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**The YMCA's "Moral Empire", Public Health, and  
Masculinity in Interwar East and Southeast Asia:  
China, the Philippines, and Japan**

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## **The YMCA's "Moral Empire", Public Health, and Masculinity in Interwar East and Southeast Asia: China, the Philippines, and Japan**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper addresses the North American YMCA's transnational "moral empire" in East and Southeast Asia, focusing on the topics of public health, fitness, and masculinity. The main period covered are the 1920s, when the YMCA had already established an institutional network in China, the Philippines, and Japan. I analyze how the growing scientificity of physical education in the U.S., which during the Progressive Era (1890s-1920s) turned into an academic discipline, influenced the YMCA's attempts to improve public health and fitness in Asia. In particular, I investigate how the North American YMCA intended to assimilate Asian physical education experts into the corresponding framework of amateur sports ideals that defined YMCA masculinity. Doing so reveals the agency of not yet scrutinized Asian physical education experts and shows their ways of supporting, challenging, or resisting the North American YMCA's often hegemonic position in scientific physical education in the China, the Philippines, and Japan.

“Q. [Question]: Did you convert him [Kanō Jigorō] personally?”

A. [Answer]: Absolutely, that is [,] it was this way -- he was President of the Tok[y]o Higher Normal School where the government teachers are trained and his influence was very great. You see all the government teachers went out of this school with this other idea [*bushidō* / way of the warrior] and now the biggest single volleyball league in Japan is in his school. He ditched the whole thing and I remember his swan song when he did it.”<sup>1</sup>

On January 5<sup>th</sup>, 1920, Elwood S. Brown, in an interview that lasted for several hours, was questioned about his previous activities for the North American<sup>2</sup> branch of the YMCA. Brown, born in Cherokee, Iowa, in 1883 to a Baptist minister, provides a prime example of a transnational career as a YMCA leader in amateur sports, fitness, and public health.<sup>3</sup> In the interview’s first part, the YMCA War Historical Bureau had been interested in his cooperation with the U.S. military. Before and after 1918, the year when Brown had left Asia to provide services to the American Expeditionary Forces (AEF) being shipped to France, he had played a central role as a YMCA physical (education) director in the North American YMCA’s foreign department (staffed and supported by both the U.S. and the Canadian YMCA). Among other tasks, Brown had co-organized two major sporting events for the large number of soldiers who after the Armistice in November 1918 awaited demobilization. The AEF Championships and later the Inter-Allied Games, an international event held among the Allied countries’ militaries at the newly constructed Pershing Stadium close to Paris, nevertheless served not only to provide participants and spectators recreation and entertainment. Like Brown’s earlier activities in East and Southeast Asia, the games were characterized by the missionary and pedagogical aims of the YMCA, such as democratic citizenship training and improving public health and fitness.

Muscular Christianity, a sports concept strongly related to the YMCA, had gained in importance since the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and used amateur sports as a tool to promote a concept of masculinity that was based on three American Protestant ideals:<sup>4</sup> Christian internationalism, Christian egalitarianism, and a Protestant work ethic, which included pursuing a healthy and

<sup>1</sup> Meeting of the War Historical Bureau of the Young Men’s Christian Association. Monday, January 5, 1920, at 124 East 28<sup>th</sup> Street, New York City, pp. 18–19, in: Armed Services: World War I. Box 23: Elwood Brown Interview. Athletics in the Far East. Early Work in France. 1920, Kautz Family YMCA Archives, University of Minnesota, Minneapolis (hereafter: [KFYMCAA](#)).

<sup>2</sup> “North American YMCA” refers to the U.S. and the Canadian YMCA branches.

<sup>3</sup> On Brown see: Stefan Hübner, “Muscular Christianity and the ‘Western Civilizing Mission’: Elwood S. Brown, the YMCA and the Idea of the Far Eastern Championship Games.” *Diplomatic History* 39,3 (2015): 532–557.

<sup>4</sup> On muscular Christianity and U.S. “progressive” social reformers see: Clifford Putney, *Muscular Christianity. Manhood and Sports in Protestant America, 1880–1920*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001; William J. Baker, *Playing with God: Religion and Modern Sport*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2007; Dominick Cavallo, *Muscles and Morals: Organized Playgrounds and Urban Reform, 1880–1920*, Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981; Elmer L. Johnson, *The History of YMCA Physical Education*. Chicago: Association Press, 1979; Tony Ladd and James A. Mathisen, *Muscular Christianity: Evangelical Protestants and the Development of American Sport*. Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1999; David I. Macleod, *Building Character in the American Boy. The Boy Scouts, YMCA, and their Forerunners, 1870–1920*, Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983; David P. Setran, *The College “Y”. Student Religion in the Era of Secularization*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007. More generally on physical education and Christianity see: William J. Baker, “Religion.” In: Steven W. Pope and John Nauright (eds.), *Routledge Companion to Sports History*, London: Routledge, 2010, 216–228; Shirl J. Hoffman, *Good Game. Christianity and the Culture of Sport*, Waco: Baylor University Press, 2010. On masculinity see: Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America. A Cultural History*. Third Edition. New York: Oxford University Press, 2012.

productive body. To promote the ideals in Asia, Brown had founded the Far Eastern Championship Games (FECG), which, reminiscent of a world fair, initially served as a PR event and a tool for communicating the YMCA's activities. The FECG, taking place ten times between 1913 and 1934, constituted the largest sporting event regularly held during the interwar period. The Games were of eminent importance for Asians becoming interested in Western sports, and their later hosting drew hundreds of thousands of spectators to the venues, in addition to being covered in newspapers, radio broadcasting, and the cinema.<sup>5</sup> In another regard, the FECG's success was more ambivalent. North American YMCA physical directors for more than a decade sought to establish their ideals among their Asian colleagues and opponents from China, Japan, and the Philippines. For example, the question concerning Kanō's "conversion", which opened this paper, did *not* refer to a formal change of denomination, which possibly could remain without any practical consequences.

