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Legacy of the Past

Chinese Indonesian Sporting Achievements During the Sukarno Era

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Abstract

In contemporary times, Chinese Indonesian participation in sport is primarily associated with badminton. Less well known, however, is the prominent role Chinese Indonesians played—before the advent of the New Order—on the wider Indonesian sports scene. For many years they maintained an almost absolute domination in weightlifting and basketball, while enjoying prominence in water sports, lawn tennis, table tennis, and further sports disciplines. This article aims to investigate the determinants influencing their prominent role on the Indonesian sports scene during those periods. It will examine the colonial roots—the prevailing economic and socio-political system inherent to the Dutch East Indies—that might have provided a foundational basis for their significant performance in later years. The article will also investigate the political environment manifest during the Sukarno era—one that facilitated Chinese Indonesians' enthusiastic participation and achievement in sport. The study is based primarily on official documentation, the print media, as well as the testimonies and insights of more than a dozen former Chinese sports champions—now mostly in their seventies.

Keywords

sports history – Chinese Indonesians – colonial legacy – Sukarno era

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Introduction

Ethnic Chinese athletes featured prominently in the national sports scene during the first two decades of Indonesia's independence. Their participation in a range of sports—at both the regional and the national level—was out of all proportion to their demographic representation in the country. For example, they almost completely dominated the weightlifting and basketball scenes, and also had a strong presence in the domains of swimming, badminton, lawn tennis, and table tennis. They also featured in football, boxing, billiards, and chess. In badminton, Chinese Indonesians even managed to occupy the world's top position. In this article, I will argue that the main determinants of the prominent sporting role played by the Chinese in post-independence Indonesia can be traced back to the favourable economic and socio-political conditions they experienced during the colonial period, and the subsequent opportunities they enjoyed during the Sukarno era.

Before examining the colonial roots of such a success, the article will first, by analysing the results of national sports competitions, introduce proof of their domination in the sporting arena. This will be followed by an examination of the opportunities and challenges faced by ethnic Chinese athletes in the 1950s and 1960s.

National Sports Games 1953

Chinese Indonesians (hereafter Chinese)¹ had taken part in Indonesia's Pekan Olahraga Nasional (PON, National Sports Games) since its inception. However, their participation in the first Games, in 1948, was still quite peripheral—the instability and uncertainty faced during the Revolutionary War and decolonization process would have influenced their participation. In the 1948 event, the Chinese were found competing in swimming, basketball, and tennis (Komite Olympiade Indonesia 1954). They may have participated in other sports, such as badminton, but details of this event are lacking. At the following PON, in 1951, apart from performing well in their 'favourite' sports, such as swimming, basketball, tennis, badminton, and weightlifting, the Chinese also won medals in athletics and cycling (Komite Olympiade Indonesia 1954).

Their performance at PON III in 1953, held in Medan (North Sumatra), was no less impressive. Among the more than 15 sporting disciplines included at

1 Differentiation will be made when Chinese from elsewhere are being referred to—for example, 'mainland Chinese' will be used when referring to those from the People's Republic of China.

the Games, the Chinese performance was strongest in weightlifting, swimming, and basketball. They also maintained a strong presence in badminton and table tennis, and were well represented in the tennis and football teams (at least those from Java). In weightlifting, the majority of the participants—19 out of 22—were Chinese. Not surprisingly, all but one of the available medals went to Chinese competitors.² In swimming, they won nine out of a possible 15 medals in the men's events: two gold, four silver, and three bronze. Their performance in the women's events was equally impressive. Out of four individual events, they collected all the gold medals, two silver, and one bronze. Their domination in basketball was evidenced by the over-representation of Chinese players in the teams fielded. The lowest representation came from South Sulawesi, where the number of Chinese players constituted approximately half the team. The teams from East Java and Central Sumatra were exclusively Chinese. Throughout this article, exemplars will illustrate that Chinese enthusiasm and sporting prowess were maintained into the first half of the 1960s.

In the early 1950s, the Chinese population was estimated to be 2.5 million (Mozingo 1961:25), while Indonesia's total population was 77 million (Nitisastro 2006:126). When viewed against the achievements and participation rates cited above, the Chinese—representing a mere 3% of the total population—were over-represented in sporting successes.

Gaps and Arguments

Brown (2006) noted the paucity of scholarly publications on sport in Indonesia. Almost a decade on, the number of such publications remains inadequate, particularly those that are easily accessible to the Western world. One exception is a further article by Brown (2008) that aimed to investigate the nation-building capacity of sport in Indonesia by referencing a case study of the National Sports Weeks of 1951 and 1954. Conversely, following the demise of the New Order, studies featuring the Chinese Indonesian past—in fields other than sports—have proliferated. Nevertheless, apart from the sections of Brown's two articles mentioned, scholarly publications examining the Chinese past role in sports are almost non-existent, despite their impressive past performances.

Younger generations of Indonesians, including those of Chinese descent, are—with the exception of the badminton phenomenon—oblivious of the past 'glory' of the Chinese in Indonesian sport. It is not surprising, then, to

2 One of the silver medals went to the non-Chinese Guus Tirajoh of East Java. The Chinese athletes had almost completely dominated the sport since the national weightlifting competition had been introduced in post-independence Indonesia (Komite Olimpiade Indonesia 1954:138–44).

find that the majority of local publications representing the Chinese role in sport have focused on the badminton angle. Most were in the form of biographies of leading figures, such as Rudy Hartono (Nugroho 1986) and Liem Swie King (Adhi Ksp 2009). None of these publications dealt with the broader socio-historical aspects of Chinese Indonesian participation in sports, except for Wondomisnowo (2011) and Asmadi (2004), who examined the growth of badminton in the country in some detail. However, these publications did not fully represent the historical role of the Chinese in sport—a role which transcended that of badminton. Enlightening to a younger generation of sport enthusiasts and the general public is the recent book by Aji (2010), which illustrates the prominent role played by the Chinese in Surabaya's colonial-era football milieu.

There are but few scholarly writings regarding the influence and role played by the Chinese in sport during the crucial times of the 1950s and 1960s, nor is there an analysis of the factors that contributed to their achievements—a gap that this article aims to rectify. It will be argued that post-decolonization opportunities—which will be discussed in the second part of this article—undoubtedly contributed to enthusiastic Chinese participation in sport. However, the sporting prowess of the Chinese could not have been achieved by osmosis, and must have resulted from years of training, participation, and opportunity. An examination of the factors contributing to these opportunities needs to be made in the context of the role—inadvertent or deliberate—played by the colonial system.

Favourable Conditions During the Dutch East Indies Era

Studies have shown that a correlation exists between the colonial masters and the choice of sports being played in any given colony. The colonial powers were often the catalyst for introducing modern sports into their colonies (Page and Sonnenburg 2003:304). As illustrated by the role of the British in promoting the popularity of cricket, and the Japanese encouragement of baseball in their former colonies, such links could be unique.³ Other than for the entertainment of the population, the colonizers could utilize sport to support the colonial agenda. Sport, in this context, might be used as a means to foster stronger bonds between the colony and the colonizer (Cho 2012:535). Furthermore, it could be

3 Cricket, a quintessentially British sport, became popular in many of its former colonies, far more so than the sports of other European countries in their former colonies. The style of baseball played in Taiwan and South Korea is linked to their occupation by the Japanese (Cho 2012:535; Harney 2013:23).

used as a platform for social encounters which were otherwise infrequent—or prohibited in some colonial settings (see Brownfoot 2002:134; Salis 2010).

