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# Training Bodies and Souls.

## Missionaries and Physical Activity in China

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# 前言

体育是一种非常古老的休闲活动。什么文化都发展了它自己体育的种类。通过的时间，体育不仅是一种娱乐，而且也是仪式和典礼的部分，所以体育跟艺术一样是一种文化表现。

就今日而言，运动已经成为人类生活中必不可少的元素之一。并且，随着社会的进步，人们可以方便地在任何时间地点场所观看他们喜欢的比赛。Allen Guttman 认为现代运动有以下特点：

- 世俗平民化
- 平等竞争，环境公平
- 运动员的专业化
- 合理化
- 官方组织
- 量化
- 对比赛纪录的探索<sup>1</sup>

这些因素看起来很容易渗透至各类文化当中，然而事实上，“现代运动”这个概念是来自于英语社会，并于 19 世纪发展起来的。鉴于新教传教士的活动，运动在世界范围内流行开来。这听起来有些奇怪，因为传教士的本职工作是传教与改宗，但不可否认他们确实实在原本“西方世界”的理念基础上创造了崭新的生活方式与价值观。

现代运动通过一些港口传入中国，但主要来源还是日本与教会学

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<sup>1</sup> Allen, GUTTMANN, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1978, p. 16.

校。古代中国发明了一些本国的特殊运动，例如武术、古典舞和一些棋类游戏。但与西方不同的是，它们不以比赛为基础，而是仅仅作为节日或祭祀时的娱乐，亦或是防身的技能。而且，由于儒家学派（在古代中国占据主导地位）对于等级观念的严格控制，竞赛因为被认为会对和谐社会造成损害而被禁止。例如“六艺”中的“射”与“御”，尽管它们类属于运动，并且每个儒家弟子都被要求掌握，但是人们对于这两项运动的认知更偏向于精神层面而非物理层面。

从 19 世纪开始，新教传入中国，但在起初的十年内都没有什么发展。新教徒们主要关注平民阶级，并且为他们的孩子开设能够学到《圣经》及其他西方学校所含有的课程的学校。学校的学生数量在 1895 年起有所增长，而此时也正是中国丧失国际事务权的开始。这次战败给清政府带来了文化与经济的双重危机，由此中国的上层阶级感到他们需要一个新的模式来发展自己的文化。一些富有的家庭开始将自己的孩子送到教会学校去读书，尤其是被认为能够克服危机的新武器——科学。鉴于教会学校遵从西方社会的教育模式，因此它也包含“体育”这一学科。新教传教士认为，体育运动不仅仅可以锻炼反应能力，也有助于培养学生坚毅的性格，公平的竞争可以提高学生的耐力与诚信度。而这一观点不是很被中国社会认可，因此在一开始，几乎所有学生及其家长都对体育运动表示了抗拒。

而在 20 世纪 10 年代左右，中国人开始逐渐接受并享受体育运动，但仅限于一些主要的城市，例如北京、天津、上海和广州。传教士学校的一个重要影响是由西方教师开展了一系列强烈的反缠足运动。

在本文中，我将尝试分析运动和体育教育在传教士学校中的起源，包括它是如何影响晚清与民国初年的中国社会、而中国社会又是如何吸收并发展这些教育的一系列问题。其中，我将主要分析中国的城市阶层，以及它如何尝试接纳西方的生活方式等。

这份工作会进行如下：

第一章是一般性的介绍，旨在解释和背景，主要的工作点。它包含了定义和现代体育和体育文化在西方世界及其发展的历史回顾，以及它在古代中国的发展、耶稣教的发展和体育运动在中国发展得因素。

第二章的主要议题将是在教会学校的教育和体育教育的作用。第一部分主要集中在下层，然后我将谈论中产阶级和上层阶级的做法，基督教青年会的贡献。其中有一些会针对中国妇女。最后一部分是关于中国知识分子对体育教育的反应。

第三章我将分析现代化体育赛事的传播以及观众的反应。从 1910，传教士组织了大型体育赛事。他们仿照了英国美国的校际冠军赛。这个比赛特别有趣的，因为如果我们看这次比赛的照片的话，我们马上觉得跟在欧美的一样。我会以 1910 年的两次全运会为例进行分析。最后的部分是关于国际的竞赛，就是远东运动会而且奥运辩论。这是传教士的黄金时代。传教士主导作用的原因是政治权力真空。袁世凯鼓励了大型体育赛事，因为它们是一种虚构的民族团结，而且国际赛事隐藏中国政治弱点。

第四章是对体育事业在二战的前十年的发展，以及民族主义社会主义兴起的综述。凡尔赛条约以后，中国人认为凡尔赛条是资本主义

的先锋，所以传教士和传教士的教会学校降低他们的威信。就体育而言，这个情况影响了他们的权威。反基督教运动和蒋中正政治崛起削弱了在体育教学中传教士的重要性。国民党逐渐控制体育教学计划和体育赛事。从 1929 以来，国民体育法以后，有一个兵操的复兴，西部队的比赛越来越来不受赏识，因为它们是一个外国因素，所以它们是一种帝国主义的产品。这本章的最后的部分是关于一部电影：《体育皇后》。为了它体现所有民族主义者体育新理论，我决定了分析这部电影。

看了这两个章节，体育和政治权力的关系特别清楚。体育赛事在国家决策的过程有一定的作用，因为它们创建特性和经验分享。运动员的演出成为国家历史的表示和国家口头遗产。为了传教士组织的锦标赛必须代表一个国际基督教社会，什么中国特征都没有。这个计划失败了，因为只城市中产阶级被暴露这样的表演，而且国民党的民族主义对比了所有从国外来中国的事儿。

我的目的是分析在中国西体育的共同体，它们的价值观和生活方式。我集中了于青年 因为他们不仅是教会学校的学生，而且也是传教士准备运动游戏的运动员。这次体育赛事的观众中，有他们的家庭，学校当局亦即中国西化城市中产阶级。

我参考了许多不同的资料。每个人想郑重其事地学会中国体育历史需要掌握 Fan Hong, Andrew D. Morris 和 Wu Chih-Kang 的研究。为了发挥笔者的于在中国新教的传教士的深思，Shirley S. Garrett 的 “Social Reformers in Urban China” 和 Jessie Gregory

Lutz 的 “China and the Christian Colleges” 也非有帮助的。就人类学和文化研究而言，在明尼苏达大学的 Kautz Family YMCA archives 有大量可供参考的原始资料，例如传教士的书信、教会学校的年鉴、传教士的报告。这种资料提供第一手经验和真诚的意见，我们用这样的证据可以了解传教团的常规和关于中国人传教士的分解。可惜的是没有许多被中国学生写的观点，只有被欧美国家的人报告的情况。不管有没有直接证据，那个时间的体育杂志，体育项目的商业化，而且体育赛事的普及都无疑地揭示西部体育征服城市中产阶级。

## **CONTENTS**

<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	<b>p. 1</b>
<b>CHAPTER ONE. TERMINOLOGY AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK</b>	<b>p. 5</b>
1.1 Plays, games, sports and Physical Education	
1.2 Sport and tradition in China	
1.3 How modern sport arrived in China	
1.4 "Seeking the worthy:" Protestant Missionaries in China and their educative efforts	
<b>CHAPTER TWO. PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS</b>	<b>p. 23</b>
2.1 First stage approaching: lower classes	
2.2 Middle-upper classes' resistance	
2.3 The YMCA's contribution	
2.4 Women and Missions	
2.4.1. Missionary women	
2.4.2. Missionaries and footbinding	
<b>CHAPTER THREE. MISSIONARIES AND PUBLIC EVENTS</b>	<b>p. 47</b>
3.1 Sport events	
3.2 First sport meetings	
3.2.1 The first National Games, Nanjing 1910	
3.2.2 The Second National Games, 1914	
3.3 First International events related with sports	
3.3.1 The modern Olympics Games and China	
3.3.2 The First Far Ester Championship Games	
3.3.3 The Second Far Eastern Championship Games	
<b>CHAPTER FOUR. THE DECLINE</b>	<b>p. 77</b>
4.1 Nationalism, anti-imperialism and missions	
4.2 The Guomindang and Physical Education	
4.3 The decline of missionaries' involvement in Physical Education	
4.4 Theories on Physical Education for women	

4.4.1 Queen of Sports

**CONCLUSION**

**p. 92**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY, FILMOGRAPY, SITOGRAPHY**

**p. 95**

## INTRODUCTION

The use of physical activity for entertainment is something natural and innate, common in animals and in human beings. Most anthropologists and scientists explain this phenomenon with his didactic function: during their games, children and young animals learn hunting techniques, self-defence and codes of behaviour. As the passing of the centuries, in human societies, games acquires different values and cultural connotations, so they could be part of a religious ceremony, an initiation rite, and so on. As long as their symbolic value grows, they become more demanding from the physical point of view, and more sophisticated and restrictive concerning regulations. Games evolved from being totally spontaneous, to abide by precise canons and standards; in other words, they became sports.

As music or other forms of art, different kinds of sports and their social impact reflect the peculiarities of the civilization and the period when they developed. What about sports in culture clashes? As part of different cultural heritages, they interact and combine, giving birth to hybrid expressions of sporting disciplines, or acquiring new interpretations or different connotations, for example, when they are introduced in a new social reality, they could appeared exotic, old-fashioned, primitive, sophisticated...

The focus of this work is on the interaction of two different cultures and its influence on the sphere of physical activity, sports and physical education. I will analyse Protestant missions' contribution in the development of modern sports in China, explaining how and why it was introduced and the different ways it was perceived by Chinese people in the decades between the late Qing Empire and the rise of Nationalist Party, in the 1930s. This temporal frame covers the arrival of first Protestant missionaries in China, their initial difficult relationships with Chinese authorities and common people, their partial integration in Chinese cities, their popularity acme and then, their decline. Even if these missionaries came from different countries, the majority of them was from the UK and the US, so they shared the so-called "Anglo-Saxon" culture. Moreover, before their arrival in Asia, their student background included a new subject: Physical Education. The schools they opened in China, were modelled after the courses they attended. This is the way Western Physical Education arrived in the Middle Kingdom, a place rich in indigenous forms of physical activities. Unlike Anglo-Saxon sports, competitiveness, was completely condemned by Confucian ideal of social harmony.

If we think about contemporary China, its economic development, the growth of its cities, his rampant Capitalism; it is hard to imagine that a century and a half ago, competitiveness in every fields, was virtually non-existing. This naïf consideration is what induced me to

make research on Chinese Sport History, precisely on which factors and channels determined its full integration in Chinese society. During my Erasmus experience, I had the chance of attend professor Fan Hong's lectures on Chinese Sport History, and my interest grew so much, that it became my dissertation topic.

This work consists of four chapters. The first one is a general introduction on the terminology related with modern sports and physical education, and it contains a historical excursus about the origins of Protestant missions during the nineteenth century, and the problems of penetration in the Empire. The following chapters present two different ' areas, ' where missionaries pushed for the spread of Western sports: missions' schools and public events. The last chapter describes the decline of the missions and their heritage in Chinese physical culture. Besides historical analyses, I tried to portrayed the social consequences of Western sports in urban communities.

The first chapter is divided in four sections. The first one is an overview on the definition of modern sports and which elements make them different from the ancient ones, the rise of physical education as a science and then, as a school subject. There is an exhaustive description of Protestant intellectuals' change in the perception of the body, with the rise of Muscular Christianity theory. For this part, the book *"From Ritual to Record,"* by Allen Guttmann was a great source of reflections and offered the guide lines for all my further investigations, making me able to recognized the each step, Chinese urban classes made in approaching and assimilating modern sports. In the second section, I talk about Chinese traditional sport practices, developed since Shang dynasty, as documented in archaeological finds. I described the role of games and sports changes along the history in Confucian society, and how and why they progressively lost their competitive connotation. In the section "How modern sport arrived in China," the reader can find a complete framework on the cultural and social channels that enhance sport introduction, that are: mission schools, the so-called returned students, army academies and the ' sick man of Asia ' (*dongfang bingfu* 东方病夫) discourse. To conclude this introduction, there is closing section about Protestant missions, with a special attention to the Y.M.C.A. (Young Men's Christian Association), as it was the most involved one in promoting sports.

In the second chapter, the focus is on the education provided in missionaries' schools. The first two sections are about historical changes in students composition and in the subjects taught. The watershed is represented by the year 1895, when China lost the Sino-Japanese war. This defeat represented a cultural shock, and make Chinese upper classes realized how deep was the crises of the Empire. From this moment onwards, missionaries' schools became at-

tractive to students from the gentry class. Plenty of details are given, as regards schools organization, programs, schedules and Chinese students' reactions to physical education classes. I tried my best to provide the readers not only with historical data, but also with direct evidences, taken from missions' archives, correspondences, yearbooks, missionaries' biographies and memories. Being first-hand experiences, such sources represented a vivid testimony. Unfortunately, I could not find texts written by Chinese students, but just missionaries' notes reporting (that is re-elaborating) them. In my references, the Chinese counterpart is represented by Chinese newspapers, contemporary articles making historical analyses and reconstructions, and manuals about Physical Education in China. Along the whole work, there are passages quoted from Chinese texts, followed by my translation in English. This chapter continues with a section dedicating to the Y.M.C.A., explaining why it was so important in spreading Western sports. The section 2.4 is about the female sphere in missions schools and its approach to gymnastics and sports. Using the expression 'female sphere,' I include both female missionaries and female students, as physical education social impact has a direct relationship with gender definition and construction. These two sides of the female sphere are handled in separated subsections, with a deep research on the footbinding issue. In discussing Chinese women History of Sport, I found an accurate and exhaustive investigation in professor Fan Hong's works, particularly in her book *"Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom."* The second chapter ends with a section on main Physical Education theories elaborated by Chinese intellectuals and their impression on its role in strengthening Chinese people.

The third chapter is about the spread of physical education outside schools; in other words, public sport competitions. It depicts how missionaries used sports to gain Chinese people's attention. In promoting themselves, missionaries created public events and community moments, characterized with a sense of common belonging. The chapter is divided in three main parts. The first one is an introduction on Anthropology of Sport and it explains why sport matches had such an appeal in human societies and what values they are charged with. The origins of Chinese modern sport competitions are described in the following parts, divided in national and international competitions. Along with the dissertation, there are a lot of direct quotations from the opening speeches or from the newspapers of the period to better represent how they were conceived and perceived.

The fourth chapter talks about the decline of missions' role in the Republic of China, started with May Fourth movement, and quickly enforced by the anti-Western campaigns and the rise of Chiang Kai-shek. The chapter analyse the consequent redefinition of missionary influence on the Physical Education sphere, both in education and in the organization of public

events. Along with this decline, there is an accurate description of Nationalist Party interpretation of Western sports, and their new vision on Physical Education. If in Protestant vision, the individual can improve itself, in Nationalist view to be healthy and physically strong is a duty towards the Nation. This shift is clearly described in Sun Yu's movie "Queen of Sports" (*Tiyu huanghou* 体育皇后), so I provided the reader with a detailed analysis of this film.

Concerning the references, as I previously mentioned, I used as much direct evidences as I could. I am grateful to the librarians of the Kauz Family Y.M.C.A. Archive, at University of Minnesota for helping me finding missionaries' letters and reports. Other direct sources that I widely used, are the Annual Reports of the North China Mission of the American Board, the China Mission Year Books and the autobiographies and biographies of some missionaries. As regards the historical framework, the works of Shirley S., Garrett "*Social Reformers in Urban China: the Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926,*" and Jessie Gregory Lutz, "*China and the Christian Colleges: 1850-1950,*" were particularly useful. Allen Guttmann's and Robert A. Mechikoff/Steven G. Estes' manuals of history of sports gave a great contribution for the discussion of physical education terminology and concepts. For the paragraphs strictly focused on Chinese Sport History, the works of Fan Hong, Andrew D. Morris and Wu Chih-Kang represented meaningful and inspirational reference points.

## CHAPTER ONE. TERMINOLOGY AND HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1.1 Plays, games, sports and Physical Education

Both animals and human beings use to play at least at a certain stage of their life. Play can be defined as an intellectual or physical activity made purposelessly<sup>1</sup> and if such an activity is organized and involves a competition it takes the name of ‘ game. ’<sup>2</sup> Even if there are several definition of the word sport, we can roughly define it as any physical game “*which include an important measure of physical as well intellectual skill.*”<sup>3</sup> Starting from the early civilizations, these three elements are recurring in all human communities, both small and enormous; they have been covering different roles and have been satisfying different needs, according to particular cultures and historical periods. The influence and the conditions of the competitive component are what have changed the most along the centuries, particularly on sport history analyses, starting from the nineteenth century in Great Britain and in the United States, differences with the past times became so evident to make a new terminological distinction necessary. The sport historian Allen Guttmann in his book “*From Ritual to Record*” elaborated the concept of Modern Sports, assuming that they differ from the primitive/ancient /medieval ones in seven characteristics:

- *Secularism*
- *Equality of opportunity to compete and in the condition of competition*
- *Specialization of roles* [of players]
- *Rationalization*
- *Bureaucratic organization*
- *Quantification*
- *The quest for records.*<sup>4</sup>

As a matter of fact, this change parallels and reflects the social, cultural and material features of the period and the place in which it occurred. Let’s clarify its genesis. First of all, during the nineteenth century, Darwin’s theories about the influence of environment on evolution spread and radically influenced the Western perception of the physical body and the role of physical activity.<sup>5</sup> Competitiveness became an appreciated quality because it could guarantee wealth and even survival and sport matches offered a credible and tangible allegory of the

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<sup>1</sup> Allen, GUTTMANN, *From ritual to record : The nature of modern sports*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1978, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> Ivi, p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Ivi, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> Ivi, p. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Robert A., MECHIKOFF, Steven G., ESTES, *A History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education: From Ancient Civilizations to the Modern World*, Boston, McGraw-Hill, 1998, pp. 227-237.

struggle for existence and of the natural selection theory.<sup>6</sup> Secondly, a part of the Christian world slowly changed its viewpoint towards physical activity developing a particular favorable-to-sport attitude. Generally speaking, from the Middle Ages onwards, recreational activities as games and sports were to be limited to free time and “*the Catholic Church held the corporeal nature of humans in contempt and scorned those who engaged in sports and games.*”<sup>7</sup> Men were meant to work and pray. That was true also in Protestant world, especially in England and United States in sixteenth and seventeenth centuries where the Puritans were the most important religious group. Puritans formulated a conception of time somehow similar to the capitalistic one: stating that lifetime is a God’s gift, consequently men must spend it avoiding wasting of time. Even if the premises are different, this should be more or less the vision of every business person and it is remarkable that Catholics in England (which was far to be capitalistic at that time) were more involved in farming and agricultural works while Protestants represented mainly the merchants class, more resourceful and business-oriented.<sup>8</sup> The Puritans strongly manifested their aversion towards games and plays since they were associated with immoral and vicious conducts as gambling and drinking that took place mainly on Sundays, the Lord’s Day. The greatest manifestations of Puritan hostility happened in New England in the early seventeenth century where local magistrates wrote specific laws forbidding hunting (as recreational activity) on Sundays and punishing with fines and imprisonment who were absent from church meetings.<sup>9</sup> Despite all their efforts, Puritans never succeed in eliminating sporting recreations and games that remained largely widespread in taverns and hostels. As non-Puritans immigrants settled in the forming United States, Puritan morality was less and less influential. The turning point was in nineteenth century when different Protestant communities, both in England and in the U.S. enthusiastically experienced a revolutionary approach to sport: the Muscular Christianity movement. This term for the first time appeared in *The Saturday Review* of 1857 in a review of Kingsley’s novel *Two Years Ago* by the clergyman T.C. Sanders. It describes a new way to consider sport in the ethic debate: for the first time it was argued that physical activity and sport could have a role in the development of participants’ morality.<sup>10</sup> Thomas Hughes’ character Tom Brown gave the literal examples to follow: kind-hearted, athletic, loyal. As one can notice, the last two qualities form the basis of sport. It is the protagonist of the novel *Tom Brown’s School Days* that became

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<sup>6</sup> Ivi, p. 234.

<sup>7</sup> Ivi, p. 235.

<sup>8</sup> Ivi, p. 217.

<sup>9</sup> Ivi, p. 220.

<sup>10</sup> James, A. MATHISEN, “Reviving “Muscular Christianity“: Gil Dodds and the Institutionalization of Sport Evangelism,” *Sociological Focus*, 25, 3, 1990 p. 235.

tremendously influential, firstly among British and American educators and, as the British empire grew and missionaries action spread, its influence affected and shaped the worldwide conception of sport, as in the Far East where it “*was probably the most popular English textbook for Japanese high-school students in the Meiji Era.*”<sup>11</sup> The movement was born in the Victorian England but in the late nineteenth century “*American promoters of sporting patriotism appropriated the ideology embedded in Tom Brown’s Schooldays for the national canon of the United States.*”<sup>12</sup> Its founders Charles Kingsley and Thomas Hughes were two active Christian socialists and obviously two sport lovers. Even if Christian Socialist were just a minority among Protestant clergy and in the intellectual world, they were very influential and particularly critical of Anglican Church who neglected working class needs, promoted class division and social conservatism. They called for a more egalitarian society and advocated for social reforms aimed to improve life quality and education, a field in which they were predominantly involved. Many Christian socialists provided workers with teaching class and they had leading roles in several public schools. They saw playfields as a metaphor of the ideal meritocratic and classless existence.<sup>13</sup> Muscular Christianity theories were applied in various educational institutes and sport became a man-builder tool to raise strong healthy and devoted children, completely different to bookish intellectual. According to muscular Christianity:

*there is something innately good and godly about brute strength and power. Physical weakness was considered to be unnatural because it was only a reflection of moral and spiritual weakness. Consequently, an effort to overcome physical weakness could also be construed as an effort to be Christian and therefore moral and good.[...] muscular Christianity believed that the “body was a temple,” and consequently muscular Christians believed that they were obligated to care for and develop one’s physical being.*<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ikuo ABE, “Muscular Christianity in Japan: the Growth of a Hybrid,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 23, 5, 2006, p. 716.

<sup>12</sup> Mark DYRESON, “Globalizing the Nation-Making Process: Modern Sport in World History,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 20, 1, 2003, p. 97.

<sup>13</sup> Nick J. WATSON, Stuart WEIR, Stephen, FRIEND, “The Development of Muscular Christianity in Victorian Britain and Beyond,” *The Journal of Religion & Society*, The Kripke Center, 7, 2005, pp 3-6.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibidem.*

Even if the Church always denied Darwinism and supported creationist theories taken from the Bible, *mutatis mutandis*, on a practical side, both scientific and religious institutions found a common ground concerning sports promotion.

Besides scientific and philosophical new theories, we should keep in mind the daily environment and the practical necessities of common people. The above-mentioned century was rich in lifestyle changes due to a complex process that started in Western Europe and then spread in North America to reach all the continents: the Industrial Revolution. As regards Sport History analyses, two side effects of the industrialization shaped both the conception and the fruition of athletic events: urbanization and technological innovations. People from the country sides moved to new places, looking for an occupation. It was in the 1820s that American urban population started to grow faster than the rural one<sup>15</sup> but it happened disorderly and the peripheries turned firstly into slums and, as the European migration increased, in the poor filthy ghettos. Poor health and living conditions caused the spread of diseases and “*American cities were ravaged by cholera, typhus, typhoid, scarlet fever, influenza, diphtheria, smallpox, measles, and whooping cough.*”<sup>16</sup> Such diseases, even more violent, were recorded also in previous eras but in this century medicine experienced a fast development as a result of scientific discoveries in the organization. Before eighteenth century, external factors and individual temperament were seen to have a direct impact on human health. According to this vision, one’s own mind could originate a disease in idle, immoral people and there was “*the optimistic belief that it was within the capacity of men and women to improve themselves.*”<sup>17</sup> Thus, physicians and clergy cooperated in therapies.<sup>18</sup> Beside the relevance of medical discoveries, it is remarkable that medical staff became more and more trained and specialized along the century and, at least in Great Britain and in the U.S., clergy progressively lost its role in medical treatments. British and American university systems opened new departments and centers to allow the study of new practical subjects and around them new professional communities were born. Physicians became more well-trained and specialized. In 1847 the American Medical Association was born and soon appeared different subdisciplinary groups, according to different specializations, one of them was the “*American Association for the Advancement of Physical Education*” (AAAPE)<sup>19</sup> founded in 1885. It was a clear sign of the growing interest in physical education, that appear in the U.S. after the migration of many

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<sup>15</sup> MECHIKOFF, ESTES, *History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education ...*, op. cit., p.228.

<sup>16</sup> Ivi, p.171.

<sup>17</sup> Robert J. PARK, “Biological thought, athletics and the formation of a ‘man of character’: 1830-1900”, *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24, 12, 2007, p. 1554.

<sup>18</sup> Ivi, p. 172.

<sup>19</sup> Ivi, pp. 174-175.

physical instructors from North Europe who promoted the so-called “German system” and the “Swedish system.” Let’s clarify what exactly physical education is. This expression appeared for the first time in France in 18<sup>th</sup> century, when Jacques Ballexserd, a physician wrote an essay titled “*Dissertation sur l’education physique des enfans [sic!], depuis leur naissance jusqu’ à l’ âge de puberté.*” It developed particularly in Germany thanks to the German philosophical current of Idealism whose elements, as the Kant’s categorical imperative and Fichte’s association between mind, body and spirit, provide physical education with a theoretical authority<sup>20</sup> and because of German historical situation at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Physical educators had a key role in supporting German nationalism against France, mainly around the Turnverein movement from 1811 to 1820 when the Prussian king Friedrich Wilhelm III, by a royal decree banned all gymnastics in the state and forced the most famous physical educators such as Charles Follen, Charles Beck and Francis Lieber, to move to America.<sup>21</sup> Once in the new continent, most of them settled in Massachusetts and opened schools and gymnasium to advertise and continue the German system tradition.<sup>22</sup> German immigrants were inspired by the elaboration of “native” American programs like Catharine Beecher’s “Physiology and Calisthenics for Schools and Families” (1856) and Dioclesian Lewis’s light gymnastics system. From 1885 onwards, the medical and educational attention towards physical education has growing constantly.

Even if the reader can find the last element of my long list about sport-promoting factors quite obvious, I must report it as it is fundamental: new technology discoveries since they made possible the spread of some sports, needing particular facilities, on a large scale. The invention of new materials like vulcanized rubber (the material bicycle tires are made of) or elastic rubber (essential for the production of tennis balls) allows the diffusion and the standardization of sports equipment and mass production made it affordable, sewing machines permitted the spread of wearing-a-uniform custom.<sup>23</sup>

As we can see, the creation of modern sports and physical education was a long process occurred in particular historical and social circumstances.

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<sup>20</sup> For further readings about the role of Idealism in the development of physical education, see: MECHIKOFF, ESTES, *History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education ...*, op. cit., pp. 145-153.

<sup>21</sup> MECHIKOFF, ESTES, *History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education ...*, op. cit., pp. 155-161.

<sup>22</sup> For example Charles Follen opened a gymnasium at Harvard College in 1825. In the same year, Charles Beck created a gymnastics programme for the Round Hill School in Northampton (Massachusetts). In 1866, the Normal College of the North American Gymnastic Union had a gymnastics programme created by Turnverein members.

<sup>23</sup> MECHIKOFF, ESTES, *A History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education...*, op. cit., pp. 228-230.

