

Wild scenes at the stadium? Protest as political culture during Shanghai's international sporting events, 1924-1941

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Abstract:

Sport is never just a game. In an imperial context, it connotes a host of ideals and values directly linked to foreign political authority. In treaty port Shanghai, competition between the city's many national communities was similarly conceived of as a tool to strengthen foreign power. The practice of protest at international sports events by Shanghai's Chinese population subverted these attempts and enabled protestors to undermine foreign legitimacy. This thesis applies the lens of political culture to examine how meaning was attached to protest at international sporting events and analyse how this was received by Shanghai's foreign community.

Sport has frequently been overlooked in the wider historiography of protest. However, an investigation of the practice of sports protest is highly relevant for providing valuable insights into the nature of social relations. While historians have generally assumed that Shanghai's foreign society was insular, studying protest shows not only that there was significant contact, but that this was exploited for political aims. Sport provided a unique avenue for protest by encapsulating foreign rituals of rule, which could be spontaneously usurped to mount a symbolic challenge. Comparison with formal colonial contexts illustrates that sport as a channel for protest was shaped by Shanghai's semi-colonial arrangement, illuminating the broader complexities and vulnerabilities of semi-colonial control.

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Table of Contents:

<u>Abbreviations:</u>	3
<u>Introduction:</u>	4
<u>Chapter 1- Setting:</u>	10
<i>Contested fields: staging international sport in treaty port Shanghai:</i>	10
<i>Space and protest in a divided city:</i>	15
<i>Stadium politics: the view from the stands:</i>	20
<i>Foreign reactions beyond the stadium:</i>	23
<i>Conclusion:</i>	25
<u>Chapter 2- Actors:</u>	27
<i>Setting the scene: organisation of international sport:</i>	27
<i>Assembling the cast: protestors and their audiences:</i>	29
<i>A serious game: the SMP's response to protest:</i>	38
<i>Conclusion:</i>	40
<u>Chapter 3- Plot:</u>	42
<i>Playing by Western rules? Foreign construction of sporting narratives:</i>	42
<i>A protest 'game plan':</i>	44
<i>Threatening rituals: rehearsing resistance:</i>	51
<i>Conclusion:</i>	53
<u>Conclusion:</u>	55
<u>Bibliography:</u>	57
1) <i>Primary Sources:</i>	57
2) <i>Secondary Sources:</i>	61
<i>List of Images:</i>	66

Abbreviations:

NCHSCCG: North China Herald and Supreme Court & Consular Gazette

TCP: The China Press

JDS: Journal de Shanghai (Journal of Shanghai)

IJHS: The International Journal of the History of Sport

SMP: Shanghai Municipal Police

SMC: Shanghai Municipal Council

CNAAF: China National Amateur Athletic Federation

SFA: Shanghai Football Association

YMCA: Young Men's Christian Association

Introduction:

Sport in China today represents a highly politicised domain. As Xi Jinping's ambitious 2016 fifty-year plan for the development of Chinese football demonstrates, sport is perceived to be linked to the wider social and economic fortunes of the country.¹ The potential thus offered by sport to challenge China's cultural hegemony has in turn been co-opted by protestors. Spectators in Hong Kong routinely boo the Chinese national anthem at football games and are threatened with jail time because their acts are viewed as subversive.² Control over sport in China has therefore become symbolic for political power, acting as a mobilising force for a range of wider issues.

Alan Bairner notes that historians have frequently side-lined sport as above or below politics: either a moral stronghold against political tensions or too trivial to merit political notice.³ This approach betrays an inherently Eurocentric lens that continues to shape much research on the history of sport. Outside the Western world, however, sports imported from Europe and the United States were never taken for granted, but rather explicitly linked to foreign identity and imperialism.⁴ These sports are referred to as 'Western sports' throughout my thesis. Western sport delineates both specifically the types of sport that were originally popularised in Europe or the United States and more broadly the infrastructure associated with sport in the West, such as designated sporting grounds, (semi-)professional match officials, league structures, *etc.* In China, the

¹ E. F. Leite Junio and C. Rodrigues, 'The Chinese Football Development Plan: Soft Power and National Identity', *HOLOS*, v (2017), pp. 114-124 at p. 119.

² S. Denyer, 'Hong Kong's Sports Fans have booed China's national anthem for years. Now they might go to jail', [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/worldviews/wp/2017/10/17/people-protest-the-national-anthem-at-sporting-events-in-china-too-now-they-face-jail/?noredirect=on&utm_term=.09906df8431a] (last accessed 25 May 2019).

³ A. Bairner, *Sport, Nationalism, and Globalization: European and North American Perspectives* (Albany, 2001), p. 22.

⁴ H. Zhang, F. Hong and F. Huang, *Christianity and the Transformation of Physical Education and Sport in China* (Oxon, 2017), p. 79.

subversive potential of Western sport was recognised following its popularisation by foreign organisations from the end of the nineteenth century and actively exploited as a tool of anti-imperialist protest. 'Sport' is used in a general sense because, although patterns of protest varied somewhat between individual sports, they were nevertheless united through underlying themes. In the first half of the twentieth century, sport was most routinely used as an avenue for protest in treaty port Shanghai, which afforded unique opportunities for dissent as a result of its large, diverse international population and its division into three separate, competing areas of jurisdiction in consequence of China's semi-colonial arrangement.

Social relations within this complex political environment have largely been oversimplified. Robert Bickers has argued that there was little exchange between the three different zones, as well as limited contact between foreigners and Chinese living in each area.⁵ The practice of protest at international sports events highlights the necessity of revising this view, and re-examining its implications for Shanghai's political organisation. International sport involved competition between teams or individuals claiming to represent different nations. This could occur through contest between self-styled 'national teams' or more implicitly through segregation into teams on the basis of nationality. International sports competitions were carried out exclusively in Western sports in all three areas of Shanghai by almost all nationalities present during its occupation. Chinese teams were first able to enter these international leagues from 1924, which disbanded after the Japanese occupation of the International Settlement in 1941.⁶ Currently, no dedicated piece of research has examined the practice of international sport

⁵ R. Bickers, 'Shanghaianders: The Formation and Identity of the British Settler Community in Shanghai 1843-1937', *Past & Present*, clix (1998), pp. 161-211 at p. 171.

⁶ S. Kuang, 'Eastward Transmission of Western Learning and the Evolution of Modern Sports in Shanghai, 1843-1949', *IJHS*, xxx (2016), pp. 1606-1625 at p. 1615; *Ibid.*, p. 1622.

in Shanghai. This is a significant oversight given that the international contact occasioned through sport challenges the dominant historiography. Consequently, this has implications for our understanding of the complexities of semi-colonial rule, as foreign control over international sport could represent a ritual of cultural imperialism. Foreign-run sporting bodies exercised control over sports grounds, officials, rules and the underlying values associated with sport, rendering it a cultural expression of wider foreign political control.

By subverting these sporting rituals through acts of protest, however, Shanghai's Chinese population opposed Western associations and instead linked sport to their own anti-foreign ideas. Protest at international sports events was most conspicuous when it took violent forms through the practice of rioting. Nevertheless, other forms of protest, such as boycotts or correspondence with the foreign press, also disrupted foreign sporting hegemony. Shared themes gave these protests coherence and meaning, thereby creating significant anxieties for both Shanghai's foreign community and its governing bodies, who were worried about the subversive potential of a Chinese political culture. In response, my thesis focusses on the question: 'How was Chinese protest during Shanghai's international sporting events perceived as a manifestation of a Chinese political culture by Shanghai's foreign community between 1924 to 1941?'

Examining sports protests through a cultural framework offers a two-fold contribution to the existing historiography. Firstly, I argue that a shared political culture gave the actions of protestors at international sports events unity and substance, since it enabled them to mobilise as a group following a shared anti-foreign agenda. As this allowed for the cooperation of a variety of elite and non-elite actors, I propose that social relations in Shanghai were more complex than has previously been considered. Protest highlighted the divisions between different foreign authorities, foreign and Chinese

sporting bodies, foreign authority and the foreign community, as well as foreign authorities and the Chinese populations they ruled. These divisions contradicted foreign narratives of rule and thereby questioned foreign legitimacy and identity. Secondly, I argue that political culture in Shanghai as expressed through sports protest was fundamentally different from that in formal colonial contexts. Representations of political culture were conditioned by the context in which it manifested and the unique political climate of the divided city led to the creation of a distinctive tradition of sporting protest. Analysing how expressions of political culture were dealt with can therefore reveal the complexities and ironies of semi-colonialism more broadly.

My thesis draws primarily on foreign newspapers produced in Shanghai between 1924 to 1941, my analysis of which is supplemented by Shanghai Municipal Council (SMC) and Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) reports. Additionally, I focus mostly on material produced in the International Settlement, because it possessed a more developed sporting culture than the French Concession and consequently there are more sources available. Over two hundred newspapers operated in Shanghai by 1934.⁷ I examine the main foreign-language publications, as these represented the politically-dominant Western communities. All three were sponsored by different agencies, which gave each a distinct political orientation. The newspapers used include the *NCHSCCG*, Shanghai's most popular foreign-language newspaper and the official organ of the SMC; *TCP*, published in the International Settlement and financed through a mixture of American and Chinese backing; and *JDS*, sponsored by the French Concession authorities.⁸ The selection of exclusively foreign sources poses limitations because they rarely directly lend a voice to the Chinese actors involved. Nevertheless, attitudes of the

⁷ Nantes: Archives Diplomatiques, Box 135, fol. 635PO/A: French Consular survey of Shanghai's Press, 1934, p. 1.

⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-11.

press reveal the significance of protest, as their responses represent attempts to deal with the challenges it posed to foreign legitimacy.

The concept of political culture has acquired interdisciplinary relevance through its potential for exposing manifestations of power.⁹ Jeffrey Wasserstrom has applied it to the study of student protest in early-twentieth century Shanghai. He posits that students created their own political culture, which he defines as including:

All of the discourses, values, and implicit rules that express and shape collective action and intentions, determine the claims groups may (and may not) make upon one another, and ultimately provide the logic of revolutionary action.¹⁰

A political culture forms the rulebook for protest, which in the case of Shanghai was gradually moulded by its unique political context. Political culture assumes its force through its potential for subversion: by appropriating the rituals and discourses of the governing faction, protestors staged political theatre which through its symbolic meaning called into question the legitimacy of foreign rule. Clifford Geertz has claimed that because ritual is a crucial tool for all regimes, the theatrical staging of protest has far-reaching implications.¹¹ Foreign elites in Shanghai likewise depended on stories to justify their rule, which they told both those they governed and themselves.¹² Given that Western sport was closely tied to wider assumptions about Western cultural superiority, challenging the rituals and discourses associated with sport through the creation of their own political culture offered Chinese protestors a forum through which to criticise the wider legitimacy of foreign rule.

⁹ R. Formisano, 'The Concept of Political Culture', *The Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, xxxi (2011), pp. 393-426 at p. 395.

¹⁰ J. Wasserstrom, *Student Protests in Twentieth-Century China: The View from Shanghai* (Stanford, 1991), pp. 10-11.

¹¹ C. Geertz, *Local Knowledge: Further Essays In Interpretive Anthropology* (New York, 2000), p. 124.

¹² Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, p. 286.

Ronald Formisano has warned against according too much significance to expressions of political culture, as this poses the danger of obscuring the persistent influence of formal power.¹³ Crucially, protestors at Shanghai's international sports events never mounted a tangible challenge to foreign political power. Even so, Shanghai's foreign community did react strongly to the symbolic threat posed by protest to their legitimacy, suggesting that the lens of political culture can be useful for analysing how opposition was exhibited through informal channels. Wasserstrom further justifies its relevance by highlighting that historians have tended to focus on the ideologies of protest, without considering how protest itself was performed.¹⁴ Applying the lens of political culture therefore enables a refocussing of protest from underlying beliefs to actions, allowing a reframing of sports protests that have otherwise been dismissed as hooliganism due to the absence of ideological underpinnings.¹⁵ My thesis aims to extend the study of protest in Shanghai to international sports events, adopting a theatrical lens to analyse how a symbolic challenge was staged through the setting, the actors involved and the creation of a ritualised plot.