The Dutch colonizers played a significant role in the dissemination of sport in Indonesia (formerly the Dutch East Indies). One unique link was found in korfbal—a sport that originated in the Netherlands—which was popular in Indonesia before the 1950s, as well as in the other Dutch colonies of Curaçao and Suriname.⁴ The Dutch also played a prominent role in the spread of football (Colombijn 2000), which became a very popular sport in the colony. In addition, many other ‘modern’ sports, such as fencing, athletics, and volleyball, were introduced to the archipelago (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional 2003:137, 159, 220). Unfortunately, the Dutch were less enthusiastic in formalizing or allowing sports education, especially in those schools available for indigenous students (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional 2003:18–9). Furthermore, as will be revealed, the colonial system discriminated against indigenous people, restricting their access to sport.

Colonial policies were a crucial determinant in the uptake of sports by the Chinese. First of all, lax migration policies in the Dutch East Indies meant that Chinese from elsewhere could travel and migrate to the archipelago with relative ease. This freedom of movement helped the dissemination to the archipelago of sports that were popular in China and other parts of Southeast Asia. Two examples of this are the diffusion of badminton in Indonesia by Chinese traders from Malaya, and the spread of basketball from China to students attending Chinese schools and the wider community (Brown 2006:73; Departemen Pendidikan Nasional 2003; Wondomisnowo 2011:3–5). The residential and travel restrictions that constrained the movements of the Chinese in some regions were lifted in the early twentieth century. This facilitated not only regular business and social travel, but also regional sports events, which grew rapidly from the 1920s onward.⁵

Compared to its attitude towards indigenous organizations, the colonial government was less suspicious of the Chinese organizing themselves. In fact, the government allowed the Chinese to establish their own schools and ethnic

4 A national korfbal association was one of the few umbrella sports associations formed by indigenous Indonesians before the end of the Second World War (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional 2003:24). Unfortunately, korfbal fell out of favour following Indonesia's independence. There are further examples of the ‘failed’ adoption of colonial sports in former colonies—for example, cricket in Canada and the USA (Kaufman and Patterson 2005:86).

5 The *wijkenstelsel* (zoning system) constrained the Chinese to live in designated residential areas, many of which developed into Chinatowns. The *passenstelsel* (pass system) required the Chinese to have a permit to travel outside of their local areas (Tjiok-Liem 2011:123).

social organizations. These institutions helped popularize sports such as football, basketball, table tennis, and badminton within the Chinese community. Their popularity led to the setting up of sports clubs, which in turn led to the formation of sports associations and federations, as well as more organized and frequent competitions. This not only energized sporting activities amongst the Chinese, but also helped produce better athletes. In light of this wider sports exposure, it is no coincidence that, in the two decades following Indonesia's independence, the Chinese—rather than the indigenous population—came to dominate some sporting disciplines.

Social Division

A further vestige of colonial rule needing investigation is that of the social division of society. Where one stood in the racial hierarchy led to a differentiation in one's access to public goods and services. The colonial administration classified society rather loosely into three groupings: European, East Asian, and indigenous Indonesian (Lindsey 2005:42–3).⁶ This system was inherently discriminatory as members of each group were subject to different types of regulations. Compared to the other groups in colonial society, Europeans had the best access to services and facilities. With the exception of members of the aristocracy and other elites, the Chinese and indigenous people enjoyed fewer privileges.

During the colonial era, certain social facilities and activities were managed by exclusive clubs, whose membership was generally limited to Europeans and the upper class. Sports such as yachting and horseracing were among those often managed by these exclusive clubs.⁷ Lawn tennis, played mostly by Europeans, Chinese, and Japanese, was also considered an elite sport. A few upper-middle-class indigenous people played tennis in order to maintain their social status (PON 1951). As will be shown below, water sports such as swimming and water polo were also considered elitist, because access to swimming pools was often restricted.

Restrictions to access might be placed on public recreational facilities such as parks, cinemas, and swimming pools, particularly if these were privately managed.⁸ A frequently mentioned example of a colonial-era sporting restric-

6 Many pre-colonial societies in the archipelago were likewise feudalistic and hierarchical; the Dutch therefore did not necessarily invent the social-stratification concept.

7 Bangun 2007:36, 39; Departemen Pendidikan Nasional 2003:192. See also Cisca Pattipilohy, 'Jeugdherinneringen van een "Inlandse Indische"', 2009, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_indoo4200901_01/_indoo4200901_01_0005.php#01T (accessed 12-10-2016).

8 Complaints and arguments over such restrictions could occasionally be found in the local

tion was that of access to swimming pools. As late as 1940, the indigenous councillors of Jakarta were still questioning how ‘public’ the public swimming pools were, when the natives were barred from entry.⁹ In the late 1930s, the Brantas Swimming Pool in Surabaya (established 1925) was still advertised in the newspaper as a swimming pool exclusively for Europeans.¹⁰ Incidents of discrimination continued to be reported there in 1941—not only towards indigenous patrons, but also towards the Chinese.¹¹ Indigenous eyewitnesses reported similar experiences elsewhere.¹² Even when there were no apparent restrictions, the exclusive nature of the facilities psychologically prevented the entry of ‘undesired’ social groups, as the latter would be sensitive of being under ‘observation’ by the ‘preferred’ users of the facilities.

The impact of these restrictions on indigenous Indonesians was significant. At the end of the 1940s, they were unrepresented in swimming competitions. The number of indigenous swimmers was still insignificant in the early 1950s. From an organizational perspective, the two best-known native swimming clubs in the nation—*Tirta Merta* (Bandung) and *Tirta Kentjana* (Jakarta)—were established as late as 1949. And it would be a further two years before the official swimming body was formed. Van Der Stoep, the coach of the Indonesian swimming and water polo team for the 1954 Asian Games in Manila, reiterated such correlations. He pointed out that swimming, as a sport, was new to Indonesians, as during the colonial era they had been forbidden to use the pools.¹³

A further constraint influencing the sporting activities of some social groups derived from racial differentiation in the education system. Schools—as well as the sports clubs that will be discussed later—spearheaded the development and spread of sport in Indonesia.¹⁴ Because primary education for the popula-

newspapers; for example, *Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 27-12-1911, 11-4-1916; *De Indische Courant*, 26-11-1929.

9 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 12-3-1940.

10 *De Indische Courant*, 21-2-1939.

11 In the incident reported in 1941, a well-known Chinese individual and his guest were reminded of the swimming pool restrictions (*Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 25-2-1941).

12 Cisca Pattipilohy, ‘Jeugdherinneringen van een “Inlandse Indische”’, 2009, p. 29, http://www.dbnl.org/tekst/_indoo4200901_01/_indoo4200901_01_0005.php#011T (accessed 12-10-2016); Soedarpo 1987:33.

13 *De Vrije Pers* 3-5-1954.

14 Brown (2008:441) observed that sports clubs were much more influential in the development of sports, at least athletics, than schools. However, as this article will argue, the role of schools was crucial in terms of introducing and nurturing interests in some sports, such as basketball, among Chinese students.

tion was racially segregated (although not strictly), and entry to secondary and advanced schools was limited, it is not unremarkable that an uneven progress of sports access occurred across the racial divide.

