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## CONTENTS

Information about the New Zealand Journal of Asian Studies v

### Articles

'Gentlemen both on and off the Field': The 1924 Chinese Universities  
Soccer Team in New Zealand  
GEOFF WATSON 1

White People Can't Sell Sushi: Unpacking Korean Influence over  
Sushi Production in New Zealand  
MATTHEW ALLEN and RUMI SAKAMOTO 18

To Sing for the Nation: Japan, School Song and the Forging of a New  
National Citizenry in Late Qing China, 1895-1911  
HONG-YU GONG 36

The Neglected Administrative Foundations of Pakistan's Constitutional Democracy  
ILHAN NIAZ 52

Writing Spirituality in the Works of Can Xue: Transforming the Self  
ROSEMARY HADDON 68

### Review article

Muslims in New Zealand: 'An integral part of the nation'? A review of  
Erich Kolig, *New Zealand's Muslims and Multiculturalism*  
CHRISTOPHER J. VAN DER KROGT 82

### Book reviews edited by Duncan Campbell

Robert Cribb, *Digital Atlas of Indonesian History*.  
ANTHONY L SMITH 90

Mary Farquhar and Yingjin Zhang, eds., *Chinese Film Stars*.  
PAUL CLARK 91

Laurel Kendall, ed., *Consuming Korean Tradition in Early and Late Modernity:  
Commodification, Tourism and Performance*.  
CEDARBOUGH T SAEJI 93

Elizabeth Dorn Lublin, <i>Reforming Japan: The Women's Christian Temperance Union in the Meiji Period.</i> VANESSA B WARD	96
Andreas Marks and Sonya Rhie Quintanilla, eds., <i>Dreams and Diversions: Essays on Japanese Woodblock Prints from the San Diego Museum of Arts.</i> DAVID BELL	99
Ōki Yasushi and Paolo Santangelo, <i>Shan'ge, the 'Mountain Songs: Love Songs in Ming China.</i> DUNCAN M CAMPBELL	101
M. Cody Poulton, <i>A Beggar's Art: Scripiting Modernity in Japanese Drama, 1900-1930.</i> MARK GIBEAU	104
Jennifer S. Prough, <i>Straight from the Heart: Gender, Intimacy, and the Cultural Production of Shōjo Manga.</i> DAVID BELL	106
Stella R. Quah, <i>Families in Asia: Home and Kin.</i> GEOFF WATSON	107
Ronit Ricci, <i>Islam Translated: Literature, Conversion, and the Arabic Cosmopolis of South and Southeast Asia.</i> ANTHONY REID	108
Janette Ryan, ed., <i>China's Higher Education Reform and Internationalization.</i> LIMIN BAI	113
Shao Dan, <i>Remote Homeland, Recovered Borderland: Manchus, Manchoukuo and Manchuria, 1907-1985.</i> DAVID BROPHY	115
Jing Tsu and David Der-wei Wang, ed., <i>Global Chinese Literature: Critical Essays.</i> ZHENGDAO YE	118
Michael Wesley, <i>There goes the neighbourhood: Australia and the Rise of Asia.</i> ANDREW BUTCHER	122

## **‘GENTLEMEN BOTH ON AND OFF THE FIELD’: THE 1924 CHINESE UNIVERSITIES SOCCER TEAM IN NEW ZEALAND<sup>1</sup>**

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The Chinese Universities Soccer team, in the words of James Ng, ‘brought to New Zealand a more dynamic image of China’, attracting large crowds and raising the profile of a then minor sport.<sup>2</sup> For historians, the presence of a Chinese team playing the form of soccer codified in nineteenth century Britain, affords interesting insights into issues of race, class and imperialism in New Zealand. The team was generally portrayed in a positive light, in contrast to the generally negative representations of Asians in New Zealand. The tour has received some coverage in James Ng’s work and histories of New Zealand soccer but merits a more detailed examination.<sup>3</sup> The article commences with a discussion of the background to the tour and the Chinese community in New Zealand before analysing how the touring team was represented to New Zealanders.

### **Political and Sporting Background to the Tour in China**

The tour took place at a formative time in the history of Chinese soccer and Chinese history more generally. In its modern form, soccer had been played in China since the late nineteenth century but earlier forms of the game were played from the earliest years of Chinese history. Writing in 1911 Herbert Giles, Professor of Chinese at Cambridge University, acknowledged ‘Football was played in China at a very early date’ and went on to write ‘the game, which had disappeared for some centuries, is now being revived in Chinese schools and colleges under the control of foreigners, and finds great favour with the rising generation’.<sup>4</sup> Bill Murray notes that teams formed by foreign missionaries and the military were prominent in developing the modern form of soccer in China and that most of the Chinese who played the game were from the middle classes.<sup>5</sup> In the decades following the demise of the Qing dynasty in 1912 Chinese teams, comprised principally of students, embarked on tours to Australia and New

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1 *Evening Post*, 27 September 1924, p. 18. I would like to acknowledge the guidance of the anonymous referee’s for their comments on an earlier draft of the article.

2 James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, Dunedin: Otago Heritage Books, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 159.

3 Tony Hilton and Barry Smith, *An Association with Soccer: The NZFA celebrates its first 100 Years*, Auckland: New Zealand Football Association, 1991, pp. 23, 145.

4 Herbert Giles, *The Civilization of China*, London: Williams and Norgate, 1911, pp. 152-153.

5 Bill Murray, *Football: A History of the World Game*, Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1994, pp. 210-211.

Zealand and also played against Japan and the Philippines.<sup>6</sup> Like many sporting teams in the interwar period, Chinese soccer teams reflected both nationalist and imperialist influences. At a national level, the teams were ambassadors of the Chinese Republic. The tour occurred during an unsettled period in China's history in which regional leaders, (often called Warlords), a Beijing-based government dependent on Warlord support then headed by Cao Kun and the nationalist-communist alliance headed by Sun Yat-Sen competed for political influence. The effective power of the last two was limited. The Beijing Government was recognised by Foreign Powers but its power was limited and Cao Kun was unseated in November 1924. The nationalist-communist alliance's influence was limited to Canton. Warlords governed most of China and imperial powers, particularly Japan and Britain, controlled much of China's modern industry.<sup>7</sup> Western influence in China created both political and cultural tensions. While resenting foreign control of Chinese assets; some argued that modernisation, based at least in part on westernisation, was necessary to restore China's fortunes.<sup>8</sup> Yet while Chinese Universities played under the flag of the Chinese Republic, they also embodied imperial values, notably what historian Tony Mangan called the 'games ethic' of British Public Schools.<sup>9</sup> Sport was seen as an activity through which British values of fair play and gentlemanly conduct could be transmitted to both indigenous and anglo-saxon citizens of the world. Accordingly, the existence of a Chinese soccer team playing according to British values was represented as both a vindication of the new China and the civilizing influence of British expatriates.