¹³ Formisano, 'Political Culture', p. 396.

¹⁴ Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, p. 9.

¹⁵ R. Giulianotti, *Football: A Sociology of the Global Game* (Cambridge, 1999), p. 40.

Chapter 1- Setting:

Contested fields: staging international sport in treaty port Shanghai:

Foreign authorities in Shanghai attempted to imbue sporting spaces with political and cultural meaning, reflecting both their expansionist territorial aims and efforts to project their cultural identity. However, these meanings could be symbolically usurped by protestors for their own purposes. With the Treaty of Nanjing (1842) that followed China's defeat in the first Opium War, foreign powers were granted political authority in various 'treaty ports'.¹ Control over these ports gave foreign powers a semi-colonial status in China.² While they could not formally colonise Chinese territories because of their dependence on cooperation with the Chinese government, they nevertheless attempted to exert power over the Chinese population in treaty ports through different legal, political and social methods.³

Shanghai was the largest of these treaty ports and from 1863 was divided into three areas: the old Chinese city, the French Concession and the International Settlement.⁴ The administration of the International Settlement was unique throughout China: although it was British-dominated in practice, it was governed by the SMC, which was comprised of representatives of the different foreign nations trading in Shanghai.⁵ Although the foreign zones were intended for residence by the foreign community, their social composition defied attempts at segregation. Thus in 1925 there were only 37,600 foreigners living in both foreign-administered zones, while the Chinese population

¹ Bickers, 'Shanghailanders', p.281.

² J. Osterhammel, 'Semi-Colonialism and Informal Empire in Twentieth-Century China: Towards a Framework of Analysis', in W. Mommsen ed., *Imperialism and After: Continuities and Discontinuities* (London, 1986), p. 296.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ B. Wei, *Shanghai: Crucible of Modern China* (Hong Kong, 1990), p. 45.

⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 109-110.

exceeded 500,000.⁶ The overwhelming number of Chinese residents caused anxieties about the status of the foreign community, which authorities attempted to overcome by demonstrating control over their zones.

Competition between the three competing administrations led to significant differences in the governance of each area.⁷ The police of the French Settlement were primarily concerned with guarding their territory from external threats and neglected internal law enforcement.⁸ Consequently, they took a lax stance to Chinese protest and were widely regarded as ineffective by the foreign population.⁹ In contrast, the Shanghai Municipal Police (SMP) was strict in applying the SMC's exclusionary spatial policies which, due to their racially-motivated nature, often excluded Chinese from the foreign social sphere.¹⁰ As a result, control and access over sporting sites was highly variable throughout Shanghai and became a contentious issue in Chinese popular conscience.¹¹ Olivia Hunter has highlighted that studies of space and power in Shanghai have generally focused on single areas, with interactions between different zones rarely being considered.¹² Analysing the practice of international sport reveals the artificial nature of this approach, as its locations display clear cultural interrelations through their transcendence of Shanghai's administrative boundaries (see *Figure 1.1*).

⁶ Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, p. 32.

⁷ M. Zhenyu, 'Land, Law and Power: The Cadastre of the French Concession in Shanghai (1849-1943)', *European Journal of East Asian Studies*, xiv (2015), pp. 287-312 at pp. 310-311.

⁸ O. Hunter, 'Crime and Security in Shanghai's French Concession, 1919-1937', *Earlham Historical Journal*, ix (2017), pp. 105-148 at p. 137.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 115.

¹⁰ R. Bickers and J. Wasserstrom, 'Shanghai's "Chinese and Dogs Not Admitted" Sign: History, Legend and Contemporary Symbol', *The China Quarterly*, civii (1995), pp. 444-466 at p. 461.

¹¹ D. Rihal, 'Foreign-Administered Parks in Shanghai: Visual and Spatial Representations of New Forms of Public Open Space', [<https://www.virtualshanghai.net/texts/articles?ID=59>] (last accessed 15 April 2019).

¹² Hunter, 'Crime and Security', p. 116.

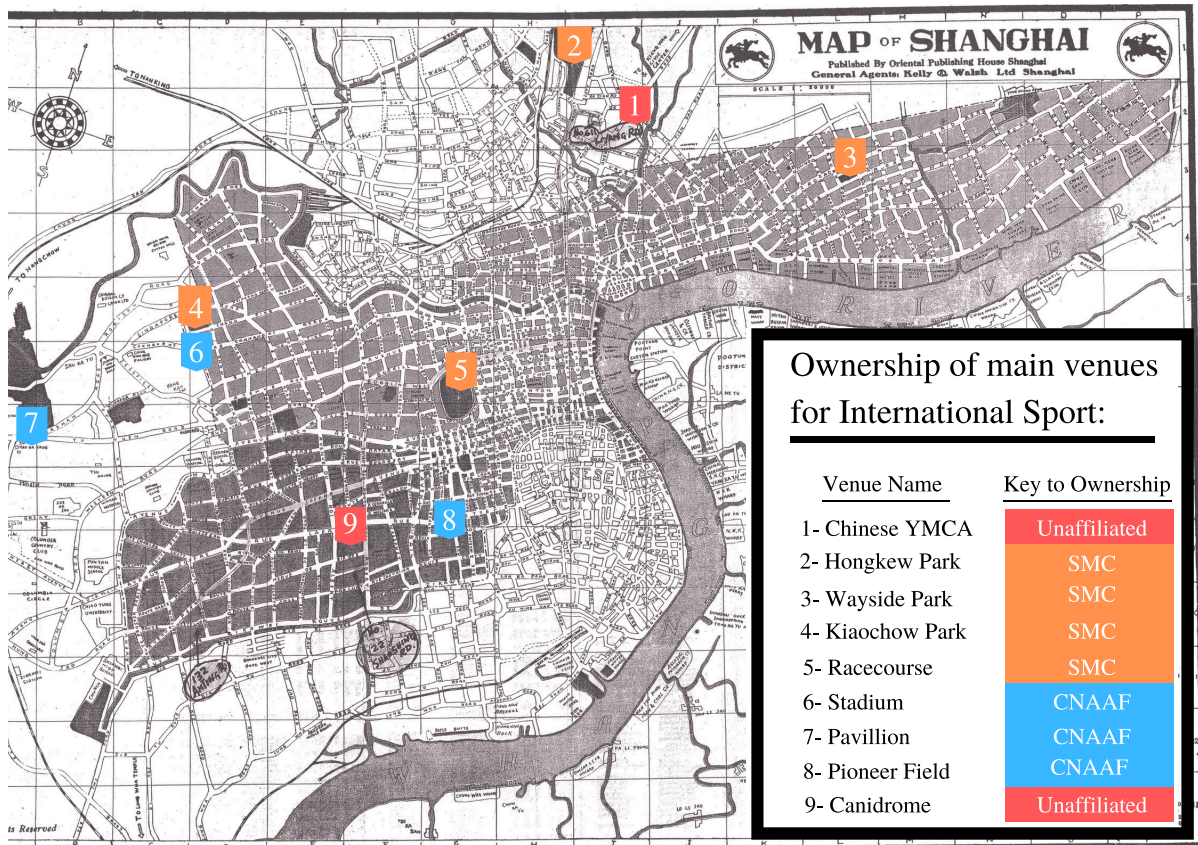


Figure 1.1- Main venues for international sport in Shanghai, 1924-1941.¹³ Map represents boundaries from 1930 until 1939. The International Settlement is coloured light grey, the French Concession dark grey and the remaining white area was under Chinese jurisdiction.

While international sporting events occurred in all three areas of Shanghai, the ownership of stadiums did not necessarily correspond to the powers who held jurisdiction over their location. Hongkew Park was the most frequently-used SMC-owned ground for staging international competitions, but crucially was built in the Chinese-controlled area of Shanghai. Through its status as the International Settlement's 'home ground', the site was associated with a distinctly foreign cultural meaning as British, American and other foreign teams hosted sports events there. Chinese athletes were

¹³ Oriental Publishing House Shanghai, 'Map of Shanghai between 1930-1939', [\[https://www.virtualshanghai.net/Maps/Source?ID=247\]](https://www.virtualshanghai.net/Maps/Source?ID=247) (last accessed 25 May 2019). Annotations based on newspaper reports from years 1924-1939; S. Drakeford, *It's a Rough Game but Good Sport: The Life, Times and Personalities of the Shanghai Rugby Football Club* (Hong Kong, 2014), p. 281; *Ibid.*, p. 342.

barred from claiming this foreign cultural space although it was located within their territory. When a Chinese *versus* Japanese baseball league was mistakenly organised at Hongkew Park over two consecutive weekends, *TCP* claimed that the second game should be moved because Hongkew Park was not the 'home ground of the Chinese'.¹⁴ International sporting events carried out here could therefore ritually impose foreign cultural practices on an area under Chinese legal jurisdiction, undermining the Chinese cultural presence.

Until 1925 the SMC followed a policy of informal expansion, building roads outside the International Settlement to extend their control beyond its formal borders.¹⁵ This practice was halted amidst disputes with the Chinese nationalist government, yet the placement of sports stadiums suggests they represented a way to continue to exert a softer cultural influence beyond the International Settlement's official borders. Consequently, ownership of Hongkew Park and other smaller sports grounds outside Settlement boundaries could form a means of extending foreign cultural control without upsetting diplomatic relations.

This practice illuminates the unique power dynamics in early twentieth century Shanghai. Jeremy Taylor has argued that spatial symbolism acquired a crucial role within foreign-dominated treaty ports as compensation for the absence of institutions associated with formal colonial control.¹⁶ While foreign powers were, for instance, not allowed a permanent military presence, they displayed their military prowess through naval displays aimed at audiences within the different zones.¹⁷ However, Taylor

¹⁴ K.S.C., 'A Couple Of Slips Of Baseball Moguls', *TCP*, 7 September 1935, p. 6.

¹⁵ Bickers, 'Shanghaianders', pp. 172-173.

¹⁶ J. Taylor, 'The Bund: Littoral Space of Empire in the Treaty Ports of East Asia', *Social History*, xxvii (2002), pp. 125-142 at p. 134.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 137.

maintains that efforts to wield cultural control through the manipulation of space were exclusively a feature along Bunds, the waterfront streets central to treaty port life, which through their architecture became symbols of foreign culture in China.¹⁸ Analysing the location of sporting grounds and the discourse surrounding them reveals that foreign efforts to exert cultural control extended beyond their formal territory, symbolically imposing on Chinese space.

The China National Amateur Athletic Federation (CNAAF), the organising body of Chinese sport, in turn appropriated foreign methods of cultural expansion by extending their influence into foreign settlements through sport. In 1924, it replaced the China National Athletic Union, which had been controlled by the Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA).¹⁹ This marked the transition from the organisation of sport through foreign schools and missionary bodies to a formal structure overseen by the nationalist government, which enabled Chinese athletes to enter Shanghai's international competitions.²⁰ Their entrance to these leagues was, at times grudgingly, granted by foreign sporting bodies to promote international cooperation.²¹ To host matches, the Pioneer Field was financed for Chinese use by American sports-enthusiasts in 1924.²² Located in the French Concession, the stadium became the Chinese 'home ground' as the most frequently-used site for competition between Chinese and foreign teams.

Control over the Pioneer Field provided a platform from which to challenge a foreign spatial order through Chinese cultural imposition, highlighting the limits of foreign control and thereby exerting pressure over the international sporting

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 138.

¹⁹ Kuang, 'Sports in Shanghai', p. 1612.

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² 'The China Baseball Commission: Organized for the promotion of Baseball in China, among Chinese Principally', *NCHSCCG*, 9 August 1924, p. 217.

community. After Chinese athletes were warned they might be barred from international sports following a boycott, a letter to the editor of *TCP* by a Chinese author stated: 'Now, they don't want us to play with them, but with true spirit of sportsmanship, I hope the Chinese athletic authorities would continue to give the foreigners the uses of the above mentioned premises [Pioneer Field].'²³ Earnest considerations of the importance of sport for China's 'national spirit' earlier in the letter imply that this intimidation was meant very seriously by its author.²⁴ Chinese ownership of the Pioneer Field and the fact it was used by the foreign community due to its location therefore allowed the Chinese community to assert themselves by threatening foreigners with exclusion. Claiming that granting use of the field was in the 'true spirit of sportsmanship', in opposition to foreign expressions of sportsmanship, attached cultural meaning to this space as its use reflected a confident and independent Chinese sporting culture. The governing complexities of Shanghai therefore created an environment where space was constantly appropriated and contested through cultural methods.