A closer look at the school system illustrates that it was tiered into two streams at primary-school level: the seven-year elite school and the three-year basic village school. The majority of the indigenous population attended the basic school (*volkschool*) following its inception at the end of the nineteenth century. The intention of these schools was to provide basic literacy and numeracy skills, but given their inadequate funding, learning outcomes and access to appropriate sports facilities for pupils attending these schools was limited. However, those attending the better-funded elite schools would experience a more 'rounded' education. Among the indigenous population, only the children of the elite and members of the aristocracy had the privilege of attending these prestigious schools, of which there were still only a few.¹⁵ Attending one of these elite or other secondary schools seemingly had a positive impact on an individuals' sporting activities, as students and alumni of these schools often became the pioneering players and sponsors of indigenous sports associations.¹⁶ Western physical education in public schools was only made available in 1920 and only in cities where military officers were present, such as Bandung, Magelang, and Malang. A specific school to train physical-education teachers to teach lower-secondary-school-aged students was only established in 1937. The number of Indonesians admitted into this physical-education training school was very small due to the quota system (Sie 1971:75).¹⁷ The combination of these circumstances meant that the indigenous majority had fewer opportunities, and less chance to participate in, or understand, the finer points of sports.

Initially, the Chinese had no other options but to establish their own ethnic schools.¹⁸ Most of these schools were affiliated with the Chinese Associ-

15 The *volkscholen* for the indigenous population were established following the introduction of the ethical policy. The elite schools—also known as first-class schools—were divided into at least three types: the Europese Lagere School (ELS) for European children, the Hollands-Inlandse School (HIS) for indigenous children, and the Hollands-Chinese School (HCS) for Chinese children. Ricklefs (2008:190–3) provides a succinct summary on the operation of this complex school system.

16 *Aneka*, 10-3-1952; Departemen Pendidikan Nasional 2003:147, 159, 278–9, 336, 374.

17 In 1940 only 14 Indonesian teachers had graduated from the training school and possessed the proper certification (Sie 1971:76).

18 This was in contrast to the position of indigenous Indonesians, who had been provided with a basic education from the turn of the twentieth century. Providing 'the natives' with some education was part of the aim of the ethical policy to address their welfare (Ricklefs 2008:183–4).

ation known as Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan (THHK 中华会馆; this institution will be revisited in a later section). In 1908, the government began to establish the Hollands-Chinese School (HCS) for the Chinese as a way of countering the growing influence of the THHK schools. Nevertheless, the majority of young Chinese still received their education through THHK schools. Unlike the HCS, which adopted the Dutch education system, the THHK schools were influenced by the education system and practices of mainland China. One implication of such links was that sports popularly played in schools in China, such as basketball, were also popular with the THHK students. Basketball was made part of their sports curriculum (Sumarto and Tohir 2001) and every Chinese school had a basketball court (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional 2003; PON 1951). Some THHK schools also provided more diverse sporting activities, such as football, volleyball, table tennis, badminton, and swimming, for their students (Nio 1940; THHK Tegal Java 1936). Interested students often continued their sporting activities in the community via clubs and associations. In later years, their domination in various sports, in particular basketball, was strongly linked to the sports education opportunities afforded to them in the Chinese schools.

Economic Capacity

The expense of playing would deter those from lower socio-economic backgrounds from being active in sports. Sports in which a higher degree of technical competency was required had the capacity to stymie some poorly coached athletes. Incorrect techniques resulted in poor performance or even disqualification in competition. In the 1958 Asian Games in Tokyo, two Indonesian swimmers, Ria and Dhalia Tobing, were disqualified from the competition because they had a flawed swimming technique—a mistake partly attributable to the coach (Ang 1962:29). Access to an experienced coach could be expensive and difficult to arrange—a circumstance in which social connections were sometimes needed. This access was less of a problem for those with money and social status. In her memoir, Mrs Tan Lip Tjiau, who grew up in a very wealthy family, mentioned how she and her husband had been trained by a famous tennis coach (Budianta 2013:47–9, 71–2). Such training undoubtedly helped shape their tennis careers, so much so that in the 1950s both held several national titles to their name.¹⁹ The ability to train using appropriate, standard equip-

19 Mrs Tan Lip Tjiau (born Siek Siok Aye), who later changed her name to Aye Priyanti, was born in 1925. She won the women's singles event in the national tennis championship four times in the 1950s, while her husband won the men's singles event six times in the same period. In 1956, they both won four out of five available national titles (Budianta 2013:70, 92).

ment similar to that used in formal competitions (that is, not traditional or homemade equipment) was also critical for any professional athlete's success. However, these were not always affordable for those less affluent.

Sports requiring expensive facilities were naturally the preserve of the rich. Water sports, for example, required swimming pools, which were expensive to build and maintain. Hence, their numbers were limited. As mentioned above, many swimming pools were privately managed, and thus entry could be restricted. Even when open to the public, the pool entrance fees would be too expensive for the less affluent.

When compared with the indigenous population, the Chinese, due to their relatively better economic background, had more choices in terms of accessing sporting facilities, services, and equipment. Where necessary, the Chinese had the capacity to provide their own sporting facilities. For example, they built the Tegalsarie swimming pool in Surabaya in 1936 and the Chung Hwa pool in Jakarta in 1939. The bulk of the archipelago's Health & Strength clubs—where members practised weightlifting and bodybuilding—were owned by the Chinese. Access to these facilities contributed to their stronger performances in weightlifting and swimming in later years. This contrasts sharply with the natives, who were unrepresented in swimming sports and played a limited role in weightlifting.

Urban Advantage

The limited number of sports facilities in existence during the colonial era were generally located in the administrative centres or in areas with strong colonial interests. Brown (2008:443) notes that some elite facilities, such as swimming pools, were located mostly in the wealthier suburbs. Occasionally, sporting facilities could be found in smaller towns where significant commercial activities—mining sites, factories, and plantation areas—existed. For example, Stanvac, a major petroleum company, built modern sports facilities, including a swimming pool, in Prabumulih, a small town in South Sumatra.²⁰ However, facilities such as these were usually for the exclusive use of the companies' employees.

The number of modern sporting facilities remained scarce post-independence—a case in point would be facilities for water sports and weightlifting. In 1953 there were as few as 19 swimming pools suitable for competition in Indonesia (Komite Olympiade Indonesia 1954:126). Some of these were

20 Stanvac sent athletes to partake in national competitions in the early 1950s (*Het Nieuwsblad voor Sumatra*, 27-7-1951; *De Locomotief*, 11-6-1952).

privately owned and their availability for public use was not guaranteed.²¹ The nation as a whole supported a mere six weightlifting clubs—four in Java and one each in Medan and Makassar. Of these, only Bandung and Jakarta had appropriate equipment, the others had to be satisfied with substandard gear (Komite Olympiade Indonesia 1954:140). Given that post-colonial political restructuring and post-war economic reconstructions were the focus, the limited resources in the 1950s meant that the construction of new sports facilities would not have priority.

The situation began to improve after the mid 1950s. The city that was selected to host the PON usually embarked on large-scale sports facility construction. Modern sports stadiums were built in Medan and Makassar when these cities came to host the PON in 1953 and 1957, respectively (Komite Olympiade Indonesia 1954:40; To'Supu 2005:100–10). At the national level, the biggest sports building project occurred in the early 1960s, in Jakarta, when the capital was preparing to host the Asian Games of 1962 and Ganefo (Games of the New Emerging Forces) the following year. Such projects supported Sukarno's dream of making Indonesia a leading light of the 'new emerging forces'—the area then often referred to as the third world. In the realm of sport, his 1962 announcement of a 10-year plan to catapult Indonesia into the top ten of sporting nations was ambitious. Domestically, he favoured the promotion of sport as a nation-building tool.

