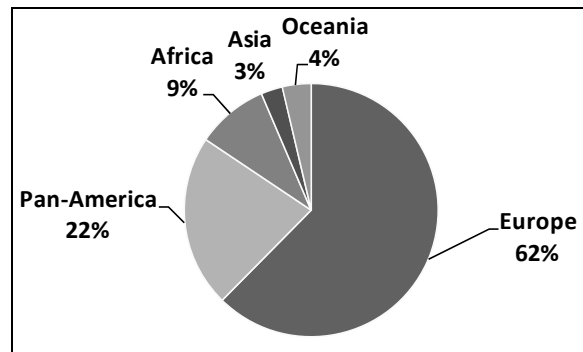
Next I will show the birthplaces of foreign players in the 2007–2008 season. There are eight Spanish, six Lithuanian, six French, six Slovenian, six Brazilian and six Argentinean players in the NBA (Figure 2). In particular, South Americans such as

Emanuel Ginobili (San Antonio Spurs) tend to transfer to the NBA through European leagues. Furthermore, according to place of origin in the 2007–2008, the rates of foreign players were 62% Europeans, 22% Pan-Americans, 9% Africans, 4% Oceanian and 3% Asians (Figure 3). This approach compared the distributions of the original area of foreign players in the 2000–2001 season with those in 2007–2008. As a result, the number of Europeans increased from 32 to 68 and that of Pan-Americans also increased from 13 to 24.

**Figure 2** Birthplace of foreign players in NBA (2007–2008: N = 109)



**Figure 3** Birth areas of foreign players in NBA (2007–2008: N = 109)

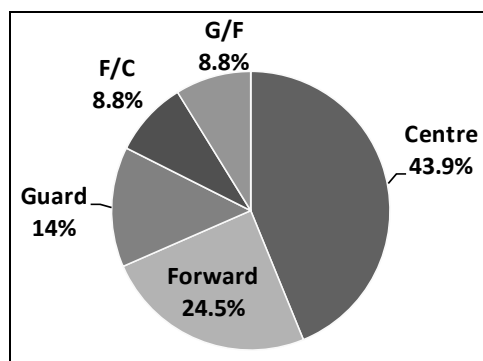


It follows from what has been said that NBA players from Europe and Pan-America doubled since 2000. In short, the NBA is the most competitive professional basketball league and attracts the best players from all over the world. Still, some 80% of the total NBA players are Americans. On the other hand, Europeans occupied 62% of the total foreign players in the NBA. In short, the rate of NBA players according to place of origin reflects power relationships of the basketball world explained in the Figure 1. In effect, as North American players occupied some 80% of the total NBA players, North America proves to be the centre in the world of basketball. In addition, NBA imports talents from

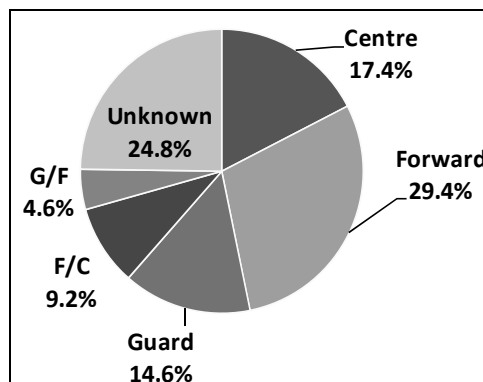
semi-periphery (European countries) and periphery (Africa and South America) and makes other professional basketball leagues underdeveloped.

Turning now to the transition of playing positions, it is clear that playing positions for foreign players gradually changed during the seven years. There were 43.9% centre players (25), 24.5% forwards (14), 14.9% guards (8), 8.8% centres/forwards (5) and 8.8% guards/forwards (5) in the 2000–2001 season (Figure 4). In short, centre players occupied half of all foreign players. There were a number of famous foreign centres such as Dikembe Mutombo, Arvydas Sabonis and Vlade Divac in the 1990s. One explanation for the increase of foreign centres may be that there is a lack of big players in the NBA. On the other hand, there were 29.4% forwards (32), 17.4% centres (19), 14.6% guards (16), 9.2% forwards/centres (10) and 4.6% guards/forwards (5) in the 2007–2008 season (Figure 5). Thus we see that while the number of foreign centres decreased, that of foreign forwards recently increased.

