Embodied Masculinity: Sex and Sport in a (Post) Colonial Chinese City*

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ABSTRACT This article examines the historical formation of local masculine identity in the city of Dalian in north-east China. I argue that the experiences of Dalian-Chinese men under Japanese colonialism (1905–45) established a model of masculine identity based on bodily resistance. The article explores Dalian men's encounter with colonialism by comparing two different forms of bodily experience: military calisthenics in Japanese-run schools for Chinese boys and street soccer. On the one hand, military calisthenics impressed Chinese schoolboys with a sense of subjugation focused on the body. Bodily movements were performed under the strict scrutiny of Japanese drill masters and formed an integral part of everyday rituals of obedience. On the other hand, street soccer emerged as a popular and potentially creative activity among Chinese schoolboys. In contrast with the controlled motions of military calisthenics, soccer offered a sense of freedom in its unrestricted and improvised movements. Matches against Japanese teams even more explicitly infused soccer with a spirit of nationalistic resistance. In conclusion, I argue that these bodily experiences are crucial to understanding the historical reformations of Dalian male gender identity.

This article focuses on the historical formation of masculine identity in the city of Dalian, a postcolonial city. Dalian is a seaport city situated at the southern tip of Liaoning peninsula in China's north-east (Manchuria). Before Tsarist Russia took over, it had been a fishing village comprising 60 hamlets and 1,000 households. In 1898, Tsarist Russia negotiated with the Qing court a 25-year lease for Dalian, making the centre of the Guandong Leased Territory a Russian province. After the Russo-Japanese War in 1904, the Guandong Leased Territory was formally transferred to Japanese rule with the Treaty of Portsmouth. The following year, Dalian became the key administrative and commercial centre in Southern Manchuria. It was not until April 1919 that a civilian-controlled colonial structure was formally established with the creation

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of the Guandong government (Kanto-cho). This colonial government gave more power to the local Japanese immigrant community with the first municipal elections in Dalian in the autumn of 1915.[1] Dalian was under Japanese colonial rule for 40 years until 1945.

While I will argue that the masculine identity of Dalian men was shaped as a response to Japanese imposed calisthenics, it is important to understand the original sense of masculine identity in Dalian. While part of war-like Manchuria, Dalian was populated largely by Han Chinese whose traditional sense of identity did not glorify physical prowess. The highest ideal in China was embodied in the mandarin, who eschewed the physical in favour of the intellectual. The mandarin's long fingernails and flowing robes were a sign of their superiority to those who laboured with their bodies. In the Confucian social hierarchy, the base, even below the materialistic merchants, was occupied by the soldier class. In China, intellect, at least ideally, trumped physical violence.

During the 19th century however, China was confronted with a violent challenge, first from the West and then from Japan. By the beginning of the 20th century, it had become clear to many in China that its survival depended upon a changed cultural identity, one that gave precedence to masculine violence. We can see this represented by the prestige that came to be accorded the soldier, as embodied in the figure of Chang Kai-shek (蒋介石). Even a more recent film picturing the early 20th century such as *Red Sorghum* represents this new ideal of masculinity. The creative adoption of a Chinese version of Western and Japanese masculinity can also be seen in the passion for soccer by the male youth of Dalian. It is in Dalian that bushido-based Japanese imperialism is confronted first and longest. I will argue that Dalian's adoption and transformation of soccer is the primary basis for a new masculinity.

The colonial impact on masculine identity was very complicated in Dalian. My argument in this article is two-fold. First, I argue that the experiences of Dalian-Chinese men under Japanese colonialism (1905–45) established a model of masculine identity based on bodily resistance. Secondly, I argue that Dalian men's soccer-playing was a form of overt resistance that involved conscious and collective action and direct challenge to structures of power. There are two contrasting views of combative sports. One argues that sport represents the state's monopoly over violence, while the other argues that sport allows either overt resistance or non-overt preparation for resistance to the dominant power. In this article I will argue that in Dalian, sport served as a means of resistance. I will show how Dalian's situation constituted a conscious, collective and structural form of resistance and a powerful form of self-expression. Soccer was chosen by Dalian men because of powerfully felt commitments to challenge the legitimacy of the colonial regime with the intention of demystifying the naturalization of imposed inequality between the Japanese and Chinese nations

1 Robert John Perrins, "Great connections: the creation of a city, Dalian, 1905–1931, China and Japan on the Liaodong peninsula" (Ontario: National Library of Canada, PhD dissertation, 1997).

based on men's strong or weak bodies. Soccer allowed Chinese men to assert hyper-masculinity, creativity and aggressiveness to debunk the fabricated myth of the "sick man of East Asia" and the degradation of Chinese men's bodies by calisthenics. However, although this resistance was successful in re-establishing Chinese masculine identity, it did not alter the Japanese military domination.

The article explores Dalian men's encounter with colonialism by comparing two different forms of bodily experience: military calisthenics in Japanese-run schools for Chinese boys and street soccer. On the one hand, military calisthenics impressed Chinese schoolboys with a sense of subjugation focused on the body. Bodily movements were performed under the strict scrutiny of Japanese drill masters and formed an integral part of everyday rituals of obedience. On the other hand, street soccer emerged as a popular and potentially creative activity among Chinese schoolboys. In contrast with the controlled motions of military calisthenics, soccer offered a sense of freedom in its unrestricted and improvised movements. Matches against Japanese teams even more explicitly infused soccer with a spirit of nationalistic resistance. In conclusion, I argue that these bodily experiences are crucial to understanding the historical reformations of Dalian male gender identity.

Calisthenics

Japan's first programme of calisthenics was introduced in 1878 by Dr George A. Leland, an American physical educator serving as the director of the Japanese Ministry of Education. Leland developed a system of "light calisthenics" (*kei taisō*) that was instituted in primary schools as the regular exercise regimen in 1881. Leland's routine, however, did not remain in place for long. An 1886 ordinance on primary school education made "infantry-style exercises in rank and file" the core of a new "military calisthenics" (*heishiki taisō*). The reforms were designed not only to "build stronger bodies" but also to "instil the nation's children with the virtues of unquestioning obedience to the state."[2] In Japan, students served as an important test population for the development of the categories and techniques of population management. Like military conscripts, they offered the advantages of a captive population.