Today, many scholars agree in considering “*sport as a language that transcends not only national boundaries but also national identities.*”<sup>24</sup> The British were aware of this as they keenly relied on the unifying capability of sports in creating their empire in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.<sup>25</sup> They were the first to exploit them as social technologies, that are efforts to organize the world for problem solving, according to Martin Heidegger.<sup>26</sup> A very good example is the spread of cricket in India, which creates contacts not only between British and Indian but also between different Hindu castes and the Hindu and Muslim populations.<sup>27</sup> The United States acquired different European sporting traditions thanks to progressive migrants settlement, re-elaborated them according to the needs of their growing cities and their material conditions and propagated them as their own, following the British example. If cricket was a British mark, American propagated especially baseball as it was a U.S. creation.

Non-western countries actually did develop their own native forms of physical activity but they were a mix of religious, ritual and recreational elements therefore they cannot be defined as “sports” in a modern sense. Of course, once European and American colonizers arrived on a particular territory, the cultural relevance of these practices did not disappear but the two systems were integrated and evolved together. Let’s analyze the Imperial China sporting tradition before the Western’s arrival.

## 1.2 Sport and tradition in China

The Chinese language uses the term *tiyu* 体育 to indicate a wide range of concepts as such “sport,” “athletics,” and “physical education.” Andrew Morris clearly explains the reasons why none of the above-mentioned expressions is a totally suitable translation. Both “sport” and “athletics” words etymologically lack of the educative connotation<sup>28</sup> presented in the Chinese character *yu* 育 (raise, educate). Sport and athletics can be also translated as *yundong* 运动 since it stresses the dynamic and physical element of such practices. *Tiyu* is the Chinese pronunciation of the Japanese kanji of the word *taiiku*, which first appeared in

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<sup>24</sup> DYRESON, *Globalizing the Nation-Making Process...*, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>25</sup> For further readings on this topic see: J. A. MANGAN, (edited), *The cultural Bond: Sport, Empire, Society*, London, Frank Cass, 1992.

<sup>26</sup> DYRESON, *Globalizing the Nation-Making Process...*, op. cit., pp. 93-94.

<sup>27</sup> See: Ramachandra GUHA, “Cricket, caste, community, colonialism: the politics of a great game” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 1997, 14, 1, 174-183.

<sup>28</sup> Here, I am referring to the definition of sport that I gave at the beginning of passage 1.1, that is: “any physical game “*which include an important measure of physical as well intellectual skill*”. The term “athletics” derives from the Greek words “*athlos*,” contest, and “*athlon*,” prize.

documents concerning the new Meiji educational system of 1872, modeled after Spencer's ideas on individuals responsibilities towards their own society.<sup>29</sup> This philosophical background allows me to think that Morris's translation of *tiyu* as "physical culture" is probably the best choice,<sup>30</sup> along with its literary but very evocative meaning "body-cultivation". Yan Fu was the first Chinese intellectual to use the word *tiyu* in his essay "On Strength"<sup>31</sup> (*Yuan Qiang 原強*) in 1895, and from that moment onwards, it "was a systematic ideology invested with definite ideals of the relationship between the individual and national bodies, and thus must be treated as a new and separate question.[...] closely connected to notions of the nation, modernity and a modern citizenry."<sup>32</sup>

Traditionally, China developed several forms of exercises and plays but it is hard to determine to what extent they fit the definition of modern sport especially because during different dynasties those physical activities faced various interpretations and met different needs. They both had a recreational, medical and ritual purpose. Gu Shiqian grouped them by the following classification:

*Military sport: archery, chariot races, contests of strength, wushu (martial arts), jogging, jumping, throwing, hurling, weight lifting, football, polo, hunting, tug of war and swimming.*

*Medical sports: qigong (breathing exercises), daoying (fitness exercise of which there were many forms), massage, yangsheng (keeping fit), fushi (keeping fit on a diet), taijiquan (traditional Chinese shadow boxing), yijinjing (exercises to relax the muscles), baduanjing (a set of exercises that comprised eight movements, each beneficial to a certain part of the body), manipulation of health-preserving balls, and climbing.*

*Recreational games and sports: lishe (shooting arrows as part of a ceremony or for amusement), touhu (throwing darts into a port), baixi (a general term for ancient Chinese songs, dances and aerobatics), singing and dancing, vehicle racing, horse racing, chess, kite flying, swinging, dragon-boat racing, aquatic sport, ice-skating, hiking and various other activities during festivals and at the temple fairs.<sup>33</sup>*

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<sup>29</sup> Andrew D., MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body: A History of Physical Culture in Republican China*, PhD dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 1998, pp.53-55.

<sup>30</sup> Ivi, p.4.

<sup>31</sup> Ivi, p.53.

<sup>32</sup> Andrew D., MORRIS, "Native Songs and Dances: Southeast Asia in a Greater Chinese Sporting Community, 1920-48," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 31, 1, 2000, p. 48.

<sup>33</sup> Tony HWANG, Grant JARVIE, "Sport, Nationalism, and the Early Chinese Republic, 1912-1927," *The Sports Historian*, 21, 2, 2001, p. 9.

Sheng Qi and Ding Zhiming provide us with a much more exhausting and complete list of traditional Chinese physical activities, which counts 198 different practices.<sup>34</sup> The core of these practices can be found in the ancient pre-imperial China: curative gymnastics dates back to Xia and Shang dynasties and it is from those rudimental techniques that *qigong* originated,<sup>35</sup> and the first documents referring to ball games date from the period of the Warring States (475-221 B.C.).<sup>36</sup> The evolution of traditional Chinese physical activities can be described as a process of competitiveness decline due to Confucianism that saw rivalry as a menace to society order. The Tang dynasty was the apogee of several games (as the *chuiwan*, similar to golf, *cuju*, the Chinese version of soccer) in terms of diffusion and even women participated in matches. At that time competition was still a central element and it was “*the advent of travelling cuju teams, with their own cheerleading squads.*”<sup>37</sup> Match winners were publicly rewarded like in present times.<sup>38</sup> Starting from the Song dynasty (960-1279 A.D.) pleasing-to-the-eye exhibitions rich in graceful movements became the most relevant elements in such activities, more and more similar to ritual ceremonies. Competitors turned into elegant executors of games comparable to rituals with just aesthetic values.<sup>39</sup> The reason of this loss can be seen in Confucian idea of hierarchy and harmony and its stress on the maintenance of the social *status quo*. It is true that two of the traditional Six Arts, that a gentleman should master, concerned physical activity: archery (*she* 射) and chariot driving (*yu* 御). Su Jingcun and Zheng Zhenkun highlighted the fact that a sort of indifference, if not hostility, towards them can be found directly in the Analects of Confucius (论语).

孔子以射御为六艺之卑, 轻视军事体育<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 39. For the list, see: Sheng Qi and Ding Zhiming, *Zhongguo chuantong tiyu (Forms and practices of traditional Chinese physical Culture)*, Taipei, Baiguan chubanshe, 1994.

<sup>35</sup> VV.AA., *5000 Ans de Sport en Chine: art et tradition*, Lausanne: Musée olympique; Beijing: Zhongguo ti yu bowu guan; Paris: Musée Guimet 1999, p. 15.

<sup>36</sup> Ivi, p. 76.

<sup>37</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body ...*, op. cit., pp.37-38.

<sup>38</sup> Ivi, p.38.

<sup>39</sup> FAN Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom: The Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China*, London, Frank Cass, 1997, pp. 19-25.

<sup>40</sup> SU Jingcun 苏竞存, ZHENG Zhenkun 郑振坤, “Kongzi yu tiyu” 孔子与体育 (Confucius and Physical Education), in *Tiyu kexue*, 3, 1983, p. 26.

Confucius considered archery and chariot driving as the humblest disciplines among the Six Arts, and he scorned physical activities related to military matters.

This position has to be read considering the historical period in which Confucius lived, the Spring and Autumn Period (777–476 BC).

[...]春秋时期诸侯争霸, 纷纷扩充军事力量, 进行兼并战争, 社会十分动乱. [...]军事扩张是造成社会动乱的原因, 他反对兼并战争, 因此不重视军事体育. [...]<sup>41</sup>

During the Spring and Autumn Period, the feudal lords vied for supremacy. They expanded their military power and were continuously involved in wars to annex new territories. Society was completely in turmoil. [...] The expansion of military affairs was the cause of the social disorder and so he (Confucius) opposed offensive wars and consequently he didn't esteem physical training.

Moreover, Confucius did not consider bravery (*yong* 勇) as a value in itself because if it is not controlled by benevolence (*ren* 仁) and by the rituals (*li* 礼) it can turn into insolence (*dao* 盗) and lead to social disorder (*luan* 乱).<sup>42</sup>

Military sports were employed specifically to train soldiers so they did not affect civil society and the five relationships. Representations of Chinese upper classes involved in physical activities are common but they must be read as pastimes where the gentlemen showed their elegance and aesthetic capabilities and the elitism of those meeting was intended to *reproduced and justified even further their status atop society*.<sup>43</sup>

Probably any discourse concerning sporting tradition in the Far East may remind a Western reader to the martial arts (also known as 'kung fu'). This term has two translations in Chinese: *wushu* 武术 and *guoshu* 国术. The first is still used in the PRC, the second one was coined by GMD propaganda to emphasize the national belonging of these arts, it was used during the Republic of China and remains the most common variant in Taiwan. The character *wu* 武 belongs to the semantic field of military- and army- related sphere. *Wushu* 武

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<sup>41</sup> Ivi, p. 27.

<sup>42</sup> Ivi, p.28.

<sup>43</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 43.

术 is a term referring to various fighting techniques both barehanded and with weapons.<sup>44</sup> Many of these fighting forms are said to derive from the observation of five animals: the tiger, crane, dragon, leopard and snake. They all have a prominent characteristic: “*the crane exemplifies balance; the dragon, spirit and agility; the leopard, strength; the tiger, the power; and the snake the ability to strike at the vital points of the body.*”<sup>45</sup> During the alien dynasties, particularly under the Mongol Yuan dynasties (1271-1368 A.D.) martial arts practice was forbidden as it could boost Chinese identity and be used in uprisings, consequently secret societies, as the White Lotus Sect (*Bailianjiao* 白蓮教) and religious communities secretly cultivated and were involved in maintaining martial arts alive.<sup>46</sup> Masters taught them secretly only to selected loyal men of a particular community who had to preserve master’s style. Women could not learn martial art secrets since they might leave the community once married.<sup>47</sup> Thanks to such an environment, their executors were perceived as having supernatural powers and mystic personalities. Because of their fascinating halo or just because any prohibition (especially if given from an unwanted foreign authority) boosts transgression, martial arts survived and even perfected. They had a prominent role also in the Boxer Rebellion in 1900.<sup>48</sup>

### 1.3 How modern sport arrived in China

As briefly illustrated in section 1.1, in the nineteenth century, physical activities acquired new peculiar values in Western countries, particularly in Anglo-Saxon cultures. These values overcame the sphere of mere recreation. As a consequence of Colonialism, and then Imperialism, Western sports and physical culture spread all over the world and reached all continents. Even if, technically speaking, China was rather a semi-colony than a colony, it was touched by this phenomenon in many ways and through different channels. Maybe the fact that it was not univocally controlled by a single foreign power, allowed the development of several heterogeneous theories about physical culture, some fiercely claiming for the preservation of traditional techniques, other desperately calling for the adoption of Western

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<sup>44</sup> HWANG, JARVIE, *Sport, Nationalism, and the Early Chinese Republic...*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>45</sup> FAN Hong, TAN Hua, “Sport in China: Conflict between Tradition and Modernity, 1840s to 1930s,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 19, 2-3, 2002, p. 191.

<sup>46</sup> HWANG, JARVIE, *Sport, Nationalism, and the Early Chinese Republic...*, op. cit., p. 10.

<sup>47</sup> FAN, TAN, *Sport in China...*, op. cit., p. 191.

<sup>48</sup> A very detailed description of the use of Wushu in the Boxer Rebellion is contained in the paragraph “Wushu, the Boxer Movement and the Rise of Chinese Nationalism at the turn of the Nineteenth Century” in an article by Lu Zhouxiang and Fan Hong. LU Zhouxiang, FAN Hong, “From Celestial Empire to Nation State: Sport and the Origins of Chinese Nationalism (1840-1927),” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 27, 3, 2010, pp. 479-504.

<sup>48</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 77.

physical culture. Both Western settlers in China and Chinese living abroad, had an active role in such a process that had been lasting from the beginning of the nineteenth century to the Early Republican period. My work is focused on Protestant missionaries' contributes, nevertheless I must provide my readers with a wider overview, as such contributions were limited to cities with a high percentage of Western presence like Tianjin and Shanghai, and they concerned mainly school environments.<sup>49</sup> First of all, it never was the spontaneous diffusion of exotic and funny entertainments, on the contrary, it was always a pragmatic answer to the degenerating social, cultural and economic conditions that the Middle Kingdom had to cope with, in the Late Qing dynasty. This statement is demonstrated by the fact that before 1895, Chinese's interest towards sports or Western gymnastic was nearly non-existing. The Sino-Japanese war and the defeat of China in 1895 provoked such a cultural shock among the intellectuals to make them fill the urgency of developing a physical education system to strengthen the weak Chinese population.

We can distinguish the following components as the ones that effectively impacted the birth of modern *tiyu* in China:

- Missionaries schools.
- Returned students.
- Growing interest in military drill.
- The spread of Darwinian theories in China and the self-identification of Chinese with the "sick men of the Orient."

In regards to missionary schools, the following chapters will provide a more detailed analyses on how and why religious institutions look at physical education to approach and shape Chinese society. Anyway, I will briefly explain the others factors.

In the Late Qing dynasties, the government provided different students with scholarships to go abroad, learn Western science and knowledge in order to save China from its deep crisis. They experienced university life-style, where sports and recreational activities had already gained an important role. Beside European universities, many of them were sent to Japan, and there they could approach both plays and games of European origin and the culture of military calisthenics. Starting from the Meiji Restoration, Japan recognized the importance of recreational physical activities thanks to the translation of English essays (for example

“*Outdoor games*” by F.W. Strange) as the British had their own “play movement” in the 1740s.<sup>50</sup> Beside this phenomenon, Japan was invested by a strong nationalist movement calling for the creation of a strong army and a strong population able to preserve Japanese race. The fervor about militarism was a direct consequence of the late nineteenth century, early twentieth century military successes against China (1894-1895), Russia (1904-1905) and later the First War World that “*made the Japanese self-confident, glorify war and embrace militarism.*”<sup>51</sup> Once again, the model to follow was Western physical education, especially Swedish calisthenics. In the early years of the twentieth century, Chinese students in Japan translated from Japanese, books on military drill and created student associations around physical culture provided with gymnastics equipment. In 1903, Chinese students in Tokyo formed the Military Citizenship Education Association, or informally the Physical Education Association, as a reaction to the Russian presence in Manchuria.<sup>52</sup> In Japan, the expression “military citizenship” (*jun guomin* 军国民) was coined Cai E, on the journal *New Citizen*. It became a recurrent concept in late Qing *Tiyu* literature and in 1906, it was cited in the program of educational aims of the Qing Board of Education.<sup>53</sup> There, “*the “jun” in “jun guomin” (is) as a transitive verb, describing a “militarizing” process which was effected as a “new citizenry” was targeted as the direct object of these competitive activities.*”<sup>54</sup>

This attention on the military element was present in China since some decades before the shocking result of the Sino-Japanese war, as this conflict was not the only Qing military failure, however, the previous ones were all against Western countries; this time China lost against its small neighbor. It dates back to the opium wars, where China faced the British army and remained astonished because of its unexpected power. The 1860s are considered the years of introduction of military calisthenics. In 1861, some progressive Qing functionaries launched the Westernization movement (*Yangwu yundong* 洋务运动), to strengthen the nation by purchasing Western weaponry, to industrialize the country, and to reevaluate Confucian tradition. In order to grasp the secret of wealth and power, the movement promoted the studies of Western science and many fields of knowledge, and, of course, physical culture was one of them. Qing bureaucrats were particular interested in *ticao* (体操), the military-oriented physi-

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<sup>50</sup> See: Ikuo ABE, J. A. MANGAN, “The British Impact on boys’ sports and games in Japan: an introductory survey,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 14, 2, 1997, pp.187-199.

<sup>51</sup> J. A. MANGAN, Takeshi KOMAGOME, “Militarism, sacrifice and emperor worship: the expendable male body in fascist Japanese martial culture,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 16, 4, 1999, p. 186.

<sup>52</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., pp. 67-68.

<sup>53</sup> Ivi, pp. 57-70.

<sup>54</sup> Ivi, p. 59.

cal exercises and opened Western-style military schools and academies along the country. According to professor Fan Hong:

*Western military exercises, as a contribution to military success won the approval and support of the Chinese authorities because they were significant instruments of political control. However they create a climate of acceptability for Western practices. Germination occurred mostly in Western-style schools, and academies established during this period, for example, in the North Western Navy Academy (founded in 1881), the Tianjin Weaponry Engineering College (1885), the Guangdong Navy Academy (1887), the Fuzhou Shipbuilding Institute (1866), the Tianjin Telegraph School (1880), the Shanghai Telegraph School (1882), the South Western Navy Academy (1890), the Hubei Weaponry Engineering College (1895) and the Nanjing Army Academy (1895). In these schools, Western military exercises were taught as a major subject and physical education was a compulsory course. The physical education curriculum in the North Western Navy Academy included fencing, boxing, football, high jump, long jump, swimming, skating and gymnastics.<sup>55</sup>*

Among that students who left China to study abroad, a small percentage studied in the foreign military academies, and according to the data collected by John Wands Sacca: “by 1906 there would be 691 officers and cadets in Japanese schools, 15 studying in Europe, and 3 in the United States. Within thirty years, slightly more than 1.4 percent of the total Chinese officer corps would be graduates of foreign military academies. Of that number, 90 percent had attended Japanese military schools, while the remaining 10 percent were educated in Europe and the United States.”<sup>56</sup>

This search for new models to follow, made Chinese intellectuals discuss on Chinese past and culture, criticize Confucian tradition and call for the adoption of daily physical activity to enforce the population. Among them we find Kang Youwei, Liang Qichao and Yan Fu. In this time, we can find the origins of the “Sick man of the Orient” (*dongfang bingfu* 东方病夫) discourse that will last for decades, fostered both by Chinese and Westerns and assuming different relevance, according to the particular period.

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<sup>55</sup> FAN, TAN, *Sport in China...*, op. cit., p. 193.

<sup>56</sup> John Wands SACCA, “Like Strangers in a Foreign Land: Chinese Officers Prepared at American Military Colleges, 1904-37,” *The Journal of Military History*, 70, 3, 2006, p. 708.

康严等用“病夫”比喻中国 实在有自警自励之意。

[...]到辛亥革命前后,“东亚病夫”一词便染了上[...]视、

轻蔑的色彩,逐渐成了帝国主义者污辱中国人民的一

个惯常用语.从此,只要一听到这个字眼,就会激起中国人

民反抗和强烈民族自强心,激励他们为祖国的独立、富强

奋斗不息<sup>57</sup>

*The analogy between China and the sick man, used by Kang Youwei and Yan Fu contains the idea of self-warning and self-apprehension. [...] After the 1911 Revolution, the expression “Sick man of Asia” acquired a pejorative connotation and gradually became the usual expression employed by imperialists to humiliate China and Chinese people. From this moment onwards, this expression will arouse indignation among Chinese people, the desire for strengthening the nation to do not cease the struggle for independence of the motherland and national prosperity*

This sense of inferiority parallels the spread of Darwin’s theories on evolution, that Yan Fu himself translated and diffused. Such theories represented the scientific evidence of Chinese unsuitableness with modernity. As competition is the basis of the struggle for survival, any tradition that discourage it, must be reformulated if not avoided. Chinese scholars gave to sport and physical education the same pro-evolution interpretation that the Western intellectuals did, thus it encouraged *tiyu* diffusion.

I must underline that, beside the Western sport supporters among Chinese, the cultivation of traditional martial arts remained alive particularly among the “Overseas Chinese” particularly among those living in the Philippines, British Malaya and Dutch Indies. The practice of these arts worked as a connection with their mother land to enforce the sense of community among Chinese living abroad and to remind them of their cultural belonging. This connection

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<sup>57</sup> TAN Huanwen, 谭华文,“Dongya bingfu xiaoshi” 东亚病夫”小史 (A short history of the expression “Sick Man of Asia), in *Tiyu jiaoxue yu keyan*, 17, 1985, p. 48.

became tangible and coordinated to the extent that it created a sort of martial-arts-fashion<sup>58</sup> that led to the foundation of the “Pure Martial Calisthenics & Drill School” (*Jingwu Ticao Xuexiao* 精武体操学校) in Shanghai, in 1910. In 1916, the association changed its name in the “Pure Martial Athletic Association” (*Jingwu Tiyuhui* 精武体育会) choosing a more recreational connotation<sup>59</sup>. The organization birth was due to the help of Chen Qimei and Song Jiaoren and it worked thanks to its links with the commercial and political elites in Shanghai and Guangzhou.<sup>60</sup> On the contrary, in main-land China, they had to face the critics of major intellectuals that considered them as decadent, unsuitable for the new modern China that everybody were dreaming of. Lu Xun himself wrote an article on the journal *New Youth* “*showing their irrelevancy to the national tasks at hand and revealing their role in bringing on many of China’s problems.*”<sup>61</sup>

#### 1.4 “Seeking the worthy:” Protestant Missionaries in China and their educative efforts

“If God had really called me to be a missionary, he would at the same time have prepared some of the Chinese to hear my message.” Timothy Richard<sup>62</sup>

The Catholic Church’s missions in China date back to Ming dynasty (1368-1644 A.D.) but Protestant world began relationships with the Middle Kingdom almost two centuries later. Robert Morrison was the first Protestant missionary who had gone to China in 1807. He was sent there by the London Missionary Society. The first missionary from America arrived in 1830.<sup>63</sup> Early protestants missionaries devolved their efforts in opening primary schools and in providing medical services but their aim was neither education nor health. Their aim was

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<sup>58</sup> It is called “Jingwu-ism”( 精武主义), using the suffix of the schools of thought, but in my opinion, we can talk of this phenomenon as a doctrine only starting from 1920, when five great masters made a trip in Malaya, the Indies and Indochina beginning massive programs of martial-arts-promotion.

<sup>59</sup> Brian KENNEDY and Elizabeth GUO, *Jingwu: the School that Transformed Kung Fu*, Berkeley, Blue Snake Books, 2010, p. XII.

<sup>60</sup> MORRIS, *Chinese Sporting Communities...*, op. cit., pp. 51-52.

<sup>61</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 451.

<sup>62</sup> This quotation is taken from the Timothy Richard’s autobiographical work “Forty-five years in China” and I found the extract in the following book: Shirley S., GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China: the Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1970, p. 18.

<sup>63</sup> Gael GRAHAM, “Exercising Control: Sports and Physical Education in America Protestant Mission Schools in China, 1880-1930,” *Signs*, 20, 1, 1994, p. 25.

conversion,<sup>64</sup> but they failed in approaching Chinese culture and needs so the converts were low in number and poor in faith.

*By 1877, a combined census of all Protestant affiliates showed only slightly more than 13,000 communicants to Protestant Christianity in China [...] When compared with an estimated 400,000 Chinese Catholics, this number was not large; when compared with the hundreds of millions of Chinese infidels, it was appallingly small [...] some of the converts were merely 'rice-Christians,' willing to add another deity to their pantheon in return for a bowl of food.*<sup>65</sup>

The Tianjin Treaties, signed in 1858, allowed Missionaries to buy land for homes and churches and to preach around China. Many of them, as Calvin Matter, began dangerous journeys in remote villages but they mainly obtained the indifference of the poor and the hostility of the gentry that saw them as a menace to its authority at the local level<sup>66</sup>. Hostility was also a consequence of Missionaries' habits of vilify Chinese culture, particularly Confucian tradition<sup>67</sup>. On May 10, 1877 there was the first General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China, where ninety-three Protestant missionaries of different factions discussed about problems related to Christianization since *"the salvation of China seemed as remote as ever."*<sup>68</sup> Most missionaries recognized two elements as the core of their failure: the sectarianism of the Protestant Church and the focus on preaching the gospel, excluding all other activities.

A Committee on the Division of Labor was created to coordinate the twenty-six different Protestant denominations present on Chinese soil, eleven of them were from America, thirteen British and two from the Continent. Even if most of Chinese population was not clearly aware of differences among a Methodist and a Baptist, from the headquarters of each denomination, they pushed to converted to a specific Protestant movement. Division slowed down and weakened missionaries action.<sup>69</sup> Another form of division, maybe not directly connected with Missionaries primary interests, but still a *de facto* condition, was the mother country. Generally speaking, missionaries should not be nationalistic as they belong to God's

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<sup>64</sup> Shirley S., GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China: the Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press 1970, pp. 4-5.

<sup>65</sup> Ivi, pp. 6-7.

<sup>66</sup> Ivi, pp. 11-12.

<sup>67</sup> Ivi, p. 13.

<sup>68</sup> Ivi, p. 4.

<sup>69</sup> Ivi, pp. 8-9.

world but inevitably, they reflected the interest of their own country both in a cultural and in a practical way: many times they had diplomatic roles. Beside the action of the committee, a clear separation remained of course, between the Roman Church and the French missions. British and American missions were quite collaborative, but as the passing of the years American ones gained a larger proselytism, despite the fact that they arrived almost thirty years later.<sup>70</sup> In regards to national belonging, Reverend Gilbert Reid, a prominent Presbyterian missionary from the United States, claimed for a further but just superficial distinction between the religious initiatives and governments' ones but, in reality "*American missionaries did act in official capacities for the United States. As interpreters, secretaries and in other elevated diplomatic posts, [...] they had to portray America as distinct from other nations.*"<sup>71</sup>

The focus on gospel was the most controversial point. They debated both the way and the quantity of gospel predication. Many missionaries believed in the cultural supremacy of the Bible, that had to be propagated integrally, without any cultural intermediation. They predicated concepts totally obscure for a Chinese audience, in a way that made them look like story tellers instead of soul-savers.<sup>72</sup> It was clear that a new approach was mandatory. Open-minded missionaries, like Timothy Richard and Gilbert Reid, followed the example of Matthew Ricci, the Jesuit that arrived in China at the end of the sixteenth century. They tried to adopt Chinese etiquette and dress code, shaved their beards and worn the queue indicating submission to the Manchus.<sup>73</sup> Certainly, Chinese began to fill more confident towards people behaving like them but the most successful tool for conquering the yellow men, undoubtedly science. The spread of the Western scientific knowledge was firstly promoted by the missionaries, however faced a tepid reaction. The watershed occurred in 1895 when China was defeated by Japan in the Sino-Japanese war. From that moment onwards, China recognized that "*the ancient education of China was all too inadequate to meet modern requirements, and that Western learning should be adopted.*"<sup>74</sup> Missionaries had an active role in promoting the study of mathematics, geography, history and science, and during the conference they created a committee to prepare a series of schoolbooks.<sup>75</sup> The majority of lessons were in English. Chinese students responded positively.

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<sup>70</sup> Merle CURTI, John STALKER, "'The Flowery Flag Devils': The American Image in China 1840-1900", *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 96, 6, 1952, pp. 672-673.

<sup>71</sup> Ivi, p. 673.

<sup>72</sup> GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China...*, op. cit., p.13.

<sup>73</sup> Ivi, pp. 18-23.

<sup>74</sup> Timothy RICHARD, *Forty-five Years in China: reminiscences*, New York, Frederick A. Strokes Company, 1916, p. 261.

<sup>75</sup> GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China...*, op. cit., pp. 11-17.