Instead, the religious aspiration was to change behaviors and cultural systems, based on making Japanese society embrace Protestant American amateur sports ideals. Kanō was not only in close contact with the Japanese ministry of education and thus quite influential in deciding what types of physical education were to be taught and sponsored at public schools. Since 1909, he was also the first Asian who had been coopted into the International Olympic Committee (IOC). Moreover, Kanō's "conversion" did not result in an unlimited embrace of American Protestant amateur sports. The main reason was Kanō's interest in traditional Japanese philosophy and the corresponding physical education and fitness practices, which led to his invention of judo. A conflict between muscular Christianity and Kanō's non-Western, *bushidō* ("way of the warrior") inspired physical education ideology, which initially was strongly Japan oriented and focused on educating loyal and efficient subjects of the emperor. The Third FECG (Tokyo 1917) resulted in a partial "conversion" of Kanō towards team sports, such as the YMCA-invented volleyball and basketball, and reduced his aversion to American Protestant amateur sports ideals. However, this meant that the YMCA's sports related "civilizing mission" had overcome only its very first obstacle.<sup>6</sup>

This paper addresses the North American and local YMCAs' aim of spreading modern, Western amateur sport in East and Southeast Asia.<sup>7</sup> Spreading sport in East and Southeast Asia served a large-scale social engineering project based on transferring the above mentioned ideals of Christian internationalism, Christian egalitarianism, and a Protestant work ethic. I conceptualize this endeavor as a "civilizing mission," in the words of Jürgen Osterhammel describing "a special kind of belief with, sometimes, practical consequences. It includes the self-proclaimed right and duty to propagate and actively introduce one's own norms and institutions to other peoples and societies, based upon a firm conviction of the inherent superiority and higher legitimacy of one's own collective way of life."<sup>8</sup> Hence, the following analysis covers North American and Asian YMCA officials, who were involved in

<sup>5</sup> On the YMCA and the FECG see: Stefan Huebner, *Pan-Asian Sports and the Emergence of Modern Asia, 1913–1974*. Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2016, chapters 1 and 2; Kō Takashima, *Firipin Kānibarū kara Kyōkutō Orinpikku e: supōtsu, minshu shugi, bijinesu. Kyōto Daigaku bungakubu kenkyū kiyō* 56 (2017): 113–193.

<sup>6</sup> Hübner, *Muscular Christianity*, 547–548.

<sup>7</sup> Modern sport is characterized by equality, bureaucratization, specialization, rationalization, quantification, and an obsession with records: Allen Guttmann / Lee Thompson, *Japanese Sports. A History*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2001, pp. 3–4. I do not include their seventh characteristic: secularism.

<sup>8</sup> Jürgen Osterhammel, *Europe, the "West" and the Civilizing Mission: The 2005 Annual Lecture at the German Historical Institute London*. London: GHIL, 2006, p. 8. On colonial "civilizing missions" see also: Michael Adas, "Contested Hegemony: The Great War and the Afro-Asian Assault on the Civilizing Mission Ideology." *Journal of World History* 15,1 (2004): 31–63; Kenneth Pomeranz, "Empire & 'Civilizing' Missions, Past and Present." *Daedalus* 134,2 (2005): 34–45.

the expansion of what Ian Tyrrell called the American “moral empire.”<sup>9</sup> I also pursue the activities of U.S., East and Southeast Asian elites, such as bureaucrats, politicians, and especially sports experts, who during the 1920s dealt with the transfer of amateur sports ideals. My case studies on China, the Philippines, and Japan illustrate the wide range of their reactions, ranging from acceptance to selective appropriation to rejection.<sup>10</sup> In the process, I shed light on the YMCA’s contribution towards self-government and, related to it, later to decolonization. In addition to two cases of cooperation, a case of nationalism-inspired resistance against the “civilizing mission” illustrates that its liberal and benevolent character — if compared to the “civilizing mission” claims of many colonial administrations — was rejected as an undesirable form of Protestant American paternalism.

This paper argues that the YMCA’s amateur sports-related “civilizing mission” served to implement a large-scale social, cultural, and political transformation process in the Catholic Philippines as well as in Japan and China, both non-Christian countries. In the process, the initially quite paternalistic project served to increase the capacity for self-government — using a Protestant American standard — among the three peoples. Even Japan was included, being perceived as treating its population in a too authoritarian way. The YMCA’s support for national self-government was a major difference to the “civilizing mission” rhetoric of colonial administration, often serving to justify and prolong colonial rule. The YMCA’s liberal focus was, among other reasons, the result of American philanthropists expecting efficient and effective missionary work.<sup>11</sup> This expectation included an economic use of donations, which meant that concrete successes needed to be achieved and communicated to receive further funding. Among such activities, the transfer of elements of Protestant American sports and fitness culture took a prominent place and intensified during the 1910s. Educating Asian YMCA officials in the U.S. also gained in importance, being desirable in the view of philanthropists, since it reduced the financial costs of having North American officials work abroad. In combination with growing anti-colonial nationalism since the First World War, leading to intense demands regarding a leadership transfer to Asians, the economic considerations meant that an increasing number of Asians were sent to the International YMCA College (now Springfield College) and other institutions to study. However, there was substantial fear among North American physical directors, including Elwood Brown, that their Asian colleagues would, due to the political tensions in East Asia, be unable or unwilling to enforce American Protestant amateur sports ideals against nationalistic outbursts. Such nationalistic outbursts were considered to be signs of backwardness due

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<sup>9</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Reforming the World. The Creation of America’s Moral Empire*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010.

<sup>10</sup> See Huebner, *Pan-Asian Sports*, chapters 1–2. On the Philippines see: Gerald R. Gems, *Sport and the American Occupation of the Philippines. Bats, Balls, and Bayonets*. Lanham: Lexington Books, 2016; Lou Antolihao, *Playing with the Big Boys. Basketball, American Imperialism, and Subaltern Discourse in the Philippines*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015, chapter 1-2; Celia Bocobo-Olivar, *History of Physical Education in the Philippines*. Quezon City: 1972, chapters 5–8; Regino R. Ylanan and Carmen W. Ylanan, *The History and Development of Physical Education and Sports in the Philippines*. Second Edition. Quezon City: University of the Philippines Press, 1974, chapters 7–8. On China see: Jonathan Kolatch, *Sports, Politics and Ideology in China*. New York: David Publishers, 1972, part 1; Andrew D. Morris, *Marrow of the Nation. A History of Sport and Physical Culture in Republican China*, Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004; Guoqi Xu, *Olympic Dreams. China and Sports, 1895–2008*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008, chapters 1–3. On Japan see: Kō Takashima, *Teikoku Nihon to supōtsu* [The Empire of Japan and Sport]. Tokyo: Hanawa Shobō, 2012, chapter 1.1; Ikuo Abe, “Muscular Christianity in Japan: The Growth of a Hybrid.” In: John J. MacAloon (ed.), *Muscular Christianity in Colonial and Post-Colonial Worlds*, London: Routledge, 2008, pp. 14–38; Guttman / Thompson, *Japanese Sports*, chapter 3; Thomas Blackwood, “Bushidō Baseball? Three ‘Fathers’ and the Invention of a Tradition.” *Social Science Japan Journal* 11,2 (2008): 223–240.