Space and protest in a divided city:

The spatial complexities that conditioned the negotiation of power in Shanghai had a profound effect on the practice of protest, as protestors drew on them to perform subversive actions. While foreign powers claimed control over Chinese territories through their symbolic expansion, protestors usurped this process by reclaiming ownership over these spaces. Katrina Navickas has argued that the history of protest has recently been subject to a spatial turn.²⁵ As spaces represent specific meanings,

²³ W.P.W., 'Letter from Chinese Replying to Charge Of Boycotting Track Meet', *TCP*, 23 June 1927, p. 6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ K. Navickas, *Protest and the Politics of Space and Place, 1789-1848* (Manchester, 2016), p. 15.

protestors can exercise spatial agency when they deny established associations and impose their own.²⁶ As a result, William Sewell advocates for analysing spatial agency as a resource to be exploited by protestors in social and political struggles.²⁷ In line with Wasserstrom's call for historians to examine the symbolic rituals of protest, Sewell draws particular attention to the role of spatial routines of protestors for shaping how people come together.²⁸ Nevertheless, sporting grounds have rarely been considered in spatially-oriented studies of protest, despite the unique mobilising power they hold due to their emotional and communal associations.²⁹

In Shanghai, the placement of stadiums conditioned certain spatial rituals. Match days, for example, led to a foreign influx into Chinese territory, representing a manifestation of foreign encroachment. Ironically, this provided a ready-made audience for protestors to express dissatisfaction with foreign rule, while simultaneously receiving minimal repercussions. Active negotiation of Shanghai's spatial complexity therefore allowed protests to be carried out without compromising the freedoms or safety of protestors, which enabled them to be replicated and become ritualised.

This trend is particularly clear in the case of riots. Riots represent the form of protest that can be most reliably tracked in the press, because the large numbers of people they involved and damage they caused were difficult for foreign contemporaries to ignore. A riot at the Stadium during a football game between the Chinese club team Tung Hwa and the Police team on 3 April 1935 highlights how protestors could use Shanghai's spatial arrangement to their advantage. As the boundary of the International

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

²⁷ W. Sewell, 'Space in Contentious Politics' in R. Aminzade, J. Goldstone, D. McAdam, E. Perry, W. Sewell, S. Tarrow and C. Tilly ed., *Silence and Voice in the Study of Contentious Politics* (Cambridge, 2001), p. 55.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ A. Bairner, 'Emotional Grounds: Stories of Football, Memories, and Emotions', *Space and Society*, xii (2014), pp. 18–23 at p. 22.

Settlement ran inside the Stadium, two different police forces independently attempted to control the crowds. The SMP 'stood for trouble at the gates', unable to enter the playing field itself.³⁰ Meanwhile, the Chinese police, less inclined to use violence against protestors than their foreign counterparts, merely 'tried to tell the crowds to go away'.³¹ Aided by jurisdictional difficulties resulting from the location, protestors were effectively able to exercise spatial agency. Taking advantage of the power they gained through their occupation of space, the protestors negotiated a deal with the captain of the local branch of the SMP to 'secure return of entrance fees and compensation for Chinese injuries', and conduct a 'thorough investigation' into unlawful play by the Police team.³² Exploiting the spatial order through acts of protest could therefore endow protestors with a spatially-determined bargaining advantage over foreign authorities. This spatial control could be translated into tangible concessions through interaction with foreign authorities, as the necessity of preserving a narrative of cooperation required them to engage with protestors on diplomatic terms. Given the symbolic importance of space as part of foreign rituals of rule in the International Settlement, challenges to the assumed spatial order came to represent attacks on the wider legitimacy of foreign rule.

Plotting the frequency of protest in the stadiums where international sport was carried out (see *Figure 1.2*) indicates that the spatial layout of Shanghai influenced the locations of protest.

³⁰ R. Herbert, 'Riot Ends Soccer Game at Stadium', *NCHSCCG*, 3 April 1935, p. 33.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*

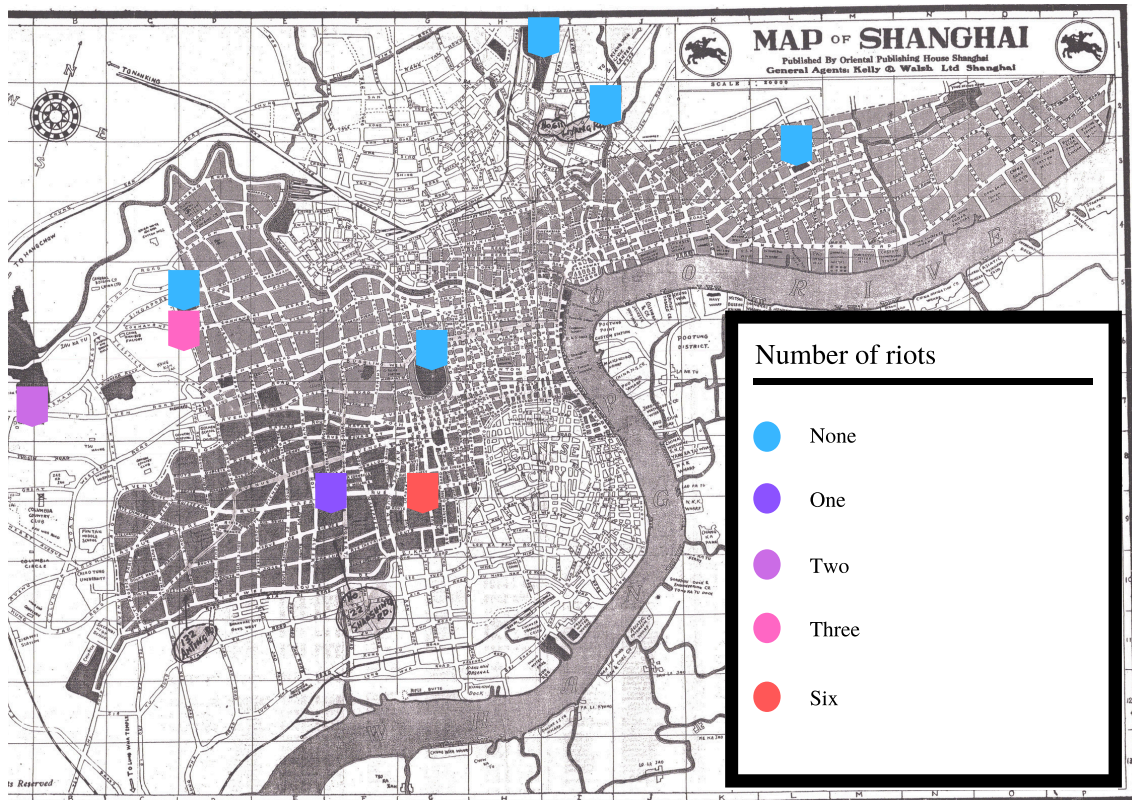


Figure 1.2- Frequency of riots at international sports events in Shanghai, 1924-1941³³

The frequency of riots at the individual stadiums in Shanghai varied significantly based on their ownership and the jurisdiction of the locations in which they were placed. These patterns suggest certain settings became associated with protest rituals as part of a political culture which codified where riots could take place. Crucially, no large-scale riots broke out in any stadiums owned by the SMC. By not staging riots within the International Settlement, protestors avoided repressive action by the SMP, which was often their response to other forms of protest such as labour activism.³⁴ Although Hongkew Park was in the Chinese-controlled area, it was heavily guarded and the neighbourhood had previously been developed by the SMC, who deliberately overstepped their jurisdictional boundaries when Chinese institutions were weak in the

³³ Base image: Oriental Publishing House Shanghai, 'Map of Shanghai'.

Annotations based on newspaper reports from years 1924-1941.

³⁴ E. Perry, *Shanghai on Strike: The Politics of Chinese Labor* (Stanford, 1993), p. 45.

area.³⁵ As a result, the power balance would not have been in favour of protestors were riots to be carried out there. In contrast, the most frequent setting for protest was the Pioneer Field, which was ideally situated through its central location. In walking distance of both the densely-populated Chinese city to the East and the International Settlement to the North, it regularly hosted a diverse crowd for international matches.³⁶ All six major riots there were staged against teams from the International Settlement, reflecting the unique opportunity offered by its location to prompt confrontations involving foreign authority on foreign ground without running the danger of altercation with the SMP. Crucially many top Chinese teams were also based in the International Settlement.³⁷ Competition with foreign teams outside Settlement boundaries thus provided the opportunity to play out conflicts on spatial terms advantageous to the Chinese sporting community. The repeated ability of Chinese protestors to stage riots at the Pioneer Field with limited repercussions established it as an enclave of Chinese control against foreign encroachment.

Hence, the broader spatial layout of Shanghai could furnish protestors with a distinct bargaining advantage. In Shanghai, sporting protest enabled them to appropriate space, staging protest rituals that repeatedly highlighted gaps in the control of foreign authorities, who were unable to suppress protest and instead forced to enter into negotiations. As a result, undermining foreign rituals associated with space through the staging of sporting protests could be used to challenge foreign political legitimacy.

³⁵ Wei, *Shanghai*, p. 77.

³⁶ Drakeford, *Rough Game*, p. 342.

³⁷ SMP Special Branch File, D-4445: Football clubs reputed to contain radical elements, 16 February 1933, p. 1.

Stadium politics: the view from the stands:

The SMC further attempted to establish its control through the ordering of space at a micro level inside stadiums in accordance with wider practices of foreign rule. The spatial codes governing the organisation of sport reflected wider foreign discourse around Shanghai's social order. Dorothee Rihal has highlighted that until June 1928, entry into SMC-run parks (which included stadiums) was racially-determined, leading to the exclusion of most Chinese.³⁸ This was the result of SMC policies which aimed to limit contact between Shanghai's foreign and Chinese populations. Bickers has argued that racial segregation was a crucial feature of Shanghai society, which maintained strict divisions in all aspects of social life.³⁹ As a result, parks became highly contentious in the Chinese popular imagination, symbolising insular foreign leisure practices.

These spatial practices were used to underpin foreign control of international sport. The association secretary of the Shanghai Football Association (SFA) used spatial reasoning to justify the initial exclusion of Chinese teams from the SFA leagues, stating that while the organisation itself did not discriminate against Chinese clubs, there were not enough grounds on which Chinese athletes were allowed to play to enable them to participate.⁴⁰ The SFA and other international sporting bodies, which were largely European-dominated, could therefore extend foreign cultural control inside stadiums through their ownership over the organisation of international sport. Likewise, those stadiums that Chinese teams and spectators were allowed to enter continued to perpetuate discriminatory practices. In 1926, Chinese spectators at the Pioneer Field were only allowed to purchase half of the most expensive \$2 seats at international

³⁸ Rihal, 'Parks in Shanghai'.

³⁹ Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 83.

⁴⁰ 'SHANGHAI FOOTBALL: Interesting Discussions at Association's Annual Meeting', *NCHSCCG*, 19 September 1924, p. 217.

matches (prices were set by the SFA), ensuring foreign spectators would not find themselves outnumbered.⁴¹ Although a degree of contact between foreign and Chinese spectators was sanctioned by the organisers of international sport, this occurred within clearly-defined class terms that privileged foreign spectators. Bairner has called for historians to consider the centrality of sporting grounds within the cultural sphere, as the communal significance attributed to them fashions stadiums into symbols.⁴² As such, sporting grounds can become intertwined with social relations. In the case of Shanghai, the spatial demarcations in stadiums were expressions of wider foreign cultural values related to race and class that contradicted the official discourse surrounding the purpose of sport.

