

## **Football and National Identity in Hong Kong and Mainland China**

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### **Introduction**

Ernest Gellner believed in today's world that, "a man must have a nationality as he must have a nose and two ears". (Billig quoting Gellner 1983: 6) Hong Kong, with its history of being a British Crown Colony from 1898 to 1997, nationality doesn't come as naturally as Gellner suggested. Residents often convey a weak sense of belonging towards their state, China. This can be seen from the majority of Hong Kong people paying phlegmatic attention to the 1997 handover as the "joy" of returning to the Motherland was shared by only a handful. Some even anticipated adverse prospects in Hong Kong. Fearing the worst, many chose to emigrate. Seven years on, significant change of hearts is still inexistent as today Chinese National Day is still rather overlooked and given the cold-shoulder in Hong Kong (local schools have the option to decide rather they celebrate National Day and most opt not to); and more obviously some people refuse or feel peculiar to call themselves "Chinese". Seemingly Hong Kong people make little identification with their state, China. However when Yao Ming, a Chinese basketball player of Houston Rockets, visited Hong Kong in 2003 and 2005, stadiums were filled with enthusiastic audience attending a seminar about "Distinguished Chinese"; considerate support was given to China as the team played in the finals of the 2002 World Cup. How does that happen? Why doesn't the identification persist and expand to other areas? Archetti once said, "Nationalism must be conceived as a cognitive and social arena marked by obligations and not by selfish consideration" (Giulianotti, Williams 1994: 227) This will bring us to the central question I wish to answer in this project. Do people in Hong Kong and China think it is an obligation for them to support their nation's teams and players?

The link between football and identity has been studied and suggested by many scholars from various fields. Anthony Cohen, in an attempt to explain why people are attracted to football, he said it helps "individuals to derive comfort, perform a social obligation, achieve recreation, discover their identity, pass the time. Be with others, and for an endless variety of other private personal purposes." (Giulianotti and Armstrong quoting Cohen 1974: 137) Michael Billig (1995) also suggested

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nationalism is not only present during wars, instead it is banal as in between wars national identity is constructed daily for a nation's citizenry. "In so many little ways, the citizenry are daily reminded of their national place in a world of nations.... This reminding is so familiar, so continual, that it is not consciously registered as reminding. The metonymic image of banal nationalism is not a flag being consciously waved with fervent passion; it is the flag hanging unnoticed on the public building." (ibid, 8) Football is a domain familiar and continual enough in Hong Kong and China to remind the people daily of their identity. Moreover with football's easy resemblance to warfare, it is justified that nationalism and national identity can be analyzed through football. Therefore the main objective of the project is to compare Hong Kong people and Mainlanders' sense of national identity seen through their preference in football. Hong Kong people, in my study are a group of legitimate Hong Kong SAR residents who were born and have spent most of their lives in Hong Kong. Mainlanders are those that were born and raised in Mainland China.

Globalization has brought people all over the world closer and certainly it has played and is still playing a crucial role in shaping Hong Kong people's football watching habits. Since Cable TV's capture of live broadcast right of the European Cup in 1996, watching football live has become a necessity from a luxury. Today Hong Kong is exposed to global football to a degree that week after week games of Spanish Laliga, German Bunglisliga, Italian Serie A, English Premier League are broadcasted live, also occasional World Cup Qualifiers, European Cup and World Cup every four years. The Chinese Super League "Jia A" is covered too in an extra-paid package offered by Cable TV. The effect is obvious, and compellingly one-sided. Everywhere we can see advertisement billboards featuring "foreign" football icons, products of European football leagues taking up 99% of the space of football souvenirs shops. Also there are local fan clubs of teams like Manchester United, Arsenal, Liverpool but none for Chinese teams like Dalian Shide. (Dalian Shide is three-timed champion of the six-year-old Chinese Super League.) On the other hand China, being increasingly affected by globalization, is exposed to even more global football than Hong Kong. With local channels and cable TV service combined, contrary to Hong Kong it seems the Super League is still a big part of people's lives. On the surface Hong Kong and Mainland China are extremely two different scenarios in regard to the classic encounter of state versus market. The project aims at understanding issues regarding nationalism under the impact of globalization.