The Japanese applied their ideas of militaristic masculinity to the training of Chinese students in Manchukuo (*Manzhouguo* 满洲国). Military-style calisthenics (*bing cao* 兵操) was one of the major forms of physical activity in schools. Group calisthenics by its very nature is militaristic. The most accurate metaphor for the modern military is the machine. In the military style of calisthenics, individual bodies function as machines subordinating themselves to the direction of another individual. Depending on the historical period, other forms of physical exertion might include combat training, martial arts and manual

2 Donald F. Roden, *Schooldays in Imperial Japan: a Study in the Culture of a Student Elite* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1980).

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labour. Only calisthenics, however, was directly integrated into ceremonial life as a form of ritual movement, thus warranting special analytical attention.

Calisthenics was the first Western form of physical education to enter China. Its introduction was part of the well-known effort by late Qing "Westernizers" (*yangwupai* 洋务派) to strengthen China's military through the incorporation of Western technology. For these reformers, "Western calisthenics" (*yangcao* 洋操) was as important as the cannon (*yangpao* 洋炮) or rifle (*yangqiang* 洋枪) in shaping resistance to outsiders.[3]

In 1934, the "All-Manchukuo student physical examination" was established in Manchukuo.[4] Because there were inadequate resources to give the students physical examinations, there was an attempt to infer their health from biographical information.[5] Between February and March 1935, the Committee for the Establishment of Building-the-Nation through Calisthenics convened in Dalian to formulate an "ideal national calisthenics" regime. The Emperor Puyi (溥仪) officially announced the results of the Committee's labours at a banquet to celebrate his recent trip to Japan. At the same time, it was resolved that the newly developed calisthenics programme would be promoted throughout Manchukuo.[6]

The Civil Department (*minsheng bu* 民生部) – formed in 1938 through the merging of the Departments of Education and Hygiene – drafted a "plan for social physical education" (*shehui tiyu shiye jihua* 社会体育事业计划) to promote the new calisthenics programme among the general population. Central to this effort was the establishment of special promotional events like Physical Education Week and Build-the-Nation Calisthenics Day. Events were supported by promotional activities such as mass meetings, film viewings, lectures, study sessions and a variety of printed materials.[7]

Ritual occupied an important position in the organization of student life. Foremost among these rituals was the imperial ceremony (*chaoli* 朝立 or *chaohui* 朝会). The basic outline of the ceremony can be gleaned from the accounts of former students. Students and teachers assembled in the playground. The teacher on duty that week delivered an admonitory speech. The two students on duty ran over to the flagpole. They came to attention facing the Manchukuo national flag. A trumpet sounded and the flag was raised while everyone sang the national anthem. Next, students bowed in the direction of the Japanese emperor in his Tokyo imperial palace and then to the Manchukuo emperor in Xinjing (新京) – today's Changchun (长春). Students and teachers recited the

3 Kuang Wennan and Hu Xiaoming, *Zhongguo tiyu shihua* (*On Chinese PE History*) (Chengdu: Baoluo shushe, 1989).
4 Jonathan Kolatch, *Sports, Politics and Ideology in China* (New York: Jonathan David Publishers, 1972), p. 423.
5 *Ibid.*
6 *Ibid.* p. 379
7 *Ibid.* pp. 423–24.

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"National code" (*guomin xun* 国民训). Finally, students performed Build-the-Nation exercises.[8]

As can be seen from this description, bodily movement was key to the ritual. All rituals require some degree of bodily involvement: at the bare minimum, the participant in the ritual must be physically present. Beyond this, however, the precise level of involvement varies. At the low end, ritualized actions may be limited to small movements that only use a portion of the body with minimal exertion and for brief periods of time. Examples include standing up for the raising of a flag, saluting and the like. At the higher end, the whole body may be employed through strenuous and extended action.

The imperial ceremony made use of both low and high-end ritual movements. At the low end was bowing. The bow is found in the rituals of many cultures as a sign of respect. Bowing is notable for its directionality: it must be done towards some specified object. When that object is present, direction is unproblematic – for example, bowing towards another participant in the ritual. If the object is absent, however, the bow must be redirected towards some substitute: either a material surrogate that stands in for the true object (such as an effigy) or the actual but unseen location of the object (as when Muslims pray towards Mecca). I refer to these two methods as "direct" and "indirect" bowing respectively.

Bowing in the imperial ceremony expressed reverence for the emperors of Japan and Manchukuo. Neither of these "objects," of course, was present. In the absence of a direct object, bows were directed towards the capitals of Tokyo and Xinjing, both the symbolic seats of Manchukuo's dual imperial authority and the regular dwelling places of the two emperors.

The symbolic implications of this particular resolution to the problem of the absent object can be best teased out in comparison with its alternative: the use of a surrogate. This latter method preserves more of the immediate conditions of the "ideal" bowing situation in that the bower and object are placed in a direct physical relationship. In contrast, the Chinese student in the imperial ceremony was, quite literally, bowing at thin air. By "choosing" an indirect over a direct physical relationship, this method of bowing did two things: first, it remained more faithful to the bow's true object by refusing to substitute with a material replacement. It might be objected that the capitals themselves replaced the emperors as the object of the bow, but I argue that the emperor remained symbolically central because the capital only had meaning through its association with the emperor.

Secondly, and more importantly, this method of bowing set up a physical relationship with the object that, although indirect, emphasized real geographic positioning. Any Chinese student would have been able easily to point out the direction of the two imperial capitals. Thus, although students had never set foot in these distant places, the act of bowing nevertheless allowed them to experience

8 Liu Minglun and Peng Xingwen, quoted in Qi Hongshen, "Oral history of Japanese colonization," www.rbqhjy.net, 2004.

viscerally a spatial relationship with the imperial centres and the sovereign rulers that occupied them. This may explain why indirect as opposed to direct bowing was used: Japanese authorities were eager to let their young colonial subjects know that the larger part of their loyalty lay across the sea on the distant Japanese throne. Hence the students were required to bow first in the direction of Tokyo.