The differing attitudes of police forces to spectators based on nationality also shaped the practice of rioting in each stadium. The Chinese Ratepayers Association (which represented the Chinese community to the SMC from 1928) complained in 1928 that during a stampede at the Stadium, the SMP treated foreign spectators differently from Chinese ones by separating them, resulting in only the latter sustaining injuries.⁴³ Thus, space also conditioned the interactions between spectators and foreign authority, acting as a reminder of the latter's lower status in semi-colonial society. The relationship between protestors and authorities at the stadiums mirrored the wider exclusionary spatial practices enforced by Shanghai's foreign authorities, which aimed to confirm the subordinate role of the Chinese population in Shanghai's cultural sphere.

Bickers has argued that in the context of semi-colonialism, maintaining distance from the Chinese population was crucial for identity preservation on the part of British

⁴¹ 'Sino-Foreign Football Match Monday To Draw All Shanghai Sportdom', *TCP*, 28 December 1926, p. A4.

⁴² Bairner, 'Emotional Grounds', p. 5.

⁴³ 'Wild Scene at the Stadium: Gates rushed by crowd eager to attend the Recs. v. Loh Hwa Football Match', *NCHSCCG*, 29 December 1928, p. 524.

settlers.⁴⁴ Isolation enabled them to craft the rituals which maintained a sense of 'Britishness' in opposition to Chinese influence, justifying their rule.⁴⁵ Ironically, although the stated purpose of international sports events was to encourage friendship between the Chinese and foreign populations, the spatial ordering of the foreign community thwarted even superficial attempts at rapprochement. Protestors drew on this irony by subverting attempts to establish spatial demarcations within stadiums, thereby exposing the contradictions in foreign discourses of rule.

The boundary between the audience and the playing field was a crucial feature of foreign sporting spatial culture, as it defined inclusion and exclusion. However, spectators routinely challenged this assumed boundary by occupying supposedly inaccessible areas. During a riot at a football game between Tung Hwa and the Police team, Chinese protestors broke down the fencing surrounding the pitch in order to storm the field and end the game.⁴⁶ This act was highly symbolic for opposing the assumed hegemony of Western sporting culture. Looking at the practice of Western sport in India, Tony Mason has identified that competition with their colonisers lead to Indians assuming broader British cultural frameworks, which were even reinforced when Indian teams beat the British.⁴⁷ By contrast, the willingness of Chinese protestors in Shanghai to ritually stop games by imposing themselves on the field of play through the act of rioting represented a rejection of the stated foreign sporting culture. This ritual was repeated in other sports, for example *TCP* reported that during an international basketball game in 1936 Chinese 'spectators began to walk off in disgust, many of them deliberately walking

⁴⁴ Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 72.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 69.

⁴⁶ 'Six injured in football riot at Stadium', *TCP*, 31 March 1935, p. C1.

⁴⁷ T. Mason, "'Football on the Maidan": Cultural Imperialism in Calcutta', in J. Magnan ed., *The Cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society* (London, 1992), p. 151.

across the floor in spite of the fact that play was being carried on.⁴⁸ Breaking down the boundaries separating athletes from spectators undermined foreign notions of spatial order with implications for the control over international sport as a whole.

Assumed boundaries between audience members were also disrupted when Chinese protestors targeted foreign supporters. Selling tickets at different prices led to the racial segregation of stadiums, as foreign spectators were most likely to purchase the most expensive seats. Protestors subverted these attempts to distinguish between spectators by imposing themselves on spaces implicitly or explicitly reserved for foreign audiences. The *NCHSCCG* reported that before the outbreak of a large-scale riot, foreign spectators were 'struck by straw cushions (provided for the comfort of people on the "reserved" stand)'.⁴⁹ The ability of protestors to overcome spatial boundaries and attack foreign spectators in the most expensive seats indicates that attempts to impose spatial demarcations were ineffective for preventing contact with Chinese spectators. The fact that even well-off Chinese fans could be involved in protest, as demonstrated by their access to cushions, suggests that attempts to socialise Chinese into a Western social model through controlled contact were incomplete. By disputing the boundaries associated with control over sport, protestors therefore usurped the powers of foreign authorities and imposed their own spatially-determined political culture.

Foreign reactions beyond the stadium:

The ability of Chinese protestors to confront foreign authority within stadiums could give them the confidence to extend their political culture into other spaces. Hence,

⁴⁸ M. Chaicher, 'Suvoong has close shave as fans riot', *TCP*, 2 February 1936, p. B1.

⁴⁹ Play the Game (pseudonym), 'Hooligans on the Football Field', *NCHSCCG*, 3 March 1928, p. 359.

protestors could export their spatial rituals outside stadiums by continuing riots on the street to more explicitly attack foreign authority.⁵⁰

This threat was taken seriously by foreign bodies who, while not physically threatened, felt their legitimacy compromised by the symbolic implications of protest. Andrew Hodges and Dario Brentin posit that when considering the impact of spectator protest, scholars need to examine changing perceptions of legitimacy by the state.⁵¹ Reactions by foreign authorities demonstrate that control over sites of international sport represented a contentious issue. The SFA gradually moved international sports matches from the Pioneer Field to the Stadium, with a *TCP* reader speculating this was because 'it is far harder at the Stadium for the spectators to mob the referee'.⁵² Still, holding sporting events in Chinese territory did not lessen riots and in 1937 the SFA ended international sporting events in the Stadium because of the many protests.⁵³ This indicates that the SFA viewed protests with considerable trepidation, because their occurrence had direct implications for the administration of sporting spaces in Shanghai.

These anxieties also affected the SMC's policies in their administration of sporting spaces. Although no major riots occurred on SMC property, their annual reports evidence fears about security at stadiums from 1929, when a number of sports grounds were walled in 'for the purpose of improved control'.⁵⁴ In the following years, stadiums were increasingly renovated to discourage protest, for instance in 1937 paths were widened to 'facilitate control during the playing of special games on the baseball field'.⁵⁵ 'Special

⁵⁰ See: 'Crowd riot at Canidrome', *NCHSCCG*, 19 March 1941, p. 445.

⁵¹ A. Hodges and D. Brentin, 'Fan Protest and Activism: Football from below in South-Eastern Europe', *Soccer and Society*, ix (2018), pp. 329-336 at p. 333.

⁵² Still Interested (pseudonym), 'Letter to the editor', *TCP*, 30 October 1928, p. 7.

⁵³ 'Football Association faced with dilemma', *TCP*, 9 March 1937, p. 6.

⁵⁴ SMC, *Report for the Year 1929 and Budget for the Year 1930* (Shanghai, 1929), p. 264.

⁵⁵ SMC, *Report for the Year 1937 and Budget for the Year 1938* (Shanghai, 1937), p. 220.

games' were most likely games between Chinese and foreign teams, as these consistently attracted the largest crowds. The precautions taken by the SMC in response to Chinese protest illustrate the successful challenge it posed to foreign sporting rituals. While Shanghai's authorities were limited in their actions through the location of borders, protestors could navigate these to their advantage and prompt responses outside of the immediate sphere of protest itself. Responses to the practice of protest at international sporting events reveal the importance of examining interrelations between Shanghai's formally separate zones, as the events in one area could trigger responses in another.

Conclusion:

Space was a uniquely important factor shaping the organisation of sport in Shanghai because of the divided nature of the city. As space carried symbolic meaning, protestors could usurp the foreign spatial practices associated with sport by imposing their own political culture. This emerged gradually and was significantly shaped by external factors. Nevertheless, protestors played an active role in its creation by imbuing spaces with meaning. By navigating boundaries both within the city and in stadiums themselves, protest at international sporting events demonstrated the centrality of spatial ritual in representations of Chinese political culture. Depictions of protest in the foreign press and official records indicate that this caused significant anxieties due to its potential for undermining foreign narratives of control. Donatella Della Porta has identified that the occupation of public space can foster the exploration of new social relations, as notions of collective identity and solidarity are reinforced through group protest.⁵⁶ In Shanghai too, the appropriation of space for protest undermined social

⁵⁶ D. Della Porta, 'Protest in Social Movements', in K. Fahlenbrach, M. Klimke and J. Scharloth ed., *Protest Culture: A Companion* (New York, 2016), p. 49.

boundaries and enabled the involvement of a diverse array of participants. As the following chapter shows, this intertwined social relations with political culture.

In a formal colonial context, control over sporting spaces symbolised attempts to impose foreign culture. Thus, British colonisers frequently constructed sporting sites shortly after their occupation of cities, locating them in city centres to confirm their centrality in foreign cultural life.⁵⁷ Shanghai's political context complicated these established colonial spatial practices, rendering sites of sport contested spaces. While Shanghai's spatial complexities could represent an asset for foreign powers looking to expand their rule, it could likewise represent a weakness by making them vulnerable to usurpation. The appropriation of sporting spaces by protestors consequently demonstrated the unique ironies inherent in semi-colonial power.

⁵⁷ Bickers, *Britain in China*, p. 84.

Chapter 2- Actors:

Setting the scene: organisation of international sport:

Foreign powers justified their rule by presenting the Chinese population as uncultured and uncivilised, discourse that was also applied to portrayals of sports protestors in the foreign press. However, through their internal cohesion, Chinese protestors subverted foreign narratives by demonstrating their own distinct political culture. Analysing sports reporting in Hong Kong's British press, Yizheng Zou has shown that the depiction of a united sporting identity played a crucial role for the maintenance of a wider foreign identity abroad.¹ Sport in a colonial context represented a microcosm of social relations, casting foreign participants as benevolent civilisers in accordance with a wider framework of rule.² This discourse was also applied in Shanghai. In 1926, Edward Cunningham, the United States Consul General in Shanghai, claimed an international track meet furthered 'international friendships more than an entire year of diplomacy combined'.³ Cunningham's statement obscures the unequal balance of power that shaped the relationship between foreign and Chinese actors involved in sport. Practically, international sporting bodies were dominated by foreign members as were the ranks of sport officials.⁴ When the Chinese team Loh Hwa was investigated following a breach of amateurism regulations, for instance, all committee members were either British or American.⁵ Crucially, the organisation of sport was not inclusive of all foreign nationalities active in Shanghai's international sports leagues. There is no evidence of some, such as Shanghai's White Russian or Jewish refugee community, being represented

¹ Y. Zou, 'English Newspaper and Sport: The South China Morning Post's Lawn Bowls Reporting in British Colonial Hong Kong', *IJHS*, xxx (2013), pp. 285–96 at p. 294.

² J. Magnan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal* (London, 1998), p. 143.

³ 'International Track and Field Meet', *NCHSCCG*, 16 October 1926, p. 122.

⁴ Kuang, 'Sports in Shanghai', p. 1615.

⁵ 'SHANGHAI FOOTBALL ASSOCIATION TO INVESTIGATE LOH HWA CASE', *TCP*, 23 October 1930, p. 7.

though they fielded teams, which mirrored their political marginalisation. While sport was presented as a neutral field, in reality it functioned as a reflection of wider power relations in Shanghai.

The CNAAF was likewise forced to negotiate with foreign bodies on unequal terms in the course of organising international sport. Frequent assertions in the press that Chinese participants had not reached the necessary level of comprehension were used to explain foreign control over international sport. For example, the *NCHSCCG* cited the 'absolute ignorance of the meaning of the game' on the part of Chinese players and spectators to justify their condemnation of Chinese football.⁶ Sport was therefore treated as a measure of cultural development, allowing the foreign press to position themselves as seemingly authoritative judges over what was a fundamentally subjective meaning. Huijie Zhang, Fan Hong and Fuhua Huang have argued that foreign interactions with the Chinese population through the practice of sport were fit into a wider paternalistic narrative encompassing foreign attitudes to Chinese leisure.⁷ Crucially, foreign sporting identity was never benign, but was explicitly linked to military power. In the 1927/28 season of the SFA Division 1, for example, seven out of the thirteen competing teams were composed of members of either the foreign military or the police.⁸ Accordingly, sport was a means of confirming foreign cultural superiority, which posed political implications in its justification of foreign rule.

⁶ 'Disgraceful Scene on Nanyang College Ground', *NCHSCCG*, 26 November 1927, p. 374.