<sup>11</sup> On YMCA media reporting targeted at U.S. donors see: Stefan Hübner, “Donors and the Global Sportive ‘Civilizing Mission’: Asian Athletics, American Philanthropy, and YMCA Media (1910s–1920s).” *Itinerario* 40,1 (2016): 589–614.

to their often emotion-driven or violent character. Self-control, in contrast, was one of the essential elements of the YMCA's concepts of amateur sport and of masculinity, providing the foundation for pacifying and democratizing societies. Consequently, this article answers the following questions: Why did American Protestant amateur sports and fitness turn into an important part of the YMCA's "civilizing mission", oriented towards self-government? How did the modernization aims of North American and Asian YMCA leaders differ from other Asian actors who were familiar with Western sports? Why and how did the latter's resistance occur, if it occurred?

During the Progressive Era, previously mentioned social and economic changes in U.S. society — in addition to the growing amount of funding that philanthropists made available — allowed the YMCA to have a larger impact on U.S. and Canadian society. This more "secular" program was partly rooted in the Anglo-American notions of the social gospel that became popular during the 1890s. Such social gospel-related work included sport, education, public health, urban social hygiene, rural development, and various other forms of humanitarian activities. Growing expectations of philanthropists, such as the Rockefeller family, meant that civil society organizations increasingly switched from lessening the symptoms of social dysfunctions — for example, poverty and sickness — to systematically investigating and eradicating their roots — for example, through education programs and improvements in public health.<sup>12</sup>

Corresponding to the YMCA's focus on "spirit, mind, and body", amateur sport's purpose was not limited to the body, but included Christian character building. Disciplining body and mind should serve as a shield against vices, such as alcohol, drugs, promiscuity, and prostitution, which anonymous city life made more accessible than it was in rural communities. Moreover, conveying norms and values to young Anglo-Saxon men, but also to immigrants and African Americans, served to integrate them into an American Protestant social order and to promote Christian internationalism, Christian egalitarianism, and a Protestant work ethic. Among such norms and values were trust in discipline and hard training (or hard work) as the foundation of success in competition with others instead of a belief in luck or fate, as is the case in many forms of gambling; fitness as a means to increase productivity by being better shielded against sickness and by having a higher life expectancy (meaning that education pays off more); fair play as a discouragement of corruption and a contribution to good government; equality of opportunity and practical efficiency by selecting athletes based on their competence, not their social background, ethnicity, or family ties; team spirit as the foundation for reaching a collective goal; obedience of duly constituted authority, such as accepting referee decisions, as a civil duty; and self-control to reduce inter-human violence.<sup>13</sup>

The U.S. expansion into the Pacific Ocean intensified the confrontation of East and Southeast Asian countries with the "progressive" ideas of North American Protestant missionaries. Beginning in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, their activities established an informal "moral empire" in Asia, whose golden age ended with the Great Depression, when donations drastically decreased. The Spanish-American War (1898) and the U.S. annexation of the Philippines in 1899 contributed to the emergence of a transnational YMCA network in Asia. At least initially funded and administered by the North American YMCA, the Protestant internationalist project's focus was on transforming seemingly backward Asian society according to the above-mentioned American Protestant interpretations of democracy and capitalism.

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<sup>12</sup> On the growing expectations of philanthropists see: Barry D. Karl and Stanley N. Katz, "The American Private Philanthropic Foundations and the Public Sphere (1890–1930)," *Minerva* 19,2 (1981): 236–270.

<sup>13</sup> On horizontal mass sports and democratization see: Paul Christesen, *Sport and Democracy in the Ancient and Modern Worlds*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012. On sport and shrinking inter-human violence see: Norbert Elias and Eric Dunning (eds.), *Quest for Excitement. Sport and Leisure in the Civilizing Process*, Oxford: Blackwell, 1993.

China, one of the countries with the highest number of non-Christians worldwide, constituted a prime target for North American missionary organizations, including the YMCA. Muscular Christianity served not only as a mediator for Christian ideals. More “secular” social gospel-inspired attempts to scientifically improve public health and fitness also were highly important. Particularly for *Chinese* YMCA physical directors, doing so was also related to ideas of increasing the population’s military capability to survive in a social Darwinist world order (which was not contradictory to Christian ideals, if limited to fighting for a “just” cause).

In 1913, China-based U.S. YMCA physical director William W. Lockwood communicated his astonishment at how important the topic of “public health” had become in the U.S. In his article in the YMCA journal *Physical Training*, he bemoaned that in Shanghai about one thousand and China-wide about two million people annually died from tuberculosis. Bad public health would be the result of six reasons: urbanization, overcrowded accommodations, lack of knowledge regarding the importance of sunshine and fresh air, an unbalanced diet that favors tuberculosis, bad sanitary conditions, and a centuries-old value system that accredited importance only to studying, but not physical exercise. As a consequence, the Shanghai YMCA’s physical department regularly organized information events on the topic of “healthcare,” which were also covered in Chinese language newspapers, meaning additional outreach potential.<sup>14</sup>

As will be shown soon, North American YMCA physical directors and their Chinese colleagues often discussed the last factor listed by Lockwood. They identified the rejection of physical exercise among Chinese scholars and especially among officials as an important reason for a problematic public health situation and, related to it, China’s decline since the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Without question, such an interpretation supported (stereotypical) images of China as the “sick man of East Asia.”<sup>15</sup> In terms of the American Protestant “civilizing mission”, Lockwood identified a serious problem and came to the conclusion that the Chinese would be unable to solve it without YMCA assistance. This conclusion, and the article in general, among others obviously addressed North American donors and philanthropists, where some exaggerations, stereotypes, and success stories could have a positive financial impact. Moreover, based on an American “standard of civilization,” Lockwood and his colleagues used scientific methods<sup>16</sup> to diagnose the outcomes of Chinese social and cultural deficits.

The demand for scientific approaches (as an element of Western civilization) thus was a central part of the amateur sport and fitness-related “civilizing mission” and a reason for the negative evaluation of local, unscientific practices. An article authored by Charles A. Siler, a physical director in the service of the national committee of the Chinese YMCA, which was published in 1919 in the YMCA journal *The Chinese Students’ Christian Journal*, can serve as an example. Collecting anthropometric data in North Chinese cities and evaluating it in combination with comparisons to U.S. data served to illustrate the consequences of the Chinese public health deficits and to amplify the need for counter-measures: “The need of systematic physical education is apparent to the most casual observer. The

<sup>14</sup> William W. Lockwood, “Health Education in China.” *Physical Training* 10,5 (1913): 138–139.