It was in this new atmosphere that the Y.M.C.A. arrived in China. It appeared for the first time in 1885, in two cities. George Smyth, an American Presbyterian missionary at the Anglo-Chinese College of the Methodist Episcopal Mission at Fuzhou organized a prayer group with forty-five Chinese students and the group name was the Young Disciples<sup>76</sup> (*You Tu* 幼徒); similarly Harlan Beach created a students' group in the Tongzhou Boy's School of the American Board. Those associations promoted an "*emphasized nonritualistic, joyful religious experience, and they were run by the students themselves.*"<sup>77</sup> Games and sports found a fertile ground in the Y.M.C.A. schools, both in China as in the others missions around the world, in the countries where the association spread. The Y.M.C.A. actually embodied the Muscular Christianity spirit. Its complete name is Young Men's Christian Association, it was founded in 1844 in London by George Williams and it was born as a pray group. Association members became growingly involved in charity and, especially, in the improvement of young men both in social, cultural and economic terms. The Association grew very fast, and in 1851 it opened in Boston. American audiences rapidly acquired and promoted the Y.M.C.A values: a joyful, non-intellectual and pragmatic approach to religion in order to made it suitable to young people. "*Association was indisputably permeated by the Protestant Christian spirit, with the overtones of evangelical activism implied by that spirit [...] (the emphasis was on) faith rather than doctrine.*"<sup>78</sup> The Boston association was particularly active in opening employment bureaus, giving assistance to poor immigrants, providing classes. Members, especially the lay ones, were meant to have an active role in community life and in fund-raising. It want to remind my reader of the fact that Boston at that time hosted not only the German physical educators immigrated from Europe but also some of the most famous Universities of the United States, as Harvard, certainly participating the emerging debate on physical education. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Boston, as many American cities, were invested by several new scientific, social and religious factors, all synergically encouraging sports. In China, Missionaries belonging to Y.M.C.A., exported these values and different scholars recognize them a great contribution in emancipating Chinese women, educating children and in importing Western games. Their activity revolutionized Chinese urban society, changing interpersonal and familiar relationships, Chinese mentality and creating a new form of public manifestation: sport matches. In the following chapters, I will analyze in detail how it happened and its consequences.

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<sup>76</sup> Ivi, pp. 25-26.

<sup>77</sup> Ivi, p. 27.

<sup>78</sup> Ivi, p. 32.

## CHAPTER TWO. PHYSICAL EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS

### 2.1 First stage: approaching lower classes

In the nineteenth century, China had already experienced contacts with Christianity since the Ming dynasty. Those early approaches were fruitful thanks to the great personalities of Jesuit preachers, above all Matteo Ricci, who showed great respect for Chinese cultural system. This “gold age” of fecund Catholic presence in China ended in 1724, because of the debate on ancestor worship and Confucius worship. According to Jesuits, converted Chinese could maintain this tradition as peculiar cultural trait not in contrast with Christian faith, but other factions inside the Church strongly disagreed on this statement. In 1715, Pope Clement XI officially condemned Chinese rites in his bull *Ex illa die*, and as a reaction, emperor Kangxi, of the Qing dynasty limited missionaries activity and allowed just a few of them to remain in Beijing for scientific purposes.<sup>1</sup> First Catholic missions found a Middle Kingdom radically different from the one saw by early Protestant preachers. Firstly, Ming emperors tolerated Christianity because they saw in it a way to limit Buddhism, secondly European missions developed friendly relationship with the upper classes of Chinese society providing them with their scientific knowledge. Moreover, European foreign policy towards China was not as aggressive as it was during the so called “imperialism”, the historical framework in which Protestant operated. During the seventeenth century, “*its [=of Christianity] effect on the educational system was negligible. [...] Western science, at this stage in its development, did not get beyond the status of a curiosity, even if at times a useful curiosity. The Chinese felt no doubt as to the complete sufficiency of their classical literature, nor was there any reason why they should<sup>2</sup>*”. As I previously mentioned, this indifference towards Western civilization and culture lasted until the 1895, after the Sino-Japanese war. To be honest, even after this watershed, Catholic missions, largely represented by Jesuits, could never regain the prestige they had in Ming period. Despite the chronological delay, the material difficulties and the hysteric attitudes of Chinese intellectuals and governors, from the point of view of Christian proselytism, Protestants surpassed Catholics in popularity because their social target was wider, they gave practically support to the population but, above all, they develop a modern educational system aimed both to spread knowledge and to create social cohesion, a lacking element in that time in China. “*The Catholics did most for pure scholarship; the Protestants*

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<sup>1</sup> Victor, PURCELL, *Problems of Chinese Education*, London, Kegan Paul, Trench, Trubner & Co. Ltd, 1936, pp. 44-46.

<sup>2</sup> Ivi, p. 46.

*most for education,*<sup>3</sup> this statement of doctor Victor Purcell best clarifies the two different attitudes. Starting from the first General Conference of the Protestant Missionaries of China of 1877, Protestant missions opened educational structures whose subjects went far beyond the pure gospel. Of course, among them physical education and sports found a place. The quantity and the quality of physical activities changed according to the conditions, the location and the funds but, even in the worst conditions, motivated protestant missionaries recognized the importance of a recreational moment linked with manual and physical sphere. In its autobiography, the Baptist Timothy Richard described the terrible drought that struck North China, particularly Shandong region, in the 1876-1878. He organized a relief campaign and opened five orphanages of one hundred boys each, from twelve and eighteen years of age. He reported the terrible living conditions, the lack of teachers and the daily difficulties. I want to show to my readers the timetable of the orphanage in Qingzhou:

- 7.30-8 a.m. Breakfast.
- 8-8.30 Worship.
- 8.30-10 Translation of English into Chinese.
- 10-12.30 Teaching of inquirers or preaching.
- 12.30-2 p.m. Overseeing of orphans, teaching Sol-fa music, etc.
- 2-5 Translation into Chinese.
- 5-7 Miscellaneous work, walk, and dinner.
- 7-8 Church history in English.
- 8-8.20 Chinese worship.
- 8.20-9 “Bacon’s Essays” ad Butler.
- 9-10 Conversation with teachers.<sup>4</sup>

Many elements of this schedule are remarkable, as the inclusion of Chinese worship, but according to the topic of this work, I just will make my readers focus on the two hours dedicated to “Miscellaneous work, walk, and dinner.” It does not explicitly mention physical training episodes, but some elements make me think that the verb “walk” indicates a sort of simple, recreational, spontaneous physical activity. The choice of late afternoon hours, when natural light is declining but it is not dark enough to sleep, the fact that the walking activity follows a series of sedentary, cerebral moments allow me to see in it an effort of dedicate a part of the day of the one’s body. The drought and the consequent famine were particularly violent, *“the suffering in all the northern provinces was so terrible that it was said that in all*

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<sup>3</sup> Ivi., p. 52.

<sup>4</sup> Timothy RICHARD, *Forty-five Years in China: reminiscences*, New York, Frederick A. Strokes Company, 1916, p. 110.

*history, even in that of China, the distress had never been equaled. It struck terror into the hearts of all,*"<sup>5</sup> but apparently, Richard could not renounce to a pleasing daily walk. This need, recurrent among the so-called Anglo-Saxon religious men, will develop organized sporting activities, athletic competitions, structured body training once better living conditions, economic resources and Chinese authorities' approval will create a suitable working fields. Generally speaking, this is not a peculiarity of Protestant missions in China. Sport was promoted in all the colonies, mainly in those of the British empire, from Africa to Australia. The fact that China was rather a "semi-colony" makes the issue more controversial and variegated.

A good question can be: why did Protestant missionaries include physical activity in their schools? Well, there are several answers, some obvious, other more complex. I will not consider the introduction of physical activities and sport as a project in itself, as something consciously established; do not forget that the real core of missions was conversion. At least at the beginning (the second half of the nineteenth century), it was an instinctive choice: physical education was taught in English and American public schools and it sounded logical to insert it also in Chinese curricula. It was particularly true for male-school curricula. Female involvement in physical education was always intentionally encouraged by missionaries, particularly by American female missionaries. Gael Graham underlined the fact that efforts to strengthen Chinese girls bodies reflected a cultural change already happened in United States schools where, from the late nineteenth century onwards, public educational system have included physical training for both sexes. As a result, "*the "New Woman" of the 1890s who emerged from these colleges was physically active [...] such passage also indicated a cultural change in the United States away from the Victorian glorification of feminine fragility.*"<sup>6</sup> I will largely analyze the consequences of Chinese female involvement in physical education in section 2.3. Medicine theories about the importance of physical education for a healthy body, are another core element. Where possible, Missions provided Chinese population with free medical treatments and vaccinations<sup>7</sup> and made campaigns against spitting, blowing the noose on the fingers, and using communal chopsticks.<sup>8</sup> At the time, China population experienced a lot of epidemic diseases, as trachoma, malaria, smallpox plague and tuberculosis. Missionaries believed in using physical training in order to strengthen people bodies and to

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<sup>5</sup> Ivi, p. 97.

<sup>6</sup> Gael, GRAHAM, "Exercising Control: Sports and Physical Education in America Protestant Mission Schools in China, 1880-1930," *Signs*, 20, 1, 1994, p. 34.

<sup>7</sup> There is an interesting episode about vaccinations in Timothy Richard autobiography. See: RICHARD, *Forty-five Years in China...*, op. cit., pp. 62-66.

<sup>8</sup> GRAHAM, *Exercising Control...*, op. cit., p. 29.

contain illnesses.<sup>9</sup> Such precarious and dramatic conditions that struck Chinese population helps to develop in China a very common attitude among Western missions around the world, that is the inclination to depict native populations as sick, weak and even “effeminate.”

As I have already mentioned in the first chapter, nineteenth century saw the spread of racial theories. Protestant missionaries were supposed to be part of the “Anglo-Saxon Race,” a not-clearly-defined group of people, whose ancestors were from Germany and settled in England before the Norman conquest. Myths concerning the “Anglo-Saxons” date back to the 1530s, to justify the English Reformation and Henri VIII’s break with the Roman Church<sup>10</sup>. They gained English scholars’ interest around 1660s who “*did much to expand the interest in links between the Anglo-Saxons and other Germanic peoples.*”<sup>11</sup> English intellectuals and historians published several essays on the Anglo-Saxon religion, language, customs and law, describing this period as a flourishing one, based on freedom and equality. English settlers in North America believed in this mythical vision of their past and perpetuated it also in the forming United States propaganda.<sup>12</sup> These unclear “Germanic” origins and the fact that formerly, a missionary does not belong to any state beside the God’s one, made the missionaries less aware of their existing cultural differences and the discourse on racial differences among a Protestant mission and another was not so relevant. In China, Protestant missionaries did have different cultures but according to racial divisions, they were all part of a great ‘ Germanic family, ’ as they were largely from England, the United States (the core of the Anglo-Saxon race), Canada, Germany, Denmark, and Scandinavia.<sup>13</sup> In that contest, the different ones were the Chinese. First of all, they were different in a psychical sense. With this statement, I am not only referring to the facial somatic traits but also to those features recognizable through Anthropometry. The measurements of particular body parts were very widespread and encouraged by physicians throughout the late nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century, in order to define the physical “ideal” qualities. Such practice was recurrent in American and English colleges and again, it is a reflection of Darwinian and racial theories. Physical education was intended as a tool for ‘ shaping ’ both male and female bodies in order to make them satisfy particular standards, in other words, make them match

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<sup>9</sup> Ivi, p. 30.

<sup>10</sup> Reginald, HORSMAN, *Race and Manifest Destiny: Origins of American Racial Anglo-Saxonism*, Cambridge, London, Harvard University Press, 1981, pp. 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> Ivi, p. 15.

<sup>12</sup> Ivi, pp. 10-15.

<sup>13</sup> For a complete list of all the Protestant missions in China see: Donald MACGILLIVRAY, *A Century of Protestant Missions in China (1807-1907) being the Centenary Conference historical volume (1907)*, Shanghai, American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1907, pp. v-viii.

the ideal Christian “maleness” and “womanhood.”<sup>14</sup> Missionaries and missions medical staff used to measure Chinese students and check their physical performances. Mary Margaret Moninger, Presbyterian missionary, in Hainan, particularly involved with education of Chinese girls, purchased a device for measuring lung capacity,<sup>15</sup> and encouraged students in participate in athletics. It was not just a physical matter. According to Gael Graham:

*Christian manhood was twofold: first, physical strength, stamina, and muscular development were important; the second half was character-possessing personal virtues such courage, courtesy, honesty, self discipline, diligence and sportsmanship. The missionaries found their male students deficient in both physique and character.*<sup>16</sup>

Missionaries criticism was not direct to lower classes (who had to face terrible living conditions and, as a matter of fact, seemed fragile) but principally, to boys belonging to upper classes that in the late 1890s started to attend missionaries schools. In those years, we see the progressive growth of physical education courses in schools, a subject that, beside in some few exceptions represented by the British-run schools of Dengzhou wenhuiguan in Shandong (from the 1870s) and in St. John University of Shanghai (from the 1880s), was not systematically taught.<sup>17</sup> Chinese governors became more and more conscious of the crisis they were living, and they felt the need for rethinking their traditional education system. Upper classes began to attend missionaries’ schools to acquire scientific knowledge. Gradually, Qing government adapted its national school curricula. In the first years of 1900s, Qing functionaries promulgated decrees aimed to modernize the national educational system after had observed local administrators’ experiments in introducing physical education, mainly in the form of military drill. Hubei-Hunan Governor-General Zhang Zhidong and Zhili Governor-General Yuan Shikai were the first who ordered the inclusion of calisthenics in schools under their dominions, respectively in 1898 and in 1901. The new Qing educational apparatus was largely modeled after the Japanese one. Physical education classes were based on the German system.

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<sup>14</sup> For further readings on this topic, see: Roberta J., PARK, “Muscles, Symmetry and Action: ‘Do You Measure Up?’ Defining Masculinity in Britain and America from the 1860s to the Early 1900s,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24, 12, 2007, pp. 1604-1636, and Ann, CHISHOLM, “The disciplinary dimensions of nineteenth-century gymnastics for US women,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 24, 4, 2007, pp. 432-479.

<sup>15</sup> GRAHAM, *Exercising Control...*, op. cit., pp. 30-31.

<sup>16</sup> Ivi, p. 31.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew D., MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body: A History of Physical Culture in Republican China*, PhD dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 1998, pp. 65-66.

*In the few years preceding the collapse of the Empire in 1911, the mandarin state showed great energy in the work of educational reform. The annus mirabilis 1901 [...] saw also the order that middle schools should be established in every prefecture and department; that higher primary schools should be established in every district, and lower primary schools throughout the country. In 1903, a commission was appointed to draw up a plan for a national public school system. The aim of the lower primary school was to give children above seven years of age the knowledge necessary for life, to establish in them the foundations of morality and patriotism, and to promote their physical welfare. The subjects to be taught were ethics, Chinese classics, Chinese language, mathematics, history, geography, nature study, and physical training. The course was to be five years, and twelve out of the thirty school hours a week were to be devoted to Chinese classics. The higher primary school with a course of four years was to cultivate the moral nature of the young citizen, to enlarge his knowledge, and to strengthen his body. The curriculum consisted of ethics, Chinese classics, Chinese language, mathematics, history, geography, nature study, drawing, and physical training. [...] a decree of 1906 further stated that the aim of education in China was not merely to discover men of talent, but to educate the whole nation and to inculcate loyalty to the throne, respect for Confucius, the awakening of the promotion of military spirit, and the creation of a practical and realistic sense.<sup>18</sup>*

*In 1906, an edict declared the aim of education to be: to inculcate loyalty to the emperor, respect for Confucius, and to promote the public spirit, the military spirit [sic!], and the realistic spirit.<sup>19</sup>*

At this point, Physical Education was officially introduced. Commonly, first instructors were not-qualified army members from Japan. Starting from 1904, Qing Government put more attention in teachers' recruitment, opening specialized academies to train future Physical educators.<sup>20</sup> The approach to Physical Education was militaristic, including training in military drill, gymnastics, calisthenics, games, judo, fencing.<sup>21</sup> Such practices were generally

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<sup>18</sup> PURCELL, *Problems of Chinese Education...*, op. cit., pp. 66-67.

<sup>19</sup> WU Chih-Kang, *The Influence of the YMCA on the Development of Physical Education in China*, PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1956, p. 49.

<sup>20</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., pp. 87-88.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibidem*.

called *Ticao* (体操). At this stage, we can see that missionaries' model did not affect Chinese decision-making yet.

## 2.2 Middle-upper classes' resistance

The urban elites' entry in Protestant mission schools generated many changes both in the structure and in the conception of Western presence in China. If previously, Missionaries were looking for Chinese, the decadence of Middle Kingdom power made the Chinese fill the need for reshape, at least some traits of their culture. First approaches were not satisfactory for both sides because of cultural misunderstandings. According to my point of view, at this stage, episodes of cultural imperialism are much more evident than in the earlier one. If economic power is a precondition for cultural domination, missionaries did not represent an exception. Early schools were for poor boys, some of them in remote villages, lacking of proper equipment, books and finances. They survived thanks to donations and the majority of students were not fee charged. Poor students were "adopted" by missionaries who paid for them. Education for poor boys was centered on religion and Confucian classics since they could achieve a sort of preparation for official exams. As girls were excluded from the exams, poor families sent their daughters to Mission schools because they could not feed and raise them. In these early years, missionaries did not have an influential role in female emancipation, and there are records of marriages between pupils arranged by missionaries.<sup>22</sup> For many girls, this was the only way to receive an education. Missionaries tolerated such practices in order to have as much students as they could. With the passing of the years, missionaries' popularity increased, many Chinese started to attend missions' schools, and missionaries became less tolerant towards ancient practices based on patriarchy, like arranged marriages. In girls' schools, students were actively involved in fund raising. They sold handicrafts in churches or, at the end of their studying courses, they worked as teachers in order to pay off their debt. Of course, Western philanthropists and mission boards heavily financed mission educational programs.<sup>23</sup> As merchants' and elites' interest in foreign education grew, tuition charges were introduced. By the late nineteenth century, starting from the 1880s, educational curricula became more variegated to satisfy the social stratification of students. Generally speaking, curricula became more secular, centered on sciences, mathematics and English because it was believed that the secret of Western power lied in such knowledge. In these years, the Educational Association of China (EAC) was born to create a

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<sup>22</sup> GRAHAM, *Exercising Control...*, op. cit, p. 26.

<sup>23</sup> Ivi, p. 27.

unified educational system in Christian schools. The Association duties were to provide standardized facilities, to create and unify curricula and textbooks, and to select schools staff and teachers with certified preparation and a proved knowledge. The model was that of English and American educational system. Among all the new subject, Physical Education should not have been students favorite one. A teacher of Chungking (Chongqing) Methodist Boys' High School wrote:

*when the first attempt was made to get boys to play basketball they just could see no fun in it. It was too much like hard work and the average student abhors anything that borders on manual labor.*<sup>24</sup>

This is perfectly comprehensible in the light of Confucian disdain for competition and according to the upper classes behavioral code that consider physical effort more suitable for peasants. Students' parents were even less enthusiastic than their sons, as they feared that sports could damage boys' health, and in some case they forbade their sons to take part in competitions.<sup>25</sup> Upper-classes boys and girls were traditionally overprotected and most of the time, parents kept them at home and did not encourage them to spend their time outside.<sup>26</sup> In forcing students to attend physical education classes, missionaries tried also to undermine the system of social hierarchy in Chinese society. Missionaries clearly violated class norms and customs. They stressed the value of manual work and physical efforts, and *"they assigned the boys chores around the school, such as serving in the kitchen, fetching the water, and raking the schoolyard. Boys in some schools were even required to do their own washing."*<sup>27</sup> Missionaries believed that team games and work activities in groups could instill in the Chinese youth a stronger sense of community that could overcome family ties. That is an attitude peculiar of muscular Christianity conceptions, and a similar use of sports is recognizable also in other missionaries' works worldwide.<sup>28</sup>

A Chinese peculiarity of their first sporting experiences was the refusal of competition. Students asked their teachers for do not keep the score during games because a defeat could

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<sup>24</sup> Ivi, p. 31.

<sup>25</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., pp. 84-85.

<sup>26</sup> WU Chih-Kang, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 30-31.

<sup>27</sup> GRAHAM, *Exercising Control...*, op. cit., p. 32.

<sup>28</sup> It is interesting to make a comparison between experiences in other places. See: J.A. MANGAN, "Christ and the imperial playing fields: Thomas Hughes's ideological heirs in empire," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 23, 5, 2006, pp. 777-804.

have vilified and it could have implicated the “loss of face.” Missionaries understood it as a lack of sportsmanship and forced them to take part in competition.<sup>29</sup>

### 2.3 The YMCA’s contribution

The creation of a community around missionaries’ schools through sport was a distinctive characteristic of the YMCA, arrived in China in 1895. They operated mainly in Tianjin and Shanghai. Part of its staff (the “physical directors”) was specifically devoted to physical education. The first secretary of the YMCA in Tianjin was D. Willard Lyon who was helped by three additional Foreign Secretaries from the 1908: Robert R. Gailey, R. E. Lewis and Fletcher S. Brockman. Since the beginning, they wanted to create physical-educational programmes<sup>30</sup> and their efforts seemed to be quite fruitful, as we can see from this letter of Willard Lyon, written in 1904:

*[...] two very successful athletic field days were held in the Shanghai and Tientsin [Tianjin] Associations respectively. They did not a little towards bringing the Association to the favorable attention of the public, and they revealed the possibility of the physical department becoming a real attraction to the Chinese young men at a much earlier date than we dared to hope among a people with whom intellectual culture takes such a pre-eminent place.<sup>31</sup>*

In 1908, M.J. Exner arrived in Shanghai and became Physical Director of the YMCA. He devoted himself to the physical education, building the Shanghai YMCA gymnasium, developing coursing for students and teachers. He opened a two-year-course for the training of Physical Education Directors in 1909 in order to guarantee the preparation of the trainers. The course was open also to Chinese that could become, after nine months of lessons, physical educators, having an academic preparation. C.G. Hoh, a Chinese student who attended the first years of that course, became a YMCA’s Physical Secretary,<sup>32</sup> as the Association pushed for the inclusion of natives in the educational and bureaucratic duties. Before this initiative, physical education was taught mainly by Western, and in military

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<sup>29</sup> GRAHAM, *Exercising Control...*, op. cit., pp. 36-37.

<sup>30</sup> Grant JARVIE, Dong-Jhy HWANG and Mel BRENNAN, *Sport, Revolution and the Beijing Olympics*, Oxford, Berg, 2008, p. 27.

<sup>31</sup> D. Willard LYON, *Report to the International Committee for the year ending Sept. 30<sup>th</sup>, 1904*, p.1. Seen in the Media Archive of the University of Minnesota. <http://umedia.lib.umn.edu/node/556154>

<sup>32</sup> JARVIE, HWANG, BRENNAN, *Sport, Revolution...*, op. cit., p. 27.

academies by Japanese officials or by Chinese soldiers themselves, but their scientific and medical knowledge was poor. Exner organized the First National Games in Nanjing in 1910, that revealed to Missionaries a new way to approach large Chinese masses and to enhance the sense of community they wanted to create. Beside their valuable contribution, it is true that YMCA concentrated their influence in urban centres on the eastern coasts. Villages and countryside were not touched by the Association's activities<sup>33</sup>.

The decade of the 1910s saw the affirmation of Anglo-American team sports over military drill and calisthenics. The use of the term *tiyu* in the literature of this period, is to be intended in this meaning. In previous texts, intellectuals were mainly referring to military drill and calisthenics.<sup>34</sup>

## 2.4 Women and Missions

### 2.4.1. Missionary women

From the beginning of Protestant activities, women worked in missions. They were mainly wives or relatives who followed the missionaries abroad, and they gave their collaboration in an informal way. The British Mary Ann Aldersey was the first single woman to work as missionary in China. Her Chinese teacher was Robert Morrison, who returned in London for a while after his first activities in China. In 1837, she started a school in Jakarta for Chinese girls. In 1843, she moved to Ningbo<sup>35</sup> (Zhejiang). There, she opened the first female school in China, that at the beginning was completely financed with her own expense. Later, the school received funds from the Society for Promoting Female Education in the East. The society was created by American and British women in 1834 and operated in India, China and in various countries of the Far-East. Other women's societies rapidly appeared to sustain project directed to other Chinese women. The first girls' schools were small, some having less than ten children<sup>36</sup> as Chinese families did not see any advantages in educating their daughters, but, they grew quickly and "*in 1902 there were more than 4,000 female students in missionary establishment.*"<sup>37</sup> It was a common opinion (shared both by Chinese men and

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<sup>33</sup> Ivi, p. 28.

<sup>34</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 111.

<sup>35</sup> Gerald, H. ANDERSON (edited by), *Biographical Dictionary of Christian Missions*, William B, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Cambridge, U.K.1999, p. 9.

<sup>36</sup> The first boarding School for girls of the Methodist Episcopal Church had just one student. See: MacGillivray, Donald, *A Century of Protestant Missions in China (1807-1907) being the Centenary Conference historical volume (1907)*, Shanghai, American Presbyterian Mission Press, 1907, p. 459.

<sup>37</sup> FAN Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom: The Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China*, London, Frank Cass, 1997, p. 54.

women) that girls were not intelligent enough to learn and study.<sup>38</sup> Constantly, missionary women worked to expand and sustain the emancipation, or better the Westernization, of Chinese women. Chinese girls not only received an education, but also they could get in contact with a reality completely different from their family's one.<sup>39</sup> In these schools, the lifestyle was modeled after the English or American one, as we can see reading the following passage, taken from a Chinese girl's statement:

*All the lessons were given in English. It was not long before I could speak a little English. I was dressed and my hair was arranged now in European fashion...With my English clothes, a hat which was the first I had ever had on my head, the skirts which I now wore instead of trousers, I felt very much in the role... I learned how to drink tea as the English take it, with sugar and milk; how to eat bread and butter and toast; how to use a knife and fork instead of chop-sticks, and how to take exercise.<sup>40</sup>*

In the reports and in the documents of girls' schools, it is particularly stressed the familiar element in describing the relationships between missionaries and the students. Protestant Missionaries described the successfulness of their institutes both from the educative side and from the point of view of inter-personal perspective. In Missionaries chronicles, they seem to have dismantled the Confucian hierarchy system based on the five relationships and the familiar *guanxi* (关系) network, as we can read from this passage:

*in 1872, they [Miss Brown and Miss Porter] opened in Peking the first boarding-school, with one girl of thirteen years; two more followed, and the three were shortly found weeping bitterly because-and they sobbed out the words-"We have teachers who are so foolish as to think that girls can learn books." And lo! This school, begun with three dismayed little maids, has developed into a great graded school of about 200 fine students; the rich and the poor, the high and the low, studying together in the most loving comradeship; and one hundred of them were tested in faith and not found lacking in the Siege of Peking.<sup>41</sup>*

It is difficult to prove to what extent such statements are true, but, the fact that even native Chinese describe similar scenes and adopt similar analogies, make me think that, Protestant

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<sup>38</sup> Ivi., p. 53.

<sup>39</sup> Ivi., pp. 54-55.

<sup>40</sup> Jane, HUNTER, *The Gospel of Gentility, American Women Missionaries in Turn-of-the-Century China*, London, Yale University Press, 1984, p. 231.