### **Sporting background to the tour in New Zealand**

The reception the Chinese Universities team received in New Zealand needs to be viewed in the wider context of tours to Australasia by Asian and Pacific teams during the interwar period.<sup>10</sup> The Chinese Universities tour of New Zealand occurred one year

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6 Murray, pp. 210-211.

7 Richard T. Phillips, *China Since 1911*, Basingstoke: MacMillan, 1996, pp. 40-68. Patricia Buckley Ebrej, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996, 2004 edn., pp. 262-282.

8 Phillips, pp. 32-39.

9 J.A. Mangan, *The Games Ethic and Imperialism: Aspects of the Diffusion of an Ideal*, London: Frank Cass, 1986, reprinted 1998. On the Chinese Universities team playing under the flag of the Chinese republic see *Evening Post*, 15 July, 1924, p. 8. See also <http://www.nzhistory.net.nz/media/photo/1924-soccer-programme> accessed 3 November 2011.

10 For a list of such tours to Australia between 1901 and 1930/31 see Andrew Honey, 'Sport, Immigration Restriction and Race: The operation of the White Australia Policy', in Richard Cashman, John O'Hara and Andrew Honey (eds.), *Sport, Federation, Nation*, Sydney: Walla Walla Press, 2001, pp. 29-30. The most relevant examples for the purposes of this paper are the 1907/08 Fijian cricket tour, the 1923 and 1927 tours of Chinese soccer teams and the 1930/31 West Indian cricket team. The most prominent New Zealand tours were the Indian hockey teams: The Indian Army team in 1926, the All-India team in 1935 and the Prince of Manavadar's team in 1938. A Fijian women's hockey team visited in 1936 and a team of African American debaters from Le Moyne College, Tennessee, visited in 1938.

after a Chinese soccer team had visited Australia. That tour was organised by Henry Millard who was born in Ballarat but moved to New Zealand prior to World War One, where he worked as a newspaper publisher.<sup>11</sup> Nick Guoth suggests Millard saw both a commercial opportunity and a chance to showcase a 'different type of Chinese', athletic and respectable to Australasian audiences.<sup>12</sup> Millard had encountered Chinese labourers while serving with the New Zealand Army in France during World War One and was impressed by their bearing, which contrasted to stereotypical Australasian representations of Chinese as physical weaklings.<sup>13</sup> Having persuaded the New South Wales Rugby League (NSWRL) to back the tour, Millard and Jack Shaw travelled to Hong Kong in December 1922 intending to select a rugby league team to tour New Zealand and Australia. Les Cubitt, captain of the 1921-22 Australian Rugby League team on their tour of Great Britain, agreed to coach the team and travelled to Hong Kong with the intention of helping Millard and Shaw select the team. They soon came to the view that there was no prospect of organising a competitive rugby league team so they decided instead to arrange for a Chinese soccer team to tour because the game was reasonably well established in Hong Kong.<sup>14</sup> The Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA), who played an influential role in the development of Chinese soccer, were willing to assist, hoping that it would help display the new muscular and scholarly Chinese athlete to the western world.<sup>15</sup> The team selected was comprised primarily of players from Hong Kong who played in competitions organised by the South China Athletic Association and the majority of the players were from the middle-classes.<sup>16</sup> The YMCA would also play an influential role in organising the Chinese Universities tour of New Zealand.<sup>17</sup> The 1923 team proved phenomenally popular on and off the field in Australia, 44,000 watching the opening match of the tour at Sydney's Agricultural Showgrounds.<sup>18</sup> They proved reasonably competitive, winning eight, drawing nine and losing seven of their matches, Australia winning the test series by three games to one with one match drawn.<sup>19</sup> During this tour, A. Varney from the New Zealand Football Association (NZFA), and also the national secretary of the YMCA,

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11 Nick Guoth, 'Kangaroos and Dragons: The 1923 Chinese Football Tour of Australia', Unpublished M Phil Thesis, Australian National University, 2010, p. 34. I am grateful to Nick Guoth for providing references and information on the tour.

12 Guoth, p. 33.

13 Guoth, 'Kangaroos and Dragons', pp. 34-37.

14 Guoth, *Kangaroos and Dragons*, pp. 38-53. See also *New Zealand Truth*, 3 March 1923, p. 5.

15 Guoth, 'Kangaroos and Dragons', pp. 50-51.

16 Guoth, 'Kangaroos and Dragons', pp. 55-57.

17 *New Zealand Truth*, 26 July 1924, p. 9. *Dunedin Star*, cited in *Otautau Standard and Wallace County Chronicle*, 9 September 1924, p. 3.

18 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 28 July 1924, p. 4. The 1923 team was also well received off the field. Nick Guoth, 'Political Football and the Nationalist Movement of China in Australia', presented at *History at the Edge*, Australian History Association Regional Conference, Launceston, 7 July 2011, p. 8.

19 Guoth, 'Kangaroos and Dragons', p. 156.

enquired about the possibility of a Chinese team touring New Zealand and the visit of a Chinese Universities team was announced in February 1924.<sup>20</sup> Organising the tour was a brave venture by the NZFA because reports during the tour suggested it would cost over £6000 (equivalent to approximately \$540,000 now) to host the team.<sup>21</sup> An advertisement for one of the matches during the tour explained that profits from the tour were being 'reserved to finance a British team' to New Zealand in 1925, although this tour did not eventuate.<sup>22</sup> Millard did not organise the Chinese Universities tour of New Zealand but spoke to the NZFA prior to its commencement about his experiences organising the 1923 Australian tour.<sup>23</sup> According to newspaper reports, of the fifteen players selected eleven were from Eastern China and four from South China. The team selected for the tour (listed according to position and University) was Goalkeeper: Pao Ching Ti, Fuhtan; Backs: Lung Kuen (Alexander) Ting, Nanyang; Loh Mei Lung, Nanyang; Halves: Chen Po, Nanyang; Liang Kwan Sung, Soochow; Lok Lun Naam, Canton Christian College; Hung Hwai Chang, Hong Kong; Tsai Tsa Ying, South Eastern; Wang Chen Sheng, Fuhtan; Chang Hsi En, Fuhtan; Wu Yen Chang, Fuhtan; Lowe Po Tah, Fuhtan; Jap Boon Boey, Hong Kong; Wong Fuh Tan South Eastern; and Lung Kwai (Alfred) Ting (Nanyang, captain). Wong Tin Sik, from May Hill University, Hong Kong, coached the team and the manager was A.E. Dome, Director of Physical Education at the Hong Kong YMCA. Two of the team, Chang Hsi En and Wan Ching Sheng, had toured Australia in 1923.<sup>24</sup> In contrast to the team which toured Australia in 1923, advance publicity presented the 1924 tour as 'the first time in the history of the game in China that a thoroughly representative team has been brought together'.<sup>25</sup> Moreover, the NZFA emphasised the tour was 'in no way a commercial undertaking'.<sup>26</sup>