<sup>15</sup> See for example: Chengting T. Wang [Pinyin: Zhengting], *Ō Seitei kaikoroku. Looking Back and Looking Forward* [Wang Zhengting’s Memoirs], ed by. Ryūji Hattori, Tokyo: Chū Daigaku Shuppanbu, 2008, pp. 4–5, 18; Charles H. McCloy, “Physical Education in China.” *Bulletins on Chinese Education* 2,5 (1923): 1–8, here 1–2; “The Athletes of China.” *China’s Young Men* (English Edition) 6,10 (1916): 523–527, here: 524. On China as the “sick man of East Asia” and sports see: Kō Takashima, “‘Tōa Byōfu’ to supōtsu – koroniaru masukyuriniti no shiten kara [The ‘Sick Man of East Asia’ and Sports – from the Perspective of Colonial Masculinity].” In: Yoshihiro Ishikawa and Naoki Hazama (eds.), *Kindai Higashi Ajia ni okeru honyaku gainen no tenkai* [The Development of Translated Concepts in Modern East Asia], Kyoto: Kyōto Daigaku Jinbun Kagaku Kenkyūjo 2013, pp. 309–342.

<sup>16</sup> “Scientific methods” does not necessarily imply that such methods are today still perceived to be productive.



investigations made at Tsinghua [Qinghua] College and at the Tientsin [Tianjin] Y.M.C.A. show Chinese students to be smaller in stature, in girths, and in lung capacity than American students of the same age. It stands to reason that when American men are breaking under the strain of modern conditions, Chinese men cannot hope to stand the strain with bodies less strong.”<sup>17</sup>

The next logical step for solving at least some Chinese public health problems was (in addition to the promotion of medical and pharmaceutical knowledge) the transfer of Western amateur sport and fitness practices to China and their systematic spread among the population. The Chinese population thus was seen as having the biological potential to achieve, with YMCA support, a significantly higher degree of health, fitness, and physical capability if the roots of the problem were tackled. An article written by YMCA physical director Alfred H. Swan shows this.<sup>18</sup> Since 1912, Swan had held several positions in China, among them head trainer of the Chinese team for the FECG and instructor of Chinese YMCA physical directors in Shanghai, before he temporarily returned to the U.S. in 1919 to earn a medical degree. In an article published in March 1921 in *Physical Training*, he was optimistic that a Chinese team would succeed at the Olympic Games if it underwent strict training (although China’s first and, in terms of medals, unsuccessful participation with a team of one athlete would not take place before 1932<sup>19</sup>). The physical strength and body size of the about 140,000 Chinese laborers who had been recruited to work for the Allied forces in France would have demonstrated the Chinese biological potential to the “whole world.” In contrast to African Pygmies, whom he judged to lack the biological potential to succeed at the Olympics, the Chinese possessed great potential, if universal training in amateur sports were to be implemented.

A final step in terms of the “civilizing mission” was to train and assimilate Chinese YMCA physical directors, who would contribute to spreading Western amateur sports. Their taking over YMCA leadership position in physical education would not only allow North American physical directors to be withdrawn, and therefore reduce the budget of the North American YMCA’s foreign department, but also decrease anti-colonial criticism and (in some cases) solve language problems.

Hao Gengsheng [Hoh Gunsun], who became Taiwan’s (or the Republic of China’s) most important sports official for several decades after the Chinese Civil War (1945–1949), was one of the most prominent YMCA recruits. Hao had been trained by the YMCA in Shanghai and later graduated from the International YMCA College in Springfield. An extended and revised version of Hao’s bachelor thesis (1923) was published as a book in 1926.<sup>20</sup> Although there is no guarantee that his writings reflected his personal opinion (since for career purposes he might have written what his supervisors wanted to hear), at least in his book he supported the Protestant social engineering aims of the North American YMCA. In his historical overview on physical education in China before the arrival of Protestant missionaries, he supported the not implausible thesis that the hostile attitude of high ranking Chinese scholar officials towards physical education and fitness training was a major reason for the military decline of China. Hao heavily attacked the imperial examination system, which until its abolishment in 1905 had opened the door to prestigious government offices but was primarily based on repeating memorized classical texts while observing various formalities: “No system was more perfect or effective in retarding the intellectual and literal development of a nation.”<sup>21</sup> Over

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<sup>17</sup> Charles A. Siler, “Physical Education in China.” *The Chinese Students’ Christian Journal* 6,1 (1919): 28–30, here: 29.

<sup>18</sup> Alfred H. Swan, “Report of Committee on Foreign Work.” *Physical Training* 18,5 (1921): 229–230.

<sup>19</sup> Xu, *Olympic Dreams*, pp. 40–45.

<sup>20</sup> Gunsun Hoh [Pinyin: Gengsheng Hao], *The Past and Future of Physical Education in China*, bachelor thesis, International YMCA College, 1923; Gunsun Hoh, *Physical Education in China. Zhongguo tiyu gailun*. Shanghai: Commercial Press, 1926.

<sup>21</sup> Hoh, *The Past*, p. 34.

centuries, the resulting exclusive focus of candidates on bookwork resulted in the Chinese elite's rejection of physical education as a practice unworthy of their attention.<sup>22</sup> Hao also judged that the teachings of Confucius and Laozi did not encourage a physically active life. Military examinations, on the other hand, focused only on physical prowess, such as physical strength, weapon skills, etc. without taking intellectual education into consideration. Since high ranking scholar-officials increasingly lacked interest in military examinations, military matters eventually were left to physically more developed but undereducated people.<sup>23</sup>

It is hardly surprising that for Hao the founding of missionary schools during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in particular the YMCA's arrival, marked the turning point. Western schools and universities put much effort into increasing the physical activity of pupils and students to improve their health and fitness.<sup>24</sup> Doing so was no unexpected move, since the attempt to create a new, Protestant and pro-American elite would pay off more if graduates remained in good physical shape. Regularly falling sick or dying young was as unproductive as if graduates abandoned the American Protestant value system.

Similar to Swan, Hao believed that it would be possible to identify and develop "outstanding stars" among the large mass of "untried but potential athletes" if these received the opportunity to engage in competitions. He believed that especially the last years had shown that "the old Chinese idea, 'To study is beneficial: to play is useless,' has been entirely changed in the mind of the people."<sup>25</sup> Hao hereby referred primarily to a new, Western or American-trained small elite, since affecting a substantial part of the population through mass sport had proven more difficult than expected. Based on an estimate by the North American YMCA, in 1921 only about 25% of about 400 million Chinese knew about Western sports and less than 5%, all living in Western influenced cities, had accepted them.<sup>26</sup>

John H. Gary, the YMCA's national physical director of China, came to the conclusion that this very limited spread of sport was the result of an insufficient communication infrastructure, a conservative temperament among the population, illiteracy, a lack of a national system of exercise, a new and insufficient modern school system, a lack of political homogeneity (referring to the lack of a central authority between 1916 and 1928), and other reasons.<sup>27</sup> Gray therefore also considered the hosting of regional sporting events, such as the FECG, to be useless for China.<sup>28</sup> In Japan and the Philippines, the Games had served as a PR event that not only introduced Western sport to Asians but also had allowed the YMCA to connect with leading Asian politicians, civil servants, and physical educators. At least until the late 1920s, the lack of a centralized public school system that in other countries could be used to promote sports, indeed strongly limited the YMCA advisory work's impact on the national

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<sup>22</sup> On Chinese scholar officials and their concepts of masculinity see: Geng Song, *The Fragile Scholar: Power and Masculinity in Chinese Culture*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2004; Martin W. Huang, *Negotiating Masculinities in Late Imperial China*, Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press 2006.