The majority of sports facilities, including those newly constructed, continued to be in the cities. Thus, people living in urban areas, particularly in Java, were advantaged over their rural compatriots. There were further advantages to living in urban areas. Environments such as these—with easier access to coaching professionals, on-going competitions, easier transport, et cetera—facilitated sporting endeavours. Conversely, those living in rural areas—encompassing the majority of the indigenous population—were, by default, deprived of the opportunity to participate.²² Since many Chinese—as a consequence of the past zoning system and their trading activities—lived in the

21 A report on North Sumatra's preparation for the swimming competition is instructive. The province had three swimming pools in the early 1950s. Apart from one in Aceh that was owned by the municipality, the two in Medan were private property. The pre-selection process for local swimmers in Medan for the PON was postponed several times because the swimming pool was being used for a private function (Komite Olympiade Indonesia 1954).

22 This discrepancy and uneven development between metropole/centre and periphery/region within a country in a more general context is known as internal colonialism (Hechter 1975).

urban business areas and Chinatowns, it might be assumed that they benefited from their proximity to sporting facilities.

Thus far, this article has discussed some of the conditions that during the colonial era shaped the participation rate of the Chinese in sports, a situation that was at variance with that of the indigenous Indonesians. As mentioned, the Chinese schooling system had introduced specific sporting activities to their students—a position not replicated in the schooling systems available to the other racial groups. Furthermore, the Chinese—because of their socio-economic status, or simply their proximity to the cities—had greater opportunities to access sports facilities. Another important factor—to be addressed below—differentiating the Chinese sporting milieu from that of the indigenous population, was the existence of what Colin Brown (2008:441) has referred to as the social-cum-sporting clubs.

Role of Sports Organizations

During the colonial era, sport was one of the main forms of entertainment. Being involved in sports was a distraction from the rigours of everyday life, especially for the youth of the colony. One way of participating was by joining sports clubs or organizations. There were at least three types of sporting organizations in the Chinese communities. The first were sports clubs associated with the Chinese schools. The number of these increased in parallel with the growth of the THHK schools and the HCS. Whereas in 1904 the entire Dutch East Indies boasted a mere 13 such schools, by 1911 their number had grown to 74, and then to 251 by 1935. By the 1950s, there were more than 700 schools with over 225,000 students (K. Kwee 1950b). This undoubtedly contributed to the increased sporting opportunities afforded to Chinese youth.²³

The second option for engagement was within the Chinese sports clubs, whose numbers began to grow in the 1920s, stagnated during the Japanese occupation interregnum, and resurged after the end of the Second World War.²⁴

23 This growth was reversed in 1958, when the government closed schools in smaller towns or converted them into national schools (Departemen Pendidikan, Pengadjaran dan Kebudayaan & Staf Penguasa Perang Pusat 1959).

24 The resurgence after the Second World War resulted from an enthusiasm to make use of the opportunities that had been unavailable during the oppressive Japanese occupation. China's participation on the side of the Allied forces that won the war was a further reason for the newfound confidence among the Chinese in Indonesia. The majority of these new organizations—given their orientation towards China—were considered foreign by the Indonesian authorities.

Sports that received earlier attention from the Chinese, such as football, were among the first to establish clubs. Often these clubs formed umbrella organizations or federations to manage their activities. By 1941, Batavia (now Jakarta) already supported several Chinese sports federations: the Chung Hua Swimming Federation, the Batavia Chinese Tennis Union, the Batavia Badminton Union, the Batavia Basketball Association, and the Health & Strength Association, to mention a few.²⁵ An umbrella federation for all those sports organizations, the Batavia Chinese Amateur Athletic Federation, was established in September 1941.²⁶ These clubs and federations—many exclusively composed of Chinese athletes—held regular local, regional, and Java-wide competitions.

A further assemblage that contributed greatly to Chinese sport was that of the Chinese social and youth organizations. Batavia by 1936 had four Chinese youth federations, three of them Chinese-oriented: Chung Hsioh Hsioh Sheng Hui (中学学生会, Chinese Middle Schools Association, established 1915), Hua Chiao Tsing Nien Hui (华侨青年会, Chinese Youth Association, established 1917), and Shiong Tih Hui (兄弟会, Brotherhood Association, established 1926). In post-war Indonesia, the most commonly found youth organizations were the Hua Chiao Tsing Nien Hui (HCTNH 华侨青年会, Overseas Chinese Youth Association) and Chung Hua Tsing Nien Hui (CHTNH 中华青年会, Chinese Youth Association).²⁷ Most of these major organizations were open to Chinese regardless of their nationality and cultural orientation, that is, *peranakan* or *totok*.²⁸ Their participation in sport after 1945 was equally strong, facilitated

25 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 14-11-1941.

26 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 27-9-1941.

27 In post-war Indonesia, the majority of these youth and other organizations were usually members of local or regional federations of Chinese organizations that were commonly known as the Chung Hua Tsung Hui (CHTH 中华总会). There were other such variants: Chung Hua Kung Hui (中华公会) in West Kalimantan, Chung Hua Chung Hui (中华中会) in West Sumatra, and Hwa Chiao Chung Hui (华侨中会) in North Sumatra, for instance. A liaison office for all of these CHTH—the CHTH Lien Ho Pan Sze Tsu (中华总会联合办事处)—was established in Jakarta in 1947. This office was disbanded in 1951, most probably due to the struggle between its communist and its nationalist members (*De Vrije Pers*, 25-7-1951). Later, any coordination between the red CHTHs was managed directly via the consulates and embassy of the People's Republic of China (interviews with former associates of CHTH in Jakarta, Pontianak and Singkawang in 2014 and 2015).

28 The term *peranakan* Chinese referred to Chinese who were born in Indonesia, had generally lost their Chinese language skills, and had significantly adopted the local Indonesian culture. This term is often contrasted with that of *totok* Chinese, meaning the Chinese (and their descendants) who had come from China much later, still had the ability to speak Chi-

by many general sports organizations, such as Sin Ming Hui (SMH 新明会, New Light Association) in Jakarta and Chung Hua Ta Chung Sze (CHTCZ 中华大众社, Chinese Public Association) in Semarang, two of the biggest sports and social organizations in the nation, whose memberships were open to all Chinese. Chinese sporting champions were found among both *peranakan* and *totok*. Differing political views, such as the tension between the pro-communist and pro-nationalist China factions, which had divided schools before the end of the 1940s, had become much less influential in the sporting activities from the beginning of the 1950s.²⁹

Before examining the roles played by clubs in the progress of the Chinese in sport, the following will briefly introduce the sporting activities of some representative organizations: Jakarta's CHTNH, SMH, and THHK.

Jakarta's Chung Hua Tsing Nien Hui (CHTNH, established 1946) was a respected youth organization advancing sporting education and social activities. Based on its two commemoration books published in 1951 and 1956, CHTNH had at least eight sports arms: football, badminton, korfbal, weightlifting/body building, basketball, swimming, lawn tennis, and chess (Chung Hua Tsing Nien Hui 1951, 1956). Its football team, established in 1946 and popularly known as Chung Hua, was a serious competitor among Jakarta's football clubs. Its badminton club—which performed well in competition—played a crucial role in the re-establishment of the pre-war Batavia Badminton Union (BBU) in 1947.³⁰ By winning four consecutive championships since 1951, its korfbal club was considered a leader in Jakarta. A further significant sporting arm of CHTNH were the Health & Strength (H&S) clubs. Its Jakarta and Bandung branches—which had the most modern equipment among the H&S clubs—spearheaded the nation's weightlifting and bodybuilding activities.³¹

Sin Ming Hui (SMH, established 1946), an influential *peranakan* organization in Jakarta with a branch in Bandung, was, like some other Chinese social

nese, and practised Chinese culture.