⁷ Zhang, Hong and Huang, *Physical Education*, p. 44.

⁸ N. Morrisson, 'China- Shanghai 1927/28', [<http://www.rsssf.com/tablesc/china-sh28.html#ps>] (last accessed 2 June, 2019).

Assembling the cast: protestors and their audiences:

The portrayal of protestors in the foreign press reflects attempts to delegitimise them in response to a perceived symbolic threat to foreign control. Protests did involve athletes, but were usually dominated by spectators. This highlights the limitations of attempts to impose a Western cultural framework in semi-colonial China. While athletes and the CNAAF could be compelled to adopt foreign sporting values through their contact with foreign sporting bodies, audiences were relatively free to develop their own sporting culture and shape this according to their political goals. Informal attempts were made to instil foreign sporting values in spectators, for instance the CNAAF was admonished to 'make renewed efforts to educate spectators to understand the values of fair play' after a riot.⁹ However, the absence of institutionalised foreign sporting structures made it difficult to socialise them according to Western models.

Newspapers responded to the threat posed by the spectator's volition by denying their political culture, instead disseminating descriptions of Chinese protestors as ignorant 'members of the loafer class' who were 'incited by ringleaders'.¹⁰ Individuals were rarely singled out, instead the foreign press commonly referred to groups of protestors as 'savage', 'mobs' or 'fanatics'.¹¹ The anonymization of protestors deliberately obscured their subversive potential by discrediting their agency and identity. As such, it reflects the anxieties of the colonial administration surrounding the usurpation of their sporting narratives.

Nevertheless, the identities of protestors at international sporting events tied them to Shanghai's wider protest culture in spite of foreign attempts to delegitimise them.

⁹ Play the Game, 'Hooligans', p. 359.

¹⁰ 'Referee mobbed as R.S. Fusiliers beat Tung Hwa, 2-0', *TCP*, 22 November 1931, p. B1.

¹¹ 'Sauvage', 'Le Football à Shanghai', *JDS*, 9 March 1937, p. 6; 'Chinese spectators stage riot', *NCHSCCG*, 10 March 1937, p. 425.

Reading newspaper articles against the grain to examine the methods used to undermine the political symbolism of protests reveals the make-up of the individuals involved. Commenting on the 1941 riot at the Canidrome, the *NCHSCCG* published a letter stating that the 'only redeeming feature of this affray was that not all of them [the rioters] were students'.¹² Wasserstrom has posited that Chinese student protest was unique compared to formal colonial contexts, as China was the only country in which students came to be seen as representative of the demands of the people.¹³ Although they only accounted for 0.01% of China's population, students were highly politicised and led all mass protests during the period.¹⁴ Thus, the foreign press was concerned student protestors would apply their political culture to sport and undermine foreign legitimacy.¹⁵ Fear about the significant number of students involved in sports protests triggered anxieties about their political demands, making it more difficult to dismiss protests as the thoughtless actions of uneducated mobs.

However, sports protests differed from explicitly student-led protests because they involved people from a variety of backgrounds. As such, they offered an avenue for the expression of political agency by non-elites, including members of the working class and women. In 1929, for example, '200 Chinese of the labouring class' reportedly started a riot.¹⁶ Likewise, a *NCHSCCG* report on another riot in 1929 stated there were 'scores of women and children' in the crowd.¹⁷ Participation in protests offered politically disenfranchised groups the opportunity to assert themselves in opposition to the foreign community. Elizabeth Perry has proposed that Chinese manifestations of political culture

¹² P.T.L, 'Saturday's Riot: Thoughts of a Chinese', *NCHSCCG*, 26 March 1941, p. 497.

¹³ Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, p. 22.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

¹⁶ 'Riot at Pioneer Field: Disgraceful Conduct of Chinese Rowdies', *NCHSCCG*, 23 March 1929, p. 488.

¹⁷ 'MOB STAMPEDES AT FOOTBALL GAME; 1 KILLED, 8 INJURED', *NCHSCCG*, 24 December 1928, p. 5.

through protest were unique, because of the variety of social groups that used protest to express their political aims.¹⁸ A long-standing protest tradition had evolved in China, and under semi-colonialism these established rituals proved particularly effective because foreign powers constantly had to justify their legitimacy in the face of external threats.¹⁹ Nevertheless, in the case of Shanghai these groups have largely been studied in isolation, with historians primarily focussing on student activism and strikes by labour unions.²⁰ In contrast, protests at international sporting events were unique because they evidence cooperation between different social groups. While inequalities remained, for example there is no evidence of women leading a protest, they nevertheless provide a more complex picture of social relations in Shanghai.

These are best studied by examining the organisation of riots. Depictions of their leadership in the foreign press were contentious, because acknowledging an internal cohesion undermined the foreign narrative that the Chinese population was unable to rule itself. As a result, newspapers frequently referred to protests as wild or unruly in order to disguise their organisation.²¹ When an element of leadership was acknowledged, it was often attributed to 'professional agitators' to deny the protestors an independent political culture.²² Despite this characterisation, the composition of protestors implies a democratic organisation process. During a riot at the Stadium, 'two representatives were selected by the crowd' to negotiate on the behalf of the protestors at the police station.²³ The ability of the protestors to produce two delegates indicates that there was an implicit

¹⁸ E. Perry, *Challenging the Mandate of Heaven: Social Protest and State Power in China* (New York, 2002), p. xxv-xxvi.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, p. 6; Perry, *Shanghai on Strike*, p. 7.

²¹ See: 'The Pioneer Field Incident', NCHSCCG, 23 March 1929, p. 479.

²² See: 'Riot at Canidrome', p. 445.

²³ 'Six injured in football riot', *TCP*, p. C1.

governing structure within the group that could function effectively when required. Although it was not mentioned who these representatives were, the fact of their nomination by the crowd undermines the foreign narrative that riots were either caused by paid agents or were acts of hooliganism. Additionally, it demonstrates that protestors shared common goals. This participatory structure is remarkable in comparison to the other elite-led protests studied by Perry, as it suggests that different social groups were able to cooperate on a more equal footing in the staging of protest.²⁴

Despite the variety of people involved and the lack of formal organisation, mass protest was possible because the ritual of sport led to the creation of a shared identity among the protestors. Mike Cronin and David Mayall assert that sport's power as a tool for the formation of identity lies in its clear definition of boundaries, imposing differences at local, ethnic and national levels.²⁵ These oppositions are given voice in the media through the language used to describe sports events, where metaphors of war are employed to confirm the separation between nations and situate sport in the political sphere.²⁶ Outside the stadium, local Chinese media contributed to the creation of a unified political culture by further encouraging antagonism against foreign teams.²⁷ For instance, both the 'Chinese press and the local Kuomintang took the matter up strongly' following a riot at the Pioneer Field.²⁸ Protestors were shown support in the wider Chinese community and their actions explicitly politicised through association with the nationalist government. As such, opposition within the stadiums represented a

²⁴ See: Perry, *Shanghai on Strike*, p. 92.

²⁵ M. Cronin and D. Mayall, 'Sport and Ethnicity: Some Introductory Remarks', in M. Cronin and D. Mayall ed., *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Immigration and Assimilation* (London, 1998), p. 9.

²⁶ J. McGuire and J. Tuck, 'Global Sports and Patriot Games: Rugby Union and National Identity in a United Sporting Kingdom since 1945', in M. Cronin and D. Mayall ed., *Sporting Nationalisms: Identity, Immigration and Assimilation* (London, 1998), p. 123.

²⁷ A. Morris, *Marrow of the Nation: A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China* (Berkeley, 2004), p. 98.

²⁸ 'Pioneer Field Incident', p. 488.

visualisation of the wider political tensions shaping life in Shanghai. While Wasserstrom acknowledges that members of other classes were involved in protest in Shanghai, he argues that they were invariably led by student groups and what made protests successful was their social organisation.²⁹ However, analysing the practice of sporting protest signals that this view needs to be expanded. Examining protests by African-American athletes at the 1968 Olympics, Douglas Hartman claims that sport represents a unique avenue for protest, because it does not require defined political aims but rather provides a platform to convey grievances.³⁰ The creation of a shared political culture based on a Chinese sporting identity could function as a unifying tool, granting political expression to groups who have otherwise been seen to lack the necessary organisation or shared ideological beliefs in studies of protest in Shanghai.

Protestors demonstrated their coherence by targeting specific audiences at international sporting events, casting them as actors in their own right. Acts of protest expressed animosity against a variety of audiences, both foreign and Chinese. Eric Hobsbawm asserts that in international sports events athletes come to represent symbols of the nation, as tangible expressions of an imagined national community.³¹ Gerald Gems has identified that foreign officials held a similar role in a colonial context, encapsulating foreign authority and values.³² In Shanghai too, foreign referees and players became crucial targets of protests, coming to be seen as embodiments of foreign sporting culture. The fact that the foreign press denied this characterisation, with a letter to the *NCHSCCG* following a riot stating that international sports were a 'contest between

²⁹ Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, p. 145.

³⁰ D. Hartmann, 'The Politics of Race and Sport: Resistance and Domination in the 1968 African American Olympic Protest Movement', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, ix (1996), pp. 548-566 at p. 560.

³¹ E. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990), p. 143.

³² G. Gems, *The Athletic Crusade: Sport and American Cultural Imperialism* (Lincoln, 2004), p. 9.

two groups of athletic brothers and not between international enemies', implies that there were concerns about the role foreign participants were accorded in protest.³³ Due to their representative function, foreign athletes and officials were often the primary targets of violent protest and were attacked 'indiscriminately' during riots.³⁴ This vulnerability to attack challenged their perceived social and cultural superiority. The press responded to this by portraying athletes and officials as honourable representatives of the foreign community, unfazed by the actions of Chinese protestors. When a foreign referee was threatened during a riot 'the police side formed a protective screen behind, with a howling mob coming up to attack them'.³⁵ The interaction between Chinese protestors and European athletes was presented as a wider confrontation between civilised foreigners and wild, faceless Chinese, acting as a confirmation of foreign moral dominance.

The paradox between this conflict on the ground and the lofty ideals of international friendship meant that protest also targeted the CNAAF, whom the foreign community held responsible for the failure of protestors to grasp foreign sporting values. This was actively intended by protestors, who felt the CNAAF acted against their interests by being overly yielding to foreign bodies. In 1926, students expressed this in articles reportedly sent to the Chinese press accusing the secretary of the CNAAF of being 'a running dog of the imperialists'.³⁶ Protest inevitably affected the CNAAF, both directly when their property was attacked after unsatisfactory games and indirectly when they had to accept reproof for their inability to control spectators.³⁷ Shanghai's semi-colonial

³³ 'Saturday's Riot', p. 497.

³⁴ 'Disgraceful Conduct', p. 488.

³⁵ Herbert, 'Riot Ends Soccer Game', p. 33.

³⁶ Old China Hand (pseudonym), "'Old China Hand' Advises Excluding Chinese From Future Sports Events Due To Boycott on Track Meet', *TCP*, 22 June 1927, p. 5.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

context made it possible for Chinese protestors to target both the foreign community and the CNAAF, as it forced national and foreign sporting bodies to cooperate. The fact that protestors advocated against both indicates that they were not merely acting as representatives of the nationalist government. Instead, protest represented an assertion of power against authorities and was a sign of an independent, explicitly anti-foreign political culture.

Audiences extended beyond groups formally involved in the organisation of sport, as protestors actively engaged foreign spectators. Spectators were crucial targets for protests because they could more easily be induced to undermine the descriptions of civilised conduct that were attached to athletes and officials. In parallel to foreign athletes, their behaviour during riots was commended in the foreign press.



CHINESE DEMONSTRATE AT FOOTBALL GAME

Mr. G. E. Knight, referee in Saturday's (Mar. 6) First Division Association football game between the Loyals and Tung Hwa, is seen being escorted from the Stadium ground after Chinese spectators had staged a riot as a result of their displeasure with the official's verdicts.