The combination of movement and verbal expression was intended to reinforce the message of the ceremony. The underlying theory to this can be seen from domestic Japanese practice. Physical training was often accompanied by war songs and other verbal recitations.

At the high end of bodily involvement was military-style calisthenics, the major form of physical activity in schools. The segmentation of movement into simple, discrete units allows calisthenics to be centrally directed and collectively performed. Directions can be called out by a drillmaster or broadcast over a loudspeaker. Students performed movements in unison according to the directions given by the attending (usually Japanese) drillmaster (*jiao guan* 教官) who scrutinized them according to exact specifications. Failure to produce the correct movement at the appropriate time was often punished severely.

A former student recalls how his Japanese drillmaster would conduct "surprise attacks" on students as they were engaged in free play. Without warning, he would yell "Attention!" Students had to stop whatever they were doing and assume the correct military posture. Failure to react in time was punished with severe beating.[9]

Significantly, male students were often required to perform calisthenics in relative states of undress.[10] A photograph shows students bare-chested with arms spread wide apart. While the muscular form of the young men in this picture conveys a sense of power and self-confidence, undress and underdressing were often the source of physical and mental discomfort. During the winter, students were forbidden to wear coats or sweaters while performing calisthenics. Many fell ill as a result. Exposing the body to the natural elements was used to instil students with the Japanese bushido (*wushidao* 武士道) spirit.

Besides being a vehicle for forcing students to rid themselves of their individuality and assume a corporate identity, the Japanese also used calisthenics as an occasion for humiliation. For instance, nudity was used to reinforce a sense of shame and inferiority. One former student recalls Chinese students being ordered to remove their clothes after calisthenics and pick the lice off each other's bodies.

> There were over a thousand students. After [we] finished exercises (*zuocao* 做操), we were ordered to sit down and take off our clothes to look for lice … The Japanese teacher always covered his nose and stood far away. Using an arrogant tone of voice, he said: Your inferior race is like a pig.[11]

9 Liu Minglun, quoted in *ibid.*
10 Li Yunji and Liu Minglun, quoted in *ibid.*
11 Wang Jingbo, quoted in *ibid.*

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As illustrated above, calisthenics stresses the absorption of the individual into the collective entity of performers. Unlike sports, the point is not to distinguish oneself through an exemplary display of skill but rather to co-ordinate one's movements with other performers such that one in effect disappears, that is, becomes indistinguishable.

Corporal punishment was a frequent occurrence in students' lives. Any offence, no matter how insubstantial, was punishable by severe beating. Specific measures ranged from open-handed slaps to the face to blows from an aikido bamboo sword. In one method of punishment, the teacher ordered the student to slap the face of a classmate.[12] This was called the "concordance slap" (*Xiehe erguang* 协和耳光) – an apparent pun on the name of the Concordia Society (*Xiehe hui* 协和会), a mass organization that supposedly embodied the spirit of Chinese and Japanese co-operation and fraternity.[13] Chinese men were led by Japanese men to join the Concordia Society to support the colonial war.[14] The role of this organization was to imbue Chinese men with energy and courage in service to the Japanese military rule. Chinese men in the Concordia Society served as forced labour to repair roads, construct railways and advocate Japanese morality.[15]

Food was another area in which Japanese school authorities exerted their power over students. Japanese authorities divided grains into two grades – class A (rice, flour and soybean) and class B (sorghum, corn, millet and other coarse cereals). Only Japanese were permitted to consume class A grains. The amount of food rationed to students was progressively decreased. Reductions were justified as a form of training to toughen students and develop the habit of self-denial. Whatever the conscious motivation of their Japanese schoolmasters, the actual effect on students was to create an overwhelming sense of bodily vulnerability that, in turn, increased their sense of dependency on their Japanese rulers. A former student at a technical school in Dalian relates how he and his Chinese classmates hoped for an early Japanese victory in the Pacific theatre, imagining that they would be able to fill their stomachs from the "spoils of war" (*shenglipin* 胜利品).[16]

This same student tells movingly of the central place of hunger in students' lives.[17] Hunger pangs became intolerable during the period between morning exercises and breakfast. To stifle the pain, students imbibed large quantities of

12 This method of punishment was also used in "criticism meetings" during the Cultural Revolution. It is not clear, however, whether this later application was directly inspired or otherwise derived from the Japanese precedent.

13 Wang Jingbo quoted in Qi Hongshen, "Oral history of Japanese colonization."

14 "Xiehe hui genben jingshen wei zhengfu jingshen de muti" ("The spirit of Xie He organization is the national spirit"), *Shengjing shibao* (*Shengjing Times*), 19 September 1936, p. 4.

15 "Mannan yongyue jiaru Xiehe Hui" ("Manchu men actively join in the Xiehe organization"), *Shengjing shibao*, 25 August 1936, p. 1; "Xiehe hui de zhutige" ("The theme song of Xiehe organization"), *Shengjing shibao*, 21 January 1936, p. 4; "Xiehe hui yiwu laodong" ("Xiehe organization offers the volunteer labour"), *Shengjing shibao*, 20 January 1936, p. 10.

16 Qi Hongshen, "Oral history of Japanese colonization."

17 Wang Jingbo, quoted in *ibid.*

cold water and then tightened their belts to contract their stomachs. Once they urinated, however, the hunger would return. This method had the additional disadvantage that it might induce incontinence during class, an offence punishable by severe beating from their Japanese schoolmasters. The pressure of hunger became so unbearable that some students risked punishment by smuggling additional food in their pencil boxes. One such student was caught and beaten to death.