<sup>41</sup> Donald, MacGillivray, *A Century of Protestant Missions in China (1807-1907) being the Centenary Conference historical volume (1907)*, Shanghai, American Presbyterian Mission Press, p. 461.

missionaries in a relative short time, were partially successful in breaking traditional ties. Commonly, school staff identified itself mainly as the older brothers and sisters of students, maybe because the comparison between them and the parents would have sounded too daring. To compare, I will report a short passage from introduction of the “Bulletin No. 15” of the Canton Christian College of 1918, written by Mr. W. Sz-To, the principal of the elementary school who had been working there for seven years:

*Our school is like a family. Though we have many surname and are from many different parts of the country, yet we are all of one family. Girl teachers are older sisters and men teachers are older brothers and all the rest are the younger ones of the home. Singing, walking, eating, “roaming all together in all kinds of weather”, we are just like a big family.<sup>42</sup>*

In the same document, some pages later, Miss Fung Hin Liu, the principal of the girls’ school declared: “*Chinese girls are passing through many hard experiences in this transition period. They need wise big sisters to help them to see things in their proper perspective.*”<sup>43</sup> The above-mentioned transition was from the traditional conception of the woman as a devote wife and a lovely mother to the model of the emancipated and independent modern woman (*xin nüxing* 新女性).

At the end of the nineteenth century, Western women missionaries (particularly the American ones) had been themselves in a period of transition. They were not average women: the majority of them were well educated, not married, without children and far from home, in place they reached without any imposition, just to fulfill their desires. They were trained to work in missionaries’ schools and hospitals, and many of them have a very high educational level. They represented an exception for the European and American standards as well. According to Gael Graham, “*they saw themselves as professional teachers rather than as missionary volunteers.*”<sup>44</sup> Reading the biographies of some missionary women, we can grasp how their lives were uncommon. They all showed a great independence from men in their choices. In missions, they were professionally respected and admired for their qualities as

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<sup>42</sup> W. SZ-TO, “Seven years with Boys,” in VVAA, *Bulletin No. 15: Some Educational problems in China*, Canton, the College Press of the Canton Christian College, 1918, p. 7. Available online: <http://ia601200.us.archive.org/11/items/SomeEducationalProblemsInChina/A0004047.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Ivi, p. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Gael, GRAHAM, *Exercising Control...*, op. cit., p. 34.

regards faith, will and intelligence. It is hard to me to image late-nineteenth-century Western men showing some considerations for women in other situations.<sup>45</sup>

As educators, missionary women supported pupils' ambition and encourage them in taking part in public life of the community, trying to limit sexual segregation. They denounced concubinage, arranged marriages and marriage during the adolescence period as they caused the interruption of studies. They were not against marriage in itself, but asked for girls' self-realization.<sup>46</sup> However, girls learnt to sew, to take care of the house and in some schools, they also studied home economics as they would be useful in family life.<sup>47</sup>

During their school days, missionary women held physical education classes and, once in China, they taught the same things they had learned. As in Western schools, boys and girls attended different classes and had different curricula. Most of the newly arrived missionaries started their educational activity teaching this subject because it did not require a high language level.<sup>48</sup> When they became skillful in Chinese language, they began to teach other subjects. At the beginning, missionaries distinguished between physical education for boys and for girls. The girls' one were less hard and demanding as they were considered less resistant than boys and games were not very common. Some physical exercises were perceived as embarrassing or immodest for girls, like to bend, skip, or lift their legs.<sup>49</sup> At the turning of the century, baseball became one of the most widespread team game.<sup>50</sup> As public matches became more and more common, girls' ones had generally a restrict and selected audience in order to protect the girls from male undesired spectators.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> There are many examples, all interesting to read in vast production on missionaries' lives. I provide my read with the following three examples. Margaret Moninger was defined as "brilliant and genius." See her biography: Kathleen L. LODWICK, *Educating the Women of Hainan: The Career of Margaret Moninger in China, 1915-1942*, Lexington, The University Press of Kentucky, 1995. Charlotte "Lottie" Moon, a Southern Baptist, was admired for her culture and she pushed Southern Baptist women to form their own mission society. See: Keith HARPER (ed.), *Send the Light: Lottie Moon's Letters and Other Writings*, Macon, Mercer University Press, 2002. Eleanor Chesnut was a doctor at the Woman's Hospital in Lien-Chou. She was one of the martyrs killed at Lien Chou during an anti-foreigners attack in 1905. See: Arthur Judson, BROWN, *The Lien-Chou martyrdom: the cross is still upheld at Lien-Chou*, New York, published by Presbyterian Church in the U.S.A., Board of Foreign Missions, 1906., pp. 7 and pp. 21-22.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibidem*. An example of such critics can be found at: Bulletin No. 15: Some Educational problems in China, Canton, College Press of the Canton Christian College of Canton 1918, pp. 9-15.

<sup>47</sup> GRAHAM, *Exercising Control...*, op. cit., p. 35.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>49</sup> Ivi, pp. 37-38.

<sup>50</sup> Ivi, p. 39.

<sup>51</sup> Ivi, p. 40.

## 2.4.2 Missionaries and Footbinding

As girls' schools were established by missionaries, a condition to be admitted was to unbind one's feet. Firstly, it limited the entrance of many girls, particularly in Southern regions, since in the North of China "*the natural-footed Tartar woman could help her Chinese sister in countenance and where character would not be involved as in the south.*"<sup>52</sup>

Fan Hong listed the five main characteristics of female education that can be deduced from classic books specifically addressed to women: Women's Disciples; The Records of Illustrious Women of Ancient Times; Female Filial Piety Classics; Women's Instructions; The Classics for Women.

- *An appreciation of the state of subjection and weakness in which women were born.*
- *A knowledge of the duties of a woman when under the power of a husband.*
- *The unlimited respect due to husband, and the constant self-examination and restraint necessary to achieve this.*
- *A recognition of the obedience due to a husband and to his parents.*
- *An awareness of the qualities which render a female lovable, divided into those relating to her virtue, her conversation, her dress and her occupations.*<sup>53</sup>

Footbinding was the concrete and physical actualization of all these principles. It physically handicapped but it was a duty towards parents as it made girls more desirable to future husbands. Daughters had to marry and leave their homes because, unlike sons, they were not a source of income for the family. Marriages were a kind of compulsory. Tiny bound feet and the dance-like movements they created, were symbols of erotic and social submission to the male authority, so girls (or better, their parents) broke their toe-bones to please men, limiting their mobility and then, potential infidelity.<sup>54</sup> Such practice was common both in upper and in lower classes. Bound-footed girls could walk just for a limited time, and if they lived in remote places, they could not even go to schools, whereas their fathers allowed them to go. In any case, missionaries from the very beginning, did not admit them in their schools, unless they stopped this practice.

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<sup>52</sup> MACGILLIVRAY, *A Century of Protestant Missions in China*..., op. cit., p. 461.

<sup>53</sup> FAN, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*..., op. cit., p. 52.

<sup>54</sup> Ivi, pp. 45-48.

Western women had a prominent role in the anti-footbinding campaign. In April 1895, Mrs. Archibald Little started the Natural-foot Society (*Tian Zu hui* 天足会), literally ‘ heavenly foot society ’, that was deeply involved in publishing material against this practice. They chose to write it in *wenyan*, the language of the Classics, as it was considered a source of *decorum*<sup>55</sup> against this practice. Those campaigns had a great audience both in China and abroad, where many women’s philanthropic societies were involved in fund-raising. They strenuously denounced the atrocity of this tradition and its terrible consequences, like eczema and ulceration.

To be honest, even if it can seem legitimate to a Western reader, the anti-footbinding rhetoric was in a sense “imperialist,” as many missionaries and Western used it to denigrate Chinese culture *in toto* and to emphasize the supremacy of Western cultures, and the necessity of their presence in China under the guide of God. Angela Zito analyses the content and the language of the book “How England Saved China,” written by Reverend John Macgowan, in 1913. She highlights that, according to Macgowan’s standpoint, missionaries had to fight footbinding not to improve Chinese women’s life and health but because it was God’s will. As the title shows, the anti-footbinding propaganda was a tool to gain the support of the British (and in a broader sense, of the Western) audience, to please him with their enlightening and redeeming superiority derived from the “actionless actions of Divine Will”<sup>56</sup>. In Macgowan’s idea, the “[...] *body was natural not cultural, and nature disclosed the Divine plan. That ‘ natural body ’ could be counted upon as an ally in the never-ending battle against the ‘ artificial laws of man. ’ Patiently nurtured and exposed to the Truth, mother’s instinct awakens and they cease to bind their daughters’ feet; unbound feet return to Nature’s (divine) design.*”<sup>57</sup>

Physical education was the tangible demonstration of how missionaries managed to set female body free. It was introduced in girls’ schools, from the beginning but foot-bounded students were severely limited. As this practice decreased, missionaries massively reported that “*now the girls enjoy fully all their playtimes.*”<sup>58</sup> They wanted to represent Christian Chinese woman antithetically to the Confucian one. If Chinese tradition associated women

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<sup>55</sup> Mrs. Archibald LITTLE, *Intimate China. The Chinese as I have seen them*, London, Hutchinson & Co., 1899, p. 150.

<sup>56</sup> Angela ZITO, “Secularizing the Pain of Footbinding in China: Missionary and Medical Stagings of the Universal Body,” *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, 75, 1, 2007, p. 11.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>58</sup> FAN, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 58.

with the *yin* element (negativity, passivity and weakness), they promoted a healthy, active, and self-confident image of women.. They encouraged the visibility of girls in competitive occasions. One of the first time where six girls appeared in an athletics meet probably was in 1906, in a school of Hankou.<sup>59</sup> After centuries of exclusion from public life, these first episodes are the prelude to the spread of modern girl's representation in the 1920s and in the 1930s, where the photos and the images of Western-like, ' emancipated ' Chinese women filled magazines and advertisings. Unconsciously, in the effort of freeing female bodies, missionaries partially contributed to a future, mundane and ephemeral exploitation of femininity. After the spreading of physical education for girls, we have to wait until the 1920s to see the first public sporting events involving woman athletes because of some particular medical doctrines elaborated by the American physical educationist Charles Harold McCloy (186-1959). As a member of Y.M.C.A., he arrived in China in 1913 with the aim of training Chinese physical educationist. He remained in China from 1913 to 1924, and during this period he was back in the US just for some months between 1919 and 1920 because of health problems. During his stay, he covered all the leading position related with physical education both inside and outside the missionary hierarchy, for example the was from 1917 to 1919, he was the General-Secretary of the Sports Department of the Chinese National Y.M.C.A. and at the beginning of the 1920s, he was the General-Secretary of the National Amateur Sports Association, an association created to promote and coordinate sport events in China and abroad.<sup>60</sup> He was convinced of the importance of physical activities for women, but at the same times, he believed that not all exercises were suitable to female body. In his articles "The Difference between the Sexes in Physical Exercise" and " On Women's Competitive Sports,"<sup>61</sup> McCloy explained the reasons of his beliefs giving anatomical explanations, as result of the data he collected, testing the physical abilities of boys and girls of different Chinese schools, divided according to sex, age, height and weight.<sup>62</sup> Fan Hong sums up the McCloy' s main arguments in the following way:

1. *Women could not cope with intensive training because their hearts and lungs were too small;*
2. *Women could not take part in long-distance running, because their feet were small (70 yards was their maximum distance),*

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<sup>59</sup> Ivi, p. 59.

<sup>60</sup> Ivi, pp. 256-257.

<sup>61</sup> These two articles were published in the *Tiyu Jikan* 体育季刊 (Physical Education Quarterly), a journal founded by McCloy himself in 1922. Found in FAN, *Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 258.

<sup>62</sup> FAN, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., pp. 258-259.

3. *Women were not good at rings and jumps, because they had broad hips;*
4. *Women should not participate in violent physical activities, such as races and jumps. These would damage their soft and fragile womb (the important organ of reproduction).*
5. *Women should not exercise during their menstruation period because the loss of blood would exhaust their bodies.*<sup>63</sup>

He had many followers between missionaries and Chinese physicians, as Zhu Shifang and Shun Shuqian and his theories survived along the 1920s but they gradually lost their predominant space, thanks to the activity of Chinese female physical trainers. They were members of the Y.W.C.A., the female analog of the Y.M.C.A. who was established in China in 1896. In 1915, the Y.W.C.A. opened its Physical Education Institute in Shanghai to provide a professional two-year long training including anatomy, physiology, pedagogical theory and methodology, athletics, gymnastics, basketball, volleyball, tennis, table-tennis and games.<sup>64</sup> Teachers graduated from this school “*became pioneers of Chinese women’s competitive sport*”<sup>65</sup> and as long as 1923, there was the first competition involving Chinese athletes: the Sixth Far Eastern Championship Games.<sup>66</sup>

Chinese intellectuals gave their contribution to the anti-footbinding movement but the core of their intentions were, again, nationalistic. Footbinding prevented women from physical exercise, condemning them to be weak and fragile. From an evolutionist point of view, these state of affairs was dangerous to Chinese survival. Women were meant to have the moral duty of strengthening themselves, because strong women could generate a healthier offspring. According to this theory, we can see that the anti-footbinding campaign was not a matter of female emancipation, but just a way to reach national power. In this article of Yuan Shikai, we can see that there is no mention about the advantages for women’s health and lives in stopping footbinding:

*Mothers with bound feet cannot exercise, so their arteries get stopped up and they are all sick. All the sons and daughters they produce are emaciated and weak, dizzy and likely to die young. Most never live as long as Heaven intended them to, and if they do grow up, they are just*

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<sup>63</sup> Ivi, p. 258.

<sup>64</sup> Ivi, p. 264.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>66</sup> Ivi, p. 265.

*more sick people. This is why people of our nation are ridiculed as ' sick men ' (bingfu) by all the nations of the globe.*<sup>67</sup>

A new literature more focused on female condition, based on the description of the physical suffers, will aroused in the Early Republic years, with the May Fourth Movement.

In 1907, two official acts proved that the dying Qing dynasty, in its last years, supported the strengthening of women's bodies to prove their intention to make China competitive from an evolutionist side: the Authorized Imperial Act of Girls Schools and the Authorized Imperial Act of Women's Normal Colleges which made Physical Education not only available but also compulsory to girls.<sup>68</sup>

## **2.5 Outside missionary schools**

### **2.5.1 Liang Qichao, Yan Fu and the Boxer Rebellion**

The emphasis that missionaries put on the values of sportsmanship and physical strength were not present in public schools that the Qing government established. The reformed educational system was born under the influence of many scholars looking for a harmonic synthesis between Western knowledge and Confucian/Imperial tradition, by whom they were legitimized. Among them, Liang Qichao, and Yan Fu especially tried to contain Chinese people's discontent and dissatisfaction towards the Manchu dynasty, accused to be the source of the crisis, by promoting modernizing reforms and calling for a self-strengthening movement in China.

Liang Qichao elaborated the rhetoric of ' big nationalism '. He promoted a modernization of the Chinese empire under the leadership of the emperor, the guarantor of Confucian doctrine, and wanted to enforce collectivism among different Chinese ethnic groups.<sup>69</sup> According to his vision, Western sciences and physical education should be a tool for strengthen and let the empire alive. The self-strengthening doctrine stressed the importance of "*individual bodily strength and physical fitness as the key to national and racial survival.*"<sup>70</sup> Physical Education was meant to create the ' new citizens '. The

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<sup>67</sup> CHENG Ruifu, *Qingmo nüzi tiyu sixiang de xingcheng (1894-1911) - yi ziqiang baozhong sixiang wei zhongxin zhi tantao* [The formation of late Qing philosophies of women's physical fitness (1894-1911): A study undertaken from the perspective of self-strengthening and racial-preservation thought], Guoli Taiwan shifan daxue tiyu yanjiusuo, Taipei. Found in MORRIS, *Cultivate the Body for China...*, op. cit., pp. 60-61.

<sup>68</sup> FAN, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 68.

<sup>69</sup> LU, Zhouxiang, FAN, Hong, "Celestial Empire to Nation State: Sport and the Origins of Chinese Nationalism (1840-1927)," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 27, 3, 2010, pp. 482-483.

<sup>70</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 50.

contribution of Liang Qichao to Chinese reformation was drastically reshaped as he was exiled by Empress Dowager Cixi, and he went to Japan in 1898.

As regards Yan Fu, he was in line with Liang Qichao's view of modernizing China and maintaining the empire alive. He was a prolific translator of Western authors and he introduced Darwin's "The Origins of Species" and Spencer's social ideas in China. His approach to Chinese crises was quite pragmatist and he supported the empire because he was convinced that Chinese were not ready and sufficiently educated to sustain a democratic regime. His deep knowledge of the struggle-for-survival theories is the reason why his opportunistic attitude, according to which, people's wealth was not an aim in itself, but it was a way to make a nation stronger and in a world where just the fittest can survive. In this struggle, the best weapons are education and physical strength. He suggested Germany as a model to follow because it managed to become a great power very quickly, enhancing the education of its citizens.<sup>71</sup> Yan Fu's claim for strengthening the Chinese nation has to be read in an evolutive perspective. In his view, the welfare of a nation was not an end but a means to survive in the struggle between different nations.<sup>72</sup> In introducing physical education, he wanted to develop Chinese stamina, bravery and strength. He sustained a militaristic, austere physical education, aimed to make Chinese people "*withstand the most intense winters and the fierce summers, wind, rain, hunger and famine, and not even think anything of it.*"<sup>73</sup>

Liang Qichao's and Yan Fu's efforts were concentrated in the period called One Hundred Days Reform, under the leadership of the Emperor Guangxu, in 1898. Empress Dowager Cixi's *coup d'état* stopped the reforms and the internal policy was characterized by a strong refusal of anything from the West. In the countryside, the terrible living conditions led to a growing discontent towards the Manchu imperial family and towards foreigners. These sentiments gave rise to the Boxer Movement that rejected all Western technologies. It consisted of a series of riots organized by rural lower classes. At that time, several martial art societies and fist clubs (*Quanchang*) appeared<sup>74</sup>. They worked as centers for the recruitment and the training of peasants' militias. The revolt failed because of lacking organization and of the great disparities of army forces. It was clear that modernization was mandatory and that traditional Chinese foreign policy was no longer feasible, since the power relations were overturned. Those events fostered the "sick man of Asia" discourse. During the uprisings,

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<sup>71</sup> Benjamin, SCHWARTZ, *In Search of Wealth and Power: Yen Fu and the West*, New York, Evanston and London, Harper & Row, 1969, p. 127.

<sup>72</sup> Ivi, pp. 22-40.

<sup>73</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 58.

<sup>74</sup> LU, FAN, "Celestial Empire to Nation State..." op. cit., p. 486.

churches were destroyed and many missionaries were killed in Baoding and in Taiyuan<sup>75</sup>. Foreign witnesses of the massacres reported the events stressing “Chinese Brutality” to legitimize their civilizing presence. Missionaries showed all their disdain for the spread of violence, describing the pitiful martyrdom of ‘ delicate Western women ’ publicly killed by “*blood-thirsty men, exulting in the possession of defenseless women.*”<sup>76</sup> After the defeat of the movement, Protestant missions became more and more attractive for Chinese audience, as a channel of modern knowledge. It gave to missionaries the opportunity of humiliating Chinese people through public ceremonies. There, not only converted Chinese but also gentry members were forced to attend in order to make them recognize their past errors and, in missionaries’ view, to ‘ lose their face ’<sup>77</sup>. The missionaries’ denunciations of the Boxers’ crimes represented Chinese people in a unique way, completely opposed to the theories of the sick man of Asia. Both the condemnation of violence and their effort to enforce Chinese’ fragile bodies, were ways to emphasize their redeeming cultural battle against ignorance and superstition.

By the 1910s, Asia and Africa were battlefields where European states and (with a little delay) Japan were physically occupying territories and fighting for the conquest of new colonies and protectorates, according to the Imperialist doctrine. Qing authorities were almost impotent. In Chinese schools, Physical Education consisted of individual exercises and calisthenics, in mechanical marching without any recreational intent. The goal was just to strength themselves, and in a wider perspective, the whole nation. Students were not involved in public competitions, including sports. Wang Yaodong attended middle school between 1916 and 1918, and reported: “*the only tiyu teacher in the school had graduated from a military school. He knew nothing about ball games and athletics...I never saw a basketball or volleyball in the school.*”<sup>78</sup>

Anglo-American team games were a reflection of foreign cultures and they answered to the needs of missionaries rather than the ones of Chinese population. Muscular Christianity concept about physical strength had little to do with war craft, on the contrary it was way to show the perfection of God’s creation. To preserve one’s body healthy and strong was a sort

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<sup>75</sup> James, L. HEVIA, “Leaving a Brand on China: Missionary Discourse in the Wake of the Boxer Movement,” *Modern China*, 18, 3, 1992, p. 304.

<sup>76</sup> Ivi, p. 309. The author quotes from Arthur BROWN, *New Forces in Old China: An Unwelcome But Inevitable Awakening*, New York, Fleming H. Revell, 1904, p. 206.

<sup>77</sup> Ivi, pp. 314-319.

<sup>78</sup> WANG Yaodong, “Sport in the Middle School,” quotation found in: LU Zhouxiang, FAN Hong, “From Celestial Empire to Nation State: Sport and the Origins of Chinese Nationalism (1840-1927)” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 27, 3, 2010, pp. 494-495.

of gratitude and worship. Allen Guttmann makes notice that all team sports derived from religious rituals. Ancient sports were performed in public, they were competitive but in a different way. The winner was the chosen one by the divinity or the one who showed the most his devotion. This is the reason why in missionary schools team games, performed outdoors were the favorite ones. We will see in the next chapter the involvement of missionaries in organizing public sporting events that, beside initial diffidence, they were welcome and appreciated but, again, the target was very limited. From the 1900 onwards, Chinese attending missionaries' schools were part of the rich, forming middle class, more and more similar to Western bourgeoisie than to the majority of their fellow countrymen. Between the end of the 1910s and the 1930s, this new business oriented and well-educated élite had the great advantage to follow the stream of the urban fashion behavioral code: going to the cinema, wearing Western clothes, living in Western-like building, practicing and enjoying sports and athletics events.

### **2.5.2 The end of the Empire and Early Republican years**

Sharp differences between physical education of the public schools curricula and the one taught in missionaries schools and in Western schools attended by Chinese students abroad, generated an intense debate in the Early Republic years among Chinese scholars on which one should be the best to promote. There were approximately the pro-military drill supporters and the pro-western sports ones. Military drill was considered the best system to be adopted in schools, approximately up to the mid-1910s.<sup>79</sup>

The father of the Republic Sun Yat-sen supported military drill and he was convinced that people were living “ *in an age of competition.*”<sup>80</sup> At the turning of the century, he called for ‘ small nationalism ’ and organized a strong anti-Manchu campaign through secret societies which will create the famous Chinese United League (*Tongmenghui* 同盟会), in 1905.<sup>81</sup> He gained a lot of consents and his political activity spread although censorship and his exile. Some of his supporters were involved in educational activities and the schools became centres for the recruitment of anti-Manchu nationalist forces. Ironically, the schools and academies created with Qing reformation of the educational system by Qing ministers, trained the militias who will overthrow the dynasty, like the Shangyu Academy and the Hu Academy. In these schools, Physical Education consisted of spear drill and free-standing exercises.

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<sup>79</sup> LU, FAN, *From Celestial Empire to Nation State...*, op. cit., p. 496.

<sup>80</sup> Ivi, p. 493.

<sup>81</sup> Ivi, pp.487-488.

Physical educators were hired from military schools of China and Japan. Many members of the staff and the students of such schools joined the battle of the Shanghai Arms Office and in the battle of Jiangnan Arsenal, in 1911.<sup>82</sup> Sport societies were employed to hide Anti-Manchu secret societies and they were centres of Nationalist propaganda and places to train volunteers. Differently from the Boxer movement, these sport societies were mainly in cities and popular among middle class members. Even if Sun Yat-Sen propaganda was deeply anti-foreigners, by the early 1910s, the adoption of Western knowledge and technology were commonly accepted, as the boxer movement experienced demonstrated. Nationalist sport societies abandoned *wushu* techniques, and totally dedicated to Western gymnastics training and team sports. Huang Xing, a leading nationalist established two baseball teams, in 1903 and in 1905 that worked as a channel for anti-Manchu ideas in the area of Changsha.<sup>83</sup> Qiu Jin, one of the heroine of the Nationalist Movement, was a physical educator in Minde and Hunyang girls' schools in Nanxun and then in the Datong Normal College. Her classes consisted of fencing and riding lessons, military training and athletics.<sup>84</sup> She was executed by authorities because of her revolutionary activities, in 1907. After the 1911 revolution, Huang Xing became the Republic of China's first commander-in-chief of land forces and continued supporting the spread of physical education among Chinese people.<sup>85</sup>

Initially, the Republic adopted the same educational system of the Qing dynasty. In 1919, the Minister of Education published "The Work Plan for the Promotion of Sport" promoting a campaign focused on the importance of mass sport. Local governments were asked to provide sports facilities, open school playgrounds and offer courses.<sup>86</sup>

A young and unknown Mao Zedong took part in the debate on physical education publishing an article titled "On Physical Education and Exercise" (*Tiyu zhi yaniju* 体育之研究) on the journal New Youth (*Xin qingnian*, 新青年), in 1917.<sup>87</sup> In my opinion, this article represented an intermediate point in the debate on the systems of physical education. Even if evoking a sort of struggle for existence, it does not have the dramatic pathos of previous late-Qing essays and considers the involvement of pleasure in doing exercises:

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<sup>82</sup> Ivi, pp. 490-491.

<sup>83</sup> Ivi, p. 489.

<sup>84</sup> FAN Hong, J.A. MANGAN, "A Martyr for Modernity: Qiu Jin - Feminist, Warrior and Revolutionary," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 18, 1, 2001, pp. 41-43.

<sup>85</sup> LU, FAN, "From Celestial Empire to Nation State...", op. cit., p. 493.

<sup>86</sup> Ivi, p. 496.

<sup>87</sup> FAN, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 131.

*Participation in frequent exercise is very important. Regularity is the essence...First, regularity produce interest ...Once should exercise twice a day: after rising in the morning and before going to bed in the evening... A regular programme of thirty minutes per day is necessary. Second, regularity produces pleasure from his performances, experience improvement and fell an inner urge to maintain the regime. In short, interest motivates people. It is the beginning of exercise. Pleasure pleases people. It is the result of exercise...In conclusion there are three rules of exercise: the first is consistency, the second is concentration and the third is severity of the programme if a powerful physique is to be developed.<sup>88</sup>*

Against this emphasis on military drill in public schools, we found the leading figure of Xu Yibing, the founder of the first Chinese journal dedicated to physical education: “Physical Education World” (体育界 *Tiyujie*), founded in 1909.<sup>89</sup> Xu Yibing was a Tongmenghui member and he shared nationalist ideas. A strong national pride can be deduced in an article appeared on his journal about the history of physical education. In author’s opinion, it is a product of ancient Chinese civilization. Beside the legitimacy, it was the first history of physical education written in China.<sup>90</sup> For a witness-to-the crisis intellectual, ‘the glorious Past’ is a common and easy refuge. Xu Yibing believed that at certain stage of their history, Chinese people stopped practicing physical exercises and this is the reason of their fragility. Surprisingly, he did not call for a return to traditional sports, as chariot driving, but he insisted on the adoption of medical and based-on-science exercises<sup>91</sup> and, for this purpose he published essays about corrective calisthenics and on suitable-for-girl gymnastics.<sup>92</sup> He strongly denounced the lack of preparation in teachers and their background in the army. He described them like an “immoral soldier coming right out of the barracks and in one swoop becoming a teacher, ineffective and not worth a damn. These are people that do not even know what a professor is or where a school is, excessive drinkers and mad gamblers, who love to fight like wolves, and whom nothing would be below.”<sup>93</sup> In Xu Yibing’s view, the

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<sup>88</sup> Article found in: FAN, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 317. Translated by Fan Hong.