**Figure 4** Playing position of foreign players in NBA (2000–2001: N = 57)



**Figure 5** Playing position of foreign players in NBA (2007–2008: N = 109)



The change in playing positions of foreign players may be explained by the remarkable success of European and Argentinean teams in International competitions. For example, the Argentine team including Manu Ginobili took gold medals defeating the USA team which was full of star NBA players in the semi-final of the 2004 Athens Olympic Games. Furthermore, the Spanish team, including Pau Gasol (Los Angeles Lakers), also got a gold medal defeating the Greece team in the Final of the 2006 World Basketball

Championship. The overall skill level of basketball in European countries has been improving steadily. As a result, some elite players were recruited by NBA teams regardless of their playing positions.

Turning now to the academic backgrounds of foreign players, patterns of school careers changed drastically. The rate of graduates of foreign players from US universities/colleges changed from 52.6% in 2000–2001 to 33% in 2007–2008 (Table 1). In particular, the rate of foreign players who did not go on to US college increased from 47.4% in 2000–2001 to 67% in 2007–2008. Chi-square tests for school career and season resulted in statistically 5% significance (Table 1).

**Table 1** Graduates of US universities in foreign players

	<i>Graduates in USA</i>	<i>Others</i>	<i>Total</i>
S2000–2001	30 (52.6%)	27 (47.4%)	57
S2007–2008	36 (33%)	73 (67%)	109

Note: \* $p < .05$

The NCAA Final 4 tournament is frequently referred to as a gateway to success in the NBA (Ando, 2007). If top teams and players make their marks in the NCAA tournament, they are often recruited by NBA teams. Indeed, for a long time it was almost mandatory for players to play college basketball if they wanted to become NBA players (Ando, 2007). However, as a result of the improvement of athletic skill level in European basketball, foreign players are now able to contract directly with NBA teams instead of playing US college.

Next this approach focuses on the management strategy of NBA since the 1980s in order to explain reasons that foreign players increased in the 1990s. Next, how was the increase of foreign players in the NBA related with the global strategy of the NBA? Let me clarify it through the interview of David Stern.

## 5 Management strategy of NBA since the 1980s

The image and financial status of the NBA in the 1970s was in serious trouble (Andrews, 1997). Andrews (1997, p.74) explained that:

“At the root of the league’s identity crisis were the domineering presence of African-American athletes, and the racist pathologies that had historically been articulated to black masculinity that were now engaged within the context of professional basketball.”

In short, it was difficult for the NBA to be a financial success given its negative image in the 1970s. However, David Stern transformed the deficits of 17 out of 23 teams after he became the commissioner of the NBA in 1984. After that, 20 out of 30 teams reported profits in 2008. When asked about the biggest challenge he faced as a commissioner, Stern answered as follows:

“Well, I think the biggest challenge was the problem that people thought and suggested that it was because of the race of our players -- because the league was predominantly African Americans -- the league could not succeed, and that was a very big problem. (...) we have higher percentages of African Americans. We demonstrated that fans in America and around the world just



want to see the performance. They do not care about the ethnicity or nationality of our players.”