The quality of food also plummeted. Mouldy grain was used to make students' corn cakes, leading to digestive problems. Once during the night, a student afflicted with diarrhoea was unable to reach the lavatory in time and was forced to defecate in the corner of the stairwell. The resulting mess was discovered the following day just as students were lining up for lunch outside the school cafeteria. In order to root out the offender, the Japanese schoolmaster forbade the students from entering. After more than two hours of standing in line, a student with diarrhoea soiled himself. He was assumed to be the perpetrator of the previous night's incident and was severely beaten.[18]

One measure of Japanese educators' success at instilling students with a sense of militaristic manhood is the high level of intra-student violence. Upper-class students were imbued with the authority of minor officers. Lower-class students were expected to salute them and stand at attention in their presence. Although probably not as violent as their Japanese teachers, upper-class students were not averse to using physical intimidation to enforce their authority. One former student perceptively located this intra-student violence within a longer chain of violence: "Japanese beat Chinese; teachers beat students; upper-class students beat lower-class students."[19]

Comparing Sport with Calisthenics

Since the early 19th century when the Qing dynasty experienced crisis from foreign threats, a new physical culture was heralded as the remedy for the national agonies and an indicator of national strength and health.[20] Unlike calisthenics which was intended to cultivate subordination to a single strong imperialist leader, modern sports brought teamwork and sportsmanship with "measurements, race times, physical and behavior boundaries, rules and regulations, theories of free movement and natural motions, and celebrations of the modern masculine national and personal ideal."[21] Self-strengthening with sports, modern knowledge, skills and values to build the Chinese nation, was supported by social Darwinist ideals: the individual body as emblematic of the national body that was necessary for national survival in the modern world. In

18 Wang Jingbo, quoted in *ibid*
19 Wang Jingbo, quoted in *ibid*
20 Andrew D. Morris, *Marrow of the Nation: History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 4.
21 *Ibid*. p. 240

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other words, to create a new China and rid the Chinese of the reputation of "sick men of East Asia,"[22] national citizens needed to be muscular, fit, competitive, confident, responsible and disciplined through modern sports, a sharp contrast to "the gentlemen with long finger-nails, large goggles, and round shoulders – the typical Chinese scholar of the old school."[23] The creative freedom afforded by modern sports provided Chinese men with a disciplined, modern yet free manhood. The gesture of cutting the queues helped a number of sportsmen find their manhood and ambition as they made their names as pioneers of Chinese masculinity and modernity.[24] For the masses, physical training would allow all Chinese to become productive members of a modern society.[25]

The symbolic difference between sport and calisthenics can be best illustrated by comparing what constitutes an "ideal performance" in each case. In sport, athletes often refer to such performances as "magic moments": the successful application of skill that brings together the elements of time, position and force into perfect alignment for the execution of a big piece of play.

In reading the historical accounts of former Dalian soccer players, I was surprised by the level of detail with which these authors were able to recall matches they had participated in well over half a century ago, even to the point of giving minute-by-minute accounts.[26] Not coincidentally, the moments that they wrote about in the greatest detail conform to the above definition of a magic moment – not only because of a self-serving desire to present oneself in the best light possible but also because these moments are what make sport enjoyable.

Calisthenics is wholly devoid of such sublime moments. Here, the ideal performance is the exact reproduction of predetermined movements in unison with other participants. While skill is not irrelevant, its role is much more circumscribed than in sports. The elements of time and location that are left variable in sports are fixed in calisthenics: location is assigned; the timing of execution follows central direction or a preplanned routine. This does not mean that the impact of calisthenics on the body-mind is less than that of playing sports. However, unlike the perfect picture of sport's magic moment, the impression of calisthenics is etched on to the body-mind through repetition over long stretches of time. Even today, I can still recall portions of the calisthenics routine that I performed as a schoolgirl. The above differences are highly consequential for the symbolic significance of sport and calisthenics.

22 As Susan Brownell points out, the early 20th-century Western physical educators perceived Chinese athletes as effeminate. Susan Brownell, *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), p. 40.
23 Morris, *Marrow of the Nation*, p. 13.
24 *Ibid*. p. 14
25 *Ibid*. p. 240
26 Zhu Yuanbao, "Dalian guaqi dongbeifeng" ("North-eastern wind blows in Dalian"), *Zuqiu zhoubao* (*Soccer Weekly*), 18 July 2002.

Masculinity and Sport

Soccer played a critical role in the development of a unique masculine identity among Dalian men. This masculinity intersected with soccer in at least two ways. On the one hand, the way that men play soccer is believed to manifest the particular masculine style of their home region, however defined. Indeed, playing style and masculine style are so closely interwoven that any comment on one simultaneously reflects on the other. On the other hand, passion for soccer can itself become a distinctive feature of local masculine style. Whether Dalian men's personality predisposes them to soccer or their passion for soccer has shaped their collective personality, there is a close connection. Indeed, one commentator goes so far as to suggest that Dalian men *resemble* the sport of soccer.[27] Soccer in Dalian demonstrated Dalian men's rebellious, tenacious and fearless masculinity; their soccer match resembled a street fight, and they were renowned for their fast and tough style.[28]

Before 1920, the Japanese held an annual sports meeting every May in Dalian. Chided as the "sick men of East Asia,"[29] the Chinese men were excluded. In 1920, Fu Liyu (傅立渔) organized the Dalian Zhonghua qingnian hui (大连中国青年会 Dalian Chinese Youth Team) – the very choice of name reflected their rebellious spirit. Although they lost their first game to the Japanese, the Dalian players were not discouraged. They exerted all efforts to strengthen their training and enhance their techniques under austere conditions of hunger and pressure. They started training from 4.00 am, and each player developed his own unique skills.[30] The tenacious efforts finally bore fruit: from 1926 they consistently defeated British, Japanese and other foreign teams, marking each triumph with a national celebration.[31] Such a steadfast spirit pervaded all the games that they played. One game against the British team took place in pouring rain. According to the Dalian sports writer Zhu Yuanbao (朱元宝), the men pledged to each other that "we would rather die in the fight than die out of fear." He further related that "all were determined to put their lives on the line." Their resolution allowed them to defeat the British team.[32]

Sports writer Zhu Yuanbao is the icon par excellence of Dalian men's nationalistic fervour against the Japanese colonial regime. His writing can be read as a romanticized hyperbole of Dalian men's soccer team. Although exaggerated, Zhu's writing accurately reflects the consciousness of Chinese men of the time. He echoed the nationalistic spirit of the team in stating that

27 Zhu Yuanbao, "Dalian zuqiu shi yibu buqu de lishi," ("The history of Dalian soccer is a history of perseverance"), *Zuqiu zhoubao*, 18 July 2002, p. 1.