- 29 Some smaller sport clubs, however, could have aimed for specific participants. In the 1930s, for example, besides the three China-oriented youth federations mentioned above, there was a Western-oriented one (*Het Nieuws van den Dag voor Nederlandsch-Indië*, 22-12-1936). This association, judging from its lack of appearance in the news, must have been smaller compared to the first three.
- 30 For a background on the founding of BBU, refer to Brown 2006:74–5.
- 31 The original Jakarta H&S club was established in 1933. During the Japanese occupation it was merged into Chung Hua Ti Yu Hui (中华体育会, Chinese Sport Association), which later became the CHTNH (Chung Hua Tsing Nien Hui 1956:90).

organizations, also involved in sport.³² Based on its commemoration book (Sin Ming Hui 1956), the organization had active billiard, table tennis, badminton, and football clubs, which were all established in the 1940s. Its billiard club played an important role in the nation's billiard activities and was cited as the main driver behind the establishment of the national billiard association.

The last organization to be introduced is Tiong Hoa Hwee Koan (established 1900), the first 'nation-wide' Chinese organization in the archipelago. Headquartered in Jakarta, it was a nationalist Chinese organization, oriented to mainland China.³³ THHK's foremost achievement was that of establishing modern schools for the Chinese in the Dutch East Indies, which had hitherto been non-existent. Apart from sports, THHK was also active in cultural and social activities. A respected pre-war sinologist, Nio Joe Lan, who happened to be an officer of THHK, noted that it was THHK Batavia that had sparked the enthusiasm for sporting activities amongst the Chinese in the Netherland Indies (Nio 1940:295). It was the teachers and officials of THHK Batavia who established the first Chinese Sports Association—Tiong Hoa Oen Tong Hwee (中华运动会) in 1905 (T. Kwee 1933). As the foremost Chinese institution in the colony, THHK facilitated connections with other social and cultural organizations. For instance, in 1914, Batavia's Tiong Hoa Im Gak Hwee (中华音乐会, Chinese Music Society, established 1912)—a well-known music and sporting club—joined THHK (Nio 1940:76, 183). Associations with THHK also occurred in other locales.

The apparent influences of these clubs and organizations on Chinese sport needs to be questioned. The existence of large numbers of Chinese sporting clubs meant that they had sufficient numbers of athletes to organize all-Chinese tournaments. The regular sporting competitions, while further popularizing sporting activities within the Chinese community, also ensured that Chinese athletes were more competitive and better 'trained'. It was also through these competitions that potential future champions emerged. The above factors all contributed positively to the sporting performances of the Chinese in the 1950s and 1960s.

32 On Sin Ming Hui activities in the 1950s, see its tenth anniversary book (Sin Ming Hui 1956). The biography of Oei Tjoe Tat, one of its leaders, also provides scattered notes on its activities and influences (Oei 1995).

33 The other association was Chung Hua Hui (中华会), which was oriented towards the Netherlands and whose members were mostly those with a Dutch education. A further grouping, oriented towards Indonesia, was spearheaded by the Partai Tionghoa Indonesia (Indonesian Chinese Party) established by Liem Koen Hian in the early 1930s.

One of the first sports to establish regular competitions was football. It can be seen from the database of the football leagues during the Dutch East Indies era³⁴ that Chinese football clubs generally participated in the citywide competitions organized by various local European football leagues. In parallel, since 1917, the Chinese football clubs in Java had also organized competitions among themselves. The competitions became more formalized in 1927 with the formation of the Comité Kampioenswedstrijden Tiong Hoa (Chinese Championship Committee). When it was established in 1930, the organization of this competition was taken over by the Chinese football league Hwa Nan Voetbal Bond (HNVB, Chinese South Football League). Aside from football, the Chinese also organized region-wide championships in other sports—lawn tennis had its first *Chineesch Java Kampioenschap* in 1929.³⁵

In comparison, significant indigenous sporting tournaments—apart from those in football—were far from adequate. Even in football, the more institutionalized Java-wide competition did not commence until 1930, following the founding of the *Persatoean Sepakraga Seloeroeh Indonesia* (PSSI, All Indonesia Football League), the first ‘national’ indigenous football association. A thorough discussion on the causes for this delay is beyond the scope of this article. Briefly however, one might elicit that a lack of interest and co-operation, as well as management issues among the existing clubs might have been ‘internal’ causes for non-collegiality (Bangun 2007:60–3, 2012:14). Obstacles posed by the colonial government or its official sports body might be a further reason. Generally, as they feared the dissemination of ‘dangerous’ nationalist attitudes, the state was suspicious of any large, indigenous organization. PSSI, for example, was known to be supported by Indonesian nationalists (Hasan 2015:81–2) and the official football body at that time restricted contact with PSSI (Colombijn 2000:183–4). Furthermore, the sense of ‘Indonesian-ness’ among the indigenous groups came rather late—at the end of the 1920s. By contrast, and despite the differences among them, the Chinese positioned themselves as a group vis-à-vis the indigenous and the Dutch colonizers. Their sense of group identity—a feature common to migrant groups—was further strengthened by the growth of Chinese nationalism in the archipelago from the early twentieth century.

The existence of large, established organizations supportive of sports was thus crucial to the development of Chinese sporting prowess. In contrast to its attitude towards large indigenous organizations, the colonial government

34 Karel Stokkermans, ‘Dutch East Indies—football history’, 2016, <http://www.rsssf.com/tables/indiechamp.html> (accessed 29-2-2016).

35 *Bataviaasch Nieuwsblad*, 15-9-1941; Aji 2010.

was less critical of, and did not restrict, the growth of the Chinese organizations.³⁶ With their respected names and larger support base, these organizations could fund or draw support for sporting activities and events. They organized tournaments, sent their athletes to compete overseas, and hosted overseas visits, all of which required significant funding. Take for example the costly visit of the Loh Wah (乐华) football club of Shanghai at the end of 1920s. This visit, which appeared to be the turning point for many football clubs in the archipelago, would not have been possible without the cooperation of these organizations.³⁷

Social organizations having direct links with sporting activities were absent among indigenous Indonesians during the colonial era—or at least, were not reported. This state of affairs remained unchanged post-independence. It seems that aspirant natives—for example, in the case of basketball in 1948—simply joined the local, official, or specific sports associations. The PON held that year saw the indigenous athletes represented by various local official sports unions, the Persatoean Olahraga Repoeblik Indonesia (PORI, Indonesian Sports Union), while the Chinese were mostly represented by teams from Chinese social organizations (Komite Olympiade Indonesia 1954:243).

These organizations maintained sports facilities for the use of their members, and often allowed the facilities to be utilized by third parties. SMH often lent its badminton court to the Persatuan Bulutangkis Seluruh Indonesia (PBSI, All Indonesia Badminton Association)—the official badminton organization, or hosted important badminton events (Sin Ming Hui 1956:93–4). It also hosted the first billiards and weightlifting competitions in Jakarta.³⁸ As the largest such organization in Semarang, Chung Hua Ta Chung Sze (established 1946) had facilities for chess, pingpong, billiards, badminton, tennis, football, and

36 Not perceived as a threat in the eyes of the Dutch Indies government—particularly in the last fifty years of its rule—this migrant community and their organizations were generally regarded as supportive subjects. This does not mean that the colonial government was completely at ease with the Chinese, as they had been troublesome in some parts of the archipelago on several occasions prior to the twentieth century. In 1740, the Chinese were deemed enemies and were massacred in Batavia. In West Kalimantan and some areas in Java, they were involved in movements against Dutch rule (Heidhues 2003; Liem 1933; Ricklefs 2008:113–7). Until the early years of the twentieth century, one way of maintaining control over the Chinese—especially those domiciled in Java—was to subject them to travel and residential restrictions.