Figure 2.1- Foreign spectators during a riot in 1937³⁸

Figure 2.1 shows a group of foreign spectators, rushing onto the field to protect a foreign referee after he was attacked during a riot 'staged' by Chinese spectators. Their willingness to put themselves at risk for foreign authority and work in unison with

³⁸ 'CHINESE DEMONSTRATE AT FOOTBALL GAME', *NCHSCCG*, 10 March 1937, p. 425.

athletes and the police suggests that they were integrated within the narrative of righteous foreign behaviour. Similarly, to Chinese spectators, however, they had the weakest connection to the foreign sporting enterprise and as a result their behaviour was most difficult to control. While foreign players escaped the grounds during a riot at an international football match in 1935, 'many other fights had occurred amongst the partisans of both sides amongst the spectators'.³⁹ The willingness of foreign onlookers to engage with Chinese protestors on their terms posed the danger of exposing that foreign sporting culture was not inherently superior to or separate from Chinese sporting culture.

Foreign spectators also undermined narratives of the press by actively seeking confrontation with Chinese athletes and spectators. Thus, a letter from a foreign fan to the *TCP* editor complained about the 'continuously aimless shouting by certain foreign spectators' at Chinese audiences during international games.⁴⁰ By instigating protest, foreign viewers appropriated the discourse assumed to be characteristic of uncivilised Chinese spectators. The use of sporting spaces by foreigners to express their racial prejudices demonstrates how successfully sport had become politicised as a representation of wider social divides within Shanghai's multinational community. The foreign nationality of the author evinces that the foreign sporting culture was not unified, but instead that protests could expose rifts in the community. *TCP* published a note by the editor in conjunction with the letter stating that heckling by foreign audience members was 'mild compared to those [insults] hurled at the foreign team, especially at the Pioneer Field'.⁴¹ The fact that protests by spectators of different nationalities were

³⁹ 'Riot Ends Soccer Game', p. 33.

⁴⁰ A Spectator (pseudonym), 'Use Your Weight', *TCP*, 15 January 1929, p. 5.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

compared nevertheless shows that a Chinese political culture and its potential for dissent were recognised and even appropriated.

By staging disruptive, eye-catching riots and engaging with foreign newspapers, protestors further expanded their reach to the foreign community at large. After Shanghai athletes boycotted an international track and field event to attend a meet organised by the nationalist government instead, *TCP* published several letters purportedly sent to the editor by Chinese readers. The author of one asserted: 'We are not afraid to be excluded from participation in foreign sports, for Chinese athletes would have just as much fun competing among themselves.'⁴² By claiming Chinese athletes were not dependent on Western sporting structures, the author denied their sporting hegemony and instead asserted confidence in Chinese organising abilities. Additionally, the insistence that enjoyment of sport was unrelated to international involvement undermined the foreign narrative that sport fostered international friendships. Correspondence with the media therefore enabled Chinese protestors to reclaim the dialogue surrounding their protests and thereby dispute foreign portrayals. Writing for a foreign audience magnified the impact of sporting protest, as publishing complaints became a means of extending their actions outside the immediate sporting sphere.

Foreign spectators and the press did occasionally sympathise with Chinese athletes when they felt unfair acts by foreigners had prompted protest. After a referee made an incorrect call which led to a riot the *NCHSCCG* wrote: 'in justice to the Chinese team, many foreigners said they thought that he was wrong.'⁴³ Subsequently though, the article states 'that was neither here nor there', as the actions of protestors were never

⁴² W.P.W., 'Letter from Chinese', p. 6.

⁴³ 'ANGRY SCENE ON FOOTBALL FIELD', *NCHSCCG*, 27 March 1926, p. 571.

excused.⁴⁴ Protestors were even condemned in *TCP*, which was otherwise broadly sympathetic to Chinese causes in consequence of its largely Chinese financial backing. While the foreign press could be conciliatory to other forms of protest, such as student activism, hostility to Chinese protest at international sporting events was thereby shown to be fundamentally incompatible with foreign culture.⁴⁵

A serious game: the SMP's response to protest:

In response to the threat protestors posed to their legitimacy, municipal authorities resorted to close supervision of sports associations. The SMP files indicate how the foreign administration in the International Settlement dealt with the implications of protest at international sports. Ann Stoler has argued that colonial archives can reveal the anxieties of the administration, as their worries around seemingly innocuous practices like sport reflect their broader unstable power.⁴⁶ The accuracy of SMP reports is limited by the fact that they were usually compiled by British policemen with limited knowledge of either local language or customs. Nevertheless, reading them with a view to understanding the assumptions underpinning foreign rule in Shanghai can reveal useful insights about the instabilities of power. Wasserstrom has highlighted that Chinese political groups had a long-standing tradition of forming societies and other superficially non-political associations in order to disguise their activities.⁴⁷ The act of protest at international sporting events illustrates that this association also applied to sports, with those clubs whose games exhibited a high frequency of protest coming to be seen as more subversive.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ See: Wasserstrom, *Student Protest*, p. 201.

⁴⁶ A. Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, 2009), p. 26.

⁴⁷ Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, p. 129.

Football clubs in particular were singled out by the SMP as potentially dangerous, most likely because of the high frequency of riots at matches. Concern about the political association of football clubs is reflected in the comprehensive investigation of all Chinese football clubs active in the International Settlement undertaken by the SMP in 1933.⁴⁸ Although the investigation was described as having 'little or no value' due to the lack of findings, its meticulous noting of every sports club and their political links indicates the anxieties of the colonial administration surrounding the actors involved in sport. The only football club found to have objectionable political leanings was Tung Hwa, one of the two Chinese clubs playing in the SFA division 1, which was accused of fostering Communist sympathies.⁴⁹ Although no evidence was cited as to why Tung Hwa was suspect, the existence of the report demonstrates that the police were concerned about the political underpinnings of sport and by extension sports protest. These were justified by the outbreak of four major riots at international games involving Tung Hwa between 1924 to 1941, more than were caused by the supporters of any other one team.⁵⁰ The SMP was aware of attempts to use sport for political purposes, as they collected Communist texts advocating the use of sport as a means of developing political identity.⁵¹ Considering Chinese spectators were likely to associate themselves with Chinese teams based on their national identity, the SMP's actions indicate it was concerned this association would be drawn upon to spread Communist beliefs.

Extensive supervision of sporting activities reflects fears of foreign authorities regarding the use of sport as a political tool, even if these were unsubstantiated. Although

⁴⁸ SMP Files: Football Clubs, p. 1.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁵⁰ 'REFEREE MOBBED', p. B1; K.S.C., 'Rioters Action is Cowardly, Despicable', *The China Press*, 22 December 1934, p. A6; 'Six injured', p. C1; K.S.C., 'Gravest Offense', p. 6.

⁵¹ SMP Special Branch Files, D-4772: Excerpts From Communist Evidence, 18 April 1933 p. 26.

no violent protests occurred on SMC property, anonymous forms of protest, such as the distribution of anti-Japanese leaflets in Hongkew Park, were a cause of concern for the SMP.⁵² By bringing diverse social groups into contact, international sport posed unique challenges to the SMP, who generally attempted to keep different social groups apart. The diversity of people involved in sporting riots made their occurrence unpredictable and difficult to police. Additionally, the inability of the police to apprehend actors at events occurring outside the International Settlement meant that their activities focussed primarily on prevention. Ultimately, the explicit political links of sports clubs did not determine the occurrence of riots, as most Chinese sports clubs remained apolitical. Instead, protestors attached their own values to sport in accordance with a shared political culture. The futility of efforts to suppress them symbolically demonstrated the weaknesses of foreign control.

Conclusion:

Protest at international sports events in Shanghai involved a range of actors who, through their coherence, were able to threaten foreign legitimacy. Analysing the groups implicated in protests can help to illuminate the nature of social relations in Shanghai. On one hand, the active participation of spectators from diverse social backgrounds differentiated sports protests from other forms, in which non-elites only occupied supporting roles. Simultaneously, however, sports protests reflected broader protest currents as the majority of those involved were students. This implies that the agenda of protests was linked to their wider anti-foreign protest agenda. Their self-leadership illuminated the limits of foreign authority and undermined foreign justifications for rule.

⁵² SMP Special Branch Files, D-4745: Efforts made by Communists, 22 April 1933, p. 5.

Examining the case of cricket in India, Ramachandra Guha has argued that sport was not effectively used as a tool of protest against their British colonisers, because competition deepened existing rifts within Indian society without questioning the overarching British cultural constraints in which sport occurred.⁵³ When colonised communities did share the same goals, they focused on beating the colonisers without fundamentally questioning the relationship between the two parties, as Janice Brownfoot has highlighted in the case of British Malaya.⁵⁴ As such, the colonised were not able to go beyond foreign frameworks of sport. In comparison, protestors in Shanghai were able to mount a generally unified opposition and subvert foreign discourse. While athletes and spectators in a colonial context were afraid of exclusion, the existence of multiple sporting bodies and the divided nature of actors involved in international sport in semi-colonial Shanghai meant that protestors were able to navigate these tensions to their advantage. Thus, even when foreign teams refused to play Chinese athletes there were alternative sporting opportunities for them to fall back on.⁵⁵ In this context, competition against foreign teams was not the overarching goal, rather protestors sought to undermine the governing institutions and cultural frameworks underpinning the organisation of sport itself.

⁵³ R. Guha, *A Corner of a Foreign Field: The Indian History of a British Sport* (London, 2002), p. 256-257.

⁵⁴ J. Brownfoot, 'Healthy Bodies, Healthy Minds: Sport and Society in Colonial Malaya', *IJHS*, ix (2002), pp. 129-156 at p. 148.

⁵⁵ See: 'Foreign Chinese Football Split is amicably settled', *TCP*, 6 January 1927, p. A1.

Chapter 3- Plot:

Playing by Western rules? Foreign construction of sporting narratives:

Foreign powers promoted sport amongst Shanghai's Chinese population with the aim of acquiescing them to foreign rule by socialising them into a Western cultural system. However, protestors usurped this foreign sporting discourse when they rejected foreign values, thereby denying claims of Western powers to cultural supremacy. Both imperial and voluntary organisations associated Western sport in China with a host of values including loyalty, obedience, respect, fairness and discipline.¹ The concepts of fair play and sportsmanship created a sporting discourse which appeared value-neutral, but was underpinned by specific foreign ideals about behaviour and identity. While the British colonial enterprise pioneered the use of sport as a tool of empire-building, the French gradually adopted British sporting practices in their own colonial possessions.² In Shanghai, foreign authorities utilised sport for similar goals (although the promotion of sport was significantly less pronounced in the French Concession), cooperating with one other and with external organisations, such as the YMCA, in order to educate the Chinese population about their sporting values.³

Sport provided an ideal tool to disguise power relations because it gave the appearance of a meritocratic space, where foreign superiority could be objectively confirmed. The *TCP* expressed this when it stated that at international sports events 'all meet on common ground' but 'only the fittest survive'.⁴ International sport therefore aimed to place foreigners and Chinese on a 'more friendly footing together' by

¹ Zhang, Hong and Huang, *Physical Education*, p. 6.

² E. Combeau-Mari, 'Colonial Sport in Madagascar 1869-1960', *IJHS*, xxviii (2011), pp. 1557-1565 at p. 1558.

³ Zhang, Hong and Huang, *Physical education*, p. 19.

⁴ 'ATHLETES OF SIX NATIONS WILL ENTER IN TRACK MEET', *TCP*, 4 November 1928, p. A7.

superficially promoting equal competition.⁵ Foreign narratives of sport centred on its cooperative aspect, thereby denying the unequal power relations that shaped the cultural framework in which sport was conducted. J. Magnan has highlighted that the promotion of sport in various British colonies contributed to the establishment of a cultural hierarchy underlining the superiority of the West in parallel to the overt political hierarchy.⁶ Analysing the case of China, Gems has argued that sport was introduced in China for similar reasons, as the Western cultural values it aimed to transmit were linked to those seen as a necessary requisites for effective foreign rule.⁷ Presenting sporting values as objective provided a justification for maintaining foreign control. An article in *TCP*, for instance, asked ‘whether the Orient was capable of grasping the international ideals of sportsmanship’.⁸ Sport was always more than a game, explicitly functioning to place the Chinese population within an orientalising discourse denying their development.