28 Anonymous, "Liaoning zuqiu fazhan shi" ("History of Soccer in Liaoning"), Huaxia jingweiwang (Chinese Net), 30 June 2003. As Susan Brownell notes, the first soccer club in post-Mao China was founded in Shenyang in 1988. Brownell, *Training the Body for China: Sports in the Moral Order of the People's Republic* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995), pp. 71–73.

29 Zhu Yuanbao, *Dalian zuqiu yundong shiliao* (*Historical Materials on Dalian Soccer*) (Dalian: Dalianshi zonggonghui yinshuachang, 1992), p. 34.

30 Zhu Yuanbao, "The history of Dalian soccer is a history of perseverance."

31 Zhu Yuanbao, *Historical Materials on Dalian Soccer*, pp. 34–35.

32 *Ibid.*

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persecution by the Japanese authorities could not defeat the Dalian men's persistent and resilient spirit.[33] Although the Japanese authorities forced them to change the name to Dalian Youth Team, attempted to appoint the Japanese general manager of the trolley company as their board director and even imprisoned some soccer players, the Chinese players refused to submit to the Japanese. An example of this resistance was Ma Shaohua (马绍华), one of the key players who helped defeat the Japanese soccer team. He was not only dismissed but sent to labour camps. However, he escaped, and continued to resist the Japanese rulers through playing soccer.

Ma Shaohua became a cultural hero for the Chinese. That many of his stories are apocryphal is not in doubt. However, the legendary quality of the stories became a focal point for Chinese resistance. In relating his life story, he said that he began martial art training when he was very young.[34] By the age of 16, using a simple wooden stick, he defeated a Japanese man with a Japanese battle sword. Ma Shaohua's youth was filled with romantic adventure. As he later related, one night, he witnessed a Japanese soldier attempting to molest a Japanese woman. The woman resisted by jumping into Kunming Lake (*Kunming hu* 昆明湖). Ma plunged into the lake and rescued her. The irate soldier attempted to arrest Ma for attempted rape. As the soldier pulled out his gun to shoot Ma, Ma jumped up, kicked his gun away and threw it into the grass. Wanted by the Japanese, Ma escaped into a burial ground and hid there for six months.

Whether these stories are apocryphal or not, the important thing is that Ma became a cultural hero for the Chinese in Dalian. Susan Brownell notes that the martial arts novel and nationalism developed side-by-side because China was a nation defeated by foreign powers with superior military strength. The heroes of the novels appealed to the Chinese imagination because they defeated modern weapons with traditional physical skills.[35] Ma Shaohua's stories compensated for the humiliation felt by Chinese men before the military power of the foreigners, and created a hero who could not only represent China on the soccer field, but even rescue foreign women from their own men.

The Body as Symbol of Nationalism

Wasserstrom points out that student protesters adopted many techniques that were originally used as part of the pageantry in sport meetings, including flying flags and banners, marching in line, and so on.[36] The sports meeting, however, was not only a repository from which student protesters could pilfer new techniques but also an important site of protest in its own right. The following analysis thus fills an important gap in China's history of protest by

33 *Ibid.*
34 Zhu Yuanbao, "Mashaohua xinbei yongzhu" ("A monument forever exists in the heart of Mashaohua"), *Zuqiu zhoubao* (*Soccer Weekly*), 26 February 2003, p. 2.
35 Brownell, *Training the Body for China*, p. 52.
36 Jeffrey N. Wasserstrom "Student protests in fin-de-siecle China," *New Left Review*, Vol. 237 (1999).

incorporating the efforts of student-athletes to galvanize support for the anti-imperialist struggle. More important for the purpose of this article, however, is how student-athlete protest symbolically linked the male body with oppositional themes – indeed, turning the male body itself into a symbol of defiance.

The use of the body as a medium for displaying texts was a technique found only in the protest repertoire of student-athletes, taking advantage of the fact that the athlete's body is the centre of visual attention in a sports stadium. In other protect contexts, such as a march, protesters are surrounded by others and texts have to be elevated overhead on flags and banners in order to be visible. The sports stadium, in contrast, provides an ideal stage for political displays of the body.

The athlete's body, however, was not a neutral medium. First, the predominance of men in sports meant that the body on display was most likely to be male. The way that the text was inscribed on to the athlete's body highlighted its male features. The chest was the focal point. The jersey of Liu Changchun (刘长春), the first Chinese Olympian who competed in 1932, had the characters "*dongbei*" (东北, north-east China) emblazoned on his chest.[37] The jersey became his personal symbol and he wore it to every domestic sports meeting as a visual reminder that the region he represented was under foreign domination.

Today, Chinese male athletes and spectators avidly partake in the international sports culture of body decoration. This is nowhere more evident than in soccer. After scoring a much needed goal in competition with Japan, an impassioned Chinese soccer player pulled up his jersey to reveal the English word "winner" (unfortunately, misspelled as "winer") on his chest. Likewise, Chinese soccer fans show no reluctance to bare their chests to other spectators and the camera lens, turning their upper torsos into canvases to be written and drawn on.[38]

The jersey itself was part of a new form of display featuring the male form. Political leaders applauded the appearance of the male athlete's broad chest and shoulders as a sign of racial strength. The use of the body reminds one of the emphasis upon the torso that comes from fascist Italy: Mussolini showcased his torso in innumerable bare-chested photographs.[39] Republican-era China was no stranger to these images. For instance, a very famous propaganda photograph showed the strong torsos of Chinese men performing military calisthenics.

37 Ying Wu, "Liuchangchun daibiao Zhongguoren shouchuang Aoyunhui shimo" ("The beginning and end of Liuchangchun attending the Olympics on behalf of China"), *Yanhua chunqiu* (*Spring and Autumn of the Chinese*), Vol. 7 (2001).