At the time of the tour soccer was an established, albeit minor, sport in New Zealand. The game was introduced into New Zealand by British immigrants and the New Zealand Football Association was formed in October 1891, six months prior to the formation of the New Zealand Rugby Football Union in April 1892. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, rugby union was established as the team sport most closely linked to national identity, a position underpinned by a strong presence in male

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20 *Evening Post*, 22 February 1924, p. 3. I am grateful to Barry Smith for providing this reference and information on the tour. See also *Evening Post*, 16 July 1924, p. 8. Newspaper reports variously referred to the New Zealand Football Association and the New Zealand Football Council, its executive body. For the sake of consistency, I use the term New Zealand Football Association in the article (NZFA). Hilton and Smith, pp. 7, 12, 19.

21 *New Zealand Truth*, 27 September 1924, p. 9. *Manawatu Daily Times*, 30 July 1924, p. 1. Approximate value in today's terms calculated using Reserve Bank Inflation Calendar. <http://www.rbnz.govt.nz/statistics/0135595.html> accessed 8 September 2011.

22 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 30 July, 1924, p. 1.

23 *Evening Post*, 3 July 1924, p. 6.

24 *Evening Post*, 15 July 1924, p. 8. *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 30 July 1924, p. 6. *Manawatu Daily Times*, 10 July 1924, p. 8.

25 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 5 July 1924, p. 10. See also *Evening Post*, 3 July 1924, p. 6.

26 *Evening Post*, 22 February 1924, p. 3.

boarding schools, a network of provincial unions and a cross-class constituency.<sup>27</sup> By contrast, soccer had a reasonable constituency in the main centres by the 1920s but was not linked to provincial identity in the way Rugby was and it had only a limited presence in schools. An (admittedly indicative) 1924 survey of New Zealand sport estimated there were approximately 40,000 rugby players in New Zealand compared to 6000 soccer players spread among 460 clubs.<sup>28</sup> Nor was soccer linked to national identity in the same way rugby was. Prior to the Chinese Universities tour, New Zealand's international experience was confined to two reciprocal exchanges with Australia. New Zealand hosted New South Wales in 1904, and toured Australia in 1905 (drawing the series 1-1) and prevailed in home and away series in 1922 and 1923 respectively.<sup>29</sup>

### The Chinese Community in New Zealand at the Time of the Tour

Chinese Universities toured during a period of public anxiety over Asian immigration to New Zealand. The 1921 census, for example, proclaimed New Zealand's population had always been 'of a high standard of purity' and went on to say 'history has shown that the coalescence of the white and the so-called coloured races is not conducive to improvement in racial types'.<sup>30</sup> Statistically speaking, the numbers of immigrants were modest. In 1921 so-called 'race aliens' numbered 5438 (0.45%) of New Zealand's then population of 1,218,913. Of these, Chinese numbered 3266, 2993 of whom were male and 273 female. What caused concern, however, was what the 1921 census described as an 'enormous increase of 2,234 or 69.73%' in the number of 'race aliens' between 1916 and 1921.<sup>31</sup> In the case of New Zealand's Chinese population, which increased from 2147 in 1916 to 3266 in 1921, it reversed a downward trend in New Zealand's Chinese population which had peaked at 5004 in 1881. Concern about Asian immigration predated the 1921 census. James Ng attributes the increased number of Chinese immigrants (1374 paid the poll tax between 1918 and 1920) to the goodwill arising from the wartime efforts of China's labour corps and the Chinese tael appreciating against the New Zealand pound thereby lowering the cost of the poll tax.<sup>32</sup> The Immigration Restriction Amendment Act, introduced in 1920, insisted that a permit was needed for

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27 For an analysis of the early years of soccer in New Zealand see Nick Guoth, 'Loss of Identity: New Zealand Soccer, its Foundations and its Legacies', *Soccer & Society*, 7:2, (2006), pp. 187-207. On the formative years of rugby in New Zealand see Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country? The Image of the Pakeha Male – A History*, Auckland: Penguin, 1987, pp. 82-130 and Greg Ryan (ed.) *Tackling Rugby Myths: Rugby and New Zealand Society 1854-2004*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2005. Ryan disagrees with some of Phillips' arguments but both agree Schools played an important role in the development of Rugby.

28 *New Zealand Official Year-Book 1925*, Wellington: Government Printer, 1924, pp. 761-763.

29 Hilton and Smith, pp. 15-24.

30 *New Zealand Census 1921*, Part VI, 'Race', Wellington: Government Printer, 1925, p. 1.

31 *New Zealand Census 1921*, Part VI, 'Race', p. 2.

32 James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, Vol. 3, pp. 152-154.



any immigrant 'not of British birth or parentage' to enter New Zealand.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, immigration legislation included special provisions for Chinese immigrants, including payment of a poll tax of £100 (equivalent to approximately \$9000 today).<sup>34</sup>

Chinese immigrants first came to New Zealand in the mid 1860s at the invitation of the Otago Provincial Council to work the goldfields vacated by Victorian miners. They were, in James Ng's words, 'sojourners', who hoped to make sufficient money in New Zealand to retire to their villages in China.<sup>35</sup> Most Chinese came to New Zealand as single men and the poll tax, initially set at £10 before being raised to £100 in 1896 was one of a number of measures intended to discourage Chinese women from immigrating to New Zealand.<sup>36</sup> Between 1916 and 1921, however, the number of Chinese women in New Zealand more than doubled, increasing from 130 to 273, something the 1921 census described as 'a feature of vital importance'.<sup>37</sup> A diminishing, primarily male, Chinese presence could be tolerated but the prospect of a regenerating Chinese community was less palatable. The renewed anti-Asian sentiment needs to be seen in the context of post-war New Zealand coping with the impact of 16,781 of its people being killed and over 41,000 injured during World War One and the influenza epidemic of November 1918 in which 8573 died.<sup>38</sup> Compounding these tragedies, New Zealand slid into economic depression in 1921 owing to a declining market for New Zealand's agricultural produce which resulted in many soldier-settlers leaving their farms.<sup>39</sup> In the face of such extensive loss of life and harsh economic times, the increase in Asian immigration raised concerns about immigrants taking jobs away from New Zealanders. As Leckie and Ip observed, organisations across the social spectrum including the Waterside Workers Union and the Returned Soldiers' Association (RSA) expressed concern at Asian immigration. At a popular level, such fears were graphically depicted

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33 *New Zealand Census 1921*, Part VI, 'Race', pp. 1-2.