<sup>23</sup> Hoh, *The Past*, pp. 34–39.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid., pp. 90.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., pp. 129, 134.

<sup>26</sup> The Contest Committee of the Far Eastern Athletic Association (ed.), *Report of the Fifth Far Eastern Championship Games Held May 30th - June 4th 1921 at Hongkew Park, Shanghai, China*. [Shanghai?]: n.p., [1921?], p. 20.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>28</sup> Gray, Dear Elwood (October 26, 1921), in: International Work in China, Box 39: Correspondence and Reports. Sept.-Oct. 1921, KFYMCAA; Gray, Dear Mr. Wu (August 22, 1952), S. 3–4, 6, in: Biographical Files, Box 73: Gray, John Henry. Biographical Data (C), KFYMCAA.

level.<sup>29</sup> When during the mid-1920s North American YMCA physical directors increasingly transferred leadership positions to Chinese sports experts, one could hardly talk about a successful institutionalization of sport and fitness in more than a number of big cities. Most members of this new elite of Chinese physical educators had, like Hao, been trained in Springfield or had been sent to other U.S. institutions to study.<sup>30</sup> In terms of the educational backgrounds of leading figures involved in the institutionalization of physical education up to and even during early communism, the impact of the North American education offensive was impossible to ignore. However, even before the communist victory in the Civil War (1945–1949), the Great Depression and dwindling donations had contributed to a slow decline of the North American YMCA’s “moral empire” in China.

In the Philippines, the fear of diseases and infectious Philippine bodies during and after the Philippine-American War (1899–1902) provided the foundation for a medicine and public health-based U.S. “civilizing mission.” This justification of U.S. colonialism, its proclaimed aim being that the colonial administration improved the living conditions of the local population, indirectly profited from the war. For example, the Spanish public health system completely broke down, with unsurprisingly disastrous consequences.<sup>31</sup> Even during the 1920s, the connection between public health and self-determination remained acute. The Republican administrations since 1921 aimed to slow down the transfer of political responsibility to Filipinos — which had begun during the mid-1910s under President Woodrow Wilson — as much as possible, considering them to be too corrupt and incompetent. The debate about *The Isles of Fear* (1925), a provocative rejection of Philippine capacity for self-government, can serve as an example. The book’s author, journalist Kathrine Mayo, a strong believer in the superiority of American Protestant civilization, argued that the indifference of the Philippine oligarchy towards the dependent population would, in the case of independence, end in a healthcare catastrophe.<sup>32</sup> Altogether, improving public health not only related to the colonial administration’s economic and humanitarian considerations but also was a tool to make a positive impression on the Philippine population and on voters in the U.S. Knowledge transfers, vaccination campaigns, and sponsoring the healthcare infrastructure therefore also were useful to show the colonial administration as a champion of public health.

Since the early 1910s, the North American YMCA had substantial freedom of action in institutionalizing physical education, sport, and fitness training, which could contribute to public health as a complement to medical care. Brown was the first YMCA physical director who was sent to the Philippines and, due to his training and work experience in the U.S., also the most experienced sports administrator in the islands. After his arrival in spring 1910, the U.S. colony turned into a “laboratory of modernity” for the YMCA’s sports-related social engineering.<sup>33</sup> Since the colonial

<sup>29</sup> Huebner, *Pan-Asian Sports*, chapters 1–2.

<sup>30</sup> Among them are: Dong Shouyi, who had been trained in Springfield and became an IOC member, later representing the People’s Republic of China; Ma Yuehan or John Ma, who had also been trained in Springfield and became a professor at Qinghua University in Beijing and was a highly important administrator even during early communism; Zhang Huilan, who had been sent by the YWCA to the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and later became the “mother of women’s sport in China” and a professor at Jinling Women’s College in Nanjing; Shen Siliang, who had been trained at Oberlin College and Columbia University, became an important sports administrator and a professor at St. John’s University in Shanghai.

<sup>31</sup> Warwick Anderson, *Colonial Pathologies. American Tropical Medicine, Race, and Hygiene in the Philippines*, Durham: Duke University Press, 2006, chapter 1.

<sup>32</sup> Katherine Mayo, *The Isles of Fear. The Truth about the Philippines*, New York: Faber and Gwyer, 1925. See also: Dinah Roma Sianturi, “Of Pathogens and Empires: The Discourse of Public Health in Katherine Mayo’s *The Isles of Fear* – *The Truth about the Philippines*.” *ARI Working Paper Series* (accessed: May 8, 2015): 1–19; Kramer, *The Blood*, p. 389.

<sup>33</sup> Huebner, *Pan-Asian Sports*, p. 22–24.

administration was interested in the YMCA's expertise, while the YMCA was eager to get access to the financial and human resources that the administration could offer, Brown had a lot of freedom of action in implementing his plans. Achieving successes in the sports-related "civilizing mission" in cooperation with the colonial administration certainly also was deemed helpful in financial terms.<sup>34</sup> In the predominantly Catholic Philippines, the YMCA, after all, never managed to attract a sufficient amount of donations to cover its ambitious plans. Lack of staff was another outcome of the limited funding. Cooperation with the colonial administration, training physical education teachers, and using the public school system to promote muscular Christianity therefore at least temporarily compensated for the limited acceptance in Philippine civil society (compared to the YMCA's important role in U.S. civil society, exemplified by the sports infrastructure it there could offer on its own).

During the 1920s, training Philippine sports experts in the U.S. gained in importance, following the North American YMCA's successes in popularizing amateur sport during the previous decade. The Wilson administration's above-mentioned legislation of 1916 to transfer more authority to Filipinos connected well to the North American YMCA's intention to reduce expenses, which had grown tremendously as a result of sending large numbers of staff to Europe and other places during and after the First World War, and to deal with anti-colonial nationalism among Asian members. According to the president of the International YMCA College, Laurence L. Doggett, the task was to create "indigenous, self-governing associations."<sup>35</sup> Like in China and other countries, the North American YMCA made a significant contribution to training the first generation of professional physical educators, who took over senior positions from Americans.