Given the semi-colonial organisation of Shanghai, where formal tools to achieve security were limited, informal cultural means such as sport acquired additional significance in attempts to entrench foreign control. Assimilating the Chinese population through soft cultural power could compensate for the limitations on political or military intervention while China maintained its sovereignty. However, the highly fraught political setting of Shanghai also opened up sport as an arena symbolic for political conflict. An article in the *NCHSCCG* stressed the importance of asserting foreign control over sport in Shanghai:

In Europe or America a football match is a thing by itself. There is no question of international feeling to cause special danger as there

⁵ ‘Pioneer Field Incident’, p. 479.

⁶ Magnan, *Games Ethic*, p. 143.

⁷ Gems, *Athletic Crusade*, p. 28.

⁸ ‘The East and West in Sport’, *TCP*, 15 December 1926, p. 12.

is in Shanghai. From no point of view, whether foreign or Chinese, can anything likely to occasion a riot be tolerated.⁹

The 'international feeling' the author refers to most likely stemmed from the several competing national allegiances in Shanghai. These gave international sport its politicised nature, which was perceived to render it fundamentally different from sport in both a Western and formal colonial context. As a result, control over the values associated with it were crucial for the preservation of foreign legitimacy. Ironically, the efforts of the foreign administration to claim control over sporting events highlighted their vulnerability to sports protest. Since protest was a response to foreign command over sport, authorities were never able to eliminate the causes of riots as doing so would have undermined the structures they themselves put into place to establish their control.

A protest 'game plan':

The irony between the values of fair play propagated by colonial powers and the reality of the 'unequal treaties' was not lost on Chinese protestors when they subverted narratives of harmonious cooperation. By accusing foreign referees and teams of acting unsportsmanlike, Chinese protestors asserted their ownership over the meaning of fair play. This subversion of values found expression through the ritualised act of protest.

Riots were a frequently reported-on ritual of protest, as their spontaneity and disruptiveness made them effective for provoking anxiety among the foreign community. Riots could refer to any act of violent protest that involved several people and targeted representatives of Shanghai's sporting establishment. Tracking the frequency of riots in newspapers is difficult since, though they reported extensively on mass protests, smaller violent incidents were underreported. Letters to the editor imply that the number of riots

⁹ 'Pioneer Field Incident', p. 479.

was significantly higher than was reported, with one stating that ‘incidents occur at nearly every game’ on the Pioneer Field ground.¹⁰ The less consistent coverage of protests at international sporting events in the *NCHSCCG* and *TCP* compared to *JDS* suggests that underreporting was a conscious choice, because acts of dissent were seen as threats to the political orders they propagated. In fact, the *JDS* only explicitly reported on protest at an international sports event once.¹¹ This omission on one hand reflects the less developed French sporting culture, with only one French team participating in SFA Division 1 and sport being covered less extensively. On the other, the fact that the *JDS* did report weekly on sport point to this exclusion representing an attempt at self-preservation. Crucially, the only act of protest covered was a riot at the Stadium in the Chinese jurisdiction, although the majority of riots occurred in the French Concession.¹² This silence on protest reflects attempts to maintain the image of cultural superiority despite the inability of the French police to control protest.

The riots that can be precisely tracked in newspapers are shown in *Figure 3.1*, though these all represent large-scale riots, which involved at least fifty people. Some, such as the 1941 riot at the Canidrome, could involve thousands of spectators.¹³

¹⁰ Play the Game, ‘Hooligans’, p. 359.

¹¹ ‘Football à Shanghai’, p. 6.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ ‘Crowd riot’, p. 445.

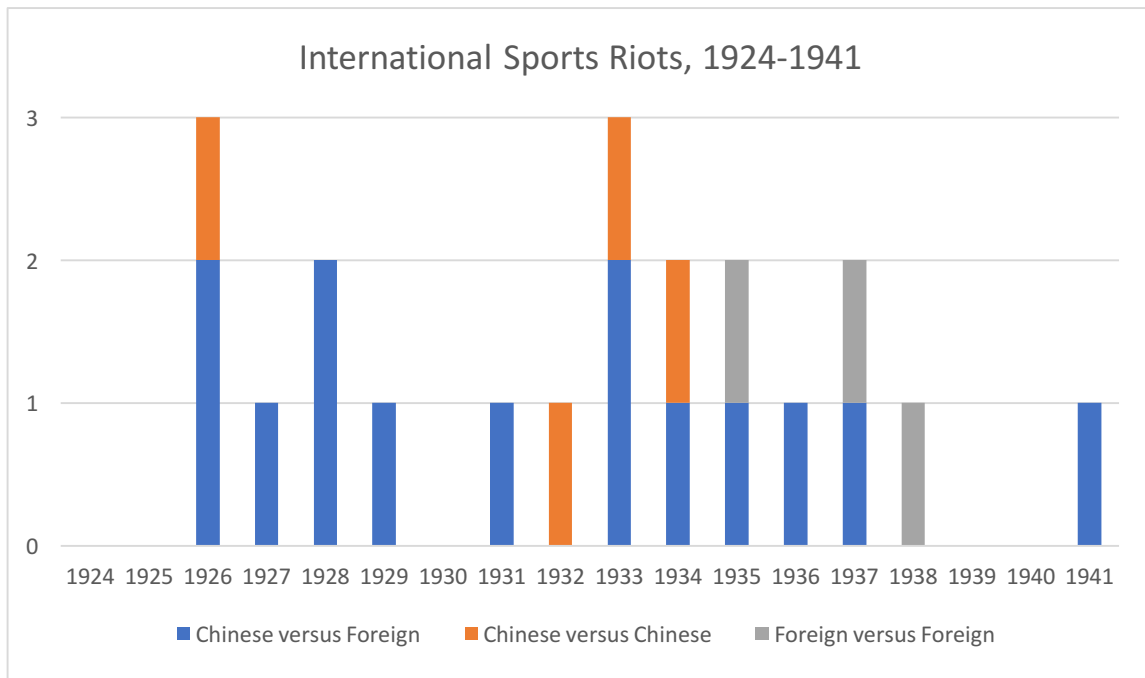


Figure 3.1- Reported riots at Shanghai international sports events, 1924-1941¹⁴

Although rioting was also a feature of sport in the West, no sports riots were reported in either the *NCHSCCG* or *TCP* before 1924. This indicates that large-scale sports protest was not adopted from foreign spectators, but rather developed independently and became associated with a distinctly Chinese sporting culture. Riots were staged primarily at football games, the only two exceptions occurring at basketball games (in 1933 and 1936).¹⁵ Football matches were a practical medium for protest because football was the most popular sport in Shanghai. On a deeper level, football was connected to Chinese identity, as it was thought to have been invented in China and merely re-introduced in a modified form.¹⁶ As a result, it could be imbued with Chinese meaning and co-opted as a national sport by the Chinese press.¹⁷ Similarly, basketball was not seen to have a strong imperial identity because it was invented and introduced by the YMCA,

¹⁴ Data from newspaper reports from years 1924-1941.

¹⁵ 'Basketball Fans Riot When Marines Beat Liang Hwa', *TCP*, 28 December 1933, p. 6; Chaicer, 'Mob attacks', p. B1.

¹⁶ Morris, *Marrow*, p. 120.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

which enabled the Chinese sporting community to attach their own values.¹⁸ Protestors initiated riots at matches regardless of the nationality of teams playing. Crucially, even riots between foreign teams reflect imbalances of power, illustrating that a united foreign sporting culture in Shanghai was never complete. Thus the 1935, 1937 and 1938 foreign riots were caused by Jewish, White Russian and Italian supporters respectively, all of whom were marginalised in Shanghai's political sphere.¹⁹ *Figure 3.1* (p. 46) illustrates that riots at international sports events were by far the most frequent, which is especially significant as only a small percentage of sporting competitions in Shanghai were between foreign and Chinese teams. In the 1927/28 season, for example, only 17% of the 169 football games organised by the SFA were between Chinese and foreign teams.²⁰ Although friendly international games were occasionally organised by companies or voluntary associations, these generally attracted fewer spectators and only two riots were staged at football games not organised by the SFA, both in 1926.²¹

The ritualised nature of riots was crucial for establishing the guidelines which enabled protestors to carry them out regularly despite a lack of formal organisation. Riots were generally prompted when either Chinese players or spectators accused a match official of making an incorrect call. By claiming foreign officials were 'biased and incompetent', Chinese protestors subverted foreign discourse that they were ignorant of the nature of the game.²² In response to their concerns being dismissed by officials, spectators would gather momentum by heckling both the referee and foreign players from their position in the stadium stands, shouting insults and throwing objects onto the

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ 'Fans stage riot at end of Inniskillings-Jews Game', *TCP*, 28 January 1935, p. 6; 'Supporters of Sokol Eleven Create Disorder', *TCP*, 22 March 1937, p. 7; 'Bad Sportmanship', *TCP*, 15 November 1938, p. 10.

²⁰ Morrison, 'China- Shanghai 1927/28'.

²¹ 'ANGRY SCENE', p. 571; 'Local Holiday Football', *NCHSCCG*, 31 December 1926, p. 636.

²² See: K.S.C., 'Gravest Offense Ever Seen on a Local Field', *TCP*, 1 April 1935, p. 6.

playing field. This represented a unifying ritual, as protestors established a common goal through their direct opposition to a representative of foreign values. These individual and spontaneous actions could be used to create consensus, as they were easily replicated by spectators who avoided risk through their anonymous location in the crowd. Having reached a critical mass of protestors, spectator unrest could easily transform into a field invasion: an even stronger expression of anti-foreign views.²³ Sporting settings therefore provided a unique opportunity for riots to gain meaning despite the lack of planning, as they united groups in opposition to one another, identifying a common target for protest. The ritualised build-up to riots gave crowds the necessary coherence to allow violent protest to be carried despite variations in the composition of individual crowds.

The ease of replicating riots due to their ritualised nature enabled protestors to mount a cumulatively effective challenge to foreign sporting values over the period. This is evident by the response of foreign sporting authorities to what they themselves acknowledged was a ritualised act. Thomas Cobbs, president of Shanghai's baseball league, originally justified excluding Chinese teams from the league by stating: 'were we to let them in our game there is no telling when a riot would break out and if it were to start, there would be no finish'.²⁴ His quote illustrates the importance of ritual for lending riots coherence. Once a protest culture became attached to sport it could easily be reproduced. As a result, foreign sporting authorities were forced to undermine their own narratives of international friendship when they excluded Chinese participation. The foreign press inserted riots within a theatrical discourse, with *TCP* writing that spectators at the Pioneer Field were 'determined to rehearse their favourite act of mobbing the

²³ See: 'Chinese Spectators Stage Riot', p. 425.

²⁴ Gems, *The Athletic Crusade*, p. 24.

referee'.²⁵ Placing protest in this context demonstrated that there was awareness that it was not a spontaneous act of violence, even though this was rarely admitted in the foreign press. Ironically, when the press dismissed riots as hooliganism, it enabled them to be perpetuated as it disguised their role as a form of political protest. Ownership of political rituals is crucial for the legitimacy of ruling elites, as it is a sign that they are accepted representatives of the people.²⁶ The attendance of Shanghai's Chinese community at international sporting events was therefore an important ritual to demonstrate that cultural assimilation was successful. However, foreign recognition that these rituals had been appropriated for protest indicates that their attempts to impose cultural control had failed.

Boycotts represented an assertion of an independent sporting identity on the part of the Chinese sporting community, but were less frequent than riots due to the significant degree of organisation they required. Adrian Guelke has highlighted that in the case of South Africa, sporting boycotts formed an important tool for community mobilisation as a demonstration of unity against establishment policies.²⁷ Boycotts in Shanghai functioned similarly to assert a unified sporting identity that was independent from foreign structures. Although Chinese athletes and commentators did not explicitly refer to their decision not to take part in the 1927 international track and field meet as a boycott, it was branded as such in the foreign press. A number of Chinese writers attempted to explain the reasoning behind the boycott to foreign readers in their letters to *TCP*. One wrote asking them to: 'Place yourselves in our position you will understand

²⁵ 'Referee mobbed', p. B1.