34 *New Zealand Census 1921*, Part VI, 'Race', p. 4. Figures calculated from Reserve Bank Inflation Calculator <http://www.rbnz.govt.nz/statistics/0135595.html> accessed 8 September 2011.

35 James Ng, 'The Sojourner Experience: The Cantonese Goldseekers in New Zealand, 1865-1901', in Manying Ip (ed.), *Unfolding History: Evolving Identity: The Chinese in New Zealand*, Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2003, pp. 20-28.

36 Manying Ip and Jacqueline Leckie, "'Chinamen" and "Hindoos": Beyond stereotypes to Kiwi Asians', in Jacqueline Leckie and Paola Voci (eds.), *Localizing Asia in Aotearoa*, Wellington: Dunmore, 2011, p. 163. These measures didn't stop Chinese coming to New Zealand, 1831 newcomers paying the poll tax between 1916 and 1925. James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, Vol. 3, p. 154.

37 *New Zealand Census 1916*, Wellington: Government Printer, 1920, p. 139. *New Zealand Census 1921*, Part VI, 'Race', p. 4.

38 W. David McIntyre, 'Imperialism and Nationalism', in G.W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 345. Michael King, *The Penguin History of New Zealand*, Auckland: Penguin 2003, p. 302. Erik Olssen, 'Towards a New Society', in G.W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 279.

39 Tom Brooking, 'Economic Transformation' in G.W. Rice (ed.), *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edn., Auckland: Oxford University Press, 1992, p. 231.

in sensationalist cartoons.<sup>40</sup> In contrast to the Chinese Universities team, who were selected from the middle-classes, most of the Chinese in New Zealand were manual workers. The 1921 census recorded that 1252 Chinese worked in market-gardening, with 621 selling fruit and vegetables.<sup>41</sup> Aside from a small mercantile elite, most could be categorised as part of what James Watson calls the 'independent working class': a group characterised by hard work, thrift and a desire to achieve 'the largest possible measure of economic independence'.<sup>42</sup>

So far as is known, there was little sporting participation by the Chinese in New Zealand prior to the Second World War.<sup>43</sup> James Ng cited examples of Chinese playing billiards and a few who played rugby, but organised sporting events among the Chinese community did not occur until later.<sup>44</sup> The Easter tournament, organised by the New Zealand Chinese Association, began in 1948 and the earliest recorded Chinese sports clubs were formed in the 1940s.<sup>45</sup> The one recreational interest Chinese and Māori and Pakeha New Zealanders seemed to share was gambling, prosecutions of Chinese gamblers eliciting a measure of sympathy from some New Zealand newspapers well aware of the widespread culture of illegal betting in New Zealand.<sup>46</sup> In a 1959 publication, Ng Bickleen Fong suggested that the long working hours characteristic of market-gardening and fruit and vegetable retailing meant most Chinese had little time for recreation and preferred to engage in relaxing activities, rather than physical exertion, in the limited free time available to them.<sup>47</sup>

## Reaction to Chinese Universities in New Zealand

Chinese Universities arrived in New Zealand on July 15 1924 and departed at the end of September. From the outset they received a warm welcome. The NZFA publicised its intention to greet the tourists and 'hoped that as many players as possible will attend at the wharf in order to give the visitors the hearty welcome they undoubtedly deserve'.<sup>48</sup> The team was given a civic reception upon arriving in Wellington which was attended by James Parr, Minister of Education; Thomas Wilford, leader of the

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40 Ip and Leckie, "'Chinamen'" and "'Hindoos'", pp. 162, 165-169. See also Manying Ip and Nigel Murphy, *Asians at my Table: Asians as New Zealanders see them*, Auckland: Penguin, 2005, especially pp. 109-126.

41 *New Zealand Census 1921*, Part VI, 'Race', p. 10.

42 James Watson, 'An Independent Working Class?' in John E. Martin and Kerry Taylor (eds.), *Culture and the Labour Movement*, Palmerston North: Dunmore, 1991, p. 188.

43 James Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, Dunedin: Otago Heritage Books, 1999, Vol. 3, p. 84.

44 Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, Vol. 3, pp. 23, 95, 231-232.

45 Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, Vol. 3, pp. 205, 233.

46 Ng, *Windows on a Chinese Past*, Vol. 3, pp. 84, 116.

47 Ng Bickleen Fong, *The Chinese in New Zealand: A Study in Assimilation*, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1959, pp. 92-93.

48 *Evening Post*, 14 July 1924, p. 8.

main opposition party the Liberals, and Harry Holland, leader of the Labour Party. They were hosted by the Chinese Consulate on July 19 and the Wellington Chinese Association the following evening.<sup>49</sup>

In terms of results, the tourists were not especially successful, winning four, drawing six and losing twelve of their 22 matches; scoring 30 goals while conceding 52. They were, however, very popular with New Zealand sports fans. The exact number of spectators who attended matches is difficult to determine. According to the attendances reported in newspapers, more than 140,000 spectators attended the 22 matches. The attendance of 15,000 at the match between Wellington and Chinese Universities was believed to be a record at a Soccer match in New Zealand and this was later exceeded when a crowd reportedly 28,000 in number watched them play Auckland at the Domain.<sup>50</sup> When the receipts of the tour were tallied however, gate takings totalled £6996, much less than the £9000 estimated by NZFA. When the finances of the tour were discussed at NZFA's 1925 AGM, some suggested the attendance figures reported in the newspapers may have been inflated (newspapers themselves acknowledged the attendance figures were estimates), leading NZFA to overestimate gate receipts.<sup>51</sup> There is some evidence in support of this, one newspaper report published at the conclusion of the tour asserted the tour had realised a profit of £1000, yet the financial report presented at NZFA's 1925 AGM showed a much more modest profit of £53.<sup>52</sup> Another possible explanation of the difference between the gate receipts and reported attendances is that a significant number of spectators evaded paying the entry fee, although there is no mention of this in contemporary sources. Provincial associations had a vested interest in attracting large crowds because NZFA funded the tour by charging each association hosting fees.<sup>53</sup> Prior to the tour, the Canterbury Football Association, protested about being allocated the final test match prior to the tour on the grounds that public interest would decline as the tour proceeded.<sup>54</sup> The relatively low attendance at the fourth and final test match in Christchurch, which attracted between 4000 and 5000 spectators (in contrast to reported attendances of 10,000 or more at the other internationals), seemed to bear out these concerns.<sup>55</sup> Although it is difficult to determine attendance numbers