37 See Liem 1933 for more on this visit.

38 Bambang Nurbianto, 'Governor turns down Candra Naya relocation', *The Jakarta Post*, 8-7-2003, <http://www.thejakartapost.com/news/2003/07/08/governor-turns-down-candra-naya-relocation.html> (accessed 10-11-2014).

weightlifting (Willmott in Brown 2008:443). The large and well-respected Tiong Hoa (established 1908) of Surabaya also offered various sports facilities to its members. Where they did not have facilities, these organizations had the capacity to source them elsewhere. All established Chinese football clubs in Jakarta—Chung Hua, United Makes Strength (UMS), and Sin Ming Hui, for example—rented football courts for their players (Chung Hua Tsing Nien Hui 1951:24; Sin Ming Hui 1956:96). The financial capacity of these organizations advanced Chinese sporting endeavours.

In general then, prior to independence, the Chinese sports organizations, acting as the spearhead of sporting activities within their communities, seemed to be in much better shape than their indigenous counterparts.

Discrimination and Chauvinism

The social stratification introduced by the Dutch encouraged racial division in many aspects of social life. In sport, the formation of sports clubs and associations based on race/ethnic background contributed to racial fanaticism and chauvinism. Tensions between players and among supporters of opposing teams—a usual occurrence in the sporting milieu—might engender racial overtones where competitions often took place between teams of different ethnicities. Newspaper reportage also had the capacity to exacerbate divisions in the community, particularly when the bias of the newspaper's ownership became apparent. An illustrative example is the exclusion of two non-Dutch newspapers from reporting on the matches organized by the European league in Surabaya. The organizer decided to ban them because they had produced unfavourable reports of an incident during one of the matches. This ban led to a boycott and mass protests against the European leagues.³⁹ The role of newspapers in the development of sporting prowess among the Chinese will be discussed at the end of this article.

Such stratification and the attached 'stigma' often linked to discrimination in sports at the organizational and player levels, might affect the degree to which natives were prepared to participate in sporting events.⁴⁰ Discrimination could

39 *De Indische Courant*, 23-5-1935.

40 This was by no means an unusual occurrence in such a setting. History has witnessed many cases of discrimination in sport as a direct consequence of the racially structured social system. For example, anti-Semitic Nazi Germany discriminated against its Jewish athletes (Kassimeris 2009:755). When it hosted the Summer Olympics, in 1936, such discrimination was also extended to international 'black' athletes. Countries that practised apartheid, such as South Africa and Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe), also discriminated against athletes of colour (Novak 2012).

derive from *in situ* rules, such as the restricted access to certain swimming pools often experienced by indigenous patrons. In the case of football, Colombijn (2000:183–4) noted that the Nederlandsch-Indische Voetbal Bond (NIVB, Netherlands Indies Football Association), which organized major national and regional leagues in the colony, opposed its rival associations, particularly those with nationalist tendencies. Throughout most of its history, the NIVB threatened with suspension its members and players who played against PSSI teams. The NIVB also denied PSSI members access to its football fields. Another type of discrimination came from the event organizers, who could pick and choose participants. The initial exclusion of Kho Sin Kie, the well-known tennis champion from Java, from the international tennis exhibition matches in Surabaya in March 1935, is illustrative.⁴¹

In such a social context, winning an interethnic sporting competition would bring prestige to the extended ethnic cohort, especially where the group managed to defeat the more ‘superior’ colonial masters. For colonized people, winning against their colonial masters might ‘showcase’ their resistance to colonial domination or, as a minimum, contrast their identity against that of the colonizers (see, for example, Allen 2003:52; Dimeo and Mills 2001:163). For the Chinese, being non-indigenous and a minority, winning a sporting competition made the community very proud. One Chinese newspaper believed a Chinese win would not only raise their prestige in the archipelago, but would also reflect positively on their status in their mother country—China.⁴² Hence, migrants’ survival mentality, nationalism, and chauvinistic spirit served as additional fuel for them to excel in competitions. The enthusiastic support of ‘brethren’ spectators would certainly provide further energy and the impetus to win.

41 Only Europeans and Japanese players were scheduled to play on this occasion. The initial decision to exclude Kho Sin Kie—for unknown reasons—disappointed the Chinese community, leading many to boycott the watching of this rare international event. Kho Sin Kie was among the crowd watching the games (Bangun 2012:26–7), so his unavailability could not have been the reason for him not competing. As Kho was allowed to play later in the same event—again for undisclosed reasons—health issues can also be discounted. Given that the event was held at a Japanese club (*Soerabaijasch Handelsblad*, 27-2-1935), the ‘culprit’ might have been his Chinese background. The Japanese were known to be antagonistic toward the Chinese who, following the Japanese incursion into China’s territory after the end of the First World War, were actively anti-Japanese. For further information on this champion, see Jatmiko W., ‘Kho Sin Kie’, 2014, <http://www.banjoemas.com/2014/03/kho-sin-kie.html> (accessed 15-2-2016).

42 *Sin Po*, 27-2-1935.

Opportunities in the New Nation

The factors outlined above explain the historical roots that helped to propel the Chinese into assuming roles of significance in sport during the 1950s. Many of them continued to underpin Chinese sporting activities in later years. However, the continuing energetic participation of the Chinese in sport in the post-decolonization period was only possible because the 'right' environment was engendered in the early years of the Republic, the features of which will be discussed below.

Disappearance of the More 'Superior' Dutch Athletes

The 1949 Dutch recognition of Indonesia's sovereignty officially ended the Revolutionary War. For the Chinese—often victimized during the war (Heidhues 2012)—this brought normality back to their lives. For many of the Dutch, it was the beginning of a mass exodus.⁴³ Given the antipathy that many of the indigenous population felt towards them, returning to the Netherlands was a sensible choice for the former colonizers, who had 'lost' the war and faced an uncertain political future. One of the consequences of this exodus was a decline in the number of Dutch athletes and sporting clubs. Their exclusive social clubs were disbanded, and those that survived merged with other clubs. In the case of elite swimming clubs, to cite Brown (2008:443), their membership had become predominantly Chinese. A number of surviving clubs of the more popular sports, such as football, were Indonesianized.⁴⁴

A close examination of the fate of the formerly Dutch Jakarta water sports clubs allows for a clearer understanding of changing circumstances. By 1947, two of the leading pre-war clubs, the Triton and Watergeuzen, had merged into Tjikini. In August 1952, the two remaining Dutch swimming clubs, Tjikini and

43 The exodus continued as Indonesian–Dutch relations deteriorated towards the end of the 1950s. This was partly attributable to the restrictions facing Dutch nationals and their economic interests, as well as the disputed status of West Papua. The exodus peaked in 1957/1958, when some 40,000 Dutch nationals left Indonesia. In total about 250,000 Dutch nationals were repatriated between 1945 and 1964 (Ohlinger 2005; see also Thee 2009).

44 Hercules (established 1895), one of the oldest European football clubs in the country, already included a significant number of Indonesian players by the 1950s. It continued to compete within the Jakarta League, Persatuan Sepakbola Djakarta (Persidja), in the 1960s, and was still registered as a member club of the league in 2015. See Sportanews, 'Inilah syarat menjadi ketua umum Persija', 2015, <http://www.sportanews.com/2015/11/21/inilah-syarat-menjadi-ketua-umum-persija/> (accessed 11-2-2016).