Stern explained that it was very difficult to promote NBA teams where African Americans made up the majority of players at the beginning of the 1980s. Andrews (1997) indicates the reasons for the NBA's metamorphosis on both structural and semiotic levels. In short, David Stern introduced an antidrug policy and a salary cap into the NBA and established “a multifaceted marketing and entertainment conglomerate incorporating more than twenty divisions, including NBA Properties, NBA Entertainment, NBA International, and NBA Ventures” [Andrews, (1997) p.75]. On a semiotic level, the NBA utilised media entertainment, including cable TV, in order to improve the images of the NBA and its players. Andrews (1997) refers to the methods that the NBA used to represent super stars such as Larry Bird, ‘Magic’ Johnson and Michael Jordan as follows:

“An even more instrumental stage in the popularized racial reassemblage [*sic*] of the NBA into a viable commercial product centered on the production of Michael Jordan as an all-American icon—a process and phenomenon that harnessed and nurtured the racially acceptable semiotic space initiated by Bird and Johnson and ushered in an even more lucrative era of popular acceptance for the NBA. In short, through the mutually reinforcing narrative strategies engaged by Nike, the NBA, and a multitude of other corporate interests, Jordan was constructed as a racially neutered (hence nonthreatening) black version of a white cultural model.” [Andrews, (1997) p.77]

In short, the NBA transformed negative images of foreboding African-Americans linked to drugs through Michael Jordan the new ‘all-American icon’ [Andrews, (1997) p.77] and through broadcasting in television and advertising strategies related with Nike.

Furthermore, when asked about the management strategy of NBA teams since 1984, Stern responded as follows:

“The first was the buildings, arenas. Every arena in the NBA between 1987 and 2000 would have been new or rebuilt and so as the arenas got bigger, they became more entertainment focused with suite boxes, club seats and increased revenues. No.2 was the growth of local cable and the US television market. So that our teams were getting more revenue from their local or their city telecasts and the NBA was becoming popular on the national level so that television payments were going up. And No. 3 is, shall I say, sports marketing, Michael Jordan and NIKE, we began to see a universal utilisation of our players for marketing and promotion.”

The reasons for the improved management of NBA teams were increases in:

- 1 ticket receipts based on new construction and rebuilding of every arena
- 2 broadcasting rights fees
- 3 of sponsorships based on sports marketing.

In addition, Stern noted the synergy effects of NBA merchandising with these three aspects. As a result, asset values of NBA teams increased from US \$15 million dollars in 1984 to US \$400 million dollars in 2008.

Furthermore, when asked about the differences between the management of sports business and other business, he replied:

“The major distinguishing characteristic between sports and regular business is that because of the nature of ownership and the desire to win – sometimes owners are moved to make uneconomic decisions to spend money on players for the purpose of winning, even though as a group only one team could win, and the other expenditures would not be successful. So it is a business where sometimes winning is more important to management than profitability.”

In short, while regular business attaches importance to make profits as a priority, some owners made uneconomical decisions because of their desire to win in sports. For example, the Phoenix Suns secured Shaquille O’Neal from the Miami Heat and the Dallas Mavericks obtained Jason Kidd in the lead up to play-off games in 2008.<sup>6</sup> Shaquille O’Neal was traded by the Miami Heat to the Phoenix Suns for Marcus Banks and Shawn Marion. On the other hand, Jason Kidd was traded by the New Jersey Nets with Malik Allen and Antoine Wright to the Dallas Mavericks for Maurice Ager, DeSagana Diop, Devin Harris, Trenton Hassell, Keith Van Horn, a 2008 1st round draft pick and a 2010 1st round draft pick. Furthermore, the Mavericks paid luxury tax to the NBA in excess of their salary cap because of trades including Jason Kidd (Dunk Shot, 2008).

Stern pointed to these as cases of uneconomical decisions. Of course, the NBA has a salary cap for every team. Thus, the Suns and the Mavericks had to pay taxes to the league. However, if the NBA wishes to keep the balance of potential among NBA teams, it should ban trading players after the opening game of the season. While Stern criticised owners who attached importance to their desire to win in games, he and the NBA permitted trading players in the middle of the season. It was often irrational and uneconomical from an owner’s perspective and it also undermined the power balance among the teams.