<sup>89</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 95.

<sup>90</sup> Ivi, p. 96.

<sup>91</sup> LU, FAN, “*From Celestial Empire to Nation State...*,” op. cit., p. 496.

<sup>92</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>93</sup> Tony HWANG and Grant JARVIE, “Sport, Nationalism and the Early Chinese Republic 1912-1927,” *The Sports Historian*, 21, 2, p. 8. Quotation taken from the *Physical Culture Weekly Special Edition*, January 1920.

presence of soldiers fostered the attention on military drill, completely inadequate to raise children because “*it’s really just another kind of barbarism.*”<sup>94</sup>

In 1919, the National Education Conference saw the will to reform the Republican Educational system starting from Physical Education. After ten years of Republic, the government chose to reduce military drill because “*no longer suits modern education.*”<sup>95</sup> As a result, physical education classes included both modern sports and military calisthenics and the new solution was defined a ‘ double-track system.’<sup>96</sup> This change must be read in a much broader context than the simple debate discussed on physical culture journal by educationists and intellectuals. It was the consequence of the spread of movements calling for democracy and justice, above all the May Fourth Movement. The first decade of the republic was so confused and unstable to make clear that internal order and a peace-oriented foreign policy were far to be reached, but at least in the cities and among students (the core component of the May Fourth Movement) a growing, wealthy, Western-like middle class was in the condition to accept the current *status quo* and initiate a *détente*. Pro-militaristic-physical-education intellectuals as Jia Fengzhen, Cai Yuanpei and Huang Xing rethought their position.<sup>97</sup> The existence of this double-track system lasted just few years. In 1922, as the banishment of military drill progressively became a firm request, the Government shaped again Physical Education programme, adopting the Renwu Educational system who abolished militarism. Physical education classes focused on athletics, gymnastics, ball games and plays.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>94</sup> LU, FAN, “*From Celestial Empire to Nation State...*,” *op. cit.*, p. 496.

<sup>95</sup> Ivi, p. 497.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>97</sup> Ivi, pp. 497-498.

<sup>98</sup> Ivi, p. 498.

## CHAPTER THREE. MISSIONARIES AND PUBLIC EVENTS

### 3.1 Sport events

Allen Guttmann listened many elements that made baseball the national game of the United States. Besides some practical reasons, like the cheapness of the equipment, he recognized some elements directly connected with American culture and he noted that baseball satisfied some particular needs inside the American society of the nineteenth century. It was portrayed as something peculiarly American. Its development paralleled the spreading of railways lines and the diffusion of radio broadcasting; these new technologies made this sport a spectacle and a mass product. People enjoyed not only the direct participation in baseball matches but also to attend at them and, to read and comment on new sport idols. As an outdoor sport, it was linked with stereotyped natural elements, like fresh air, sun, grass etc. This sport conquered American hearts because of “*psychological factors as hero worship or the occasion for nostalgia.*”<sup>1</sup> Devotional and nostalgic emotions were due to the rapid modernization that was occurring at that time. The ‘nostalgia’ was towards a past, idyllic, more natural lifestyle. The spectators mainly formed the urban middle class and baseball should have reminded them of their youth and their college days.<sup>2</sup> The ‘folk heroes,’ as defined by Guttmann, were the new sport idols and their folk element derives from the association with the natural connotation of outdoor sports, and the term hero designed particularly talented players, that became famous at that time, providing the audience with great athletic performances. This introduction on baseball success in the United States is to underline the relationship between sporting practicing, people taste and social values.

Each society develops games and sporting practice according to its needs and to its beliefs, that why the missionary Hugh A. Moon, in 1912 noticed that:

*aside from the forms of exercise that accompanied war and the chase, the Chinese had few outdoor sports and none that could be classed with Western ‘athletics.’ The flying of the kite, or a promenade with a singing bird were far more stately and suited to a studious young man, -as was angling, the eternal pursuit of the philosopher.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> Allen GUTTMANN, *From Ritual to Record. The Nature of Modern Sport*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1978, p. 98.

<sup>2</sup> Ivi, p. 99.

<sup>3</sup> Hugh A. MOON, “Physical training in China,” in Rev. G. H. Bondfield (edited by), *China Mission Year Book*, Shanghai, Christian Literature Society for China, 1912, p. 356. Available online: <http://ia700506.us.archive.org/23/items/chinamissionyear03unknuoft/chinamissionyear03unknuoft.pdf>

Traditional Chinese society didn't need such entertainments. The process of absorption was firstly due to missionaries' impositions but after sport could penetrate society because of internal changes in the social hierarchy and of innovations in physical culture. The birth of the middle class in China and the growing specialization of the athletes and bureaucratization of sports allowed the interest towards competitive games to last until today. Pierre Bourdieu explained us why modern sport are intrinsically related to the middle class. He considered two of the characteristic of modern sports as the base of this link: bureaucratization and specification of roles. Throughout the nineteenth century, many games evolved in sports. A typical example is baseball, whose regulation is the result of the evolution of many simple bat, base and ball games, between 1840 and 1870.<sup>4</sup> Others were invented by physical educator as basketball and volleyball, respectively by James Naismith at the Y.M.C.A.'s training facilities in Springfield, Massachusetts on December 21, 1891, and by the Y.M.C.A. physical director William G. Morgan, in 1895.<sup>5</sup> Fixed rules made sports a sort of international law code, valid and understandable all over the world and they could guarantee equality between participants. Spectators of different cultures found in sport a common ground, sharing the same spectacle. As regards the specialization of roles, it is a peculiarity of modern sports and it is an effort of rationalization of time and abilities. The roles followed physical and vocational attitudes. Even if in Chinese intercollegiate games, this process is only in its embryonic form, there we can see the origins of sport professionalism and the abandoning of amateurism, that according to Bourdieu:

*The theory of amateurism is in fact one dimension of an aristocratic philosophy of sport as a disinterested practice, a finality without an end, analogous to artistic practice, but even more suitable than art [...] for affirming the mainly virtues of future leaders: sport is conceived as a training in courage and manliness, 'forming the character' and inculcating the 'will to win' which is the mark of the true leader, but a will to win within the rules. This is 'fair play,' conceived as an aristocratic disposition utterly opposed to the plebeian pursuit of victory at all costs. What is at stake, it seems to me, in this debate (which goes far beyond sport), is a definition of bourgeois education which contrasts with the petty bourgeois academic definition: it is 'energy,' 'courage,' 'willpower,' the virtues of leaders (military or industrial), and perhaps*

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<sup>4</sup> Robert A. MECHIKOFF, Steven G. ESTES, *A History and Philosophy of Sport and Physical Education: From Ancient Civilizations to the Modern World*, Boston, McGraw-Hill, 1998, p. 240.

<sup>5</sup> GUTTMANN, *From Ritual to Record...*, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

*above all personal initiative, (private) enterprise, as opposed to knowledge, erudition, scholastic submissiveness [...].*<sup>6</sup>

We must bear in mind that the first competitions in China were organized inside missionaries' schools because they were part of an educational program. As such schools gained prestige, missionaries were in the position of institute a 'regime of truth.' Michel Foucault described as certain modern institutions (among them, schools) are aimed to create 'docile bodies' that can satisfied criterion of rationality of efficiency, productivity and normalization.<sup>7</sup> Sport competitions are a practical, concrete manifestation of the realization of this regime and in missionaries' view, were a sort of moral imperative because "*If the young men and young women of China are to be freed from the moral torpor, and plague-ridden miasma in which they live, their blood must be sent coursing through their veins by good sharp physical exercise.*"<sup>8</sup> Considering visibility, physical education and sport were more powerful than the learning of English or science as these subjects would have produced results outside local communities or in the future working life. They were an example of the 'productivity of power,' as they are at the basis of new needs and tastes shared by the forming urban middle class.

Chinese bourgeoisie even if in its forming stages, maintained its own peculiarities in approaching sports. In their vision, sport was directly connected to modernity. It was a foreign product and, as a matter of fact, it was necessarily perceived as something new and exotic. Rich Chinese living abroad satisfied their nostalgic sentiment, participating in martial art events, but in mainland China, ancient practices were living a period of decline and misconception.<sup>9</sup> Contrary to American people, the natural and folk element did not appeal Chinese audience. In that years, Chinese middle class was aware of the existing weakness, not only in the international arena but also inside their border lines. Confucian tradition was considered the source of the crisis and many intellectuals called for reforms. Nostalgia for a decadent and oppressive past sounded illogic. Chinese traditional society was based on agriculture and the largest majority of the population lived in a rural context. Only a small percentage lived in the urban areas and they were mostly merchants, businessmen and officials. Chinese people living in the concessions were particularly exposed to the presence

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<sup>6</sup> Pierre BOURDIEU, "Sport and Social Class," in Chandra MUKERJI and Michael SCHUDSON (edited by), *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*, Berkley, University of California Press, 1991, p. 360.

<sup>7</sup> See: Chris BARKER, *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*, London, Sage, 2000, pp. 102-103.

<sup>8</sup> MOON, "*Physical training in China...*," op. cit., p. 360.

<sup>9</sup> See: Andrew, D., MORRIS, "Native Songs and Dances: Southeast Asia in a Greater Chinese Sporting Community, 1920-48," *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, 31, 1, 2000.

of the Western people and they became familiar with Western technologies, architecture, music and art. They were the first who enjoyed cinema. In the most important cities, lights were installed, and particularly Shanghai and Tianjin became more and more similar to Western metropolis, with tree-lined boulevards, electric tramways and tall buildings.<sup>10</sup> The construction of playfields was a sort demonstration of control over nature; people could enjoy some *en plain air* hours but in a space reconverted and organized by men. Sport facilities proved the evolving of the industrial sector in China and its internationalization. Young athletes were antithetic to the sick man of Asia discourse not only because they were physically stronger, but above all, because the sick man of Asian was perceived as a product of the Confucian society created by the Manchu oppressors.

The merchant class, after centuries of poor consideration due to Confucian vision, experienced a period of wealth thanks to new trade opportunities. At that time, the Chinese industrial class was at its very beginning, it was composed of several rich Chinese entrepreneurs educated abroad, and financed by foreigner companies. On the contrary, officials and scholars were not prepared to react properly to the tremendous politic and economic changes that affected the empire system. They progressively lost their prestige and leadership. The new dynamic business class was a product of the exposition to Western lifestyle, and their enthusiasm for sport events has to be understood as something acquired from this contact. Adapting Bourdieu's statement to Chinese society, we can see that the new athletes represent also a new model diametrically opposite to the old stereotype of the Confucian intellectual, who lived separated from society and totally devoted to art, and nature contemplation, using the words of Zhou Zuoren relegated in an '*ivory tower*.'

As long as the first public events took place in China, athletes manifested their aversion towards the ruling dynasty. A very famous episode, related to the First National Games, held in Nanjing in 1910, is the queue-cutting demonstration of an athlete from Tianjin, Sun Baoqing.<sup>11</sup> Several historians described this events, but the interpretations are different. Shirley Garrett states:

[...] *one could almost chart the temper of the young by the fate of the queue, that symbol of Chinese subservience to Manchu rule. In 1900, when the scholar Chang Ping-lin (Zhang Binglin) cut off his queue before*

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<sup>10</sup> Shirley S., GARRETT *Social Reformers in Urban China: the Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1970, pp. 72-73.

<sup>11</sup> My sources are contradictory. Fan Hong uses the name Sun Baoqing, Andrew Morris refers to him with the name of Sun Baoxin, which is not the corresponding Wade- Giles transcription. Morris and Fan Hong identify him as a high-jumper, but Garrett says he is a pole-vaulter.

*a public meeting, the gesture was revolutionary and dangerous. Ten years later, queue cutting demonstrations were a gala feature of Shanghai political life, and for many young people the gesture was no longer political but merely a normal social adaptation to practical needs. In an athletic meet held as part of the Nanking (Nanjing) Industrial Exposition of 1910, for instance, a pole-vaulter lost his final jump because his flying queue misplaced the bar, and that night he simply chopped it off. Thus far had China moved in ten years.<sup>12</sup>*

Andrew Morris introduces this events in a more enthusiastic way, but the queue cutting is presented as a choice to gain better result and not as a revolutionary act in itself:

*[...] eight athletes on the North China team felt so liberated by their upcoming participation in this national meet that they cut off their queues completely on their way to the capital of the fallen Ming Dynasty, Nanjing!*  
*And then there was Sun Baoxin of Tianjin a standout student (fourth in his Putong Academy class) and, as the holder of six North China athletic records, one of the finest athletes in all of China. But "on account of opposition from his family," Sun could not convince himself to join his dangerously open-minded teammates in liberating his head and mind of this symbol of Manchu rule. This hesitation would cost Sun days later. On the first day of the meet, after finishing a close second place in the shotput competition Sun faced tough challengers from Shanghai and Nanjing in the high jump competition. When it came his turn, tragedy struck. Sun's strenuous jump was enough to clear the bar, but his long swinging queue knocked the bat to the ground. Encouraged by a meet official who barked at the disappointed Sun, "Cut it off at once!" Sun took the drastic step that he had once feared. Now with victory and national fame on the line, Sun "hacked his queue off that night, with the declaration that the next day he would jump higher than anyone ever jumped before in China. He made good on his boast, setting the excellent mark for future competitors of 5 ft. 5 ¾ in." Buoyed by this newfound manhood and desire, Sun went on to win seven medals for North China and for the Tianjin YMCA, and to make his name as a true pioneer of Chinese masculinity and modernity. After all, there could be few finer symbols of the drive, the initiative, and the personal and national tensions*

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<sup>12</sup> GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China...*, op. cit., p. 73.

*of the new sports physical culture than Sun's incredible experiences in Nanjing.*<sup>13</sup>

Fan Hong and Tan Hua saw in Sun's gesture the prelude to the fall of the empire.

*An amusing sidelight to this national meeting, which nicely illustrates the conflict between modern Western culture and traditional Chinese culture in China in those years, is offered by the case of Sun Baoqing, a high-jumper from Tianjin. Sun had performed poorly in the opening round, because his long queue (pigtail) constantly knocked the bar off its stands. He was so angry that the same evening, without a second thought, he cut off his long queue – the source of his identity, according to Manchu law. He came back the next day to become high-jump champion of China. His action was more than a symbolic gesture. Involvement in Western physical activities was the mere tip of a revolutionary iceberg – large, powerful and inexorable.*<sup>14</sup>

It is difficult to determine which is the correct meaning of Sun's gesture and his real intentions. I do not want to link this event to missionaries' pressures because officially they maintained a neutral position toward Chinese internal affairs. What is interesting is the choice of an athletic meeting as an occasion and the fact that the audience would have been mainly from the urban middle class, the new main actor in the political scene. To be honest, different categories of Chinese had abandoned their queues years before, for different reasons; Chinese emigrants living abroad renounced to the queue and to their traditional clothes, army members progressively preferred short-haired soldiers and western-like uniforms and this trend became more and more common after the death of Empress Cixi, in 1908 and gained the supports of Chinese diplomats.<sup>15</sup> In the following passages, I will analyze the first largest sporting events, stressing the fact that they were only apparently for "sport's sake."

As regards the nostalgic element, that may have moved the audience with the passing of generations and the increasing of ex-students from missionaries' schools. Data clearly show that in Southern China, the student population of missionaries' schools was largely composed of merchants' sons. In the North, particularly in the Shandong province, students came from well-to-do families, but the percentage of businessmen's sons was lower as the

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<sup>13</sup> Andrew D., MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body: A History of Physical Culture in Republican China*, PhD dissertation, University of California, San Diego 1998, pp. 106-107.

<sup>14</sup> FAN Hong, TAN Hua, "Sport in China: Conflict between Tradition and Modernity, 1840s to 1930s," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 19, 2-3, 2002, p. 196.

<sup>15</sup> Michael R. GODLEY, "The End of the Queue: Hair as Symbol in Chinese History," in *East Asian History*, 8, December 1994, pp. 65-70.

Mandarin language was the most used one in teaching. Because of tuition fees and of the new subject knowledge, boys coming from the upper middle class grew sharply.<sup>16</sup> It must also be considered as an aggregating factor.

A hard question to answer is how long Chinese people took to assimilate and get used to Western sports, but I have no doubts that, whether it had begun as an imposition, after it did penetrate Chinese society because it matched the values of the new social order and they were considered as a vehicle for modernity. The answer depends on several factors and still we cannot be completely sure of the neutrality of the authors, as we have not a lot of data and most of them are missionaries' correspondence and reports, aimed to highlight good results.

Chinese physical education developed in different stages. However, many times these stages overlapped and coexisted, forming new mainstream trends, as we can read in this passage:

就内容而言, 先是兵式体操、普通体操, 而后是田径、球类等活  
动: 就地区而言, 先是沿海城市, 而后是内地城市; 就范围而言, 先是  
军队、教会学校, 而后是一般学堂, 一再向社会渗透。<sup>17</sup>

*As regards the form, military drill and common calisthenics were the first to develop, and then track and field and ball sports; concerning the areas, (physical education) firstly widespread in the cities along the coast and after in the interior ones; considering of the scope, (it was firstly used) in the armies and in missionaries schools, then in public schools, and as the passing of the years, it penetrated society.*

In the following passage, Zheng Zhilin and Zhao Shanxing describe a track and field race, in a Tianjin missionaries' school held in the twenty-third year of the reign of Guangxu (1897) and even if the period they are talking was just the beginning of introduction of sports, in the conclusion of the article, they state :

进行的方法和规则既具体亦简单, 但形式生动活泼, 既有竞争性, 亦有  
娱乐趣味性。<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Jessie Gregory LUTZ, *China and the Christian Colleges, 1850-1950*, Ithaca and London, Cornell University Press, pp. 167-169.

<sup>17</sup> ZHENG Zhilin 郑志林, ZHAO Shanxing 赵善性, “Jiushi nian qian de yi ci tianjingsai jishi” 九十年前的一次田径赛纪实 (Records of a track meet held ninety years ago), *Tiyu wenshi* 45, 1990, p. 43.

*At that time, the methods and the regulations were concrete and simple, and the interest was deep, related to competitiveness and entertainment.*

In their vision, it seems that new values were already accepted. Considering other references, one can argue that this statement is too optimistic. Probably, Chinese society employed more time to fully appreciate these new entertainments.

Another factor directly related with sport and sport events is the birth of capitalism in China. It is not clear whether the spread of sport was boosted by sponsorship or once sporting events gained a growing space in everyday urban life, then advertising campaigns got involved in events related with competitions. For sure, around the 1920s, we can see that the bound between sport events and advertisement was wholly realized as we can read in this passage:

*The Hankou YMCA Tiyu Department funded the official publication of the Third National Games of 1924 with the help of 28 advertisements, including 14 for banks and other ads for Shell Oil, Socony, Sincere Company Snow Cream, Girl Brand Beverages, and the Hankou Commercial Press. Sports were used to sell products, like in the Quaker Rolled White Oats and featuring a muscular, tussle-haired Chinese soccer player, ball at his feet and clutching a trophy with Quaker's Chinese brand name inscribed on the cup.<sup>19</sup>*

In a record of 1915, there is a mention about the Commercial Press, one of the more important publishing company in China that was “*the first business organization to supply sporting goods, athletic facilities, sports rule books, and other sports books.*”<sup>20</sup> Not surprisingly, one of the most important people working in this company was at the same time a member of the YMCA of Shanghai.<sup>21</sup> It published many magazines with a very precise target: the young people of the urban middle class, in other words, those who studied and practices sport in missionary schools and their families. Also the names of such magazines were clear in defining their readers: *The Students' Magazine, The Ladies' Journal, Youth Magazine, English weekly, Science Magazine.*<sup>22</sup> There were also newspaper specifically about

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<sup>18</sup> Ivi, p. 44.

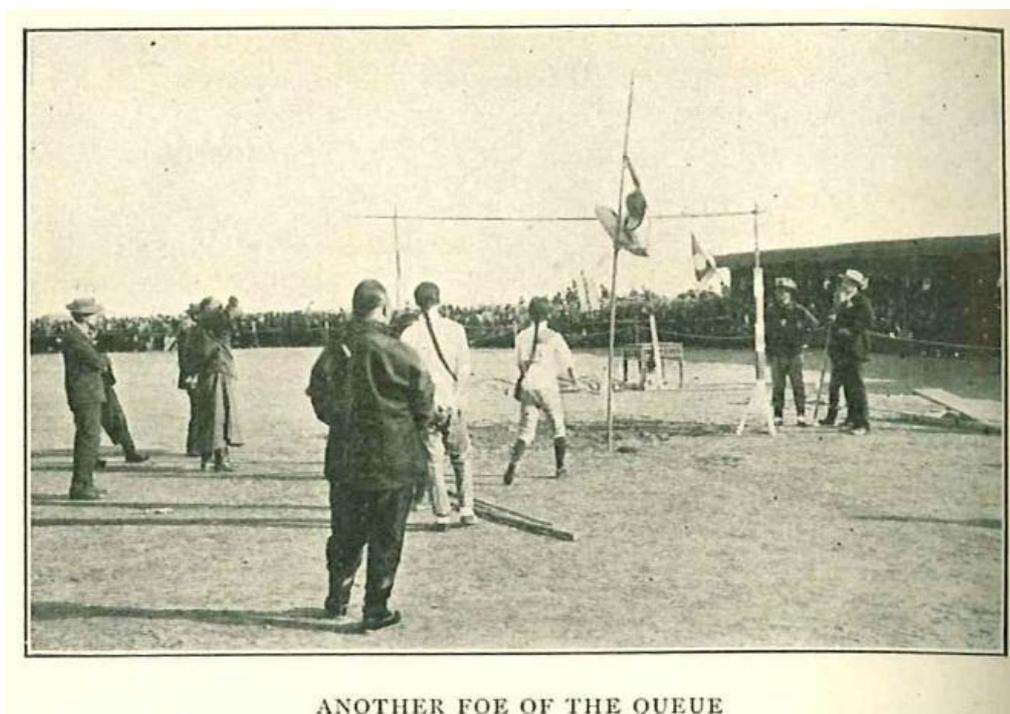
<sup>19</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 225.

<sup>20</sup> WU Chih-Kang, *The Influence of the YMCA on the Development of Physical Education in China*, PhD dissertation, University of Michigan, 1956, p. 140.

<sup>21</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>22</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 225.

physical education, as the *Physical Education Quarterly* of Nanjing that was particularly filled with advertisements.<sup>23</sup> As we can see, there was a new community raised around playfields, sharing similar experiences and values, and consequently desiring and consuming the same goods. Sport events became a new form of entertainments for this new social class that was generally formed by wealthy people but not homogeneous from the point of view of the incomes. As today, the main sport events were visible through tickets, whose prices varied according to the position and there were also spots reserved for authorities and journalists. In the 1921 Far Eastern Games, held in Shanghai, there were five different kinds of tickets to purchase in advance in different shops spread along the city, and in such events it was common to have “*boy Scouts and police had to apprehend several more ticketless fans attempting to break down the fence to get into the game.*”<sup>24</sup>



Picture 1: photo of the pole vault competition accompanying an article by YMCA physical director Max Exner in "Foreign Mail," March-April 1911. Found in: Kautz Family, YMCA. <https://www.lib.umn.edu/apps/ymca/reachgold/>

### 3.2 First sport meetings

We have just a few data concerning the first sport events in colleges and we do not clearly know which one was the first. The common word used for large-scale meet was 运动

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<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>24</sup> Ivi, p. 224.

会 *yundonghui*, taken from the Japanese *undokai*,<sup>25</sup> and by 1905, they were considered a quite common event in the social life of urban communities. They were characterized by an audience supporting one team or one athlete and they were based on competition and on the idea of some shared elements that could produce the sense of “community” both among players and audience, for example the provenience from same school, the same nationality or the same city. Many times there was a final ceremony where the winners received a prize. According to Wu Wenzhong, the first modern sporting competition in China was at St. John’s University in Shanghai and it was organized by S. E. Smalley in 1890,<sup>26</sup> but other scholars find in an archive of a missionary school in Tianjin a report about a track and field competition that dates back to 1897.<sup>27</sup> The first athletic meeting organized by a Y.M.C.A. association was in 1902. It was an athletic meeting promoted by Robert Gailey in the Austrian concession in Tianjin and it became an annual event. The second meeting was arranged by C.H. Robertson. In these first events, there were mainly competitors of the same school, with just some guest competitors but they can be seen as the first effort to organize intercollegiate championships.<sup>28</sup> According to Jessie Lutz, in 1904 there was the first intercollegiate athletic meet in North China between the University of Beijing and the North China Union College.<sup>29</sup>

As regards ball games, Chih-Kang Wu argued that soccer and tennis were present in China before 1895 and they were introduced by European merchants in port cities, in particular by the British residents in Hong Kong.<sup>30</sup> Soon, members of religious associations and missionaries conquered a central role in organizing tournaments and competitions. The Y.M.C.A. of Tianjin opened a soccer club in 1907 and they formed an all-city soccer team, whose trainer was Mr. Robertson a prominent figure in sport promotion at that time<sup>31</sup>. The first organized tennis competitions dates back to 1908, again in the Y.M.C.A. centre in Tianjin and we have records about tennis tournaments between Chinese and Japanese people.<sup>32</sup> Y.M.C.A. committees were the official ‘ importers ’ and the main promoters of basketball and baseball. Temporally speaking, the first was basketball that arrived in China around 1896 after five from its invention by (as previously mentioned) an American Y.M.C.A. member. The first article concerning basketball was written in January 1896 in the *Tientsin*

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<sup>25</sup> Ivi, p. 92.

<sup>26</sup> Ivi., pp. 76-77.

<sup>27</sup> ZHENG, ZHAO, “Jiushi nian qian...” op. cit., p. 43.

<sup>28</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 97.

<sup>29</sup> LUTZ, *China and the Christian Colleges...*, op. cit., p. 187.

<sup>30</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 92

<sup>31</sup> Ivi, p. 93.

<sup>32</sup> Ivi, p. 94

*Bulletin* published by the Tianjin Y.M.C.A.<sup>33</sup> Baseball was the second sport imported from the USA, and it arrived firstly in Beijing in 1907 after have conquered Japan where “*in every corner lot over there, and behind every high board fence it to be found a boy with a ball or a bat*”.<sup>34</sup> American army and navy YMCA living in Beijing were the first who spread baseball in China. First baseball matches hold in Beijing where played between the American community but they gained the interest of Chinese students.<sup>35</sup> Differently, Fan Hong boosts another theory about the introduction of baseball in China. According to her vision, it arrived in China thanks to Chinese returned students from Yale University in 1887.<sup>36</sup>

Missionaries (and above all, Y.M.C.A.) had a great role also in promoting athletic disciplines, in particular track and field. The first athletic meet of Tianjin in 1902 was so successful that generate other similar annual events. Among them, a very remarkable one was the meet held on 19 October 1907, it means the Fifth Annual Meet of Tianjin organized by the Y.M.C.A. We have a clear and very detailed report<sup>37</sup> about the schedule, the rules, the sponsors of the events (both Chinese and foreigners) and the closing ceremony. The closing speech was held in English, with an interpreter, who directly translated in Chinese for the audience. During the ceremony, there were musicians, probably playing western music as the one mentioned in the article were all Westerns and there are references to a violin and to a mandolin. All these details make us understand that not many efforts were made to adapt the ceremony to Chinese canons, but it was mainly a copy of sporting activities held in Western schools. Of course, the athletes were Chinese students but the ceremony was conceived for an international and hybrid community as it was in the port cities and in missionary schools. During these ceremonies there were the first documented references to the Olympic games made by a Chinese. Missionaries, particularly the YMCA members, felt the urgency for more developed manifestation that could involved people from every Chinese region. Some of them called also for the involvement in sporting events of international level in order to gain international visibility and consideration. I will analyze the first international sporting events in the section 3.3.