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49 *Evening Post*, 12 July 1924, p. 20. See also 17 July 1924, p. 13.

50 *New Zealand Herald*, 11 August 1924, p. 10.

51 *Evening Post*, 1 May 1925, p. 3. On attendance numbers being estimated see, for example, *New Zealand Herald*, 11 August 1924, p. 10.

52 *Evening Post*, 26 September 1924, p. 8, 27 September 1924, p. 18 and 1 May 1925, p. 3.

53 In order to meet the £2600 guarantee required for the tour the four major associations were each asked to contribute £350, Wanganui, Southland and Poverty Bay £150 and the minor associations £75. It was agreed the NZFA would take 50% of match profits, affiliated associations 25% with 25% reserved for the proposed England tour in 1925. *Evening Post*, 28 March 1924, p. 3.

54 *Evening Post*, 1 July 1924, p. 12.

55 *The Press*, 15 September, 1924, p. 10.

precisely, it seems the tourists attracted large crowds.<sup>56</sup> The attendances reported in the newspapers are comparable with those of the Indian Hockey Teams which toured New Zealand in 1926, 1935 and 1938, so do not appear completely implausible.<sup>57</sup>

Gate receipts were not the only issue affecting the financial returns from the tour. The NZFA outlaid £574 to outfit the team at the beginning of the tour because the team arrived without boots and football pants. This, along with other unexpected expenses further reduced the profit margin of the tour. F. Campbell, president of NZFA's finance committee, further noted they provided 'pocket money' to the Chinese Team during the tour.<sup>58</sup> I have not found any public discussion of these difficulties during the tour, which may reflect a desire to avoid adverse publicity.

In contrast to the anti-Asian rhetoric then prevalent in New Zealand, media coverage of the Chinese team during the tour was generally positive. A number of reasons might be put forward for this. That the team was drawn from the middle-classes and was perceived to embody the best characteristics of amateur sport counted in its favour. The players were described as coming from the 'Oxfords and Cambridges of China'.<sup>59</sup> The influence of the Y.M.C.A. in Chinese soccer, and the team more specifically was also noted.<sup>60</sup> In this way the team affirmed that the finest qualities of British sport and muscular Christianity could be transplanted anywhere in the world. Team Manager A.E. Dome simultaneously affirmed Chinese and British sporting influences during the tour, informing audiences that soccer originated in China and acknowledging the contribution of British games to Chinese development. In Wellington, he asserted that in the twenty years prior to the tour 'sport was regarded in China as an ungentlemanly pastime, and it was not until the Europeans introduced games that they were played at all'.<sup>61</sup> Millard forecast a successful tour, asserting the team would play 'in a manner worthy of the highest traditions of sportsmanship' and 'with a determination typical of the highest John Bull traditions of a fight they will endear themselves to the New Zealand public'.<sup>62</sup>

The way in which the team embodied the qualities expected of amateur athletes further enhanced their reputation. Advance publicity praised the players as fair

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56 Photographic records of the tour are rare but the *Auckland Weekly News* showed pictures of seemingly full grandstands and terraces for the games against Wellington and Auckland. *Auckland Weekly News*, 31 July 1924, p. 49 and 14 August 1924, p. 42.

57 Geoff Watson and Wilf Haskell, *Seasons of Honour: A Centenary History of New Zealand Hockey 1902-2002*, Dunmore: Palmerston North, 2002, pp. 48-70.

58 *Evening Post*, 1 May 1925, p. 3.

59 *Evening Post*, 3 July, 1924, p. 6. See also *Evening Post*, 12 July 1924, p. 8 and 17 July 1924, p. 13.

60 *Dunedin Star* cited in *Otautau Standard and Wallace Chronicle*, 9 September 1924, p. 3. *Evening Post*, 16 July 1924, p. 8 and 17 July 1924, p. 13.

61 *Evening Post*, 16 July 1924, p. 8. See also *Manawatu Daily Times*, 29 July 1924, p. 9. For accounts of the Chinese origins of soccer see *New Zealand Herald*, 11 August 1924, p. 10 and *Auckland Weekly News*, 14 August 1924, p. 59.

62 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 28 July 1924, p. 4.

Table 1. 1924 Results and Venues for 1924 Chinese Universities tour of New Zealand.

Date	Opponent	Result	Location	Venue	Attendance *
July 17	Wairarapa	Drew 1-1	Masterton		3000
July 19	Wellington	Lost 0-4	Wellington	Basin Reserve	15000
July 23	Hawkes Bay	Won 2-0	Napier	McLean Park	5000
July 25	Poverty Bay	Drew 0-0	Gisborne	Childers Reserve	5000
July 30	Manawatu	Lost 0-1	Palmerston Nth	Showgrounds	2300
August 2	Wanganui	Won 4-2	Wanganui		4500
August 6	Taranaki	Drew 1-1	Hawera	Show Grounds	3000
August 9	Auckland	Lost 1-5	Auckland	Akld. Domain	28,000
August 13	Rotorua and Sth Auckland	Won 2-1	Rotorua	Arawa Park	
August 16	New Zealand	Lost 1-2	Auckland	Akld. Domain	15000
August 20	Sth Auckland	Lost 0-3	Hamilton	Show Grounds	5000
August 23	New Zealand	Drew 2-2	Wellington	Basin Reserve	10000
August 27	Sth Canterbury	Lost 1-3	Timaru	Athletic Ground	3000
August 30	Canterbury	Lost 2-3	Christchurch	Lancaster Park	10,000
September 3	Otago	Drew 1-1	Dunedin	Carisbrook	5000
September 6	New Zealand	Lost 3-5	Dunedin	Carisbrook	10000
September 10	Southland	Lost 1-5	Invercargill	Rugby Park	3000-4000
September 13	New Zealand	Lost 2-4	Christchurch	Lancaster Park	4000-5000
September 17	West Coast	Drew 1-1	Greymouth		>3000
September 20	Buller	Lost 1-4	Westport	Victoria Square	3000
September 24	Nelson	Lost 3-4	Nelson	Trafalgar Park	2000
September 27	Marlborough	Won 1-0	Blenheim		3000