Since its founding in the very late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the International YMCA College satisfied the growing demand for professional YMCA secretaries (responsible for administering YMCAs) and physical directors.<sup>36</sup> The bachelor of physical education (B.P.E.) theses of a group of four Filipinos show at least in three cases an investigation of scientific methods to improve public health. The theses thus also connect to the earlier activities of Brown and the colonial administration in the Philippines, but also the interest in physical education and fitness that the U.S.'s involvement in the First World War had caused.

Region R. Ylanan (B.P.E. 1920), before his education in Springfield, had already gained a medical degree at the University of the Philippines in Manila, newly set up by the colonial administration. In his bachelor thesis, he investigated the impact of different degrees of physical activity on the body growth of young rats. In 1927, Ylanan became the government's national physical director, taking over the office from an American, which represented the leadership transfer to Filipinos. Until his retirement in 1961, he was the most important officer in the realm of physical education, leading delegations to major sporting events, such as the Olympics, and was a central person in organizing international events, such as the Tenth FECC (Manila 1934) and the Second Asian Games (Manila

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<sup>34</sup> There was no noteworthy endowment for foreign work: Foreign Work Budget 1923, general summary of gained income and expenditure, p. 1, in: International Work: Administrative Records, Box 63: Foreign Work Budget 1923, KFYMCAA.

<sup>35</sup> Laurence L. Doggett, *Man and a School. Pioneering in Higher Education at Springfield College*, New York: Association Press, 1943 [Digital Version, Springfield College Intranet], p. 109. On personnel costs see: 1921 Foreign Work Budget of the Young Men's Christian Association of Canada and the United States, pp. 3, 6, in: International Work: Administrative Records, Box 6: Foreign Committee Meetings, Minutes, 1921, KFYMCAA.

<sup>36</sup> For more information see: Stefan Hübner, "Muscular Christian Exchanges: Asian Sports Experts and the International YMCA Training School (1910s-1930s)." In: Giles Scott-Smith / Ludovic Tournès (eds.), *Global Exchanges: Scholarship Programs and Transnational Circulations in the Contemporary World (19-21st Centuries)*. New York: Berghahn Books, 2017, 119-142.

1954).<sup>37</sup> Candido C. Bartolome (B.P.E. 1929, M.P.E. 1929) also had completed his studies at the University of the Philippines and for his Springfield bachelor thesis collected and evaluated anthropometric data from students in Manila. In January 1930, Bartolome became the acting physical director of the University of the Philippines and in 1937 officially took over the position (an associate professorship).<sup>38</sup> Geronimo Suva (B.P.E. 1921), who had received training in pedagogy at the University of the Philippines, developed a sports and fitness test to be used at Philippine schools. In 1922, Suva received a master of education from Harvard University. After his return to the Philippines, he first taught at several high schools before becoming the physical director of the University of the Philippines. Following some controversies, he had to leave the office in 1929. After time spent as teacher at the university's high school, he eventually became responsible for the Philippine military's sports and recreation programs.<sup>39</sup> The exception was Serafin Aquino, who in his thesis focused on Philippine folk dances and children's games. After several years as a high school teacher, physical director of the National University of the Philippines, and athletic director of the Philippine Amateur Athletic Federation, Aquino started working for the Bureau of Education (later called the Department of Education). Responsible for physical education and sports, he had a strong influence on the public school system. Under his leadership, some of the folk dances were integrated into school curricula.<sup>40</sup> Questions concerning public health were not left out, but his intention was a re-evaluation of pre-American body culture, which had been partially discredited as a consequence of the spread of Western sport. As a consequence, his research included a criticism of discourses regarding a superiority of American Protestant practices and the inherent view of Philippine backwardness. Following the establishment of the Philippine Commonwealth in 1935, a consequence of the U.S. decision from the previous year to grant the islands independence after a transitional period of 10 years, support for traditional folk dances further intensified.<sup>41</sup> Doing so was another illustration of the endeavors of Filipinos to create a postcolonial identity that was not based on assimilation into U.S. civilization but utilized cultural elements that connected to the pre-American or even pre-Spanish past, creating continuities to earlier generations and publically resisting claims that such elements were inferior to American ones.

In Japan, the YMCA's contribution to the institutionalization of physical education and fitness was much more limited. Consequently, this last case study rather sheds light on an incident of nationalist resistance of an influential Japanese sports official against the YMCA's amateur sports ideals. Okabe Heita's main problem was the Y's aim to support not only bodily development but also democratic citizenship training and self-control.

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<sup>37</sup> Ylanan and Ylanan, *The History*, pp. 39–41; Regino R. Ylanan, *The Relation of Growth and Development to Physical Exercise*, bachelor thesis, International YMCA College, 1920.

<sup>38</sup> Ylanan and Ylanan, *The History*, pp. 46–47; Curriculum Vitae of Candido C. Bartolome, in: Bartolome, Candido C., Springfield College Archives and Special Collections, Springfield, MA; Candido C. Bartolome, *Physical Measurements of Freshmen Filipino Students in the University of the Philippines*, bachelor thesis, International YMCA College, 1929.

<sup>39</sup> Ylanan and Ylanan, *The History*, pp. 47–48; Geronimo Suva, *Physical Measurements for Philippine Schools*, bachelor thesis, International YMCA College, 1921.

<sup>40</sup> Ylanan and Ylanan, *The History*, pp. 43–45; Serafin Aquino, *Philippine Games and Folk Dances*, bachelor thesis, International YMCA College, 1922.

<sup>41</sup> On the promotion of folk dances see: Ylanan and Ylanan, *The History*, p. 49; Bocobo-Olivar, *History*, chapter 10.

Physical education practices, such as European military and non-military gymnastics, swimming, and certain games (for children and young women) had become institutionalized in the public school system that was created in the context of the Meiji reforms.<sup>42</sup> The government's pedagogical aim was primarily to create conformity among pupils and hierarchical relations between them and teachers, while also preparing boys for compulsory military service. Amateur sports and public health therefore did not turn into topics that, like in the Philippines and (less successfully) in China, could be used to spread American Protestant ideals via public institutions among millions of people. After the First World War, Western sports gained some relevance in the Japanese public school system, but were overshadowed by Swedish gymnastics.<sup>43</sup>

More efficient were the YMCA's attempts to influence students — members of the future Japanese elite — by encouraging amateur sport as a physical education practice during their spare time. Amateur sports had already been encouraged during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century by Western university instructors, but also by Japanese professors who had studied abroad and shown interest in them.<sup>44</sup> Moreover, since 1921, Japanese teams regularly — and without the earlier quarrels about the appropriateness — participated in the FECG. By then, Kanō Jigorō had given up his initial resistance against team sports (which were very prominent at the FECG). In terms of diplomatic relations, the Washington Naval Conference of 1921/22 encouraged multilateral cooperation, which facilitated Japanese participation in the FECG.