In the late Qing period, we can find also events organized by Chinese, without the involvement of religious or foreign communities, but those manifestations were more focused

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<sup>33</sup> Ivi, pp. 88-89.

<sup>34</sup> *Tientsin Young Men*, VI, 7 (June 14, 1907). Cited in: WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>35</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>36</sup> FAN Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom: The Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China*, London, Frank Cass 1997, p. 263.

<sup>37</sup> The article was published in the journal *Tientsin Young Men*, VI, 19, October 26, 1907. It can be found in WU Chih-Kang, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., pp. 102-104.

on military drill and calisthenics. In November 1905, there was the first Chinese-run athletic meet, organized by the Chengdu Military Academy. It involved forty-one academies in thirty-six events concerning footraces, calisthenics and military drill. They were reserved to men, more precisely to students of the army academies and where not based on the idea of fair play and competitions but they were aimed at demonstrate Chinese government's strength in a period of crisis.<sup>38</sup>

As regards events at the local level, in minor centres, far for the industrialized and rich cities, there were some small championships organized by missionaries for their students. We can find some mentions in the religious communities' reports, but we don't have precise and detailed information as they were very briefly discussed among all the issues related with the community, like the living and preaching conditions. The following passage is an example of these reports on the missionary activity in North China:

*The boy's school, under the two teachers, Mr. Kuan and Mr. Li, has had thirty pupils. The two teachers are enterprising and constantly improving their work. The boys have caught the spirit of athletics from the College and have had some friendly match games of football with a small governments school in the city (Tungchou).<sup>39</sup>*

Another proofs of the existence of small sporting events were some brief mentions in the same report about the built or the need of a particular playground or some superficial comments on the works of physical educators, as in the following lines:

*A tennis ground has been provided. Also a football.<sup>40</sup>*

*We are made happy by the coming of Miss Louise Miske who is teaching an English class and inspiring to more strenuous basket-ball playing while taking full work in the Language School.<sup>41</sup>*

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<sup>38</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., pp. 92-93.

<sup>39</sup> VVAA, *Annual Report of the North China Mission of the American Board for the year 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1905 to April 30<sup>th</sup>, 1906*, Tungchou, the North China Union College Press, 1906, p. 25. Available online: <http://images.library.yale.edu/divinitycontent/dayrep/American%20Board%20of%20Commissioners%20for%20Foreign%20Missions.%20North%20China%20Mission%201905-1906.pdf>

<sup>40</sup> VVAA, *Annual Report of the North China Mission of the American Board for eleven months; from 1<sup>st</sup> May, 1906 to March 31<sup>st</sup>, 1907*, Tungchou, the North China Union College Press, 1907, p. 57. Available online: <http://images.library.yale.edu/divinitycontent/dayrep/American%20Board%20of%20Commissioners%20for%20Foreign%20Missions.%20North%20China%20Mission%201906-1907.pdf>

<sup>41</sup> VVAA, *Annual Report of the North China Mission of the American Board for the year May 1st, 1912 to April 30th, 1913*, p. 83. Available online: <http://images.library.yale.edu/divinitycontent/dayrep/American%20Board%20of%20Commissioners%20for%20Foreign%20Missions.%20North%20China%20Mission%201912-1913.pdf>

### 3.2.1 The First National Games, Nanjing 1910

Scholars agree in considering the first National Games held in Nanjing from 18 to 22 October 1910, the first effort towards a national scale competition. It was held under the Qing empire, just two years before its collapse, in a period when the unity of China was clearly compromised because of the growing power of local authorities, the Qing lack of power and the growing economic and military interferences of the Westerners. The general dissatisfaction and the need for a change were somehow expressed also in that circumstance. Beside the above mentioned queue cut, many elements tell us the empire regime was not longer suitable for China, most of all, for its urban Western-exposed small components that were slowly but progressively trying to achieve the western-like status of “republic.” At that time, figures calling for a change of regime, as Sun Yat-sen, were more and more popular and the intellectuals progressively devoted themselves to the republican adventure. The whole event was organized for a specific audience, even if the formal name of the games was *Quanguo xuexiao qufendui di yi ci tiyu tongmenghui*, 全国学校区分 队第一次体育同盟会, literally “The First National Athletic Alliance of Regional Students Teams.”<sup>42</sup> The audience target was the urban middle class involved in the industrial sector and used to have exchanges with westerners. The event was organized in conjunction with the Nanyang Industrial Exposition held in Nanjing in the same period, that was “*this great celebration of and monument to the construction of a capitalistic economy, a capitalistic labor discipline, and a modern ethos of production and consumption in China, seemed the perfect moment for such a breakthrough in Chinese national strength, modernity, and integration.*”<sup>43</sup> There was a common ticket for both the events. In missionaries’ view, physical education, democracy and industrialization were not only perfectly compatible, but also deeply related. Sport and its connection with flair play can boost society towards a transition from a despotic and underdeveloped society to a democratic capitalistic reality, as we can read in following passage from the article “A Man Must Play” written by the physical director of the International Committee of the Y.M.C.A., George J. Fisher on the 6 July 1907:

*Play is necessary for the business man as well. It acts as a safety valve, giving opportunity for relieving pent-up feelings and enabling him to return more placidly to the exacting toil of every-day duties. [...] Play is a great social factor, It is boy's first social schools. It s on the playground*

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<sup>42</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>43</sup> Ivi, p. 101

*that he meets the other fellow and must learn to adapt himself to the democracy of the gang. Here he learns the values of co-operative action, finds that some things can not [sic!] be acquired alone. Here he learns to rule other wills and minds, and first tastes the sweetness of leadership.*<sup>44</sup>

We must not be surprised on reading the missionaries' post-game comments, comparing this athletic event with the first meeting of the Chinese National Assembly, held in October 1910. This assembly was a part of the project of modernization of Qing regime, trying to turn itself into a constitutional monarchy modeled after the Japan. Even if this assembly was powerless, with a mere advisory role, from missionaries' standpoint, the synchronism of the two events was simply a logic and natural consequence.

*The first National Athletic Meeting in China bids fair to leave as significant a mark on the country as the meeting of the National Assembly in Peking.*<sup>45</sup>

*It is a significant fact that, while the Senators were for the first time matching their wits in Peking, the schools boys were first measuring their wind in the Southern Capital. Had either event taken place without the other, it would have shown t those who see deeply into the affairs of the nation, a serious defect in her well-rounded development.*<sup>46</sup>

Despite Western missionaries and newspapers, there are no evidences about government participation, beside the necessary collaboration for the organization with provincial authorities. The largest Y.M.C.A. committees throughout China organized the event, his sponsorship, and the selection of the athletes. The only public officials involved were Duan Fang and Zhang Renjun, the Zhejian-Jiansu<sup>47</sup> and Moran lamented the poor collaboration of industrial exposition authorities that “*have forgotten ancient Chinese politeness, and have not yet learned Western manners.*”<sup>48</sup> M. J. Exner, the physical director of the Y.M.C.A. in Shanghai was the chairman of a special national athletic organization specifically created to organize and direct the event. Considering the audience success and the further spread of sporting Chinese-driven events, we can see that the previous years of Y.M.C.A involvement on local events paid off. Sixteen people composed the national athletic

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<sup>44</sup> George J. FISHER, “A Man Must Play,” in Tientsin Young Men, VI, 9, 6 July, 1907. Found in: WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 119.

<sup>45</sup> From the North China Herald. Found in: MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>46</sup> Hugh A. MORAN, *The Nanking Meet. The First National Athletic Sports in China*. Letter. Hankow 24th December, 1910. Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota Libraries. Quoted in: MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 103.

<sup>47</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., pp. 101-103.

<sup>48</sup> MORAN, *The Nanking Meeting...*, op. cit., p. 3.

organization, half of them were Chinese and the other western. They decided to divide China in five different macro-regions for the meeting: North China, mainly represented by the city of Tianjin (*Huabei*), South China where most of the students came from the schools of Hong Kong and Guangzhou (*Huanan*), Central China, mainly the cities of Wuchang and Hangzhou (Wuhan), Shanghai district, and Nanjing/Suzhou district (*Wuning*). In every region there was a subcommittee with a Young Men Christian Association officer as a chairman appointed to the selection of the athletes to send at the national games.

In Exner' s vision, the games should:

*[...] be a great opportunity to advance physical training, it will make the Association [Y.M.C.A.] prominent and it will be wholesome to Christianity to be allied with the promotion of so practical a philanthropic movement.<sup>49</sup>*

*in a first place they call national attention to physical training and will open an approach to many of the government schools, for we have found that the most ready opening into the government schools is through athletics, and they will do much to remove prejudice against Christianity. They will win respect for Christianity, especially in the minds of young men. In that they will cause Christianity to be associated with virile, manly elements.<sup>50</sup>*

As we can see, in the organizers' mind, the games could be understood as a sort of propaganda for Christianity through sport. It was not meant to show the ability of Chinese students, but how great and profitable was the of Christian education and values for them. The games were fully advertised on the newspaper *Shenbao* but the majority of mentions were done in the previous days, as the journal stopped publishing articles about the games, after the first day of beginning. Not many descriptions arrived to us and the main details are from missionary writings.<sup>51</sup> According to data, the attendance registered in the whole games was 40,000 spectators, a part of whom were students from the same schools of the athletes, who were allowed by schools heads to have some free days. In a country deeply divided, lacking

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<sup>49</sup> VVAA, *Annual Reports of the Foreign Secretaries of the International Committee, October 1, 1908 to September 30, 1909*, p. 439. Found in MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 101.

<sup>50</sup> Exner, "Physical Training in China," April 1911. Found in WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>51</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., pp. 103-104.

of an effective central power, and with a culture perceived as decadent and too old for the coming industrial era, missionaries created as real aggregating and identity-builder moment.<sup>52</sup>

Considering the last Exner's statements, we should not be surprised of the exclusion of women from competitions. As previously stated in 2.3.2, even if physical education was provided to women, competition was seen as dangerous for their health and not suitable to feminine nature. However, witnesses reported "*the presence of hundreds of ladies at the game*"<sup>53</sup> in the audience, cheering the 140 athletes, 40 from Shanghai, 31 from Nanjing-Suzhou, 21 from Wuchang-Hangzhou, 28 from South China, and 20 from North China, mainly from Tianjin and Tongzhou.<sup>54</sup> There were no students from Beijing as none of them passed the selection<sup>55</sup>.

During the games, Chinese students broke Chinese records in seven different track and field disciplines, in a total of 11:

- In the 100 yds race, 10 <sup>3</sup>/<sub>5</sub> sec.
- 220 yds race: 24 sec.
- 440 yds race: 55 sec.
- 880 yds race: 2 min. 1 sec.
- High jump: 5 ft. 5 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in.
- 12 lb. Shot put.: 38 ft. 9 <sup>1</sup>/<sub>4</sub> in.
- Half mile relay race, 4 men: 1 min. 42 sec.<sup>56</sup>

Other athletic competitions involved: 120 yds rava with low hurdles. Broad jump, pole vault, 12 lb hammer throw. The track and field championship was won by Shanghai district, whose schools won the largest amount of cups also in team games as football, tennis, basketball.<sup>57</sup>

Chinese National Games were modeled after the modern Olympics Games.<sup>58</sup> Missionaries definitively used and conceived sports in modern way, as we can see that the

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<sup>52</sup> Ivi, p. 103.

<sup>53</sup> FONG, F. Sec, "The First National Athletic Meet," in *China's Young Men*, 6.1, January 1911. Quoted in: Morris, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p.105.

<sup>54</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 126.

<sup>55</sup> Ivi, p. 128.

<sup>56</sup> MORAN, "*Physical Training in China*," op. cit., p. 359.

<sup>57</sup> Ivi, pp. 358-359.

<sup>58</sup> FAN Hong, "The Olympic movement in China: Ideals, Realities and Ambitions," *Culture, Sport Society*, 1, 1, 1998, p. 151.

Allen Guttmann's elements are present, in particular the quest for records (see section 1.1).<sup>59</sup> As regards secularization, someone can object that, considering Exner's interpretation of the games, this element was not respected. Analyzing Guttmann's definition, modern sports are secular in their aims. In ancient sports, "*the contest was in itself a religious act*"<sup>60</sup> and the victory was not due to competitor's talent but because he was the chosen one by the divinity. Even if behind the games, there was a pro-Christianity propaganda, it does not affect the fact that the games were secular because of their aim as they were not a moment of worshipping.<sup>61</sup> Missionaries decided to divide the students in the categories of "senior", and "junior" for middle school ones in order to make the athletes compete in conditions of equality, but because of a misunderstanding the division was not respected.<sup>62</sup> As regards technologies, missionaries started to use the stop watch from 1908 at the Sixth Annual Athletic Contest of the Y.M.C.A. of Shanghai<sup>63</sup> and it shows us also a certain attention to quantification.

### 3.2.2 The Second National Games, 1914

Four years later the National Games in Nanjing, there was the second edition of this event. The situation in China was very different from the previous one, as the Qing empire collapsed in 1912, with the abdication of the emperor Puyi. China became a Republic, a regime perceived as much more modern that could make China a strong and evolved nation. The real situation was far to be peaceful; the government did not have an effective authority in the administration of its territory and in the foreign affairs. The northern provinces were ruled by local warlords and Western powers and Japan strongly interfered in national politics. For the newborn republic, sport represented an occasion to show and perform its (incomplete) national unity and to receive international legitimization. The government officials showed more interest towards Western physical education than their predecessor in the Empire system but along all the 1910s and 1920s decades, missionaries maintained their central role in promoting and organizing sport events.

The second edition of the National Games was held in Beijing, on the 21 and 22 of May 1914, and was deeply different from the first one. The Y.M.C.A. in Beijing had a leading

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<sup>59</sup> It is interesting to see how Hugh Moran in a report stressed the results obtained and made comparisons with the Amateur Athletic Union's (A.A.U.) record. See: MORAN, "*Physical Training in China*," op. cit., pp. 359.

<sup>60</sup> GUTTMANN, *From Ritual to Record...*, op. cit., p. 25.

<sup>61</sup> Ivi, pp. 16-26.

<sup>62</sup> Hughes A. MORAN, *The Nanking Meet. The First National Athletic Sports in China*. Letter. Hankow 24th December, 1910. Kautz Family YMCA Archives. University of Minnesota Libraries, p. 4.

<sup>63</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 105.

position in the organization and the whole organization was carried out by one of its sub-organizations, the Beijing Athletic Association. Ironically, the committee chose a different name: the first National United Athletic Meet (*di yi ci quanguo lianhe yundong dahui* 第一次全国联合运动大会). The name was meant to underline the beginning of new prosperous era, but in 1924 the name was turned into “the Second National Games.”<sup>64</sup> ‘ United ’ is the leitmotif of all this second edition. Such union was more to be performed because on the real side, the Republic and his despotic president Yuan Shikai had a very limited power, and the territory was administrated by local warlords, foreign interferences, and local intellectuals/authorities, the majority of whom were opponents of Yuan’s politics and loyal to Sun Yat-sen. The location chosen was a clear reference to the classical Chinese culture: the Temple of Heaven or Tiantan park.<sup>65</sup> The temple was an altar for the ancestor worshipping, a milestone in Chinese culture, both related with Taoism and Confucianism. If the 1910 games were focused on the industrialization of China, the second edition preferred a symbol of the tradition, probably because after the change of regime, it would have seemed a homage to the classical Chinese culture and an factor unifying people from different part of China, even those who converted to Christianity, as ancestor worshipping was tolerated in school missionaries and some preachers respected such practice. Nevertheless, during the ceremonies there were manifestation of the modernity and internationalism that not only the Y.M.C.A. but also the republican government wished for China, for example the air show of the Nanyuan Aviation School, where the planes threw confetti over the audience, and the volleyball exhibition of some American athletes.<sup>66</sup>

New team sports were added to the matches: volleyball and baseball. The three categories of athletes (senior, junior and sectional) were no more observed.<sup>67</sup> As regards geographical criteria to divide the teams, the commission adopted a different division from the previous games. The five regions were reduced to four: North, South, East and West, and 298 athlete took part in the competitions. Western regions were scarcely represented and people, and many students from central China were included in the western team.<sup>68</sup> The games worked as selection for the coming second Far Eastern Championship Games. Morris

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<sup>64</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p.120.

<sup>65</sup> Ivi, pp. 119-121.

<sup>66</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit.,p. 120.

<sup>67</sup> Ivi, p. 121.

<sup>68</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 129.

reads this change as an effort to formally diminish the differences between the urban regions and the countryside and to split the country in a more rational and ‘ scientific ’ way.<sup>69</sup>

As in the first edition, missionaries had a leading role in the organization but there was a larger government interest and participation. The North China Athletic association was charged with the organization. Beijing was not among the first cities to be touched by the Y.M.C.A. and its emphasis on physical education and sports, but it was the capital of the Republic. The Beijing (at that time, it was written Peking) Y.M.C.A. was founded in 1907<sup>70</sup> and the Beijing Athletic Association, in 1910,<sup>71</sup>. Mr. A. N. Hoagland was at the same time, secretary of the Beijing Y.M.C.A., general secretary of the North China Athletic Association and general manager of the meet.<sup>72</sup> Chinese institutions gave their contribution, both in terms of funds and of presence. The vice-president Li Yuan Hung was the honorary president of the Peking Athletic Association ; the minister of Education and the minister of Foreign Affairs attended at various matches and the prizes ceremony, that took place in the Board of Foreign Affairs. Yuan Shikai financed the games with 1000 dollars and provided a big silver cup; other prizes were contributions from “*every Board in Peking and officials and tutuhs [sic] of various provinces.*”<sup>73</sup>

Considering sport results, many previous records were broken, as in pole vault jump, 100 yard dash, 440 yard run, 880 yard run, 220 x 4 relay.<sup>74</sup>

### **3.3 First international events related with sports**

Even today, international sport events are the most seen and appreciated by the audience because beside the one’s taste and interest towards a particular discipline, there is a clear aggregating factor: the same national belonging. If we considers just the different national background we can see that, international competitions dates back to the first years of the nineteenth century. Of course, the first events were organized mainly for entertainment and without investment of money. In 1904, Tianjin YMCA members organized football matches against Western soldiers.<sup>75</sup> In 1907, we have reports of baseball matches organized in Beijing by the American Army, American students and eventually Chinese students of the

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<sup>69</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 122.

<sup>70</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>71</sup> Ivi, p. 122.

<sup>72</sup> Ivi, p. 129.

<sup>73</sup> A. N. HOAGLANG, *Annual Report for the year ending Sept. 30, 1914*, Kautz Family YMCA Archive, University of Minnesota Libraries, p. 1. Available online: <http://umedia.lib.umn.edu/node/555420?mode=basic>

<sup>74</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., pp. 129-130.

<sup>75</sup> GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China...*, op. cit., p. 101.

missions.<sup>76</sup> Similarly in 1908, the Tennis Club inside the Y.M.C.A. of Tianjin organized a tournament against a Japanese Tennis Club and the result were reported on the newspaper *Tientsin Young Men* of 29 February 1908.<sup>77</sup> More evolved international events started in the 1910s when Chinese teams were sent abroad but also foreign ones competed in China in international meetings, for example “*Hong Kong Nanhua Football Club beat Australian team in Melbourne in 1923; the annual Shanghai International Football Championship took place between 1908 and 1937, and participants included missionary schools, modern Chinese schools, the YMCA and American, British, Italian armies residing in Tianjin.*”<sup>78</sup> As the passing of the years, international competitions became more and more widespread. After the fall of the Qing empire, China experienced a troubled and unstable republican period, where the leading party was the Nationalist Party (*Guomindang*) had to show its control on the territory also from the point of view of coordination of sporting events, representing China internationally, as it was a form of legitimization of its hegemony. As a result, on the 5<sup>th</sup> July 1924, the Nationalist party founded and sustained the China National Amateur Athletic Federation (*Zhonghua quanguo yeyu tiyu xiejinhui* 中华全国业余体育协进会), in Nanjing, the capital city of the Republic of China, to supervise and organize both national and international athletic events. The federation represented Chinese government in the IOC (International Olympic Committee) and in all international athletic organizations.<sup>79</sup>

Thinking about international sport events, probably the first connection in everybody’s mind will be with the Olympic Games. The first modern Olympic Games dates back to 1896 and were held in Athens, thanks to the efforts of Baron Pierre de Coubertin. There are many factors connected with the will to organize such events: the growing importance of physical education, the interest for archeology and the desire to recover and safeguard ancient traditions, a new passion for international large scale exhibitions, following the example of the universal expositions.<sup>80</sup>

News about this large events arrived also in China and both Chinese intellectuals and Westerns living in China started a debate about around this issue that will be discussed in

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<sup>76</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>77</sup> Ivi, pp. 94-95.

<sup>78</sup> FAN Hong, TAN Hua, “Sport in China: Conflict between Tradition and Modernity, 1840s to 1930s,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 19, 2-3, 2002, p. 200.

<sup>79</sup> FAN, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 267.

<sup>80</sup> J.J. MacAloon provides us with a great explanation about the relationships between the 18th century archaeology discoveries and de Coubertin’ s efforts. See: J.J. MACALOON, “The Olympic Idea,” *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 23, 3-4, 2006, pp. 505-518.

section 3.3.1.. The second big international event was the Far Eastern Asian Games there are remarkable because they represent at the same time an effort towards internationalism and an identification with a sort of Asian identity.

### 3.3.1 The modern Olympics Games and China

Since the first edition, the modern Olympics Games were seen as the most important event related with sport in the world. Up until today, athletes are meant to personify their country and their culture and throughout history we can see many example of the parallelism made between international conflicts and competition on the Olympic playfields, particularly during the Cold War period.

Not surprisingly, Qing government refused to send Chinese athletes to the first modern Olympic Games in Paris in 1896, even if it was formally invited through the French embassy, in 1895. The time was not ripe, and the Qing court showed lack of interest for almost every foreign cultural phenomenon.<sup>81</sup> Chinese interest towards the Olympic games started at the beginning of the twentieth century, paralleling the general efforts to make the “four hundreds millions move,” occurred after the Sino-Japanese war.

Missionaries, coming from Western countries, were aware of the historical meaning of the Olympic games in the ancient times and they easily could figure out how important was this modern revival and the big honor for the athletes involved. Chinese intellectuals and western-oriented class was conscious too and, considering the end-of-Qing dramatic period and the ‘ sick man of Asia stereotype, ’ they began to dream of participating to this event, because “*nations seek internal stability and external status. Sport is commonly viewed as a vehicle to achieve both.*”<sup>82</sup>

From the first years of the 1900s, this debate around the Olympics, arrived also inside missionaries’ schools, mainly during the opening and closing ceremonies of the sporting events. According to Wu Chih-Kang, the first Chinese who talked about the Olympic Games and the China involvement in them, was Zhang Boling, (in the text, his name is in Wade-Giles, Chang Po-ling), a director of the first private middle school in Tianjin during the presentation of trophies of the fifth annual athletic contest in Tianjin on 24 October 1907.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> FAN, “The Olympic movement...,” op. cit., p. 150.

<sup>82</sup> James H. FREY, D. Stanley EITZEN, “Sport and Society,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, vol. 17, 1991, p.511.

<sup>83</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., pp. 105-106.

*Mr. Chang then pointed out how a number of the European competitors in the Olympic Games of last year although the equal physically of any others at the contest had not gone into the science of the different events sufficiently to give them even a remote chance of winning. He then gave some suggestions of the possibility of China's athletes from the standpoint of their natural and physical endowment of being among the best in the world and that the great need is for such instruction as will enable the men to use the strength most advantageously. It was suggested that we ought not to wait a long time for a beginning in China's having a representation in the Olympic Games but that the first need of the present time is for skilled instruction. The speaker then pointed out that plans have already been proposed for getting out an instructor from America, the winner of the last Olympic Games, and gave his hearty endorsement to the plan.<sup>84</sup>*

In 1908, he was in England to visit British schools and universities, and during his travel, he had the chance to see the 4<sup>th</sup> modern Olympic Games in London. When he was back to China, his relationships with the Y.M.C.A. became stronger and he converted himself to Christianity in the same year.<sup>85</sup> He was great educator and founded Nankai University and other private colleges, where he applied John Dewey theories on practical education and gave a central role to Physical education.<sup>86</sup>

The Y.M.C.A. had a central role in the Olympic propaganda, providing lessons and conferences about the history and the meaning of the Games and pushing for a soon Chinese participation. In May 1908, on the Y.M.C.A.'s newspaper *Tientsin Young Men*, there was an article about the coming London Olympic Games of 1908, with an introduction on the historical background of the Games in ancient Greece. China did not take part in the 1908 London Olympic games, and the writer pointed the lack of training and the indifference of the government as the reason of this absence, and he concluded :

*We shall continue to train athletes and to urge upon those who are in a position to forward this enterprise the privilege and the need not to speak of the duty that China owes to herself and to others to develop physical training to the point where she can not only send athletes to Athens, but*

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<sup>84</sup> Ivi, p. 103.

<sup>85</sup> GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China...*, op. cit., p. 100.

<sup>86</sup> FAN Hong, LU Zhouxiang, "Beijing's two bids for the Olympics: the political games," in *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 29, 1, January 2012, p.145.

*of that time when she can invite one of the biennial games that are held out of Athens to come to China.*<sup>87</sup>

In 1907, Clarence H. Robertson during a conference in Tianjin, posed the famous provocative three questions, that after became the slogan of the Tianjin Y.M.C.A.:

1. *When will China be able to send a winning athlete to the Olympic contests?*
2. *When will China be able to send a winning team to the Olympic contests?*
3. *When will china be able to invite all the world to come to Peking for an International Olympic contest, alternating with those at Athens?*<sup>88</sup>

Robertson, also known as “Big Robbie” was a science lecture and a preeminent figure in the Christian community of Tianjin. He arrived in China firstly for his scientific education as he was a mechanic engineer. Because of his deep friendship with Chang Po-ling and his athletic talent, he had an active role in the promotion of sport as coach at the P’u T’ung School (pinyin: Pu Tong).<sup>89</sup> His main contribution was in the field of communication: in China, he was the first to use modern visual techniques in the conferences, for example the film projectors, motion pictures and he became a famous speaker throughout Chinese cities schools and universities, giving lectures about disease preventions, technologies and sport. He gave a speech on the Olympics for the provincial colleges in Nanjing.<sup>90</sup> On 22 October 1908, during the awards ceremony of the Sixth Annual Athletic Contest, Tianjin Y.M.C.A. Chinese students had the chance to see photos of the London Olympic Games during. In this ceremony, for the first time Y.M.C.A. staff used the projectoscope to show the slides on a screen, so the sport propaganda was charged with modernity and advanced technology elements.<sup>91</sup> After the 1910 First National Athletic Games, Moran reported the progresses of Chinese students in physical education and ensured that China will “*send a picked Chinese team to the World’s Olympic Games, - if not in 1912 certainly in 1916.*”<sup>92</sup> University and college students and staff were particularly sensitive to the Olympic issue; Crocker, one of the leading figure of the Far Eastern Championship games, was invited by thirteen universities and colleges of Hong Kong to organize a meeting on the Olympic Committee and they created a specific organization to promote physical education in the city.<sup>93</sup>

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<sup>87</sup> VVAA, “Athletic Events,” in *Tientsin Young Men*, VII, 12, May 23, 1908. The whole article can be found in: WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., pp. 106-107.