\* Attendance figures are derived from newspaper reports on the tour and are approximate.

sportsmen, noting they declined to take penalty kicks (on the grounds that they did not want to take advantage of their opponent's errors).<sup>63</sup> Interestingly, this policy seemed to be abandoned in favour of a more pragmatic approach as the tour progressed. In the fifth match of the tour they chose to take a penalty shot at goal (although the attempt was unsuccessful) and they scored from a penalty in their match against Canterbury.<sup>64</sup> Match reports consistently praised the tourists for their skilful, fair play.<sup>65</sup> Reportedly, the spectators gave them a warm reception in most games.<sup>66</sup> Summarising the tour, the *Evening Post* lauded them as 'gentlemen both on and off the field'.<sup>67</sup> The team's impeccably amateur credentials were particularly important in New Zealand, where amateurism was firmly entrenched in most sports.<sup>68</sup> Accordingly, Dome's statement that New Zealand was 'the most amateur country in the world, and for that reason he had a great respect for people of the Dominion' would likely have endeared him to his audience.<sup>69</sup> Such positive endorsements of amateurism were particularly timely because the 1924 England League Team reignited tensions between rugby union and rugby league in New Zealand because league was stigmatised as a 'professional' sport.<sup>70</sup> 'Sport' wrote to the *Evening Post* observing that Robert Wright, Mayor of Wellington granted a civic reception to Chinese Universities but had earlier declined to accord the visiting Australian rugby league team the same honour on the basis they were professionals.<sup>71</sup> J.H. Dannatt, one of the managers of the England team, was much more critical. He condemned 'the treatment we have received in some towns in New Zealand' and then observed 'the Chinese footballers have been received with open arms, but the

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63 *Evening Post*, 3 July 1924 p. 6. See also *Evening Post*, 12 July 1924, p. 8. In this regard, the team emulated the practice of amateur clubs such as Corinthians. Murray, p. 42.

64 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 31 July 1924, p. 7. *The Press*, 1 September 1924, p. 13.

65 The *Manawatu Daily Times* of 31 July 1924, p. 7, praised their 'scrupulously clean and fair game'. See also *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 31 July 1924, p. 7.

66 See, for example, *Manawatu Daily Times*, 31 July 1924, p. 4. *New Zealand Truth*, 26 July 1924, p. 9.

67 *Evening Post*, 27 September 1924, p. 18.

68 The refusal of the Scottish Rugby Union to grant the All Blacks matches on the 1924-1925 tour of the United Kingdom, reportedly because they believed the New Zealand players were professionals was extensively discussed in New Zealand newspapers during 1924, many of which upheld New Zealand's amateur credentials. See for example the *Evening Post*, 13 March 1924, p. 9, 16 June 1924, p. 8 and 11 December 1924, p. 7. See also *Observer*, cited in *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 2 August 1924, p. 9. *New Zealand Truth*, 2 February 1924, p. 9. That same year there were debates over the eligibility of Rugby League players to play tennis and cricket. See, for example, *Evening Post*, 2 December 1924, p. 8 and 6 December 1924, p. 18.

69 *Evening Post*, 17 July 1924, p. 13.

70 Bill Greenwood, 'Class, Conflict and the Clash of Codes: The Introduction of Rugby League to New Zealand: 1908-1920', unpublished PhD Thesis, Massey University, 2008, p. 372. Millard himself refuted suggestions Rugby League was a professional game in New Zealand and Australia stating that no player in either country made their living from the sport. *Evening Post*, 28 June 1924, p. 19.

71 *Evening Post*, 15 July 1924, p. 7.

treatment shown by Britishers to Britishers has been disgusting'.<sup>72</sup> The barring of Rugby League from certain grounds also irked the management.<sup>73</sup> The Otago Rugby Union issued a writ against the Forbury Park Trotting Club (with whom it had an arrangement to use the venue during winter) to prevent it renting the ground to Otago Rugby League for the third test match, which resulted in the game being played at Tahuna Park.<sup>74</sup> In contrast, Chinese Universities were hosted at New Zealand's most prestigious sporting venues including Carisbrook, the Basin Reserve and Lancaster Park. The temporary elevation of middle-class Chinese footballers ahead of working-class English rugby league players illustrates the capacity of sport to temporarily change hierarchies of race and class. In some respects this is consistent with Andrew Honey's assessment of the reception of 'non-white' sporting teams touring Australia between 1907 and 1931. He argues racial prejudices could be temporarily suspended in sporting contests because the outcome of the match would not change the underlying power structure in society.<sup>75</sup>

Media reports generally affirmed Chinese masculinity, in contrast to the standard cartoon caricatures of the Chinese as grotesque and physically underdeveloped.<sup>76</sup> The *Evening Post* commended the team on their appearance: 'though slight of stature, the visitors were of a fine stamp, clean living, and proud of their race'.<sup>77</sup> Initially, they struggled to match the physicality of New Zealand teams. Reports on their second match, which they lost 0-4 against Wellington, remarked that they were disinclined to challenge their opposition for the ball.<sup>78</sup> As the tour progressed, however, match reports approvingly noted their play, while remaining generally clean, became more physical and the Chinese were prepared to shoulder opponents off the ball.<sup>79</sup> Thus Chinese physicality, generally viewed critically, received some favourable comment. It seems that the New Zealand Football Association was keen to ensure the tourists were as competitive as possible. After their match against Wellington, the *Evening Post* reported that NZFA decided to provide 'the visiting team with a coach, who would teach them something of the game as it is played in New Zealand'.<sup>80</sup> Colin Reid was duly appointed as 'trainer' to the team.<sup>81</sup> The report appears to have caused some anxiety, because shortly after the story was published the NZFA issued a statement saying 'there

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72 *Evening Post*, 18 August 1924, p. 8.

73 *Evening Post*, 18 August 1924, p. 8. See also *Evening Post*, 12 August 1924, p. 13.