This project will also look at mass media in both Hong Kong and Mainland China and examine their influence in constructing people's identities. Hong Kong's

football broadcasting channels seem to portray a sense of patriotism by taking special notice on Chinese national team's games. The games are usually broadcasted and the national team is cheered on and sided with by the match commentators. A recent example will be the match between Beijing Hyundai and Manchester United. ATV had it broadcasted live and the commentators spent the 90 minutes reminding the audience how well the Hyundai players performed although they ended up losing 0-3 and procession was Manchester United's most of the time. How much of the support is reflected in Hong Kong football fans? The project will pay attention to possible ambiguities and find out how they make sense to the receivers. Other forms of mass media will be analyzed too. For example football match reports, football advertisements, official publishings and books about football in Hong Kong and China.... Informants will be interviewed to help understand how they perceive the information.

### **Methodology**

Ethnographer Paul Willis has once questioned the validity of cultural study without appropriate fieldwork. Paraphrased by Giulianotti and Armstrong, he questioned, "how can one claim to do any form of cultural study without actually meeting and engaging with its subjects through ethnography." (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997: 13) Research therefore is important in this project. Data were gathered through means of participant observation, in-depth interviews, online forums interaction and text analysis.

National identity of fans is the main focus of investigation, so fieldwork is dealt mostly with fans. Participant observation is done by attending matches in Hong Kong. They were the first leg of the 28th Hong Kong-Guangdong Cup Competition played on 31st December, 2005; the Lanwa International FA Cup semi finals played on 8th April, 2006; and two 2005/06 Hong Kong Football Association Coolprint Ventilation First Division Football League games scheduled on 30th April, 2006. Seated in the most crowded stand, I observed how fans react to teams, players, referees, goals, tackles, players' injuries, yellow/red cards....etc. After and during matches I had causal conversations with some fans to understand more of how they perceived the games.

In-Depth interviews were conducted with fans from Hong Kong and Mainland China. The interviews were in semi-constructed manner which means a set of fixed questions were always asked but other questions would be raised in respond to each informant's account. I interviewed 6 Mainlanders and 11 Hong Kong people. Of the 6

Mainlanders, 4 are currently staying in Hong Kong; 2 have never been to Hong Kong, interviews were done through online instant messenger. 9 of the Hong Kong people were fans, the other two were once a China team coach and a China team player respectively.

I also post questions on online Hong Kong-based and Mainland-based forums to see how members respond to them. Short surveys which contain a few simple questions were conducted on these forums too.

Text analysis is crucial to the study as well. Data were collected from academic works by John Williams, "Game Without Frontiers" (1994); Michael Billig, "Banal Nationalism" (1995); Armstrong and Giulianotti, "Entering the Field: New Perspectives on World Football" (1997), "Football Cultures and Identities" (1999); and Adam Brown, "Fanatics! Power, Identity and Fandom in Football" (1998). These works will be featured and discussed in the literature review chapter. Books about football in Hong Kong and China are also of huge significance as they provide information about football histories of both regions. Some perspectives of the writers are also very useful. They include "Hong Kong Football History" (1990) by Lam Sheng-yi; "Hong Kong Football in the Fifties" (1993) by Au Chi Yin; "Towards the 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong-Guangdong Cup Competition 1978-1996" (1996) and "Towards the 25th Anniversary of Hong Kong-Guangdong Cup Competition 1978-2002" (2002) by Hong Kong Football Association and Guangdong Football Association; "Our Football Field" (1998) by Lui Dai-lok; "The 90th Anniversary of Hong Kong Football Association" (2004) by Hong Kong Football Association; and "China Football Encyclopedia" (2002) by Yuan weimin.

### **Literature Review**

Benedict Anderson (1991: 6 – 7) argues a nation is socially constructed and it is an idea imagined by people who recognize themselves as part of that group. He coined the term "imagined communities" which states that a community "is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion....The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible." (ibid)

Michael Billig (1995: 74) pointed out that the national boundaries, which define the “homeland”, need to be imagined too, “nationhood.... involves a distinctive imagining of a particular sort of community rooted in a particular sort of place. Nationalism.), is never “beyond geography” (Billig quoting Agnewp 1995: 167). But the geography is not mere geography, or physical setting: the national place has to be imagined, just as much as the national community does.” (Billig 1995: 74) Therefore, “the imagining of a bounded totality (is) beyond immediate experience of place.” The homeland is far beyond our “home, the immediate place of living.” (ibid, 75)