²⁶ J. Escherick and J. Wasserstrom, 'Acting out Democracy: Political Theatre in Modern China', *The Journal of Asian Studies*, il (1990), pp. 835-865 at p. 840.

²⁷ A. Guelke, 'Sport and the End of Apartheid', in L. Allison ed., *The Changing Politics of Sport* (Manchester, 1993), p. 166.

that it is our right not to take part'.²⁸ Through the public upheaval they generated, boycotts provided the opportunity for active negotiation with the foreign community. The author's request for empathy places foreign and Chinese readers on equal terms, implying equal rights. The urgency with which Chinese authors stressed their case is clear by the plea of *TCP* requesting that no further letters on the subject be sent as they were 'besieged' with correspondence.²⁹ Hartmann asserts that sport represents one of the few arenas in which marginalised groups are able to generate mobilisation, because even otherwise disenfranchised groups can accumulate cultural capital through successes in sport to use as leverage.³⁰ In the case of semi-colonial Shanghai, where cultural institutions acquired heightened significance as tools of foreign rule, protestors could use this cultural capital to undermine the influence of imposed cultural frameworks.

The subverting of allegiances was a uniquely effective method of protest in a semi-colonial context, as it functioned to undermine the legitimacy of both foreign and Chinese sporting structures. During an international basketball game in 1936, Chinese fans began to support the foreign team when they became dissatisfied with the performance of the Chinese team.³¹ *TCP* reported that: 'They did this to spite the selectors of the team' whom they blamed for 'losing face for China'.³² Protestors claimed strong allegiance to China, yet they attacked the CNAAF when they asserted that spectators and not Chinese sporting bodies best represented the country. Moreover, their actions disrupted established hierarchies, which assumed beating the foreign community to be the ultimate aspirational goal, by demonstrating the flexibility of association. This subversion was an

²⁸ Old Chinese Athlete (pseudonym), 'Letters from Chinese Replying to Charge of Boycotting Track Meet', *TCP*, 23 June 1927, p. 5.

²⁹ 'No more Letters of Subject of Track Meeting', *TCP*, 25 June 1927, p. 5.

³⁰ Hartmann, 'Race and Sport', p. 549.

³¹ Chaicer, 'Suvoong has close shave', p. B1.

³² *Ibid.*

effective means of protest due to the political complexities of Shanghai, which forced foreign and Chinese institutions to cooperate. Whereas in a colonial context, protestors were limited by the absence of rival sporting structures, meaning a successful protest could lead to exclusion from formal sport, the existence of competing sporting bodies in Shanghai left protestors free to choose their own alliances. Their ability to vary these depending on context reflected an independent political culture, which while anti-foreign was also broadly anti-authority.

Threatening rituals: rehearsing resistance:

Protests drew a common set of themes, lending their actions the coherence necessary to challenge Western legitimacy. Wasserstrom has argued that protestors developed a shared protest language, which included a set of ritual acts.³³ This protest language could be drawn upon to appropriate the discourses integral for the maintenance of foreign authority.

Language was important for the preservation of foreign community abroad, representing a pillar of foreign identity. English was the official language of the SMC and also the language of international sports, functioning as a medium through which wider cultural values were transmitted.³⁴ By ritually appropriating the English language, however, protestors could usurp foreign claims to ownership over sporting discourse and insert themselves into the political dialogue. Wasserstrom has pointed out that student protestors in semi-colonial Shanghai communicated their demands in English to force the foreign public to engage.³⁵ Likewise, the *NCHSCCG* reported that rioters attacked

³³ Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, pp. 200-201.

³⁴ Morris, *Marrow*, p. 52.

³⁵ Wasserstrom, *Student Protests.*, p. 232.

the referee 'shouting their usual "kill, kill"'.³⁶ Referring to insults as 'usual' shows that the English language had been accepted as part of the routine of protest. Foreign influence fundamentally shaped the thinking of protestors about sport, and one aspect of this was the provision vocabulary through which sport was conceptualised.³⁷ Although Western and Chinese attitudes to sport were represented as distinctive in the foreign press, foreign sporting culture and Chinese political culture ironically came to be interrelated, with subversive acts drawing on these connections.

Simultaneously, sport and violence were closely linked in the public discourse. Alina Bernstein and Neil Blain have suggested that by using military language, the press can present sport as a substitute for war.³⁸ While international sporting competition is frequently portrayed as a tool for improving international relations, sports coverage ironically contributes to stereotyping and encourages nationalist sentiment.³⁹ Sports reporting in Shanghai fostered the perpetuation of violence outside the sporting sphere, where matches were referred to as 'battles' and protestors as clamouring for blood.⁴⁰ As such, language and violence became intertwined with consequences outside the stadium, as confrontations were polarised through a militaristic lens.

Violence was an effective ritual of protest, because the use of force threatened foreign authorities by appropriating one of their fundamental privileges. Wasserstrom posits that ownership over violence was a crucial legitimising tool of Shanghai's foreign elites, who themselves ritually showcased their authority through police displays.⁴¹

³⁶ 'ANGRY SCENE', p. 571.

³⁷ Morris, *Marrow*, p. 52.

³⁸ A. Bernstein and N. Blain, 'Sport and the Media: The Emergence of a Major Research Field', in A. Bernstein and N. Blain ed., *Sport, Media, Culture: Global and Local Dimensions* (London, 2002), p. 13.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

⁴⁰ 'MOB STAMPEDES', p. 5; 'Six injured', p. C2.

⁴¹ Wasserstrom, *Student Protests*, p. 286; I. Jackson, 'The Raj on Nanking Road: Sikh Policemen in Treaty-Port Shanghai', *Modern Asian Studies*, xl (2012), pp. 1672-1704 at p. 1689.

When rioters used violence against foreigners at international sports, they subverted foreign authority over a crucial legitimising mechanism. Their ability to use violence exploited the possibilities offered by international sports to meet foreigners in a liminal sphere. The kinds of confrontation staged at sporting events were not possible in the International Settlement, which was strictly policed, nor in the remainder of the Chinese zone because of the lack of foreigners. Not only did Chinese therefore possess a spatial advantage, but they also vastly outnumbered foreigners in the stadiums, sometimes by a hundred to one.⁴² The willingness of protestors to use violence to prematurely end games show that riots were not merely a form of entertainment complementary to sport, but rather gained meaning through their power to upstage it. As a result, violence became a crucial feature of Chinese political culture as expressed through sporting protest.

Conclusion:

Protest at international sports events drew on ritual to undermine the foreign practices of rule represented by Western sport. The ability of protestors to appropriate elements of colonial culture, notably language and violence, during protest shows that sport was not an empty avenue for the expression of dissent. Rather, the values and routines associated with Western sport fundamentally shaped the practice of protest. Simultaneously, expressions of dissent were influenced by other protests in Shanghai, particularly student demonstrations, highlighting the existence of a flexible political culture shared across social groups.

While Western sport gave the illusion of social equality, it simultaneously maintained clear class differences through its presupposition of foreign racial and moral

⁴² 'Some Pertinent Questions', *NCHSCCG*, 26 March 1941, p. 497.

superiority. Harald Fischer-Tiné has argued that although sport in India was utilised by the colonised to promote political independence, this nevertheless occurred within a foreign modernising discourse which was less liberal than its advocates hoped.⁴³ In Shanghai too, Western influence shaped the creation of a Chinese sporting culture. However, foreign ideals could be usurped for protest, as the presupposition of specific values and associations could conveniently be mobilised for the purpose of communal action. Given the existence of a developed protest culture outside the sporting sphere, Shanghai's protestors were in a unique position to apply this to other areas, which lent coherence to their protests in a way not possible in formal colonial contexts.

⁴³ H. Fischer-Tiné, 'Fitness for Modernity? The YMCA and physical-education schemes in late-colonial South Asia (circa 1900–40)', *Modern Asian Studies*, liii (2018), pp. 512-559 at p. 548.

Conclusion:

The practice of protest at international sports events in Shanghai represents a valuable case study, with implications for our broader understanding of the relationship between sport and protest. While attempting to deny the symbolic challenge posed by protestors, foreign newspapers and authorities in Shanghai inadvertently exposed the vulnerabilities of semi-colonial control when confronted with manifestations of Chinese political culture. Through an analysis of their reactions, I aim to make two contributions to the existing historiography. Firstly, historians should consider sports protests as a legitimate forum for the expression of popular dissent. Although they may not be premeditated or underpinned by defined political goals, they can nevertheless provide opportunities for otherwise marginalised groups to establish an independent political culture and thereby wield agency. International sport in Shanghai offered a platform for protest by bringing together a critical mass of people around shared opposition to both a tangible rival and an intangible cultural framework associated with Western sport. The association of protestors and their ability to divide sport's organising community illuminates that social relations in early twentieth-century Shanghai were highly complex. Expanding this research to sports protest beyond Shanghai can provide valuable insights into the wider political and social contexts in which protest was carried out, where opportunities to undermine foreign power were exploited in the cultural sphere.

Simultaneously, the unique political culture performed at international sports events illuminates the complexities of semi-colonialism in comparison to formal colonialism. Semi-colonialism gave rise to ironies in foreign narratives of rule, which were more open to contestation because of the vulnerability of foreign authority. This

was aided by the interconnected nature of Chinese protest culture, as existing student protest rituals enabled the staging of dissent to be exported to the sporting sphere. In contrast, international sport in formal colonial settings was never mobilised to the same extent and the demands of protestors were inevitably limited by lack of alternatives to foreign-controlled sporting structures. Sport in the rest of China likewise never acquired the same galvanising potential as in Shanghai. Ironically, it was used by the Nationalist and later Communist government in similar ways to foreign powers, as a tool for identity formation and control.¹ This indicates that expressions of political culture through protest in Shanghai were directly shaped by the political complexities of the city.

An awareness of the relationship between political context and manifestations of protest culture remains valuable for examining contemporary protest rituals. Although political protest is banned in mainland China, Hong Kong continues to host an active protest culture. Many of the methods analysed in my thesis, such as the appropriation of space, diverse participation and democratic organisation, have been applied in recent anti-extradition protests in Hong Kong to undermine political authority.² While protestors may be drawn from a variety of social groups, as they were in Shanghai, these groups are not isolated and their objectives can overlap to form a coherent political culture. Although protest is expressed through different channels depending on the political contexts and collective identity of protestors, it nevertheless subverts symbols of authority to achieve its effect. As such, the lens of political culture continues to be relevant both in the field of sports protest and beyond.

¹ Morris, *Marrow*, p. 127.

² J. Pickney, 'Can Hong Kong's anti-extradition protestors succeed without a leader?', [<https://www.scmp.com/week-asia/politics/article/3014605/can-hong-kongs-extradition-protesters-succeed-without-leader>] (last accessed 18 June 2019).

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List of Images:

Figure 1.1: Main venues for international sport in Shanghai, 1924-1941

Base image: Oriental Publishing House Shanghai 'Map of Shanghai between 1930-1939', [<https://www.virtualshanghai.net/Maps/Source?ID=247>] (last accessed 25 May 2019). Annotations are my own, created on [canva.com](https://www.canva.com) with information sourced newspaper articles between 1924 to 1939.

Figure: 1.2: Frequency of riots at international sports events in Shanghai, 1924-1941

Base image: Oriental Publishing House Shanghai 'Map of Shanghai between 1930-1939', [<https://www.virtualshanghai.net/Maps/Source?ID=247>] (last accessed 25 May 2019). Annotations are my own, created on [canva.com](https://www.canva.com) with information sourced from newspaper articles between 1924 to 1941.

Figure 2.1: Foreign spectators during a riot in 1937

Source: 'CHINESE DEMONSTRATE AT FOOTBALL GAME', *NCHSCCG*, 10 March 1937, p. 425.

Figure 3.1: Reported riots at Shanghai international sports events, 1924-1941

Chart is my own, created on Microsoft Excel. Data sourced from newspaper reports between 1924 to 1941.