<sup>88</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 82.

<sup>89</sup> GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China...*, op. cit., pp. 98-101.

<sup>90</sup> GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China...*, op. cit., pp. 114-117.

<sup>91</sup> Ivi, p. 83. WU, *The Influence of YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 107.

<sup>92</sup> MORAN, *The Nanking Meet*, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>93</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 120.

The first contact with the IOC was in 1912, when the Far East Sports Association was created and it was approved by Pierre de Coubertin and the IOC. The original idea was about an Asian alternative to the Olympics, but the IOC did not allow the use of the word ‘Olympic.’<sup>94</sup> because, that term “*should only be used in connection with the great world’s games which occur quadrennially.*”<sup>95</sup> <sup>96</sup>Members of the IOC helped in the organization of the Games. In 1915, China was invited to the Olympic Games of Berlin in 1916, but they were cancelled because of the First World War.<sup>97</sup> The first Chinese member of the IOC was the Wang Chengting (in pinyin: Wang Zhengting), the Foreign Minister of the Republic of China, in 1921 and ten years later the China National Amateur Athletic Federation became an official part of the IOC.<sup>98</sup>

Beside the bureaucratic and diplomatic presence of Chinese authorities, from the point of view of the competitions, the efforts of Y.M.C.A. paid off just in 1932, when the sprinter Liu Changchun was sent to the Los Angeles Olympics. He did not get the podium. In the same city, in 1984, the sharpshooter Xu Haifeng was the first Chinese to win a golden medal.<sup>99</sup>

Generally speaking, after the end of the Qing empire, the missionaries found a political situation more favorable to international contest. The Republic government encouraged sport and international competitions to boost a sense of national belonging and for international visibility, and progressively substituted missionaries. International and Chinese audience were particularly interested in the sorts of athletes and their achievements and the issue of identity and race became a core of the 1930s history of sport, particularly in the 1936 Berlin Olympic Games, as we will see in the following chapter.

### **3.3.2 The First Far Eastern Championship Games**

Beside the first efforts to create a competition involving all the Far Asian countries, we can find again Y.M.C.A.’s members. These games are the result of interpersonal relationships between missionaries and committees of different countries, and it reveals us that their efforts in promoting physical education were sincere and not only limited to show

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<sup>94</sup> FAN, “The Olympic Movement...,” op. cit., p. 151.

<sup>95</sup> Elwood, S. BROWN, Report of 1910. Found in : WU, *The Influence of YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>96</sup> Firstly, the Olympic Games were scheduled every two years, but starting from 1908 they were held every 4 years.

<sup>97</sup> FAN Hong, XIONG Xiaozheng, “Communist China: Sport, Politics and Diplomacy,” in J.A. MANGAN, FAN Hong (edited by), *Sport in Asian Society: Past and Present*, London, Cass, 2002, p. 258.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>99</sup> FAN, LU, *Beijing’s two bids for the Olympics...*, op. cit., p. 145.

bias for the sick man of Asia. They really tried their best to make the fragile East men fully enjoy the advantages of a healthy, devote body.

C. H. Robertson, the creator of the three questions, could not attend at the First National Games in Nanjing because he was back in the U.S, in a furlough, nevertheless his will to develop physical education in Asia was so strong that he met Elwood S. Brown, the secretary of the Y.M.C.A. of Manila, in 1910, in Salt lake City, Utah. During their meeting, for the first time, they discussed about the opportunity to hold the Olympics Games in the Far East.<sup>100</sup> Once back to Manila, Brown decided to evolve the yearly Philippine Carnival, where physical activities were already present and athletes from Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore took part in an informal way. During the Carnival, competitions were not held according to the modern criteria of observe a written regulations and fair play.<sup>101</sup> In order to modernize these events, Brown founded the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation to supervise the organization of the championship, and between 1911-1912, he travelled to China and Japan, to advertize his idea of a sport event involving Far East countries and with the participation of Y.M.C.A. committees spread throughout these countries, he founded the Far Eastern Olympic Association.<sup>102</sup> The name of the association caused the disapproval of the IOC (as explained in the previous section) so it was turned into “Far Eastern Athletic Association” and consequently, the event was called the “Far Eastern Championship Games” (FECG).<sup>103</sup> The first edition was held in Manila, in May 1913.<sup>104</sup> Wu and Morris disagree on the number of participants sent: Wu talks about forty athletes from China, eighty from Philippines and twenty from Japan;<sup>105</sup> Morris indicates thirty-six participants from China who had to compete against 103 Filipino and 13 Japanese.<sup>106</sup> The head of the Chinese delegation was Dr. Crocker, who arrived in the Philippines with three Y.M.C.A. authorities: A. Shoemaker from Qinghua University of Beijing, A. Swan from Shanghai Y.M.C.A. and F.R. Wilber from Guangdong Y.M.C.A..<sup>107</sup> During the first edition, only three Asian countries took part in the competitions: the Philippines, China and Japan.<sup>108</sup> Among the participants, Japan showed the lowest interest from the preparation of the Games, as it did not join the FECG from the beginning, but only

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<sup>100</sup> WU, *The Influence of YMCA...*, op. cit., p.130.

<sup>101</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>103</sup> WU, *The Influence of YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>104</sup> Ivi, pp. 130-133.

<sup>105</sup> Ivi, p. 132.

<sup>106</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 127.

<sup>107</sup> FAN Hong, “Prologue. The Origin of the Asian Games: Power and Politics,” in *Sport in Society: Cultures, Commerce, Media, Politics*, 8, 3, 2005, p. 395.

<sup>108</sup> *Ibidem*.

in 1917. Despite China, that made a long selection process in different cities, Japanese athletes were all from Mejin University baseball team and two runners. The team was visiting the Philippines and then took part in the games.<sup>109</sup> It was the first occasion for a Chinese delegation to experience “*the pride of representing their nation under their national flag, before thousands of spectators.*”<sup>110</sup> During the opening ceremony, Chinese athletes marched bringing the flag of the Republic of China.<sup>111</sup> This was a classical and meaningful way to create a sense of common identity, but how to define it? Chinese? Asian? Surprisingly, there were no Chinese government officials, just missionaries and foreign politician, as Forbes, who paternally gave the chance to the new-born Republic to be represented internationally and to behave as a modern nation, in change of their acceptance of new values, above all the Christian ones. The opening ceremony was held by the Philippines Governor-General W. Cameron Forbes, elected as president of the Games.<sup>112</sup> His opening discourse shows how Western elements (both imposed and self-imposed) characterized all the games. Despite the fact that this event should have been based on the shared ‘ Far Eastern culture, ’ the athletes were dressed in a white suit and white shoes,<sup>113</sup> without any space for traditional Asian clothes. The opening speech was given by Forbes in Malacañang Palace, a building built by the Spanish, that from 1898 had been the house of the American Governor-General. Forbes opened the games “*in the name of the Government of United States and the Government and people of the Philippine Islands;*”<sup>114</sup> and it clearly reveals us the cultural imperialistic aim behind the sport events, to which there will be further references along all the games rhetoric, particularly in a Forbes’ statement: “*I hope that all your contests will be carried on in the spirit of fair play, which in after years may govern your conduct in business and other vocations of grown-ups.*”<sup>115</sup> Morris, in particular sees a veiled reference to free market.<sup>116</sup>

The teams competed in track and field, swimming, soccer, basketball and volleyball. The games lasted seven days and about 155,000 spectators came to see the matches.<sup>117</sup> In its first international contest, China obtained the second place in all the matches.<sup>118</sup> The First Far Eastern Games were enthusiastically portrayed:

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<sup>109</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>110</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>111</sup> BROWN, Report 1913. Found in WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>112</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>113</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 123.

<sup>114</sup> FAN, “Prologue. The Origin of the Asian Games: Power and Politics...,” op. cit., p. 395.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibidem.*

<sup>116</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 124.

<sup>117</sup> Ivi, p. 127.

<sup>118</sup> *Ibidem.*

*The greatest athletic meet ever held in the Orient [it] was more than a success, it was a triumph. It took three thousand years or more for the Olympiad to reach the Far East in its west-ward moving globe-circling tour, but it hit the Asiatic shores with a twentieth century bang when it came.*<sup>119</sup>

*When the history of the modern Orient comes to be written, but few events will be found of deeper significance than the Far Eastern Championship Games which were participated in by the Philippine Islands, China, and Japan.*<sup>120</sup>

Western journalists and witnesses agreed in considering this championship a great step forward both in culture and in the politics of these Asian countries, who were approaching the modernity and sharing the real values of democracy and equality, abandoning their hierarchical and archaic societies. In the passage below, we can understand that the Far East Championship games were not meant to celebrate an Oriental cultural belonging, but to boost their homologation:

*The Far Eastern Olympiad is quite the most significant event that has touched oriental peoples in united action. [...] The Olympiad is democracy in itself. It is an indication of the tremendous progress the Far East is making in keeping step with the movements of modern times. The Far Eastern Olympiad is the outward manifestation of the spirit of the younger generation. The 'effete, effulgent East' of the poets is passing away and the rise of the common man and the solidarity of nations is coming apace.*<sup>121</sup>

However, the cultural/racial feature emerged in a debated fomented by the Chinese soccer team, that protested because:

*whereas they are pure-blood Chinese, the eleven sent against them are not pure-blooded Filipinos, but are mestizos, and add, with a great deal of justice, that it would have been possible for them to have brought down*

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<sup>119</sup> From a Japanese newspaper. Found in: WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 134.

<sup>120</sup> Discourse said by Frank L. Crone, acting director of education of the Philippine Island. Found in WU, *The Influence of the YMCA...*, op. cit., p. 133.

<sup>121</sup> "The New Olympian," *Philippines Free Press* 7.5, 1 February 1913, p. 1. Found in: MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 125.

*a team of Eurasians, if they had not been convinced that pure Chinese, Japanese, or Filipinos only would be allowed to compete.*<sup>122</sup>

The issue was discussed on the newspaper “*The Manila Times*,” that supported Chinese team argument and asked the Committee to define precisely the criteria of identity belonging. We have no further details on how and if the question was solved, but one of the points touched by the newspapers was if the mestizos considered themselves Filipinos.<sup>123</sup>

This first edition is in large part Western-driven and Chinese government had no role in it. Asian elements did not emerge and the way ceremonies were arranged and media refereed to, were definitively example of cultural imperialism. Nevertheless, in the following edition, Far Eastern identities gained more relevance.

### 3.3.3 The Second Far East Championship Games



Picture 2: cover of brochure announcing the Shanghai Far Eastern Games, organized in 1915 by the YMCA as the first international athletic competition to be held in China. Found in: YMCA International Work in China Records, Kautz Family <https://www.lib.umn.edu/app>

In terms of national pride, the efforts of the missionaries paid off. Not only China obtained good result in the competitions, but also it had the honor to host the second edition in 1915, in Shanghai. Crocker was elected president of this event and president Yuan Shikai and vice-president Li Yuanhong (Wade Giles: Li Yuan Hung) offered their support to the organization of the games, financing them with respectively 2,000 and 1,000 dollars. Yuan Shikai understood the potential of sport events concerning identity-making and consensus-

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<sup>122</sup> “Chinese Object to Local Team: Soccer Protest Brings Up Difficult Decision,” *The Manila Times*, February, 1913, p. 9. Cited in: Morris, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 128.

<sup>123</sup> *Ibidem*.

building processes, and we wanted Chinese athletes obtain the best result so he personally financed the travel of Chinese baseball players in Honolulu back in their homeland.<sup>124</sup>

In this second edition, the process of national identity construction was the core of the games rhetoric. The government's support was due to Yuan Shikai's hope of create some moments for the celebration of national unity and pride, after the indignation raised by the Twenty-one Demands of the Japanese government. The politic protests touched also the games and Japanese delegation joined the competitions with two days of delay.<sup>125</sup> The government invested a lot in the built of a new stadium for the 350 athletes, coming from China, Japan and the Philippines.<sup>126</sup> The games provided a mix of modern and traditional elements, for example the cup for the decathlon winner was a miniature of the Temple of Heaven in Beijing,<sup>127</sup> and the 100,000 spectators had some special trains with a based-on-the matches schedule to reach the stadium and the play fields. At the opening ceremony, Yang Cheng, the foreign ministry, representing Yuan Shikai, gave a speech where he clearly compared the young athletes to the future national leaders, supporting again the parallel between playfields and international arena.<sup>128</sup>

China had great results, winning the first place in swimming, soccer, volleyball, pentathlon, the marathon and the half-mile run.<sup>129</sup> Even though China gained the second place, the marathon generated a big pathos. We had a report made by Siler, the physical director of Tianjin Y.M.C.A., on the Chinese athlete's struggle with a Japanese for the second place; in the chronicle some pathetic features emerged, like the (Confucian) gratitude and respect towards the master, and the idea of patriotism and national unity personified by the athlete:

*After twenty minutes of suspense we saw a single Japanese runner enter the gate and begin his final two laps around the track. Just before he reached the tape, a second Japanese runner entered the gate, pale with fatigue but still running strong. When this second runner covered one of the two final laps, a Chinese runner by the name of Bai Bau-Kun entered the gate. Instantly the vast concourse of Chinese spectators stood up, and a cheer went up that fairly rent the heavens. Bai Bau-kun took a quick glance about the field, grasped the situation, and began to sprint as though he were starting a 220 yard dash instead of finishing a six mile*

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<sup>124</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA*..., op. cit., pp. 134-135.

<sup>125</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body*..., op. cit., p. 132.

<sup>126</sup> Ibidem.

<sup>127</sup> Ivi, pp. 131-132.

<sup>128</sup> Ivi, pp. 130-131.

<sup>129</sup> WU, *The Influence of the YMCA*..., op. cit., p.136.

*run. Each step brought him closer to the worn out Japanese runner, and the closer he came to him the stronger he seemed to run. Just at the tape he passed the Japanese, taking second place for China. Fainting into the arms of the American teacher whose Yale bulldog grit he had made his own, he was limp and silent for half a minute. Then his head raised, his eyes brightened, and he gasped: "When the Chinese people cheer, my strength comes back."<sup>130</sup>*

China found in the games a relief from all the humiliations received on international level. It was a catharsis, a moment of national unity and pride, a reconciliation with its past and present that ended in a bitter way. On the 26 May, the day after the end of the Games, people who experienced the competitions as athletes and spectators of different social classes felt the need of celebrate this moment of glory with a traditional ceremony, understandable everywhere throughout China. They proposed a mass lantern procession (*tidenghui* 提灯会), led by Wang Zhengting, the games chairman and a member of the Chinese National Assembly. The procession should have started at 6:30 pm from the Chinese park on North Suzhou Road, and should have crossed the French Concession and the Zhang Gardens, a site famous during the anti-Manchu campaigns. Unfortunately, the police forbade the procession because they feared that it would turn into a violent manifestation, considering the tension generated by the twenty-one question general discontent.<sup>131</sup>

On the cultural ground, one of the greatest result of these games was that Chinese Republican authorities experienced the potential of sports, and from this moment onwards, athletic competitions became more and more state-driven and tiyu developed characteristics and rhetoric focused on national and racial pride, in other words, it became a propaganda tool.

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<sup>130</sup> C.A. SILER, "Physical Education in China," in *Chinese Students' Christian Journal*, VI, October, 1919, p. 28. Cited in: WU, *The Influence of the YMCA*..., op. cit., pp. 135-136.

<sup>131</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body*..., op. cit., pp. 137-138.

## CHAPTER FOUR. THE DECLINE

### 4.1 Nationalism, anti-imperialism and missions

During the 1910s, missionaries and their schools experienced a peak in popularity because of particular historical circumstances and thanks to great personalities as Exner and Robertson. The decadence of the Qing dynasty and the new born and instable republic caused a vacuum of power where missions could grow and imposed themselves as sources of stability. Yuan Shikai's regime encouraged the growth of sport events because they offered an occasion of fictitious national unity. He not only tolerated missionaries' activities but promoted them because they were not officially engaged in internal policy (largely hostile to him) and they had the prestige among urban, well-educated classes he lacked. After his death in 1916, relationships between missionaries and Chinese people got worse and worse. Internal divisions due to war lords, the menace of Japanese expansionism, lack of identity and leadership fostered anti-western campaigns, aimed to destroyed everything perceived as imperialist. Christianity was one of the main target. University students and intellectuals had a strong role inside these campaigns, even who studied at Protestant colleges and universities. Missionaries were criticized because of their policies of neutrality towards the rise of capitalism and the consequent exploitation of workers, and their international diffusion, also in the evil empire of Japan was seen as suspicious. Students grouped around the May Fourth Movement organized many boycott campaigns and strikes that never received the sustain of the Protestant communities and that made them disappointed.<sup>1</sup> The Nationalist Party and (after 1921), the Communist party both condemned Western religious movement and enrolled part of students dissatisfied by missions' neutrality. Protestant associations did not persevere in giving support to the workers and student movements because big industrialists and capitalists financed their activities and schools. Even though, proposals about a deeper engagement in social problems was proposed during conferences, they were never put in practice.<sup>2</sup> By accident, all the great personalities that characterized the Christian entourage during the late 1910s, left China in the following years, with a resulting lack of power and credibility. Protests, strikes and boycotts affected school attendance and some schools closed for some periods because of violence. Along the first part of the 1920s, there were two strong anti-Christian campaigns; in 1922 and in 1924. In the first one, the newly born Chinese Communist Party had a prominent role. It centered the anti-Christian sentiments using

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<sup>1</sup> Shirley S. GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China: the Chinese Y.M.C.A., 1895-1926*, Cambridge, Harvard University Press, 1970, pp. 164-172.

<sup>2</sup> In 1923, during a Y.M.C.A. convention, they organized a program to "Christianize industry," but it was never realized. See: GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China...*, op. cit., p. 171.

traditional Marx's visions of religion as a source of capitalism, and stressing that it was something imposed by foreigners, so it fostered imperialism. Chinese Marxists saw missions' schools as part of West colonization, and according to this vision, they would have been a channel for control fears, create superstitions and mental dependence, so they would have facilitated the exploitation of resources, as stated in this slogan taken from the Shanghai anti-Christian manifesto: "[missionaries are] *implanting in foreign areas the remnants of their superstitions in order to prolong their parasitic existence. Their governments and big business favor these enterprises because they open the way to colonization...Gold and iron make our body slaves of the foreigner; the Gospel enslaves our souls.*"<sup>3</sup> The Socialist Youth Corps, a branch of the Communist Party, was particularly active in financing and spread the ideas of the Anti-Christian Student Federation. The Federation, founded on March 1922, grouped and organized different student movements, involved in strikes and protests.<sup>4</sup> Anti-Christian sentiments spread and gained the support of relevant figures outside the leftist sphere, as Liang Qichao, Wang Jingwei, an important member of the Nationalist Party, Hu Shi and the anarchists.<sup>5</sup> Even if Christians were the most persecuted, as they represented a clear link with imperialism, the intolerance affected observant of other religions, and the Great Federation of Antireligionists, an even more radical association, attacked Confucianism, Taoism and Buddhism too.<sup>6</sup> Christian Chinese themselves criticized the Protestant Church, as they lamented the decrease of missionary involvement in social services and the lower attention towards scientific development.<sup>7</sup> Besides Marxist issues, education provided in missionaries' schools was criticized from a legal perspective. First of all, starting from the late 1920s, education was conceived to serve the State, and a foreign institution, independent from the Ministry of Education, could not guarantee this service. Secondly, Chinese constitution safeguarded the freedom of worship, and it was not compatible with the mandatory conversion for students in missionaries' schools. The debate raised around these two points, gave birth to the Restore Educational Rights Movement.<sup>8</sup> Missionaries demonstrated their will to reform their educational system and to make it "*more efficient, more Christian and more*

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<sup>3</sup> Léon WIEGER, "Chine Moderne", in *Remous et Écume*, Hsien-hsien, vol. III, 1922. Quoted in: Jessie Gregory, LUTZ, *China and the Christian Colleges: 1850-1950*, Ithaca, London, Cornell University Press, 1971, pp. 222-223.

<sup>4</sup> LUTZ, *China and the Christian Colleges...*, op. cit., pp. 226-227.

<sup>5</sup> Detailed information about these intellectuals viewpoints can be found in: Lewis HODOUS, "The Anti-Christian Movement in China," in *The Journal of Religion*, 10, 4, Oct., 1930, pp. 487-494.

<sup>6</sup> LUTZ, *China and the Christian Colleges...*, op. cit., pp. 228-229.

<sup>7</sup> Ivi, p. 231.

<sup>8</sup> Ivi, pp. 232-233.

*Chinese.*”<sup>9</sup> By 1925, Chinese Christians had no role and representation in the administration of missions’ colleges, all the higher authorities were foreigners. In order to make Christian education more Chinese, it sounded logic to give more representation and decision power to local intellectuals. This ‘ sinization ’ process was slow and difficult to apply, as Chinese Christians had not the support of the international mission boards and many of them were not trained enough to take such responsibility. Only four years later, most colleges had a Chinese president and a relevant number of Chinese managers, but it was after a period of violence, incidents and confiscation of Church’s goods.<sup>10 11</sup> During the 1930s, the network of missions and their schools was progressively eroded by nationalist requests, schools became more independent from one another with a resulting lack of coordination and the abandonment of large-scale projects.<sup>12</sup> The debate on the free worship right, divided missionary community; some of them openly refused to suppress religion teaching and renounce to be recognized by the government, others decided to give religion courses only on voluntary basis. One of the most affected religious association was the Y.M.C.A., that was facing a deep crisis. As it was one of the most active in preaching and because of its international sphere, it was particularly exposed to criticism and one of the favorite target of the left wing of Nationalists. The unstable situation affected the number of students and consequently its financial situation; in Wuhan, the association faced bankruptcy.<sup>13</sup> In Yali, a school of Changsha, in 1926 students asked the abolition of the Y.M.C.A., after have been exposed to Guomindang propaganda.<sup>14</sup> Efforts towards a ‘ sinicization ’ of the missions failed because Christian Chinese themselves were banned from their own society and lost contacts and prestige with new political powers, that were largely promoting a secularization of society, adverse to foreign influences.

## 4.2 The Guomindang and Physical Education

Instability, bad relationships with government, poor reputation among urban and intellectual classes, severe financial crisis obviously limited missionaries roles in sport.

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<sup>9</sup> It was the slogan created by a Western commission of Christian educators in China, who realized the general dissatisfaction of Chinese people. See: Lutz, *China and the Christian Colleges...*, op. cit., p. 234.

<sup>10</sup> Ivi, pp. 246-264.

<sup>11</sup> Among the most cruel incidents, I must cited the incident of May 30, 1925, happened in Shanghai. While Chinese students were protesting for the murder of a Chinese worker, twelve students were killed by foreign troops. It gave birth to the May 30th Movement, and affected particularly St. John’s, one of the most important mission institution. Hawks Pott, the President of the school, expelled the students involved in the protests, so students accused him of having insulted Chinese people. Episodes of cruelty were widespread also during the Northern Expedition of 1926-1928, where missionaries living in the Northern regions were persecuted by Chiang Kai-shek’s army.

<sup>12</sup> LUTZ, *China and the Christian Colleges...*, op. cit., pp. 255-276.

<sup>13</sup> GARRETT, *Social Reformers in Urban China...*, op. cit., pp. 180-181.

<sup>14</sup> LUTZ, *China and the Christian Colleges...*, op. cit., pp. 256-258.

During missionary presence in the Middle Kingdom, the success of physical education was partially accidental and conceived as a tool to develop Christian morality, but as the passing of the years it had a special attraction on urban masses, and missionaries understood the potentiality of this channel to influence the lifestyles and expectations of average urban citizens. Sports gave great visibility to missionaries institutions and created new shared values and, moments and senses of identification with a community, even if just spiritual and/or international. After the May Fourth Movement, a growing attention towards nationalist issues, and the anti-imperialist sensibility began to develop, and slowly changed the approach to sports. If in the previous decades, Western games offered an experience of internationalism, along the 1920s and 1930s, Chinese (and in particular, the Nationalist Party) tried to ‘ sinicize ’ physical activities and recreational events. This Nationalistic interpretation of physical education parallels the decline of missionaries’ prestige. It occurred gradually and on different levels: linguistic, political and cultural.

On a formal stage, Nationalist leaders felt the need of a redefinition of vocabulary. Most missionaries came from the English speaking world, they imported disciplines largely created in UK or in the US, so the terminology used to export and to explain them was in English. The use of a Western words, not only to talk about sport facilities or rules, but also during public events, where the audience was supposed to be mainly Chinese, was no more tolerated. Because of the Treaties of Versailles and the consequent Japanese aggressive policy, everything foreign was perceived as dangerous and not respectful of China unity. During the late 1910s, English language gave a sense of belonging to the scientific and evolved part of the world but now it evoked mainly episodes of national shame.<sup>15</sup> The terminology of sport and Physical Education was standardized by a missionary, Charles Harold McCloy, one of the leading figures in the late 1910s physical education world. His book, “*Gymnastics Nomenclature*” (the Chinese title is: *Ticao Yiming*, 体操译名) standardized the English-Chinese translation of physical education vocabulary.<sup>16</sup> This book was written in 1916 and its influence did not last that much. In 1925, the Nationalist Party “*called for the creation of a unified Mandarin tiyu terminology to replace the messy mix of English sports terms and Japanese commands still in use.*”<sup>17</sup> Curiously, McCloy was one of the member (the only foreign) of the commission appointed to rectify the words. Probably the government chose

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<sup>15</sup> Andrew D., MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body: A History of Physical Culture in Republican China*, PhD dissertation, University of California, San Diego, 1998, p. 186.

<sup>16</sup> Ivi, p. 192.

<sup>17</sup> Ivi, pp. 240-241.

him because of his intellectual status and because during his stay in China, he manifested a great will of integration, publishing his studies and researches in Chinese and working for the improvement of students' health. He signed his articles using a Chinese name Mai Kele, and never show an attitude, perceivable as imperialist.

After the death of Sun Yat-sen in 1925, Chiang Kai-shek became the leading figure of the party, and he intensified the anti-Imperialism campaigns. As regards physical culture, he gave a special attention to militarism. Military drill and army academies became quite widespread after 1850s, in the late Qing era, but during the first decades of the 1900s, it declined in favor of Western team games. The revival of militarism must be understood considering both Chiang Kai-shek personal background and his vision of masses as a unique social body. Chiang himself was educated in Baoding Military Academy, and then moved to Japan where he attended the Imperial Japanese Army Academy. He was inspired by Italian Fascism and German Nazism, so he boosted contacts and alliances with these countries. In May 1934, a Chinese delegation of officers was sent in Italy and Germany to learn new techniques.<sup>18</sup> The 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin, offered another occasion of observation of the Nazi model. Chiang and famous physical educators, as Cheng Dengke, Dong Shaoyi, Cheng Dunzhen,<sup>19</sup> showed admiration for Hitler's policy and promotion of military drill and believed that this moral shift and attention for people's strength was at the base of Germany economic development. Germany had an important role in the anti-Communist campaigns, as in 1933, Hitler sent his General Von Seecket to train Chiang's troops, Nationalists defeated Communist resistance and it was the beginning of the Long March.<sup>20</sup> Different intellectuals stressed the link between the rise of militarism and military drill in education programs, and the improvement of economy and National unity in Italy, Germany and Japan.<sup>21</sup>

Chiang Kai-shek wanted to created a public and standardized physical education programme based on Chinese tradition, filled with nationalistic values and aimed to militarize the lifestyle of Chinese people. In 1928, one of the eight resolutions on physical education taken by the government of Nanjing, was the reintroduction of military training in Chinese

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<sup>18</sup> FAN Hong, "Blue shirts, nationalists and nationalism: fascism in 1930s China," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 16, 4, 1999, p. 213.