## **6 Expansion of the NBA since the late-1980s: overseas marketing strategy**

Andrews (1997, p.78) described the status of the NBA in the US market in the early 1990s quoting Helyar’s (1994) report:

“By the early 1990s, and after almost a decade of stupendous expansion, the U.S. market had been saturated by NBA products and became relatively stagnant in terms of the all-important indicator of percentage annual growth as measured by game attendance, television audience, and retail sales figures.”

In short, the US market was saturated by the NBA products during the 1980s. Thus, the NBA needed to start pioneering overseas markets in the 1990s in order to continue to develop. Andrews (1997, p.79) explained the need for overseas promotions of the NBA as follows:

“Having outgrown its home market, the NBA realized that sustaining its spiralling patterns of economic growth necessitated actively cultivating overseas markets, (...) pushing forward for the NBA meant deliberately evolving into a transnational, global corporation.”

The NBA developed as a transnational corporation as a result of the saturation of NBA products in the domestic market in the 1990s. At this point this approach will show how the NBA expanded since the late 1980s.

The NBA has expanded the number of teams since the late-1980s. For example, the Charlotte Hornets and the Miami Heat were founded in 1988, and the Orlando Magic and Minnesota Timberwolves were established in 1989. Furthermore, the Toronto Raptors and Vancouver Grizzlies were founded in 1995 as the first Canadian teams in the NBA.

When asked about the reasons for the expansion of NBA teams, Stern explained that the NBA sought to increase teams in Florida and North Carolina in the south-eastern area of USA. Furthermore, new franchises in Toronto and Vancouver were established in Canada based on a transnational strategy by the NBA to expand its markets.

While the Toronto Raptors have enjoyed some success, the Vancouver Grizzlies could not make a profit. Thus, the franchise of Grizzlies moved to Memphis in 2001. Stern did not have a plan to build another new franchise in the USA as of 2008. However, he did note the possibility of a new franchise in Mexico City or Monterey, Mexico.

The NBA started playing exhibition games in Europe during the off-season in the mid-1980s. The McDonald Open between NBA and European teams was founded in the USA in 1987. This tournament was renamed the MacDonald Championship in 1995 and now the NBA champion team plays European professional teams every two years [Umeda, (1997), p.59]. However, the first official overseas NBA game was held in Japan in 1990. After that, the Japan Games have been held in Tokyo six times until 2003.

Stern stated that overseas tours of NBA games were planned by agents such as Ito Chu Trading Company. Stern thought that real NBA games increased new supporters at overseas countries which showed NBA games through satellite broadcasting. Furthermore, he indicated that the reason the NBA sought out overseas markets was:

“Because that is what every smart business was doing at that time. There are 300 million Americans, and the rest of world has 6 billion people. And basketball already has been in the Olympic Games since 1936.”

It is clear that the NBA imitated the global strategies of other multinational corporations. The NBA was eager to pioneer overseas markets compared to the MLB and the NFL in the 1990s.<sup>7</sup> Thus, overseas tours and official games of the NBA were held at the beginning of 1990s.

This approach included the participation of the ‘Dream Team’ in the Barcelona Olympic Games (1992). The ‘Dream Team’ was the Men’s American gold medal team in 1992 composed of NBA players such as ‘Magic’ Johnson, Larry Bird and Michael Jordan. Demachi (2003, p.118) called their participation in the Olympic Games a ‘sensational strategy’ even if the NBA urged star players to join the Olympic Games in order to advertise their acrobatic play for the world. When asked about the impact of the Barcelona Olympic Games, Stern stated:

“That was a very important game for the development of our television. Because since then, we have gone from a few countries to 200 countries coverage of NBA television, you know, and we have gone from, you know, a few players to 80 players who were born outside of United States. So I think, you know, that was, we did not urge our players, but the fact that they played has had a big impact on the development of the sport.”

