Sport and the Origins of Nationalism: A Sino-Irish Comparison

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Structure

1 Inspection and Interpretation

2 Comparison

3 Generalizations

- Sport and the Origins of Nationalism in China
- Sport and the Origins of the Irish Nationalism

Differences

Similarities
Sport and the Origins of Nationalism in China

Map of Ming Dynasty, Composed between 1368-1644 A.D., Published in 1663 A.D.

‘Culturalism’ instead of ‘Nationalism’

‘Modern Chinese nationalist consciousness was sparked by China’s defeat in a series of wars against the Western powers and imperial Japan in the nineteenth century.’ (Zhao 2004).
Sport and The Self-strengthening Movement (1864-1895)

Lin Zexu, *The Four Continents*

Wei Yuan, *Illustrated Treatise on Maritime Countries*

- The adoption of Western military physical exercises and modern gymnastics
- ‘Gymnastics concerns the future of the country. If everyone is as strong as soldiers, China will be a powerful country.’ (Zhang Zhidong)
- The government established modern schools to train specialised personnel for the army and modern factories. Physical education was part of the curriculum.
Sport and The Hundred Days' Reform (1898)

‘It was nationalism that has made Europe strong since the 16th century. The lack of collectivism was one of the most important reasons for China’s failure and the idea of nation state and nationalism which came from the West could be applied to enhance social cohesion and make China powerful’ (Liang Qichao, 1890s)

• ‘The Westerners dominated the five continents because they advocate the philosophy of the ‘active’. In Western countries, even scholars and women practiced gymnastics. It was the individual’s strong physical strength that contributed to the rise of these Western nations’. (Tan Sitong, 1890s)

• ‘The power of a nation state is based on people’s physical strength. Sport is a crucial way to “preserve the nation” and “preserve the race”’. (Yan Fu, 1890s)
Wushu, the Boxer Movement and the Rise of Chinese Nationalism at the Turn of the 19th century

‘The hate and bitterness cumulated as people suffered humiliation. Therefore, conflicts between the Churches and civilians increased dramatically.’ (Zhang Zhidong)

‘Le Gateau des Rois et... des Empereurs’ In Le Petit Journal, 16th January 1898
The Boxer Movement could not have come into being without the involvement of sport.

‘People began to practise “The Righteous Harmony Fist” on February 1900. It was spread from villages around Shen City. People choose to do so because Christians ride roughshod over the villagers. They occupy public facilities and land by force, but the government dares not to stop them …. People can do nothing but using Wushu to protect themselves…. In ten days’ time, Niujia village and Laoli village joined the movement. Later, people in Jiangdong village, Shizhu village and other ten villages started to practise Wushu. Masters who taught Wushu in these villages were all came from Shandong province. They hide their names and keep secret of their activities…’
Sport and the Nationalist Revolution in the 1900s

- **The Rise of Nationalists:**
  - The Revive China Society - 1894
  - The Rise China Society - 1903
  - The Chinese Revolutionary Alliance - 1905

- **The Three People’s Principles:**
  1. Nationalism
  2. Democracy
  3. People's Livelihood

- The nationalists adopted Western military exercises, gymnastics and athletics to train their members
- The Anqing Patriotic Association 1903
- Shaoxing Sports Society 1905
- Datong Shifan School 1905
- Lishui Sports Society 1906
- China Gymnastic School (1906)
- Taizhou Yaozi Sports School 1907
- The Commerce Gymnastics Society 1907
- Western Shanghai Gymnastics Society 1907
- Chongqing Sports School 1908
The concept of ‘Native’ and ‘Foreign’

The Hibernicisation

Statutes of Kilkenny (1367)

...But now many English of the said land, forsaking the English language, manners, mode of riding, laws and usages, live and govern themselves according to the manners, fashion, and language of the Irish enemies; and also have made divers marriages and alliances between themselves and the Irish enemies aforesaid...
Item X of the Statute of Kilkenny identified hurling as an evil and illegal game:

….the commons of the said land of Ireland, who are in the different marches at war, do not, henceforth, use the plays which men call hurlings, with great sticks and a ball upon the ground, from which great evils and maims have arisen, to the weakening, of the defense of the said land, and other plays which men call coiting…. 
The Statute of Galway 1527:

‘...the horlinge (hurling) of the litill balle [little ball] with hockie stickes [hockey sticks] or staves, nor use no hande ball to play withoute the walles, but only the great foote balle.’