<sup>19</sup> Cheng Dengke studied Physical Education in Germany, he was professor at Nanjing University and the head of the National Military Training Commission; Dong Shaoyi was the Chinese representative at the IOC; Cheng Dunzhen was a famous physical educator. For further details, see: FAN, *Blue shirts, nationalists and nationalism...*, op. cit., pp. 215-218.

<sup>20</sup> FAN, *Blue shirts, nationalists and nationalism...*, op. cit., p. 207.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew D. MORRIS, "How Could Anyone Respect Us? A Century of Olympic Consciousness and National Anxiety in China," *Brown Journal of Word Affairs*, vol., 2, Spring/Summer 2008, p. 3.

high schools.<sup>22</sup> Even though team games became popular during the 1910s, they remained limited to largest cities and to middle classes but less and less people practiced such sports for recreation. Chiang Kai-shek militarism should have reached every village, as it was formally expressed on April 16<sup>th</sup> 1929, with the “Citizens Physical Fitness Law” (*Guomin tiyu fa* 国民体育法).<sup>23</sup> This law separate physical education from the sphere of entertainment, and clearly stated: “*The aim of physical education and sport is to develop the bodies of men and women for the good of the country.*”<sup>24</sup> It was the beginning of central-planned deal of physical education. One of the urgencies was the creation of public sporting facilities and play fields financed by the State, and not by foreigners, not only in the cities, but also in the rural areas. In the same year, the party the party created a special institution focused on physical education research, called the Central *Tiyu* Research Society, with its own journal, *Tiyu zazhi*.<sup>25</sup> Such project was not limited to the education sphere, but it involved every individual, as every Chinese had to serve his nation. Stay healthy and physically strong became a social and moral duty. In this vision, physical education must be available to everybody, not in a democratic spirit but in order to ensure the national strength. Children and women were pushed (and sometimes, forced) to train themselves; girls schools had daily exercise sessions, and in most cities adult women had to join public gymnastics programmes.<sup>26</sup> From the late 1920s onwards, National propaganda made continuous mentions and invitations to exercise. Specific organs and commissions were create to supervise the models and the rate of physical activity throughout China. Such controls were firstly made through the Ministry of Education, that starting from 1927, had a specific organ devoted to *tiyu*: the National Physical Education and Sports Committee.<sup>27</sup> Soon, every branch of government administration created its own Physical Education section, like Sports Councils in every province, a special Physical Education and Sports Department inside the New Life movements, and the National Military Training Commission.<sup>28</sup> Such efforts are the proof that mass-direct policy and mobilization were employed before Communist Party rise, and were as effective as the post-1949 ones. Guomintang succeeded in what missionaries have failed: spread physical education outside educational and urban environments. Along the 1930s, even in the most remote provinces,

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<sup>22</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body*..., op. cit., p. 276.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>24</sup> This is the second of the thirteen points of this law. Found in: FAN Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom: The Liberation of Women's Bodies in Modern China*, London, Frank Cass, 1997, p. 321.

<sup>25</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body*..., op. cit., p. 276.

<sup>26</sup> FAN, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom*..., op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>27</sup> Ivi, p. 230.

<sup>28</sup> FAN, *Blue shirts, nationalists and nationalism*..., op. cit., p. 218.

provincial-level championships and competitions were encouraged and massively scheduled, public competitions became institutionalized cyclical moments, proposing on a national-scale missions games and changing the mood and the interpretation of sporting events.<sup>29</sup> In each province, there should be also selections to determine which district succeed the most in promoting physical activity.<sup>30</sup>

Legal imposition was just one side of the pro-military-drill efforts. Chiang managed to penetrate and control society thanks to special movements and association, made of trustworthy components. The first Nationalist group were the Blue Shirts, a clear reference to the Italian *Camicie Nere*. The movement was born in 1931 and only the most loyal army officials, trained at the Huangpu Military Academy could join. It remained an elite group, powerful among Nationalist army, and they had a great role in spreading militarism and in creating a sense of belonging and identity between soldiers.<sup>31</sup>

From 1934, with the foundation of the New Life Movement, Chiang Kai-shek wanted to propagate Blue Shirts' spirit into common people in order to militarize the country and to inculcate leaderism. He called for the integration of Confucian ancient values in modern life. He elaborated a new code of behavior derived from a mix of Nationalism, Militarism and Confucianism, condensed in 96 rules of conduct.<sup>32</sup> Individualism had to be condemned and everybody had to respect social hierarchy and national unity, giving his contribution. Talking about sports, it caused a redefinition of the entire ideological apparatus, imported by missionaries through British and American games, as we can read in this passage:

*In the past, the average athlete had incorrect ideas like "sport for sport's sake" or "playing sports just to win prizes." But "sport for sport's sake is just as meaningless as talking about "eating for eating's sake, or studying for studying's sake." And "playing sports just to win prizes" is like talking about "studying just for an exam or just for a diploma" even more ridiculous. The goal of sports, narrowly defined, is to develop the individual's physical fitness. But people cannot exist outside of society. Thus we can go even farther and say that besides aiming to develop the*

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<sup>29</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., pp. 350-352.

<sup>30</sup> FAN, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>31</sup> FAN, *Blue shirts, nationalists and nationalism...*, op. cit., p. 209.

<sup>32</sup> Ivi, pp. 211-213.

*individual's fitness, [sport] also aims to develop the fitness (tiyu) of the entire body of society.*<sup>33</sup>

Nationalist's revival of traditional Chinese culture involved also the promotion of martial arts, as a part of cultural heritage. After decades of poor consideration, there was a new interest towards these ancient techniques, and his revival represented the triumph of China over the foreign games. Nationalists invests great effort in promoting *wushu*. In 1928, Guomindang founded Central Martial Arts Academy (*Zhongyang guoshuguan*), in Nanjing and it was the beginning of the *Guoshu* project, a name that could be translated as 'National Arts.'<sup>34</sup> Not only Martial Arts were introduced in the army drill but also the Nanjing government pushed for establish local-level martial arts academies and an high rate of female attendance was registered.<sup>35</sup>

### **4.3 The decline of missionaries' involvement in Physical Education**

The shift in physical education was mainly a matter of power. Missionaries and Chinese converts were less and less, struck with persecutions, accused of being the vanguard of imperialism, they lacked consideration and were poorly organized. Some Christian colleges and universities were not recognized by the ministry of education, as they refused to make religion classes voluntary. Because of his policy of centralization of powers and violent purges against the Communist Party and other relevant figures inside his own party, he could impose his ideas on a large scale.

However, not all the influences of muscular Christianity were lost. They survived thanks mission school ex-students, as Wang Geng, a student of McCloy and he worked as physical educators in many public schools in Shanghai, so differently from his colleagues, his education was not focused on militarism. His greatest efforts were towards the creation of public sporting facilities and, if we consider that between 1929 and 1938, 1687 new public stadiums were built,<sup>36</sup> we can figurate out how massive where these pro-tiyu campaigns. As he declared in his book "What is tiyu for society?" he saw sport as a moralizing agent, able to contrast vices and to lead to a peaceful society, similarly to the view of 1800s muscular Christianity.<sup>37</sup> This was not a core idea in the Nationalist consideration of sports because, the idea of virtue in the Nationalist rhetoric was radically different from the Church's vision.

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<sup>33</sup> Quoted from an essay of Zhu Jiahua, director of China's Fourth National Games. Found in: MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 274.

<sup>34</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 472.

<sup>35</sup> Ivi, p. 465

<sup>36</sup> FAN Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 233.

<sup>37</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., pp. 283-284.

Sports were not strictly a tool to build character, as according to Guomintang propaganda, virtues were innate and already present in Chinese culture and people, but Western presence corrupted Han people to exploit Chinese resources. Physical education focused on military drill was a way of self-defense and to enforce and take back Chinese ancient morality.

Starting from the death of Sun Yat-sen, Nationalist Party progressively abandoned democratic ideals promoted by its own founder, and perceived them as generator of chaos and confusion. Similarly, Missionaries associations were accused of corrupting Chinese youth, providing them with foreign ways of entertainment and fostering false values. During the Nanjing Decade, competitions were at the centre of a contradictory criticism against the so-called “trophy-ism.”<sup>38</sup> Western athletes were portrayed as vain and greedy, and some Chinese champions who emerged in the 1910s, thanks to first national and international events could be corrupted too. As missionaries were the first to promote this kind of competitions, automatically they were accused of being the channels of those ‘ moneybag sports, ’<sup>39</sup> that lead to individualism. In Nationalist (and after, Communist) view, Y.M.C.A. promoted sports for elites, where famous athletes were exploit to advertize Protestant Church.<sup>40</sup> Their conception of physical education on individualism.

Accuses and Christians persecution caused a limitation of missionaries influence not only in tiyu sphere, but also in all their social activities. Both in schools and in public events, missionaries role was gradually reshaped. This process parallels what happened as regards missionary education, that was progressively secularized. Firstly, foreign missionaries’ duties were done by Christian Chinese. The first national games completely organized by a Chinese commission, were the Third National Games held in Wuchang in 1924, nevertheless, the all commission members were Y.M.C.A. staff.<sup>41</sup> Guomintang ideology was represented for the first time in a large-scale sporting event, during the Fourth National Games in Hangzhou in 1930, where the racial notion emerged, deleting all the international atmosphere of previous Games. Missionaries lost their role also in representing Chinese sports abroad, in 1924, when the Chinese Amateur Athletic Union (*Zhonghua yeyu yundong lianhehui*), heavily controlled by Y.M.C.A., was substituted with the China National Amateur Athletic Federation (*Zhonghua quanguo tiyu xiejinhui*), close to the Nationalist Party.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Ivi, p. 350.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibidem*.

<sup>40</sup> Ivi, p. 240.

<sup>41</sup> Ivi, p. 243.

<sup>42</sup> Ivi, p. 214.

#### 4.4 Theories on Physical Education for women

Physical education for women was one of the central points that all physical educationists had to face. Along the 1920s, there were three main positions:

- the total exclusion of women from physical activity, because it could affect their reproductive system. The eugenicist Pan Guangdan was the main supporter of this current.<sup>43</sup> Some writers, outside scientific environment, discouraged women participation in sports for reasons related with decorum, as during female sporting events, there were episodes of impoliteness.<sup>44</sup>
- The idea that women need physical training for their physical development; but within certain limits and without competitiveness as it is not suitable for female bodies. This vision was widespread also in Europe and in the United States; in China, it was mainly promoted by missionary McCloy.
- In the late 1920s, nationalist intellectuals pushed for women involvement in military-drill-like public exercises, to strengthen their bodies in a nationalistic dimension.<sup>45</sup>

The first position had little success, as it never became popular in schools, where firstly missionaries, and then Chinese physical educationists pushed for an inclusion of girls in gymnastics.

Along the 1920s the second position was the most followed, and female athletes appeared in public events, and gain visibility. According to statement that competitions were not suitable for girls, their presence was limited to group demonstration of soft calisthenics (*rouruan ticao*) and dance. The first important event including such show was the Far Eastern Championship Games in 1921.<sup>46</sup> Y.M.C.A., and its sub-organization Y.W.C.A., promoted this kind of events, but in that there were no space for the individual. In the early 1920s, a specific and daily physical activity was supposed to have some effects on beauty, and articles about how to reach precise aesthetic standards through exercises, flourished articles on magazines.<sup>47</sup> In the first half of the 1920s, the idea of female bodily fragility dominated and limited woman participation in physical activity to a conservative dimension, mainly aimed at satisfy an aesthetic criteria for male satisfaction. The domains of recreational games and military drill remained man prerogatives. The rise of Nationalist Party changed this prospective, and

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<sup>43</sup> Ivi, p. 293.

<sup>44</sup> Ivi, pp. 253-254.

<sup>45</sup> FAN, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>46</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 251.

<sup>47</sup> Ivi, pp. 256-258.

strongly pushed women to take part in training. The reason of such promotion lied in the assumption that strong woman could generate a strong nation; so it became a matter of moral duty and national service. Consequently, true Nationalist women contrasted with the ideal of pale weak girls. For them, the party promoted a training specific program, based on a mix of Swedish, German and Danish gymnastics.<sup>48</sup> In some provinces, there were Women's Physical Education Committees, to supervise the involvement and the respect of this program, according to 1929 Citizens Physical Fitness Law. Song Meiling, Chiang's wife, became the model to follow.

Under the Nationalist regime, female competitions gained visibility, to stress that “*both boys and girls must take part in physical education and sport,*”<sup>49</sup> but curiously, their début was in an international occasions. It was the 1934 Far Eastern Championship Games in Manila, for the first time, that Chinese female athletes competed in a medal competitions and not only in demonstrations between a match and another.<sup>50</sup>

#### 4.4.1 Queen of Sports

“Queen of Sports” (*Tiyu huanghou*) is a film directed by Sun Yu, in 1934. It is a fantastic concentrate of *tiyu* theories, analyzed and criticized through the representation of the characters. In line with 1930s vision, physical education issues are mixed with social and politic considerations, that show both politic engagement of the director and his knowledge of *tiyu* debate. Considering Sun Yu's belonging to the Communist group of Xia Yan, we can recognize both documentary and ideological intents. I must spend some words to define the term leftist as regards Chinese silent movie history. Even though, at that time Chiang Kai-shek was involved in ferocious campaigns against the Communist Party, Nationalist censorship never was efficient in setting up a unique criterion to follow to identify communist movies, so film directors were not as persecuted as writers were. Guomindang itself promoted films on social problems.<sup>51</sup> In “Queen of Sports,” the plot is quite simple and could be seen as the path of personal growth of a young athlete. Personal evolution is a recurring theme both in classic and modern Chinese literature. Lin Ying, a talented sprinter, evolves from the condition of naïve little girl, who realized her talent as a runner, to the one of a frivolous and vain athlete. After one fellow's death, she renounces the title of “Queen of Sports” and she

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<sup>48</sup> FAN Hong, *Footbinding, Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 245.

<sup>49</sup> First point of the 1929 “Citizens Physical Fitness Law.” Found in: Fan Hong, *Footbinding Feminism and Freedom...*, op. cit., p. 321.

<sup>50</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., p. 250.

<sup>51</sup> XIAO Zhiwei, “Le Ambiguità Politiche del cinema di Sinistra (1932-1937),” in Elena Pollacchi, Marco Müller (edited by), *Ombre Elettriche. Cento Anni di Cinema Cinese (1905-2005)*, Milano, Electa, 2005, pp. 34-45.

becomes a trainer to serve her country. The protagonist is the only character who changes, as the other characters embody a precise stereotype, easily recognizable at the first sight. The main actress is Li Lili, who performs the role of Lin Ying, a girl from the countryside, arrived in Shanghai to attend school. She is hosted by her relatives, a couple of rich bourgeois, dressed with Western clothes. They are clearly influenced and fascinated by West and they want to arrange a marriage between her and a boy who is “just arrived from abroad.” He embodies the stereotype of the Chinese businessman and intellectual who integrally adopts Western way of behavior; his characterization is very precise and his admiration for the West appears also in his speech as he is the only one who uses linguistic loans, like 密死 (*misi*) for “miss,” instead of the original Chinese word 小姐 (*xiaojie*). As corrupted from foreign societies, he is physically weak: when he shakes his hands with the country girl, he cannot stand her force. In many scenes, we can see iconic shoots of the city (for instance, the Bund), and symbols of modernity, like trains, ships and cars. These scenes work as establishing shots and to better criticize modernity. The protagonist embodies all the good values of the country people: she is young, pure, innocent and spontaneous. Her condition of country girl provides her with an innate deep knowledge of her own country, and her purity from foreign influences gives her the capability of recognize loss of morality and social inequalities that strike big urban areas, where foreign influences and the effect of imperialism are more evident. When her father asks her impression about Shanghai, she answers:

我覺得上海是一個奇怪的小地方，有些房子好得像皇宮，有些房子又  
脏得像狗洞!... 人也是很奇怪的! 有些瘦得像骷髏，有些却又吃得像肥  
豬!...

*I think Shanghai is a weird place; some houses are so beautiful that look  
like royal palaces, some other are so dirty that seem dog nests!... People  
are strange too! Someone is so skinny that looks like a skeleton, on the  
other side, some people are fat as pigs!...*

In another scene, Sun knowledge and interest of the “sick man of Asia” debate emerged, in a dialogue between Lin Ying and her father. The young girl is aware of China decadence and gives her explanation:

爸爸，我知道為什麼中國不強了! 第一個原因就是身體太弱!

*Dad, I know why China is not powerful! The first reason is because the bodies (of Chinese people) are too weak!*

Her trainer personifies the young honest intellectual devoted to his work and aimed to serve his country. It could be seen as a young Communist activist. His moral superiority is stressed by his corporeality: he is the tallest actor in the movie, he has wide shoulder and a strong body, his style is proper and simple to underline his frugality. His words are in line the *tiyu* theories of his time. In that decade, both Nationalist and Communist rhetoric had a special consideration for *tiyu*: both conceived *tiyu* as a way to serve the Nation and to emancipate the population from its condition of inferiority, compared with world powers. At the beginning of his lesson, encouraged military drill and Chinese as he states:

有健全的身體, 然後有健全的精神! 有青春的朝氣, 然後有奮鬥的恆心!

任何民族自強的原動力, 就是健全的身體!...

*A sound mind in a healthy body! Who has the vigour of the youth, can persevere in the struggle! Healthy bodies lead every Nation to its self strengthening .*

Through this film, Sun demonstrates to be aware participates in the debate about the ideal physical activity for China, and indirectly gives his opinion. The choice of a sprinter for a film centered on sport, is not casual. He did not choose team games, because they were foreigner product and they implicate the false value of ‘ playing sports just to win prizes. ’ There are some rapid sequences of girls playing basketball and a soccer match, but the soccer players have a very bad characterization: they are university students, very influenced by Western lifestyle; they are vicious, they smoke and get drunk; one of them tried to seduce the protagonist. Team games promoted by missionaries had definitively lost their status of build-man tools, promoted by missionaries. One can state that running is an athletic discipline born and develop in the ancient Olympic Games. That’s true, but running is perceivable as more primitive, not needing of any technology, and it is individualistic. It is more suitable in describing personal evolution and the spectator can easily identify oneself with the character. Guttmann observed a note-worthy contradiction as regards Americans preferences in sport. He noted that even if American society defines itself as individualist, United States citizens have always preferred and practice team games, more than individual disciplines. Even in its literature and cinema on sports and athletes, the presence of team sports prevails. Curiously,

in Europe and in Japan, the tendency is towards individualist disciplines predominates.<sup>52</sup> Unfortunately, he did not collect data about China, and a research on this issue is not directly related with the core of this work. However, this topic is very interesting and offers reflections on a sociological and cultural phenomena, and maybe it would offer new interpretations about Sun's choice of an individualistic disciplines, that overcome the historical context.

Lin Ying's renounce to the Queen of Sports competition is another personal stance of Sun Yu, in line with the anti-trophy-ism position, in favor of a mass-oriented physical education.

Another relevant element is the function of a female protagonist and the representation of female body. Why did Sun Yu choose a girl as the main character in movie on sports? There are many possible answers. Considering physical education debate and assuming a Sun's interest in them, the Nanjing Decade represented the beginning of female public competitions and were characterized by a push on women in sports. A second option can be, the director's adhesion with 1930s tendencies in Chinese cinema, that privileged female protagonists. Analyzing commercial interests, we can find another explication. In the same years, the phenomenon of national stars raised. Both cinema and sports worlds experienced the growth of idols, beloved by lots of fans and persecuted by journalists. As regards *tiyu*, the most admired athletes were Liu Changchun, a male runner, and the female sprinter Sun Guiyun.<sup>53</sup> They became famous in 1930, thank to their results at the First National Games and they became protagonists of a "*sports hero-worship never before seen in China.*"<sup>54</sup> A similar admiration was reserved to cinema stars, particularly Ruan Lingyu, Wang Renmei and, of course Li Lili. Images of their bodies were employed in advertisement on magazines for goods considered related with a modern life style, and designated to urban middle class. After 1934, Li Lili embodied the ideal of healthy and graceful woman, and she promoted sport facilities on magazines.<sup>55</sup> Probably, Sun Yu's choice was a mix of influences from the woman question, the physical education debate and commercial interests. About the representation of female body, in the movie we can recognize both documentary and realistic intents, and a particular attention for female sensuality. In the first part of the movie, we see some unusual situations, as girls in a college dormitory training, having shower and washing themselves.

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<sup>52</sup> Allen GUTTMAN, *From Ritual to Record: The Nature of Modern Sports*, New York, Columbia University Press, 1978, pp. 137-156.

<sup>53</sup> MORRIS, *Cultivating the National Body...*, op. cit., pp. 278-279.

<sup>54</sup> Ivi, p. 278.

<sup>55</sup> ZHANG Zhen, "La Lotta per la Donna Moderna tra il Cinema Sentimentale e Cinema realista nella Shanghai degli anni Trenta", in Elena Pollacchi, Marco Müller (edited by), *Ombre Elettriche. Cento Anni di Cinema Cinese (1905-2005)*, Milano, Electa, 2005, p. 53.

Professor Paul Pickowicz perceived these images as a modern concept of femininity, portrayed an allure of sensuality.<sup>56</sup> I must recognize that for 1930s standards, there some shots of girls bodies were quite provocative, but in my opinion, this series of every day (even if sensual) moments of personal hygiene must be read from a different perspective. In that period of high militarism in schools, shaped on the model of European Fascisms, real life was not far from what we can see in the movie, so I linked it to the realism typical of the Second generation directors.

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<sup>56</sup> Paul G. PICKOWICZ, "The Theme of Spiritual Pollution in Chinese Films of the 1930s," *Modern China*, vol. 17, 1, Jan. 1991, pp. 50-52.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this work was to define the contribution in Physical Education and Sports in China, given by Protestant Missionaries, and its consequences in terms of self-perception, and cultural belonging. I strictly selected the Christian missions channel, excluding influences from the Army academies and the military word, because my will was to reflect on the formation of a Chinese modern middle class, modelled after the Western (or more precisely the Anglo-Saxon) ones and exposed to Western values and lifestyles. In the Late Qing and Early Republic decades, the new-born Chinese bourgeoisie was the class who absorbed the most the idea of sports as man-builder tools, and enjoyed first sporting events as identity-making performances. But what kind of man and what identity? Those were the burning questions, I tried to answer.

First of all, we can recognize different stages, according to the different integration levels of missionaries. Up until 1895, Chinese urban classes largely perceived themselves as Chinese, and besides Chinese living abroad, there was no interest in adopting Western lifestyles. Only lower classes experienced Western Physical Education, as Protestant missions concentrated their efforts in small rural communities, and they were poorly considered by upper classes. Throughout the nineteenth century, missions faced many organizational difficulties, and the indifference of the population, due to the Chinese peculiar condition of semi-colony, that limited missionary potentialities. They had no resources and no precise strategies in their preaching. In their schools, Physical Education was introduced for medical purposes, but because of very low finance, and the limited numbers of students, mainly orphans, their social impact was not relevant. At this stage, we cannot talk about sports as community links.

The military defeat during the Sino-Japanese war generated wealthy urban families' interest in missionaries' schools. People believe that the power of Western countries depends on their scientific knowledge. Christian schools introduced in their curricula Western sciences, gained appeal among Chinese intellectuals. Physical Education was an unpleasant side-effect. Wealthy students and their families showed strong resistances in joining physical education classes, as it was antithetic to the ideal of Confucian intellectual. I would define this phase as a Western sport passive assimilation period, since those who practiced them were forced by school curricula, without any interests for bodily and spiritual advantages.

Starting from 1905, hostility towards physical activity gradually decreased. The active phase, where Chinese urban classes not only accepted it but shared team sports values, was a consequence of the identity crisis, occurred in the last years of the Qing empire. Along with the dynasty, also the old notion of being Chinese ended, particularly in big cities of the East, like Shanghai, Hong Kong and Tianjin, where the massive exposition to European American products and habits created a hybrid social stratum, born Chinese, but educated in Missionaries' schools, or in foreign universities, and following Western lifestyle. Such people not only practiced Western sports but also went watching matches. Differently from the previous stage, Chinese are no more forced, as the paid admissions proved. First big sporting events were organized by missionaries, who selected athletes among the students of their schools. Modern sport competitions have always been identity-making factors; they have an important role in the Nation-Making process because "*sport creates stories which people tell themselves about themselves. These stories, or ' discursive regimes ' [...] provides the symbolic clay for making culture.*"<sup>1</sup> Someone could argue that people watching an event as the First National Games and cheering the team coming from their own regions, were actually stressing their Chinese regional identity. As I explained in the third chapter, events organized by missionaries looked like American or English matches. The opening speeches were in English, athletes were dressed in a Western way, the music played between a match and another was Western. If we look at the Far Eastern Championship Games logo, the first thing we note is that the athlete represented has no Asian features. The rhetoric related with the opening and closing speeches and the way Chinese newspapers portrayed these events, was more focused on how China managed to overcome the obscurantism of its traditional misconception about sports, and the progresses Chinese youth made in strengthening his body. Such phase approximately covers the years from 1905 to 1925 and represents the period when Chinese Sport History was influenced the most by missionaries. The stories developed in these years are more about an international, westernized community. Missionary reports are filled with enthusiastic comments on how their students had improved their athletic performances, differently from the weak sickly previous generations. Concerning the female sphere , they were even more proud of their successes in promoting soft calisthenics among girls and in contrasting the custom of footbinding. The lack of a strong and hegemonic politic power influenced the growth of missions, that filled this vacuum of power and could impose their authority in organizing national- and international- scale events.

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<sup>1</sup> Mark DYRESON, "Globalizing the Nation-Making Process: Modern Sport in World History," *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 20, 1, 2003, p. 93.

The Treaties of Versailles and the growing Japanese expansionism worsened the relationships between Chinese people and missionaries. Nationalistic ideologies called for a return to Chinese culture. Christianity and all Western influences were persecuted, so less and less students attended mission colleges and universities. Western team sports were accused to fostered false values of individualism and sterile careerism. After 1925, the Nationalist Party promoted military drill as the main component of Physical Education in schools. Chiang Kai-shek adopted a policy aimed to gain the State control over Physical Education. Missionaries lost their exclusive position in education and in the organization of sport events. The following National Games were centred on the promotion of military drill and the idea that training oneself was a contribution to the ‘ National Body. ’ After decades of scarce consideration, Martial Arts were promoted as being original Chinese techniques. Nationalist Party propaganda on Physical Education was charged with features of tradition and modernity at the same time.

By the 1930s, missionaries lost all the prestige they gained, and the communities developed around missionaries’ schools in urban areas, were persecuted by the *Guomindang*, and after by the Communist Party. However, Protestant missionaries have the credit of having introduced sports in China, with their values and competitive features. They made urban middle classes feel like a community, in a period when the deep politic and cultural crisis separated them from rural population and officials. Sports and athletes were the main aggregating factors, creating a trans-generational and trans-regional identity moments, between people sharing a common educational background.

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