During the 1920s, the increasingly popular FECG turned into an important institution for popularizing the YMCA's amateur sports ideals in Japan. During the Fifth Games (Shanghai 1921), about 350 male athletes had participated and, according to official sources, about 155,000 spectators had followed them. At the sixth instalment (Osaka 1923), more than 400 male and now also female athletes had competed, while about 250,000 spectators had been drawn to the stadiums. Two years later (Manila 1925), again about 400 athletes joined. At these Games, self-control and respect for duly constituted authority even under great stress or anger — for YMCA physical directors a central element for democratizing and pacifying societies — became the bone of contention. According to Okabe Heita, head coach of the Japanese track and field team, 13 members of the team (including him) were unwilling to continue competing after Philippine referees had made six wrong decisions against the Japanese, one of them having resulted in the disqualification of the team captain.

Okabe was a graduate of the Tokyo Higher Normal School (*Tōkyō Kōtō Shihan Gakkō*), whose president was Kanō Jigorō. Afterwards, Kanō had sent Okabe to the U.S. to study, where he met Amos Alonzo Stagg, professor and athletic director at the University of Chicago. Stagg, who had been trained at the International YMCA College and Yale University, was a well-known supporter of muscular Christianity and American Football coach. During his studies in the U.S., a first conflict emerged between Okabe and Kanō, about which he informed Stagg. Okabe proved to be unwilling to study boxing and wrestling, considering them to be professional sports, which he rejected in favour of amateur sports. Another conflict emerged after his return to Japan, when he in 1921 left the *kōdōkan* (Kanō's judo headquarters), since Kanō had agreed to a competition between two *judoka*

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<sup>42</sup> Andreas Niehaus, *Leben und Werk Kanō Jigorōs (1860-1938). Ein Forschungsbericht zur Leibeserziehung und zum Sport in Japan* [Life and Work of Kanō Jigorō (1860–1938): A Research Report on Physical Education and Sports in Japan], second edition, Würzburg: Ergon, 2010, pp. 29–55.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 52–53. On the connection between horizontally organized mass sport and democratization see: Paul Christesen, *Sport and Democracy*.

<sup>44</sup> On the 19<sup>th</sup> century see: Lee and Guttmann, *Japanese Sports*, chapter 3.

and professional wrestlers. Okabe saw this competition as a threat to the *bushidō* spirit of judo.<sup>45</sup> His interpretation of *bushidō* de facto corresponded to the YMCA's amateur sports ideals and the related concept of masculinity. A similar, strongly Christian interpretation of *bushidō* had already been advocated by Abe Isoo, a Christian, socialist, and professor at Waseda University and founder of its baseball team. Abe's and others' references to *bushidō* served primarily to facilitate the integration of Protestant ideals into Japanese culture and to circumvent anti-colonial resistance.<sup>46</sup> Okabe's interpretation of *bushidō* thus strongly differed from Kanō's. Kanō had developed his interpretation in connection to the invention of judo, thus before his confrontation with American Protestant amateur sports ideals, which was the reason for the earlier on mentioned incompatibility between the two religious-cultural physical education systems.<sup>47</sup> Following Okabe's turning away from Kanō, he also got involved in the struggles between Japanese sports federations that did not contribute to the morale of the Japanese team in 1925.<sup>48</sup>

After the incident at the Seventh FECG, Okabe wrote Stagg that he at first tried to convince the boycotting athletes to return to the competition but solidarized with them after he recognized their determination. He then asked the Japanese senior delegates to protest against the referee decisions. However, these did not file a protest, according to him, since the Games were dominated by the YMCA and the Japanese senior delegates' cooperation with the Y. Okabe's main argument was that the referee decisions were motivated by nationalism and were aimed at making the Philippine team defeat the Japanese one: "But we were not satisfactioned [sic] in that game bec[au]se all officials are mad to win the game." He thus saw a boycott as the only possible answer to the Philippine referees' decisions: "But I believed that an amateur must obey the rules and the morals but allso [sic] has a right to outdraw [sic] from the unmoraled [sic] world."<sup>49</sup>

E. Stanton Turner, YMCA senior secretary of the Philippines, offered a different explanation for Okabe's behavior. Okabe lost his self-control and started to challenge referee decisions in an attempt to save his and his team's face. When it became obvious that the Japanese track and field team was to lose, he supported the boycott to prevent a public defeat.<sup>50</sup>

Okabe's decision in favor of the boycott was, independent of the reasons, a demonstration that he did not accept amateur sports norms and values, if these were incompatible with what he saw as Japan's national interest. In his view, Philippine nationalism needed to be fought with Japanese resistance. Accepting the decisions with strict self-control, since the referees' authority was duly constituted before the competition started — even if during the match they were wrong due to a nationalistic bias, insufficient knowledge of the rules, or other reasons — was not an option for him.

<sup>45</sup> Okabe, Dear Prof. Stagg (February 25, 1918), Okabe, Dear Mr. Stagg (May 27, 1918), Okabe, Dear Mr. + Mrs. Stagg (March 16, 1921), and Jujitsu Teacher Quits because Experts Are to Meet Americans, all in: Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers: Box 2, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago. On Okabe's later activities see: Kō Takashima, "Sensō – kokka – supōtsu. Okabe Heita no 'tenkō' o tooshite [War – Nation – Sport. Okabe Heita's Conversion']." *Shirin* 93,1 (2010): 98–130.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Blackwood, "Bushidō Baseball?"

<sup>47</sup> Hübner, *Muscular Christianity*, pp. 547–548.

<sup>48</sup> Franklin Brown, Dear Count Latour [sic] (December 18, 1930), pp. 1–2, in: H-FC03-EXORI/001, The Olympic Studies Centre, Lausanne; Abe, "Historical Significance", p. 74; Yoshio Imamura, *Nihon taiikushi* [History of Sports in Japan]. Tokyo: Fumaidō Shuppan, 1970, pp. 539–540.

<sup>49</sup> Okabe, Mr. + Mrs. Stagg (August 17, 1925), pp. 2–3 (first quotation), 4 (second quotation), und All Japanese Athletes Sail on Same Boat, all in: Amos Alonzo Stagg Papers: Box 2, Regenstein Library, University of Chicago.

<sup>50</sup> Kolatch, *Sports, Politics, and Ideology*, pp. 62–63. Gerald Gems briefly covers the event but connects it too much to Japanese-American quarrels on the international level: Gems, *The Athletic Crusade*, p. 40.