74 John Coffey and Bernie Wood, *The Kiwis: 100 Years of International Rugby League*, Auckland: Hodder and Moa, 2007, pp. 71-72. *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 30 July 1924, p. 12.

75 Honey, pp. 26-46.

76 Ip and Murphy, see especially, pp. 87-100.

77 *Evening Post*, 15 July 1924, p. 8.

78 *Evening Post*, 21 July 1924, p. 11, and 26 July 1924, p. 18. *New Zealand Truth*, 26 July 1924, p. 9.

79 See, for example, *Evening Post*, 18 August 1924, p. 11 and 25 August 1924, p. 4.

80 *Evening Post*, 21 July 1924, p. 6. See also *Auckland Weekly News*, 24 July 1924, p. 59.

81 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 23 July 1924, p. 10. *Evening Post*, 22 July, 1924, p. 8.

is no desire to interfere in any way with Mr Wong's position as coach'.<sup>82</sup> Public denials notwithstanding, Reid seems to have played an important role. He remained with the team for the duration of the tour and his contribution was acknowledged by the Chinese management and the NZFA's F. Campbell asserted 'but for Colin Reid they would never have finished'.<sup>83</sup>

Reports of the tourists play were generally positive, albeit sometimes intermingled with orientalist allusions. 'Tottenham' writing for the *Truth*, mixed praise for the 'clean game' of the visitors with the suggestion the large attendance of Chinese spectators meant the 'pak-a-poo' schools (sic) must have had a day off'.<sup>84</sup> In some of these reports, the Chinese advanced up the colour line. Conforming to European expectations of appearance rendered them nearly white in appearance. 'Tackler', another *Truth* correspondent, began his report on the match against Wellington with an allusion to 'Chu Chin Chow' but went on to distance the tourists from this stereotype observing 'the Chu Chin Chows now in our midst are civilized, regular fellows, who, only for their complexions, could be taken for products of the West'.<sup>85</sup> The reasonably positive portrayal of the team in the populist *Truth*, the self-styled 'people's paper' popular among the working-classes, is worthy of note. In the early 1900s the paper had been virulently anti-Chinese, although Yska suggests it had toned down its anti-Asian rhetoric by the 1920s.<sup>86</sup> Advertisements for the match between Chinese Universities and Manawatu blended positive adjectives about their play with references to 'celestials' and 'dainty' Chinese.<sup>87</sup> These relatively positive images of China co-existed with more negative reports linking Chinese with opium use.<sup>88</sup> On 27 September, the day of the tourists' final match against Marlborough, a *Truth* article on a seizure of opium from an overseas liner carried the subheading, 'inscrutable ways of the Orient: life-bound slave remains silent'.<sup>89</sup> It would be overstating things to say that the tour broke down racial barriers, rather sport provided a space where they could be temporarily suspended. Nevertheless,

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82 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 23 July 1924, p. 10. Wong Tin Sik may not have been the original choice to coach the team. The *Manawatu Daily Times* of 10 July 1924, reported 'the inclusion of Wong Tin Sik, as coach does not agree with the cable sent by Dr Gray of Shanghai...as he cabled the name of Chen as coach'. The person referred to is K.C. Chen, one of China's leading players. I have not been able to locate any further information on this. *Manawatu Daily Times*, July 10 1924, p. 8. See also *Auckland Weekly News*, 10 July 1924, p. 59.

83 *Evening Post*, 29 September 1924, p. 8 and 1 May 1925, p. 3.

84 *New Zealand Truth*, 26 July 1924, p. 9. Pak-a-poo was a form of gambling popular among Chinese.

85 *New Zealand Truth*, 26 July 1924, p. 9.

86 Redmer Yska, *Truth: The Rise and Fall of the People's Paper*, Nelson: Craig Potton, 2010, pp. 31-35. See also James Belich, *Paradise Reforged: A History of the New Zealanders from the 1880s to the Year 2000*, Auckland: Allen Lane, 2001, pp. 179-180.

87 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 26 July 1924, p. 1 and 28 July 1924, p. 1.

88 *Evening Post*, 29 September 1924, p. 6. See also *Evening Post*, 14 August 1924, p. 5.

89 *New Zealand Truth*, 27 September 1924, p. 6.



match reports provided a forum in which Chinese conduct and skill was affirmed and recognised. Newspapers of the time had distinct spaces for editorial comment and factual reports, so match reports and accounts of social functions were a space in which Chinese were presented as legitimate athletes and good citizens.

Even controversial incidents, such as the match against Canterbury, when some Chinese players disputed a goal they believed was scored by an opponent in an off-side position, were generally reported on in a manner favourable to the visitors. Two Chinese players temporarily left the field in protest but later returned and China lost the match 2-3. Despite the fact that their actions breached one of amateurism's key tenets, that the decisions of match officials should be accepted without complaint, both newspaper coverage and spectator reactions favoured the Chinese. The *Evening Post* reported 'the sympathies of the crowd were plainly with the Chinese, who were cheered loudly at the end of the game'.<sup>90</sup> In contrast, the referee was booed by a section of the crowd.<sup>91</sup> This temporary inversion of the power hierarchy, in which a Chinese team was briefly elevated above a European official in public esteem, was commented on by the *Truth* which stated 'it is also not hard to conjecture how much sympathy a white player would get from the same crowd if he saw fit to walk off the ground as a protest against the referee's ruling'.<sup>92</sup> It is reasonable to suggest that this was one of the very few forums in which Chinese were publicly cheered in New Zealand. In applauding the visitors, the crowd affirmed both their belief in fair play and, possibly, the belief in racial equality which, despite the exclusionist immigration policy, was an integral part of New Zealand's national story.

### **Ambassadorial Aspects of the Tour: Promoting China and Connections with New Zealand's Chinese Communities**

The tourists made use of the extensive speaking opportunities afforded the team to promote a positive image of China, situating sport as one element of Chinese modernisation. Occasionally, the management offered a nationalist perspective, criticising outside interference in China. Speaking to the Palmerston North Lunch Club, Wong Tin Sik argued China had entered the League of Nations because of 'a desire to become strong'.<sup>93</sup> Dome emphasised the role of sport in developing China asserting 'China, as a nation though strong in mind was not strong physically, simply because they had not given the opportunity for proper development in the way of sport and athletics'.<sup>94</sup> China's universities were, he asserted, 'entering into sport with increasing

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90 *Evening Post*, 6 September, 1924, p. 18. *The Press*, a Christchurch newspaper, made similar observations. *The Press*, 1 September 1924, p. 13.