38 Zhu Yuanbao, "Dalian guaqi dongbeifeng" ("North-eastern wind blows in Dalian"), *Zuqiu zhoubao*, 18 July 2002. Zhu Yuanbao, "A monument forever exists in the heart of Mashaohua." Zhu Yuanbao, "The history of Dalian soccer is a history of perseverance."

39 Japanese fascist body culture likewise elevated the male torso as a symbol of racial-national strength. J. A. Mangan and Takeshi Komagome, "Militarism, sacrifice and emperor worship: the expendable male body in fascist Japanese martial culture," in J. A. Mangan (ed.), *Superman Supreme: Fascist Body as Political Icon -Global Fascism* (London: Frank Cass Publishers, 2000).

The athlete, of course, did not just serve as a mannequin to be dressed up and looked at but was also a performer. In order to secure a winning overall score for the Liaoning team, an athlete named Liu pulled out of individual competitive events in which he was the favoured competitor to save strength for higher point team events like the relay. His strategy worked and the Liaoning team captured first place from the home club – the formidable Shanghai track-and-field team. Such sacrifice of personal glory for the good of the team was by no means limited to star athletes like Liu.[40] To the extent that the team was identified with the homeland, their willingness to subordinate personal to collective goals expressed more than just team spirit; it also served as an indicator of student-athletes' patriotic attachment to their homeland.

The most vivid example of student-athlete protest took place at the Sixth North China Athletic Games held in Henan (河南) in 1932. A "cheerleading squad" (*lala dui* 啦啦队) composed of students from North Eastern University – which had been transplanted from Shenyang (沈阳) to Beiping (北平) after the 1931 Manchurian Incident – took centre stage in a highly eccentric and flamboyant political theatre: they wore clothes of every shape and size and hats with every colour of the rainbow. The squad leader had a military cap with the image of the national flag. A flag of the rising sun, the Japanese national flag, served as his trousers with the sun right on the buttocks. Squad members wore hats made out of coarse, white cloth with blue rims, like the caps worn to funerals. They had lapelled white shirts and grey trousers. The characters "cheer" (huanhu 欢呼) were written on their chests. The entire squad converged in a corner of the stadium and repeatedly yelled: "Take heart! Keep at it! Retake the lost territory!"[41]

Soccer in Dalian's Identity

A number of characteristics made sports meetings ideally suited to the staging of political demonstrations. Chinese sports writing claimed that Chinese soccer teams never lost a game to their Japanese competitors. Zhu Yuanbao is perhaps the most prolific and knowledgeable of sports writers on the topic of Dalian's pre-communist sports history. His articles have been published in Dalian's *Soccer Weekly*, a subsidiary of the *Dalian Daily* newspaper company. Local sports writers like Zhu acted as the informal historians of local sports history. Beyond basic fact-finding, however, historically minded sports writers helped cultivate the sense of a local sports tradition in Dalian. "To comprehend Dalian, you can start from a number of angles – Dalian's ports, Dalian's landscape, squares, and sea, Dalian's fashion festival and so on – but you cannot fail to

40 Bi Wanwen, *Zhang Xueliang wenji* (*Collection of Zhang Xueliang's Literary Works*) (Beijing: Xinhua chubanshe, 1992).

41 Zhu Yuanbao, "The history of Dalian soccer is a history of perseverance." Zhu Yuanbao, *Historical Materials on Dalian Soccer*, pp. 34–35.

mention Dalian's soccer. Soccer is to Dalian as the air, sunlight, rain and grain is to humankind."[42]

Zhu's main point is that soccer occupies a position of privilege in Dalian. Other features routinely emphasized in travel brochures designed to attract out-of-town and international tourists are downplayed. The idea of soccer as life-sustaining is perhaps a little overdone but conveys the author's essential point that it is critical to the identity of Dalian. It is almost as if the manly virility (*yanggang zhiqi* 阳刚之气) of soccer were specially made for the people of Dalian. Dalian men seem naturally gifted in soccer.[43]

Soccer was introduced in Dalian by foreign sailors. Scrimmages were held near the docks in Fu Island Square (*Fudao guangchang* 敷岛广场) (today's Democracy Square, *Minzhu guangchang* 民主广场). Local Chinese first watched and later began to participate themselves on makeshift playfields with bamboo poles to designate the goals.[44]

Dalian's first soccer team was organized in 1921 by the China Youth League. The founder of the League, Fu Liyu, was an early advocate of Western sports for improving the physical and spiritual quality of the Chinese people, especially youth. A "sports division" was set up to develop programmes in swimming, track and field, ball games, and martial arts. A quotation attributed to Fu Liyu expresses his emphasis on physical fitness: "The reason for the flourishing of a nation and the mark of a country's decline both depend on the ebb and flow of the people's vital energy."[45]

Susan Brownell notes that as early as 1911, an American professor expressed his contempt for the "effeminate" Chinese intellectual in a book on manliness in Western sports.[46] She speculates that the English source materials were first spread through foreign communities and then picked up by the Chinese and used to criticize their own culture. Thus the Western critiques of China were intertwined with Chinese critiques of themselves, which included the absurdity of the queue that proved to be incompatible with modern sports, so that Chinese spectators came to see the queue as absurd.[47] The contrasting image of Westerners was one of physical competence and hypersexuality. According to Geremie Barmé, the sense of self-loathing and self-criticism continues today. Confronting a new world order after the Opium War, the Chinese came to understand their inferior position.[48] "Questions of racial and political impotence have been central to Chinese thought and debate ever since."[49] For over a century there has been a vigorous trend in both popular and intellectual circles

42 Zhu Yuanbao, "The history of Dalian soccer is a history of perseverance."
43 Ma Xiangyu, "Zuqiu, Dalian" ("Soccer, Dalian"), CCTV International, 22 September 2003.
44 Zhu Yuanbao, "North-eastern wind blows in Dalian."
45 *Ibid.*
46 Brownell, *Training the Body for China*, p. 40.
47 *Ibid.* p. 41
48 Geremie R. Barmé, "To screw foreigners is patriotic: China's avant-garde nationalist," *The China Journal*, No. 34 (1995), pp. 209–34 at p. 210.
49 *Ibid.* p. 210