It follows from what has been said that NBA players wished to participate in the Olympics and their success spread coverage of NBA television all over the world. After overseas talent watched the acrobatic play of NBA players, they aimed to become NBA players. In short, their performances in Barcelona indirectly contributed to the increases of foreign-born players in NBA and of TV audiences in the world.

The NBA played games in Japan Games five times during the 1990s. However, there have been no official NBA games in Japan since 2004. On the other hand, since Yao Min, the Chinese star centre, contracted with Houston Rockets in 2002, the NBA has shifted its main Asian target market from Japan to China. For example, the NBA games in China (Houston Rockets versus Sacramento Kings) were first held in 2004 during the preseason. After that, the NBA Games in China were also held in 2007 and 2008. In addition, in 2007 NBA China was established as a subsidiary company of the NBA. It managed the Beijing Wukesong Culture and Sports Center, the basketball arena with Anschutz Entertainment Group (AEG) in order to design, market, programme and operate it during and after the Beijing Olympic Games (The Associated Press, 2008). When asked about the shift of the Asian market from Japan to China, Stern stated as follows:

“No. I think the shift was developing before. The Japanese economy was difficult. Our merchandising sales were not strong [in Japan]. Our television sales were not strong. Our internet visitations were not strong. Sponsorship interests were not strong. But all of those became stronger in China. The economy of China grows. And so China became more important and grows because of size and global economy.”

Stern confirmed that while the overall profits in Japan decreased, those in China improved because of the strong Chinese economy. In addition, he commented that the NBA contracted with 51 Chinese television companies in terms of TV broadcasting rights and who would own the Chinese basketball league in future.

Suzuki (2007) indicated that official sponsors of the NBA included six Chinese companies such as Lenovo and Haier, and the NBA made profits of some 50 million dollars in 2006 in China. The NBA actively cultivates the Chinese market and gets sponsorships from Chinese corporations and sells merchandising rights in China to US companies.

However, Stern indicated that broadcasting of NBA games in the world increased the number of foreign players in the NBA and influenced the developments of local basketball leagues. Furthermore, when asked about the effects of globalisation on the NBA, Stern stated that:

“I think it is great for the NBA. I think it is more talent to our league. It draws talent pool, and it helps us to grow the game. It helps us to grow the audiences to the NBA from outside of United States and grows the game of basketball.”

Stern considered the globalisation of the NBA as a positive phenomenon. He thought that globalisation in society advanced the development of the NBA and basketball in the world. In addition, Stern has plans to own Chinese and European leagues and deepen collaboration between the NBA and NFL in order to continue to improve the NBA. He started pioneering the overseas market in the late 1980s and had a successful growth strategy for the NBA to survive. However, if the NBA takes over teams in the Chinese Basketball Association (CBA), the CBA may become a farm system of the NBA in the future. Just as MLB operates baseball leagues in the Dominican Republic and Venezuela as farm systems, the NBA may undermine local leagues in Asia and Europe because of recruiting elite talents. Thus, the NBA needs to aim for a harmonious relationship with local leagues.

## **7 Conclusions**

In conclusion,

- 1 The number of foreign-born players in the NBA increased from 57 in the 2000–2001 season to 109 in the 2007–2008. According to the place origin of foreign players in the 2007–2008 NBA, Europeans occupied 62% and Pan-Americans (except for Americans) 22%.
- 2 The average age of foreign players became younger and the number of forward players increased rather than that of centre players during this seven years.
- 3 67% of foreign players in the 2007–2008 season contracted with NBA teams directly instead of playing US universities.
- 4 This study proposed a model of global basketball based on the world-system theory where North America is the centre, Europe is semi-periphery, Central/South America and Africa are periphery, and Asia and Oceania are part of the external world. This classification corresponded with the rate of foreign players according to the original area.
- 5 The reasons for improvement in the management of NBA teams were the increases of
  - 1 ticket receipts based on new construction and rebuilding of every arena
  - 2 broadcasting rights fee
  - 3 sponsorships based on sports marketing.
- 6 NBA actively expanded the number of teams in America and Canada since the late 1980s and pioneered overseas market by planning MacDonald championships and NBA Japan/China Games.
- 7 David Stern considered the phenomenon of globalisation in society as positive and utilised it to grow and develop the NBA.