However, this was not the behavior that the YMCA expected, perceiving self-control and respect for duly constituted authority to be essential for pacifying societies. Okabe's first participation in an international sporting event showed that he was willing to give up self-control in favor of a nationalistic decision of not being defeated by Philippine athletes. Therefore, the conflict was related to Okabe's nationalism, not to the question if the approaching defeat was the result of the competence of the Philippine team or the referee decisions. While Okabe's boycott may not sound especially spectacular to a modern audience, in 1925 it was a drastic measure that amounted to a frontal assault on the YMCA's social engineering plans, the corresponding concept of masculinity, and the benevolent but paternalistic behavior of Americans, who played a leading role in organizing the Games.

Altogether, Okabe initially seems to have been convinced of amateur sports norms and values. His first participation in an international event nevertheless resulted in a change of mind. Some of the reasons certainly were intensifying anti-colonial and anti-paternalistic nationalism in East Asia, Japanese looking down on colonized Filipinos, and in terms of the Games, the personification of nations by teams, connecting them to the image of the nation. Okabe did not completely reject amateur sports norms and values, which is hinted at in his explanation to Stagg that he was aware of them, but due to the referee decisions saw no other option than a boycott. He thus resisted a central part of the YMCA's "civilizing mission" out of nationalistic reasons — either to prevent a defeat by Philippine athletes or to prevent appearing weak vis-à-vis the referees. His behavior shows that he valued a victorious presentation of his nation higher than self-control, even if this ended in a boycott and drastic breach of rules. This very first boycott at the FECG attracted massive criticism by the Japanese senior delegates and resulted in the athletes' exclusion from the team, which emphasized the delegates' cooperation with the YMCA.<sup>51</sup> The strong reactions in Japanese newspapers were mixed in their evaluation and depended on political orientations, illustrating that no discursive consensus concerning amateur sports and the boycotters' decision existed.<sup>52</sup>

In conclusion, in the context of the expansion of the American Protestant "moral empire," the YMCA physical directors' expert knowledge gave them sometimes massive influence in debates in China, the Philippines, and Japan about physical education, public health, fitness, and new concepts of masculinity. Limited funding, part of which was provided by North American philanthropists, meant that YMCA physical directors aimed to use their expert knowledge to serve as government advisors and to use public institutions for their Protestant social engineering plans. At least those governments and colonial administrations that lacked scientific expertise in sport, public health, and fitness, such as in China and the Philippines, were interested in collaboration. In Japan, in contrast, the interest among elites belonging to or close to the government was lower due to the smaller knowledge asymmetry, the importance of local practices, such as judo, and the self-perception as a great power not in need of Western paternalism anymore. Sending Asian recruits to the U.S. to study was a means to speed up the "civilizing mission" by training local experts, to reduce personnel costs of North American physical directors serving abroad, and to avoid anti-colonial nationalist criticism of Westerners occupying all important positions.

In China, YMCA research led to the view that the population suffered from a variety of deficits that had a negative impact particularly on the constitution of educated male scholars. Their exclusive focus on bookwork was seen as an important reason for China's military decline. Systematic training programs and education campaigns for the whole population, illustrating the egalitarian ideal of the

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<sup>51</sup> Dainihon Taiiku Kyōkai (ed.), *Dai-7kai Kyōkutō Senshūken Kyōgi Taikai hōkokusho* [Report on the Seventh Far Eastern Championship Games], Tokyo: Dainihon Taiiku Kyōkai, 1925, pp. 1–4; "Japanese Athletes Barred for Strike in Far East Olympics and Apology Made." *New York Times* (May 22, 1925): 14.

<sup>52</sup> For an overview of Japanese newspaper articles see: "The Manila Fiasco." *The Japan Weekly Chronicle* (May 28, 1925): 666; "The Manila Fiasco." *The Japan Weekly Chronicle* (June 4, 1925): 708–709.



YMCA, were supposed to reduce or eliminate further deficits. When it came to attempts to implement such plans, physical directors like John Gray and Hao Gengsheng nevertheless also discussed a variety of political, institutional, and infrastructural problems, judging them to be substantial hindrances. Christian or pro-Christian elites involved with the new Guomindang (Chinese Nationalist Party) government and cooperating with the YMCA since the late 1920s temporarily facilitated the Y's advisory work. Moreover, several Chinese YMCA physical directors, such as Hao, received the highest governmental offices in the newly institutionalized realm of physical education.

In the U.S.-colonized Philippines, cooperation with the colonial administration allowed access to public institutions, such as the public school system. In this regard, improving public health and fitness also legitimized U.S. colonial rule by denying the Spanish colonizers and later the Philippine oligarchy's competence in this regard. Again, YMCA-trained local recruits took over central governmental positions in the realm of physical education.

In Japan, the public school system was much less accessible and the FECG turned into the main tool of promoting amateur sports ideals. The Okabe Heita incident of 1925 nevertheless provides an example of the YMCA's "civilizing mission," supposed to make Asians more capable of — American Protestant-style — self-government, being rejected by Asians as an inappropriate paternalism reminiscent of other, less benevolent colonial "civilizing missions." The question of continued self-control and acceptance of duly constituted authority in the case of massive stress, such as an approaching defeat, which YMCA physical directors saw as a central element for pacifying and democratizing societies, stepped into the foreground. Anti-colonial and anti-paternalistic nationalism nevertheless denied the universality and superiority of American Protestant amateur sports ideals. Okabe's and his athletes' intention was not necessarily related to democratization, but to present their nation as victorious.

Growing research on the YMCA's "moral empire" shows the huge influence that its physical directors had on spreading amateur sport in the non-Western world. Often, colonial administrations, foreign educators, local upper class members, and others had engaged in promoting sport, but very often such attempts were limited in scale and ambition, being targeted at a small elite rather than the whole population. The YMCA thus was responsible in many non-Western regions for institutionalizing international competitions, working towards physical education's integration into school systems, and engaging in education campaigns. Such attempts of using humanitarian work in the realm of physical education, fitness, and public health to convince non-Protestants of the moral superiority of Protestantism and the related concept of masculinity made debates with non-Western elites inevitable. The adoption of physical education into governmental responsibilities, its integration into local cultural systems, or the use of the much more secular sports ideology of the IOC that often followed these efforts illustrate such debates and their results.<sup>53</sup>

If one employs the thesis that the activities of Protestant missionary organizations and democratization in the non-Western world correlate,<sup>54</sup> the YMCA's work provides much evidence that via its members, but also indirectly via debates with local elites and the following appropriation processes, the organization made significant contributions to democratizing physical education, fitness, and public health, which was connected to more general political democratization.

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<sup>53</sup> Huebner, *Pan-Asian Sports*, chapters 1–2.

<sup>54</sup> Robert D. Woodberry, "The Missionary Roots of Liberal Democracy." *American Political Science Review* 106,2 (2012): 244–274.