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to criticize their country for its material backwardness, military weakness and political inadequacy. During the late 1980s, intellectuals, troubled by nihilism born of a rejection of the party-state, warned the nation that if nothing was done, the Chinese may finally be "expelled from the human race." The documentary series Heshang (河殇) equated older civilizations with decadence, non-competitive economies and backwardness, reflecting the intellectuals' frustration and hopelessness about the corrupt, chaotic and backward nation.[50] From the early 1990s onward, following the nation's increased economic growth, "there has been a new twist in this tradition of self-loathing." The national character has been transformed by personal possession of wealth. "The nationalist spirit that is being reformulated in the 1990s is not one based on mature reflection or open discussion but rather on a cocky, even vengeful, and perhaps a purblind self-assurance."[51]

The inferiority complex of Chinese men at this time was further exacerbated by schools that were for the most part racially segregated. Only exceptional Chinese students – measured mainly by fluency in Japanese – and the children of Chinese officials in the colonial administration were allowed to attend Japanese schools. However, ordinary Chinese and Japanese were brought together often in violent encounters on the streets. Street skirmishes were frequent and often took the form of free-for-alls (daqunjia 打群架) involving multiple participants. The areas between Chinese and Japanese schools and "mixed" (*hunzhu* 混住) residential quarters seem to have seen the most action. The streets were not just battlefields but also playing fields. Two districts – Xigangzi (西岗子) and Shaheko (沙河口) – became the centres of local Chinese soccer. Chinese youth formed "street teams" and held informal matches, mostly between elementary and middle school students, many of whom later went on to become key soccer players in "New China."[52]

If fighting and sports merged on the streets, Chinese and Japanese youth were connected in other ways as well. Chinese students in particular used fighting and sports to reclaim the dignity and masculinity lost in other areas of life. The names of soccer teams were contested between Chinese teams and Japanese authorities. Team names were often coded nationalistic messages. In most cases, this was as simple as including a "zhong" (中) or "hua" (华) character in the team's name to indicate loyalty to the Chinese motherland. Luo Xianqiao (罗仙樵), however, put more thought into the name of his team whose members included six or seven employees of Zhenglong Bank (Zhenglong yinhang 正隆银行). The full team name, "Zhenglong Bank Chinese Team," (*Zhenglong yinhang Zhongguo dui* 正隆银行中国队) was abbreviated as "Long Hua Dui" (*longhua dui* 隆华队), meaning "a prosperous China" (*xinglong Zhonghua* 兴隆中华). Such word play was not beyond Dalian's Japanese authorities and several teams were forced to disband or change their names. Soccer players became local

50 *Ibid.* pp. 222–23
51 *Ibid.* pp. 227–28
52 Zhu Yuanbao, "The history of Dalian soccer is a history of perseverance."

heroes in the Chinese community. Attendance at small neighbourhood matches ran into the hundreds. Fans brought water and tea for the players and even gave food and other gifts.[53]

Why soccer? Where it addresses the question at all, local historiography tends to emphasize the practical conditions that facilitated soccer's spread. For example, the abundance of open spaces such as public squares and undeveloped patches of land that dotted Dalian's colonial landscape provided the earliest soccer players with ready-made playing fields. Similarly, the relatively low technological requirements of soccer allowed people of limited means to use make-shift substitutes to formal equipment. For example, instead of soccer balls, rocks or balls made out of non-standard materials like rubber; instead of goalposts, two wooden poles stuck in the ground.

While the above factors undoubtedly contributed to the broad acceptance of soccer by Dalian's masses, this analysis fails to grasp the unique quality of soccer in relation to other sports and thus is unable truly to account for soccer's peculiar success as a form of bodily activity. Other sports like basketball, after all, were introduced to Dalian around the same time as soccer.[54] Yet soccer became the sport of preference for the vast majority of Dalian's male youth. Furthermore, it seems highly unlikely that technological considerations alone would have given soccer a definitive advantage over other sport forms. Rather, the crucial difference that distinguishes soccer from other sports lies in its historically rooted symbolic meaning, namely, as an *international* sport.

Strictly speaking, all Western sports in China are international in that they are all "imported goods" (*bolaipin* 舶来品). Not all sports, however, are as international as others. Some are played throughout world; others remain largely confined within the borders of their national origins. The international-ness of any given sport, of course, cannot be judged by simply counting the number of countries in which it is played. Certain sports retain a strong identification with their country of origin even after they have spread to other places. Until relatively recently, cricket was a thoroughly "English" game regardless of where it happened to be played. The process of unmooring cricket from its English roots – what Appadurai calls "vernacularization" – provided the conditions for its later absorption into a new, global "ecumene."[55]

Soccer in Dalian never had a strong identification with any particular country. This is largely attributable to the way in which it was introduced into Dalian. As mentioned above, it was introduced by visiting sailors, and those from a variety of nations, including the United States, Britain and Russia, all played it. The multi-national background of this group would have militated against the

53 *Ibid.*

54 Ding Xiaochun, *Zhang Xueliang yu Dongbei daxue* (*Zhang Xueliang and North-Eastern University*) (Shenyang: Dongbei daxue chubanshe, 1996). Bi Wanwen, *Collection of Zhang Xueliang's Literary Works*.

55 Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), pp. 89–113.

identification of soccer with a single "source" country, instead lending it an international status as a sport of the world.

The international character of soccer made it particularly suited to China's unique circumstances. The partitioning of China into spheres of foreign influence engendered the sense that the nations of the world had simultaneously turned against China. While Japan enjoyed total foreign monopoly in the north-east after its victory over Russia in 1905, Dalian's residents were acutely aware of the occupation of other areas by multiple foreign powers, even going so far as to stage demonstrations to support the nationalist movements in Shanghai and other cities.