Manggarai, decided to merge to become a new club, named Triton.⁴⁵ The fact that none of their athletes participated in the Jakarta-wide junior swimming competition held a year later is evidence that the merger was not an easy one.⁴⁶ One of the last accounts—by Dutch newspapers—of Triton athletes competing was in 1954.⁴⁷ As Indonesian–Dutch relations deteriorated from the mid 1950s onwards, Dutch participation in the wider sports setting suffered further.

The decline in the number of Dutch swimmers provided hidden opportunities for Chinese athletes, who began to take over the former leading role played by European athletes. The majority of winners in the swimming competition held in Bandung in 1948—one of the first Java-wide post-war competitions—were Europeans. Some Chinese were also victorious, but indigenous swimmers were completely absent.⁴⁸ The non-participation of indigenous swimmers was a consequence of their non-engagement in this sport during the colonial era. A few Western names and clubs continued to participate in local swimming competitions in the early 1950s, but later ceased to appear in competition records.⁴⁹

A smaller-scale exodus of the Chinese community also occurred from the early 1950s, when many young Chinese returned to mainland China.⁵⁰ Among them were some who would later become well-known badminton players in China, for example Wang Wenjiao, Tang Xianhu, Hou Jiachang, Chen Yuniang, and Liang Qiuxia.⁵¹ However, unlike the Dutch, many Chinese chose to remain in Indonesia, took up citizenship, and continued to be active in sport. This became evident in the newspaper reportage of the 1950s and 1960s.

45 *De Nieuwsgier*, 13-8-1952.

46 *Java Bode*, 10-6-1953.

47 *De Nieuwsgier*, 24-2-1954.

48 *De Nieuwsgier*, 18-10-1948.

49 The winners of all three female events in the 1951 competition in Jakarta were Dutch, while the Chinese swimmers took second places (*Aneka*, 1-10-1951). As foreign nationals, they were not allowed to participate in some official events, such as the PON (*Aneka*, 10-4-1953); therefore none of the Dutch winners participated at PON II either, which was held later that year.

50 Some decided to return to mainland China, partly due to the attraction of the motherland, but also on account of the increasing restrictions imposed on the Chinese by the Indonesian government. Many young Chinese also returned to continue their education.

51 韩建锋, '跑过四十年—陈玉娘口述历史', 2008, <http://home.tymq.com/space-2511-do-blog-id-7369.html> (accessed 11-2-2016).

Chinese Newspapers

Print media remained the most important source of news and opinion during the colonial era and for several decades post-independence. It was therefore crucial to sustaining sports fever within society, including in the Chinese community. On this front, the Chinese had other advantages. They happened to play a vital role in the proliferation of the nation's newspapers. From the early twentieth century to essentially the end of the 1940s, they managed some of the most important Indo-Malay newspapers. The prospect for Chinese-language newspapers from the end of the 1940s onwards seemed also bright.⁵²

These newspapers, due to their Chinese ownership as well as their main target audience of Chinese readers, were expected to take a particular interest in reporting news relevant to the Chinese, including sports news profiling Chinese players and clubs.⁵³ Non-Chinese newspapers and magazines, however, could not escape reporting the results of important competitions—although where the Chinese were the winners, they might be inclined to use a more obscure or toned-down headline.

Due to their Chinese-sounding names, Chinese athletes (and in many cases, their clubs) were easily identifiable in the colonial and Sukarno-era media, especially when compared with the epoch that followed. The dominance of Chinese players in the Thomas Cup team from the end of the 1950s and into the 1960s, as reported by newspapers and magazines, succinctly illustrates the point made above.

Aneka, a leading sports magazine of the 1950s and 1960s, reported that only one non-Chinese player competed in the 1958 Thomas Cup. The Chinese players included Tan Joe Hok, Njoo Kiem Bie, Lie Po Djian, and Tan King Gwan.⁵⁴ Players sent to the 1961 Thomas Cup included Tan Joe Hok, Tan King Gwan, Njoo Kiem Bie, Lie Po Djian, and two non-Chinese players: Ferry Sonnevile and Eddy Djusuf.⁵⁵ In 1964 the Chinese remained prominent: half of

52 Kwee gave the example of West Kalimantan, which during the pre-war period had no Chinese mass media, but suddenly became home to three publications (K. Kwee 1950a). Kwee did not foresee that all Chinese newspapers would be forced to cease publication in 1960. Such bans lasted for a mere three years as Chinese media reappeared in 1963, when control over their newspapers was relaxed.

53 *Sin Po* was the most influential Chinese newspaper, publishing both Indonesian and Chinese editions. It changed its name to *Pantjawardana* (1960) and then *Wartabhakti* (1961). Along with all other Chinese newspapers, it was banned by the government in October 1965.

54 *Aneka*, 20-6-1958.

55 *Wartabhakti*, 9-6-1961.

the Thomas Cup team were Chinese: Tan Joe Hok, Tan King Gwan, and Ang Tjin Siang.⁵⁶

The visibility of Chinese athletes remained significant in a range of sports, regionally, nationally, and internationally. Indonesia's Asian Games delegation included a significant number of Chinese athletes. In the basketball team, all players, except one, were Chinese. In weightlifting, lawn tennis, and water polo approximately half of the athletes were Chinese. The Chinese were also represented in the football and swimming teams.⁵⁷

In some regions of Java, the Chinese maintained prominent roles in swimming, water polo, lawn tennis, basketball, badminton, and boxing. The following are some examples taken from media reports. *Aneka* reported that all five available titles in the East Java lawn tennis tournament in 1958 went to the Chinese.⁵⁸ *Wartabhakti* reported that all winners, except two, of the West Java weightlifting competition in 1961 were Chinese.⁵⁹ The same newspaper noted the domination of the Chinese in the weightlifting competition in Pekalongan (Central Java).⁶⁰ In basketball, the reports from *Wartabhakti* showed strong evidence of Chinese domination. The newspaper revealed that all except four members of East Java's women's basketball team were Chinese. The same edition of the newspaper also pointed out that four of the teams that competed in the official basketball competition organized in Jakarta were all-Chinese.⁶¹ The list of table tennis players summoned for a training camp published by *Wartabhakti* was also mainly formed of Chinese names.⁶² Another article in *Aneka* showed that the Chinese took almost all of the titles in an official badminton tournament in Surakarta (Central Java).⁶³ The Chinese, again, were overwhelmingly represented in the 1965 national junior lawn tennis championship.⁶⁴ There were simply too many entries to list.

Frequent newspaper reportage with regard to Chinese athletes was encouraging, and signalled to the wider Chinese community that despite their alien background they could prevail in sports. The opportunities in which they could

56 *Wartabhakti*, 23-5-1964.

57 *Aneka* 7 (1958).

58 *Aneka* 7 (1958).

59 *Wartabhakti*, 21-6-1961.

60 *Wartabhakti*, 2-8-1961.

61 *Wartabhakti*, 8-8-1961.

62 *Wartabhakti*, 11-10-1961.

63 *Aneka* 6 (1965).

64 *Aneka* 24 (1966).

actively engage appeared limitless. This reassurance was of critical importance for the Chinese, who had suffered from discriminatory policies in the 1950s on other fronts.⁶⁵ Such continued opportunities were apparent evidence of ongoing government support.