The success of the ‘Dream Team’ in the Barcelona Olympic Games (1992) served as a turning point spreading NBA games all over the world. Notably, the participation of NBA players in the Olympics did not originate from the global strategy of the NBA but from their own will. However, the NBA actively expanded with new teams in Canada and ran exhibition and official games at abroad since the 1990s as multinational corporations did. After that NBA games were broadcast into many countries and foreign-born elite players such as Yao Min and Pau Gasol signed contracts with NBA teams. The NBA improved television rights and merchandising sales from overseas markets. As a result, after the retirement of Michael Jordan from NBA in 1999, the league developed new talent such as Kobe Bryant and LeBron James and continued improving the value of NBA teams’ assets. In stark contrast to the USA, ‘the Basketball Boom’ in other countries such as Japan has declined since the 2000s. On the other hand, Euroleague was reformed in 2000 and bj league, the first Japanese professional basketball league was founded in 2005. Local basketball has recently become more popular. Thus, further research needs to examine the athletic and cultural effects of globalisation of the NBA and basketball internationally.

## References

- Ando, T. (2007) 'NBA reports of Takao Ando', *Sports Nippon*, 30 December.
- Andrews, D. (1996) 'Deconstructing Michael Jordan: reconstructing postindustrial America', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 13, No. 4, pp.315–318.
- Andrews, D. (1997) 'The (trans) National Basketball Association: American commodity signculture and global localization', in A. Cvetovitch and D. Kellner (Eds.): *Articulating the Global and Local: Globalization and Cultural Studies*, pp.72–101, Westview Press, Boulder, CO.
- Andrews, D. (2006) *Sport-Commerce-Culture: Essays on Sport in Late Capitalist America*, Peter Lang, New York.
- Arbena, J. (1994) 'Dimensions of international talent migration in Latin American Sports', in J. Bale and J. Maguire (Eds.): *The Global Sports Arena: Athletic Talent Migration in an Interdependent World*, Cass, pp.99–111.
- Chiba, N., Ebihara, O. and Morino, S. (2001) 'Globalization, naturalization and identity: the case of borderless elite athletes in Japan', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 36, No. 2, pp.203–221.
- Demachi, I. (2003) 'Global strategy of the NBA on the viewpoints of globalization of labor and culture', in O. Ebihara (Ed.): *Introduction of Modern Sports Sociology*, Kyorin Shoin, Tokyo, pp.118–125.
- Donnelly, P. (1996) 'The local and the global – globalization in the sociology of sport', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, August, Vol. 20, pp.239–257.
- Dunk Shot (2008) *Special Interview Shaquille O'Neal*, April, pp.31–37.
- Falcous, M. and Maguire, J. (2005) 'Globetrotters and local heroes?: Labor migration, basketball, and local identities', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp.137–157.
- Farred, G. (2006) *Phantom Calls: Race and the Globalization of the NBA*, Prickly Paradigm Press, Chicago.
- Galily, Y. and Sheard, K. (2002) 'Cultural imperialism and sport: the Americanization of Israeli basketball', *Culture, Sport, Society*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp.55–78.
- Giulianotti, R. and Robertson, R. (2007) 'Forms of glocalization: globalization and the migration strategies of Scottish football fans in North America', *Sociology*, Vol. 41, No. 1, pp.133–152.
- Helyar, J. (1994) 'The inflated riches of the NBA are pulling at the league's seams', *Wall Street Journal*, 11 February, pp.A1, A4.
- Jackson, S.J. and Andrews, D.L. (1999) 'Between and beyond the global and the local: American popular sporting culture in New Zealand', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 34, No. 1, pp.31–42.
- Klein, M. (1989) 'Baseball as underdevelopment :the political-economy of sport in the Dominican Republic', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp.95–112.
- Klein, M. (1994) 'Trans-nationalism, labour migration and Latin American baseball', in J. Bale and J. Maguire (Eds.): *The Global Sports Arena: Athletic Talent Migration in an Interdependent World*, Cass, pp.112–125.
- Lanfranchi, P. and Taylor, M. (2001) *Moving with the Ball: The Migration of Professional Footballers*, Berg, Oxford/New York.
- Magee, J. and Sudgen, J. (2002) '“The world at their feet” professional football and international labor migration', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Vol. 26, No. 4, pp.421–437.
- Maguire, J. (1994) 'Sport, identity politics, and globalization: diminishing contrasts and increasing varieties', *Sociology of Sport Journal*, Vol. 11, No. 4, pp.398–427.
- Maguire, J. and Stead, D. (1998) 'Border crossings: soccer labour migration and European Union', *International Review for the Sociology of Sport*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp.59–73.