Soccer then served as a neutral field for enacting China's national struggle for survival. But to what end? As suggested earlier, there are two opposing views of combative sports: the first assigns it a conservative social role as safety valve for hostilities. This position is most famously articulated in Elias and Dunning's thesis on the origins of "combat sports." According to their argument, sport is a byproduct of the state's monopoly over violence.[56] By using sport to control violence, the state avoids making sport a venue for resistance to state power. The second view sees combative sports as a form of resistance. There are two variations of this view: first, sport is seen itself as a form of resistance that has "some degree of consciousness and collectivity about [it], as well as some explicit attention to broad structures of domination."[57] A variation on this theme suggests that sport unconsciously cultivates the spirit of resistance during the "downtime" when overt resistance is too risky or undesirable.[58] This sub-view has the drawback that it tends to reduce all non-overt forms of resistance into mere preparation or rehearsal for some expression of overt resistance in the indefinite future.

How does Dalian's situation match these views? I argue that soccer in Dalian was the site upon which the inscription of dominant power collided with the resistance of dominant power. Although Dalian men's soccer-playing was a conscious, collective and structural form of resistance, its ultimate consequence was not the overthrow of the dominant power, but rather, the rejection of the internalization of their own inferiority.[59] Chinese players deliberately resorted to soccer to exhibit collective action. Rather than a latent and/or unconscious preparation to materialize resistance in the future, Dalian soccer displayed the Chinese players' rebellious spirit, belligerent attitude and aggressive rather than compliant interactions with the Japanese rulers. When the Japanese rulers ordered the leader of the Chinese team to lose, the Chinese players collectively challenged this "colonial ethic" and won the game. While the Chinese players'

56 Eric Dunning, "Sport as a male preserve: notes on the social sources of masculine identity and its transformations," in Nobert Elias and Eric Dunning (eds.), *Quest for Excitement: Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986).

57 Jeffrey W. Rubin, "Defining resistance: contested interpretations of everyday acts," *Studies in Law, Politics, and Society*, Vol. 15 (1996), pp. 237–60.

58 *Ibid.*

59 *Ibid.*

victory challenged the government authorities, it did not change the power structure; and while the Japanese rulers had sought to use soccer games to naturalize the imposed hierarchy between the two nations, the defeat of the Japanese team did not resolve in overt rebellion by the Chinese men in Dalian. While it allowed them to escape the internalization of Japanese superiority, it did not overthrow the repressive political system. The distinction between combative sports and real violence is not as absolute as previous theories suggest. Chinese players faced varieties of soccer-related violence both on and off the field. The existence of these real physical threats suggest that soccer involved powerfully felt commitments, not just release of tension. Such intense commitments were deeply imbued in the soccer playing and were turned into a form of resistance that involved a conscious challenge to structures of power. However, the resistance should be understood as successful only in that it preserved a sense of masculine identity in the Chinese soccer players.

Soccer was chosen by the men of Dalian, not imposed upon them. It was the antidote to the colonization and degradation of Chinese men's bodies by calisthenics. The very nature of soccer involved initiative, creativity and aggressiveness. It can be a powerful form of self-expression. There is, however, a crucial additional factor: colonialism is predicated upon an explicit effeminization of the colonized. That is, an overt homology between power/powerlessness and male/female is set up as part of colonial ideology. Soccer not only asserts masculinity over femininity, but also man over boy. Colonialism is set up not only to feminize men, but also to turn them from men into boys. This is nicely illustrated by the sense of emasculation sensed by Dalian boys who were subject to calisthenics. Although the Japanese claimed to be making the effeminate Chinese boys into men, the patriarchal nature of calisthenics actually had the effect of turning men into boys.

Theorists like Alfred Adler emphasized this point by insisting that masculine protest was not an exclusively negative phenomenon. For him, it represented an almost primal drive to overcome the condition of weakness and dependency. Adler's theory points to a deep connection between masculinity and resistance: the essence of masculinity as resistance; resistance as a quintessentially masculine pursuit.[60] As Connell points out, attempts at structural reform like revolution demand traits such as courage and perseverance that are typically coded as male.[61] Hyper-masculinity posits that men's anti-social, violent behaviour is "an unconscious defensive manoeuvre on the part of males who are in conflict about or who are insecure about their identities as males."[62] A major strand in the sociological research on masculinity has been the connection between men and violence. Violence is not only a "male" phenomenon in the simple numerical

60 Alfred Adler, *Co-operation Between the Sexes: Writings on Women, Love and Marriage, Sexuality and its Disorders* (Garden City, New York: Anchor Books, 1978).

61 R.W. Connell, *Masculinities* (Berkeley & Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1995).

62 Gwen J. Broude, "Protest masculinity: a further look at the causes and the concept," *Ethos*, Vol. 18, No. 1 (1990), pp. 103–22 at p. 103.

sense that men perpetrate the overwhelming majority of violent acts, but rather, male identity itself is implicated as a source of violence. Men commit violence to construct and confirm their masculinity. The pathologization of male violence implies that male aggressiveness is acceptable and even socially desirable within certain bounds or in certain prescribed forms. Adler goes the furthest in this respect by locating in pathological masculinity the seeds of man's restless creativity.[63] Such a pathological masculinity resonates with the myth created about Ma Shaohua, an ultimate masculine rebel who redefined Chinese manhood. The myth was embraced by Chinese men because it allowed a vicarious identification with a superhero who assuaged their sense of emasculation. This restless creativity was crystallized in the sport of soccer.

Conclusion

In this article, I have argued that Dalian men underwent a dramatic transformation from a Confucian ideal of masculinity to a more violence-oriented masculine identity. I have shown that their bodily experiences are crucial to understanding the historical reformation of their masculine identity. During Japanese colonial rule, the bodies of the Chinese schoolboys were stamped with obedience and humiliation by the imposed calisthenics. The Chinese schoolboys countered their subjugation by engaging in street soccer which allowed them to voice their nationalistic spirit. In contrast with the controlled motions of military calisthenics, soccer offered a sense of freedom and creativity in its unrestricted and improvised movements.

63 Adler, *Co-operation Between the Sexes*.

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