King Henry VIII’s letter to the town of Galway in 1546:

‘Every man provide, with all speed, long bows and English arrows, and haunt shooting, and specially every holiday; and to leave all other unlawful games.’
A coalition of Gaelic Irish and Old English gentry initiated the Irish Rebellion in 1641 to fight against the English Protestant settlers. Rory O’More, the leader of the 1641 Rebellion addressed the Old English as the ‘New Irish’.

Sport facilitated the fusion of native Irish and the English settlers, and furthermore, stimulated an embryonic Irish nationalism.
The Decline of Gaelic Games in the 19th Century and Irish Nationalists’ Concerns

- A new era for Irish nationalism began in the late 18th century.

- ‘The Protestant alone could not expect to liberate his country - the Roman Catholic alone could not do it - neither could the Presbyterian - but amalgamate the three into the Irish-man, and the Union is repealed.’ (O'Connell O'Connell)
The Decline of Gaelic Games in the 19th Century

- The changes of the manners, popular culture and standards of behavior based on religion
- Economic hardship
- Politics
- The Great Famine
- The Development of modern sports: rugby, Golf, rowing, soccer, tennis, swimming
- Lack of sports governing bodies for Gaelic Games
The decline of Irish culture in the 19th century, significantly the Irish language and Gaelic Games, caught Irish nationalists’ attention.

As a part of the nationalist movement, attempts to revive the Gaelic culture were carried out in the late 19th century.

The Gaelic Athletic Association (1884)

The Gaelic League (1893)
The G.A.A.

- Mission 1: Regain control over athletics and other sports from the British
- Mission 2: Revive Gaelic Games

‘The games have great cultural value, having played a central role in Irish history for over a century. The G.A.A. is by far the most successful of the separatist organisations founded in the late 19th century to underpin the campaign for independence’ (Moran 2005)
At the turn of the 19th century, two themes dominated the G.A.A.: the implementation of its bans and its relationship with the Irish Republican Brotherhood (I.R.B.).

There were 810 clubs affiliated to the G.A.A. in 1890, of which 497 were controlled by the I.R.B. The memberships of these I.R.B. controlled clubs was about 26,000. (Mandle 1987)
During the Home Rule crisis of 1912, it was evident that many of the G.A.A. clubs across the country formed the nucleus of local Irish Volunteer movements.

Members of the Irish National Volunteers use hurling sticks for drill practice in Strabane, Countey Tyone, 1914.
‘Since the Gaelic Athletic Association is non-political it follows that the members thereof are at perfect liberty to join any political organisation they may choose to be identified with. And hence the Central Council finds that many members of the Association are attached to the United Irish League, All-for-Ireland League, Irish Volunteers, National Volunteers, and various other national associations’ (The G.A.A. Central Council, 1916)
## Comparison (Differences)

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<tr>
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<th>China</th>
<th>Ireland</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Stimulated by</strong></td>
<td>Foreign aggressions</td>
<td>English colonisation</td>
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<td><strong>Nationalists’ Objectives</strong></td>
<td>Use of sport to build up the physical strength of the people and the military power of the nation to fight/compete against the Western powers</td>
<td>Regain control over sport from the British colonial power and promote traditional Irish sports to revive Irish culture and resist the Anglicisation</td>
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<td>Use modern sports to cultivate new citizens for a modern nation state</td>
<td>Use traditional sports to consolidate national identity</td>
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<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>The rise of modern sports from the late 19th century</td>
<td>The rise of traditional Irish sports from the 19th century</td>
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<td>A weak relationship between sport and religious Identity</td>
<td>Close relationship between sport and religious Identity</td>
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Comparison (Similarities)

1. *Traditional Sports Contributed to the Making of National Identity*

2. *Traditional Sports been Promoted as Indigenous Virtue and Strength during the Nationalist Revolution Era*

3. *Sport Directly and Indirectly Served the Nationalist Revolution*
Generalizations

- Sports Nationalism Shaped by Various Forces
- Sport as the Manifestation of a Variety of Different Types of Nationalism
- Traditional Sports as the Building Blocks of a Nation
- Sport in Creating and Reflecting Nationalism