- Nathan, D. (2008) 'Review essay: travelling: notes on basketball and globalization; or, why the San Antonio Spurs are the future', *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, Vol. 25, No. 6, pp.737–750.
- Reheuser, R. (2007) *Official NBA Register 2007–2008 Edition*, NBA Properties, New York.
- Rowe, D., Lawrence, G., Miller, T. and McKay, J. (1994) 'Global sport?: core concern and peripheral vision', *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 16, No. 4, pp.661–75.
- Suzuki, T. (2007) 'Winning over 300 million Chinese basketball fans', *Nikkei Business Online*, 22 November, Vol. 2, available at <http://business.nikkeibp.co.jp/article/manage/20071031/139261/>.
- Taniguchi, K. (2004) *The MLB Empire*, 1st ed., Akashi Shobo, Tokyo.
- The Associated Press (2008) 'NBA China to manage Beijing arena during and after Olympics,' 31 January, available at <http://sports.inquirer.net/breakingnews/breakingnews/view/20080131-116012/NBA-China-to-manage-Beijing-arena-during-and-after-Olympics>.
- Umeda (1997) *Kaitaishinsho of the NBA*, Daimond, Inc., Tokyo.
- Wallerstein, I. (1974) *The Modern World-System*, Academic Press, New York.
- Wallerstein, I. (2004) *World-Systems Analysis: An Introduction*, 5th ed., Duke University Press.
- Walton, D. and Hareas, J. (2000) *Official NBA Register 2000–2001 Edition*, The Sporting News, St. Louis.
- Wolff, A. (2002) *Big Game, Small World-A Basketball Adventure*, Warner Books.

## Notes

- 1 The number of affiliated countries and basketball players are shown in official homepage of FIBA (<http://www.fiba.com>).
- 2 The number of affiliated countries and soccer players are shown in official homepage of FIFA (<http://www.fifa.com/>).
- 3 'Slam Dunk' is a popular cartoon that high school students grow up through playing basketball. This comic was written by Takehiko Inoue and published serially in a magazine from 1990 to 1996. These books of Slam Dunk were sold more than 140 million in Japan.
- 4 This number includes that of naturalised players in host country.
- 5 The number of foreign-born players was originated from Official NBA Register. Official NBA Register 2000–2001 included players who were registered more than a game during the 1999–2000 season and recorded in NBA as of 29th August in 2000. Official NBA Register 2007–2008 included players who were registered more than a game during the 2006–2007 season and recorded in NBA as of 15th September in 2007.
- 6 Their salaries were some 20 million US dollars in the 2007–2008 season.
- 7 Official games in MLB were firstly held in Mexico in 1999 at abroad and also held in Japan since 2000. On the other hand, official games in NFL were firstly held in Mexico City in 2005 and also held in London in 2007. Taniguchi (2004) indicated that MLB imitated global strategy of NBA since the late-1990s.