Support of the Government

It was understandable that many newly independent nations would like to see their indigenous people play a more active role in society, including, in this case, in sports. It can be seen through official reports that the government must have recognized the need to address some cultural issues in order to promote sport among native Indonesians. Weightlifting, for example, was almost a no-go zone for indigenous athletes, who believed that the sport was not suitable for their physique (Ang 1962:79; PON 1951).⁶⁶ It was also observed that indigenous women were less inclined to be involved in sports where clothing became a concern, such as in swimming, or in those that were very rigorous or 'rough', such as athletics and martial arts.⁶⁷

65 From the early 1950s, the government had begun to tighten up regulations in the economy as well as in education, publication, and citizenship. In an effort to curb Chinese domination in the economy, the government introduced the Program Benteng (Fortress Programme), which restricted import licences to indigenous Indonesians, and regulations to indigenize rice mills and harbour facilities. In the late 1950s the anti-Chinese Asaat movement moreover appealed to the government for more support for indigenous businesses. PPI0, introduced in 1959, was by far the most damaging policy. It banned the Chinese from retailing businesses in areas below the level of the district capital from 1 January 1960 (Siauw 1999: Chapter 8, 316–9; Suryadinata 2005:118–25; Thee 2009:31–6; Willmott 1961:115–9).

66 Ang did not specifically mention whether this perception came from the indigenous Indonesians or the Chinese, but it is unlikely that it was from the Chinese as they had been actively involved in this sport since the colonial era.

67 The perception that such sports were naturally inappropriate for women could prevent indigenous women from participating. Such perceptions could be found in other cultures, too, including the Chinese one, at that time. This could be seen in the relatively lower achievements and level of participation among female Chinese athletes compared to their male counterparts, at least in swimming and badminton, up to the early 1950s. One of my informants recalled that her Chinese parents were initially less than supportive of her swimming ambitions, citing that swimming was not suitable for her as a woman. However, religious restrictions seem to have contributed significantly to the lack of sporting activities among Muslim women too, at least in some societies. This effect can still be seen today. For example, the majority of champions in women's swimming in Malaysia, one of the two Islamic states in Southeast Asia, have always been Chinese. In other Islamic countries, such as Brunei, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia, female athletes have been discouraged

Furthermore, the government helped with the establishment of new, official sporting organizations, regardless of the existence of regional or even nationwide organizations established by the Chinese, such as those for badminton, swimming, and basketball. In other cases, the government ‘nationalized’ those inherited from colonial times, such as the weightlifting association. While the Chinese still held the chairmanships of associations for basketball, weightlifting, and table tennis in the early 1950s, these positions were soon given to native officials.⁶⁸ For example, the chairmanship of the weightlifting association, which had always been in the hands of a Chinese person, was transferred to a native in 1952.⁶⁹

These changes were not implemented without resistance from the Chinese, who sensed the efforts to weaken their role. Chung Hua Lan Chiu Tsung Hui (CHLCTH 中华篮球总会, Chinese Basketball Federation) opposed such changes. The national basketball body, Persatuan Basketball Seluruh Indonesia (Perbasi), formed in 1951, had problems with integrating the Chinese federation (Departemen Pendidikan Nasional 2003:204) and refused to recognize competitions organized by the Chinese federation.⁷⁰ The integration of the Chinese badminton association and the Jakarta Persatuan Badminton Djakarta (Perbad, Jakarta Badminton Union) also proved to be difficult (Brown 2006:78–9).

Some of the government policies affected the influence and domination of the Chinese, which used to be quite absolute in some of the organizations. Restrictions were also imposed on Chinese sports organizations, preventing them from competing freely in official events. One such victim was the Chinese basketball association, which had insisted on running an exclusively Chinese league alongside the official league,⁷¹ against official rules. There were also cases where Chinese sports clubs were forced to disband after being accused of not following official guidelines. The fate of the well-known Kuang Hua (光华) Swimming Club of Jakarta, which was forced to disband, is illustrative.⁷²

or even banned from taking part in the Olympics. See William Lee Adam, ‘Trailblazer: Meet Brunei’s first female Olympian—ever’, 2012, <http://olympics.time.com/2012/07/05/trailblazer-meet-bruneis-first-female-olympian-ever/> (accessed 1-6-2016).

The author would like to thank one of the reviewers who brought these cultural/religious issues to his attention.

68 The chairmen were Boen Seen Sze in weightlifting, Tan Tjoen Kee in table tennis, and Ong Soen Bing in basketball (PON 1951).

69 *Aneka*, 1-3-1952.

70 *Aneka*, 20-11-1951.

71 See, for example, *De Locomotief*, 21-5-1953.

72 *Pantjawarta*, 17-4-1960 and 29-4-1960.

In other instances, informants reported cases of covert affirmative action by officials or coaches in the selection of athletes, and on some occasions, the curtailment of training opportunities.

Having said that, compared to their perceived dominant role in the economy, Chinese sporting successes were considered less critical or threatening to the livelihoods of the majority indigenous population. Chinese domination in some sports was, therefore, not a matter of immediate concern which required drastic measures. Despite the instances of discrimination mentioned above, the Indonesian government recognized the important and often irreplaceable role of the Chinese in sports. Their successes in various prestigious badminton tournaments, for example, helped to raise Indonesia's international profile—something that was desperately sought after by the newly independent nation. They were also part of the Indonesian delegations to the Asian Games, the Olympics, and other significant sporting events, such as Ganefo. In this latter event, Chinese athletes obtained approximately half of the Indonesian medals.⁷³

Official recognition came in the form of rewarding the Chinese athletes for their extraordinary contributions. In a list of award recipients from the PSSI in 1960, in the 'gold' category five out of the nine recipients were Chinese: Tan Liong Houw, Thio Him Tjiang, Witarsa (aka Liem Soen Joe), Kwee Kiat Sek, and Phoa Sian Liong.⁷⁴ On another occasion, President Sukarno presented the prestigious Satja Lentjana Kebudajaan Award to six badminton players, four of whom were Chinese: Tan Joe Hok, Njoo Kiem Bie, Tan King Gwan, and Lie Po Djian.⁷⁵

Other official recognition came in the form of allowing the Chinese athletes to continue to partake in sport competitions, including prestigious international events. Their achievements, most visible in the Thomas Cup, were also officially and publicly celebrated. The Chinese were also allowed to continue to hold official positions in various national and regional sporting bodies.⁷⁶

The opportunities, acknowledgement, and celebration of their successes were psychologically important for the Chinese. These factors boosted their confidence and gave them the resolve to continue to participate in sport. My interviews with a dozen former Chinese athletes also suggest that their allegiance

73 *Wartabhakti*, 22-11-1962.

74 *Pantjajawarta*, 23-4-1960.

75 *Wartabhakti*, 16-6-1961.

76 *Bulletin Komite Olimpiade Indonesia* 2 (January 1954).

and loyalty towards Indonesia was enhanced due to their treatment by the government and the government's appreciation of them. To this end, the purpose of using sport as a nation-building strategy in the 1950s and 1960s seemed to be working—at least from the perspective of the Chinese athletes.

Concluding Remarks

This article has revealed that the prominent role played by the Chinese in some sports—as compared to their indigenous Indonesian compatriots—in post-independence Indonesia resulted from a combination of two determinants. The foundation of their achievements can be traced back to the prevailing socio-political conditions existing in the Dutch East Indies. The article has examined the contributory factors that had an impact on the sporting milieu of the time: lax migration policies, social stratification, and the vagaries of the colonial-era education system. The change of political regimes at the end of the 1940s provided another set of opportunities. Firstly, in sports such as swimming—formerly dominated by European athletes—Chinese athletes were afforded greater opportunities following the departure in large numbers of the Europeans. Equally important was the role of the print media, particularly when controlled by Chinese interests, and in which continued Chinese success in sports could be displayed. The support of the government, finally, was another crucial factor, without which the Chinese role in Indonesian sport would have suffered an earlier demise.

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