91 *Evening Post*, 1 September 1924, p. 11. *The Press*, 1 September 1924, p. 13.

92 *New Zealand Truth*, 6 September 1924, p. 9.

93 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 30 July, 1924, p. 4.

94 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 30 July, 1924, p. 4.

enthusiasm and the present team were the pioneers of the new type of the nation'.<sup>95</sup> He concluded by asking his audience to 'give China a chance.... The people have the desire to place the country on its feet, but if foreign nations are forever having naval demonstrations up and down the rivers she will never get anywhere'.<sup>96</sup> The reporting of these speeches gave at least some opportunity for New Zealanders to read positive accounts of China. Praise for the visitors was, however, interspersed with orientalist tropes. Reverend Lee, a Chinese Minister who emigrated to New Zealand from China, hoped 'the visit of the Chinese team will open English eyes to the fact the Chinese are not as stupid as they seem and not so simple as they look'.<sup>97</sup>

The team was also given the opportunity to visit local industries and educational institutions, activities which simultaneously showcased New Zealand while acknowledging that Chinese were educated. These visits ranged from a poultry farm at Oroua Downs, Manawatu to Canterbury University College on the morning of the fourth test against New Zealand and a dance hosted by the Christchurch RSA.<sup>98</sup> In addition to generating a more positive image of Chinese than everyday media reports, the tour was also an opportunity for New Zealand's Chinese communities to connect with their countrymen and heighten their profile in the wider community. In so doing they promoted their claims to be good citizens. On a number of occasions, local Chinese communities presented trophies to the local football association and to the touring team. In Palmerston North, the Chinese community presented two cups, one of which was donated to the Manawatu Football Association for use in local competition and another cup was presented to the Chinese team for competition in China.<sup>99</sup> A considerable amount of effort went into these trophies, which were displayed in a jeweller's shop prior to the match. The *Manawatu Daily Times* reported 'the two beautiful cups...are a tribute to the patriotism of Chinese residents of the Manawatu. It is doubtful if there are any finer trophies in New Zealand'.<sup>100</sup> The Chinese communities of Hawera, Wairarapa and Nelson also provided trophies to the visiting team.<sup>101</sup> Local Chinese communities in small towns such as Foxton, also entertained the team, 'prominent residents' and officials at banquets.<sup>102</sup> Approximately 300 people, 'nearly 200 guests, besides over one hundred Chinese' attended the function organised by Manawatu's Chinese community at the Municipal Hall, Palmerston North. The Chinese attendance comprised most of the local Chinese community, 103 Chinese being recorded as living in Palmerston North

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95 *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 30 July 1924, p. 6.

96 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 30 July, 1924, p. 4.

97 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 29 July, 1924, p. 9.

98 *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 31 July 1924, p. 6. *The Press*, 12 September 1924, p. 12.

99 *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 9 July 1924, p. 2.

100 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 23 July 1924, p. 6.

101 *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 7 August 1924, p. 10. *Evening Post*, 15 July 1924, p. 2 and 22 September 1924, p. 2.

102 *Manawatu Daily Times*, 31 July 1924, p. 4.

in 1921 with a further 60 living in the counties of Oroua, Manawatu and Kairanga.<sup>103</sup> These visits both reinforced the difference of the Chinese, yet also acknowledged their capacity to act as Westerners. After leaving Foxton School, the *Manawatu Evening Standard* reported 'the visitors then showed the children that they could indulge in hearty British cheers'.<sup>104</sup>

The class differences between the New Zealand Chinese community, which was primarily independent working class, and the educated Chinese University team were sometimes obliquely noted. When the Chinese team were welcomed at Hawera, Dome acknowledged the way the previous speaker had complimented their education before commenting that 'his team 'represented the higher class of Chinese', if not the highest.<sup>105</sup> Turning his attention to the 'misunderstanding in connection with the people of China' he perceived in New Zealand, he asserted 'the first people to come to a country were sometimes the lesser element, and it was not always the highly educated that were the first to arrive'.<sup>106</sup> Speaking at a dinner following the match against Taranaki, local residents Wong Hee and C.J. Pam reportedly upheld the visitors as proof China was engaging with 'western ideas', and observed 'no one' would now call China 'the sick man of the East'.<sup>107</sup> Speaking in reply, Dome observed 'when the team came to New Zealand they greatly desired to meet their brother Chinese' but their touring responsibilities limited their opportunities.<sup>108</sup>

## Conclusion

To what extent was the reception accorded the Chinese team exceptional? In many respects, the positive reception they received was consistent with the warm reception accorded other Asian and Pacific teams which toured Australasia in the interwar period.<sup>109</sup> It is worth recalling Andrew Honey's suggestion that this reflected the transient nature of tours. Because they were only temporary residents visiting teams did not pose any real or perceived economic or political threat to the power structure of the host nation.<sup>110</sup> In their positive reception of visiting Asian teams, New Zealand reinforced its self-image as an egalitarian meritocracy. The tour certainly did not result in any change in racial prejudice in New Zealand. Indeed the White New Zealand

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103 *New Zealand Census 1921*, Part VI, 'Race', pp. 14-17, 20-21.

104 *Manawatu Evening Standard*, 31 July 1924, p. 6.

105 *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 5 August 1924, p. 5.

106 *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 5 August 1924, p. 5.

107 *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 7 August 1924, p. 10.

108 *Hawera and Normanby Star*, 7 August 1924, p. 10.

109 Watson, 'Affirming Indian Identities? An Analysis of An Analysis of Imperial Rhetoric and Orientalism in the Tours of Indian Hockey Teams to New Zealand in 1926, 1935 and 1938', *Sporting Traditions*, 21:2 (2005), pp. 119-40.

110 Honey, p. 46.

League was founded in Pukekohe in 1925.<sup>111</sup> It would be unfair, however, to assert the tour achieved nothing in terms of race relations. It provided a window, however fleeting, in which Chinese were credited with exhibiting the best qualities of British sportsmen: courage, good manners and fair play. It gave an opportunity for Chinese communities in New Zealand to increase their profile and demonstrate citizenship. It hypothesised a level playing field between China and the Western World at a time when China was dominated by foreign interests. In microcosm, it reflected the capacity of sport to symbolise social change, if not bring it about in practice.

### **Biographical note**

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111 Jacqueline Leckie, *Indian Settlers: The Story of a New Zealand South Asian Community*, Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2007, pp. 66-75.