Raymond Boyle added that groups are being distinguished from each other as the boundary is imagined. “...Boundary making is of central importance in group and intergroup relationships. As boundaries are constructed, a process of inclusion and exclusion takes place, ingroups and outgroups are identified.” (Giulianotti and Williams 1994: 77) The imagining of boundaries also indicates that the construction of boundaries is a social concept. Boundaries are very often not concrete, that’s why the idea of distinctive groups remained after the Berlin wall was pulled down between East and West Germany. East and West were still intensely imagined in the early years after the unification. For instance in the encounter between former Eastern and Western football clubs, easterners showed their alienation by shouting neo-Nazism and racist chants to protest against the structural inequalities persisting between the two former nations. (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999: 6)

There are a few elements that are crucial to the maintenance of boundaries. While Anderson emphasized the possession of a common language, Billig (1995) suggested the uniqueness of the name of a nation is of substantial significance. “National labels would not be able to signify particularity, if two, or even more, nations shared the same name..... codes of national particularity are seriously threatened by a duplication of names.” (ibid, 73) Firth argues the flag performs a symbolic function too. “The national flag.....symbolizes the sacred character of the nation; it is revered by local citizens and ritually defiled by those who wish to make a protest.” History is another crucial element. “Anderson argues that the nation is to be imagined as a unique entity in terms of time and space. It is imagined as a community stretching through time, with its own past and own future destiny; it is imagined across space, embracing the inhabitants of a particular territory. The temporal dimension ensures that all nations maintain a sense of their own history, which is no one else’s. It is no coincidence that the emergence of nation-states has typically been accompanied by the creation of national histories.” (Billig 1995: 70) “National

histories tell of a people passing through time – “our” people, with “our” ways of life, and “our” culture.” (ibid.: 71) Archetti agrees, “there must be a history, in the sense of tradition, of events, symbols and ceremonies that are seen as the realization and representation of a bonded, undifferentiated collectivity.” (Giulianotti and Williams 1994: 226)

History is never objective; it’s political, written by whom Archetti described, “a segment of the population – national elites, or individual nationalist militants.” (Giulianotti and Williams 1994: 226) They generate ideas and implement actions that stand for an entire nation. However Archetti pointed out that “national consciousness must be elaborated and reproduced through different practices in “normal times”.... Nationalism is generated in many different social settings and, I believe located in less institutional contexts. In this direction, modern sport in the age of international competitions has created a particularity privileged arena for the analysis of .... nationalism.” (Giulianotti and Williams 1994: 226) Thus football preference is a manifestation of subjects of national consciousness.

Billig (1995), in objection to Anthony Giddens’s reservation of nationalism for social disruption and social movement, agrees with Archetti, “crises do not create nation-states as nation-states. In between times, the United States of America, France, the United Kingdom and so on continue to exist. Daily, they are reproduced as nations and their citizenry as nationals. And these nations are reproduced within a wider world of nations. For such daily reproduction to occur, one might hypothesize that a whole complex of beliefs, assumptions, habits, representations and practices must also be reproduced. Moreover, this complex must be reproduced in a banally mundane way.” (ibid, 6) Football can be seen as an “unwave flag” that “provides banal reminders of nationhood.” (ibid, 41)

### **Identity**

Anthony Giddens define identity “as the ongoing sense the self has of who it is, as conditioned through its ongoing interactions with others. Identity is how the self conceives of itself, and labels itself.” (Mathews 2000: 16) Billig (1995), on the other hand, suggests the investigation of identity should focus on the self’s discourse. “It is seldom clear what an identity is.... The problems start when one expects to find the “identity” within the body or mind of the individual. This is to look in the wrong place for the operation of identity.” The use of language therefore is important. “To have a national identity is to possess ways of talking about nationhood.” (ibid, 7-8) “An “identity is not a thing; it is a short-hand description for ways of talking about the

self and community. Ways of talking or ideological discourses, do not develop in social vacuums, but they are related to forms of life. In this respect, “identity”, if it is to be understood as a form of talking, is also to be understood as a form of life.” (ibid, 60) Coelho agrees, “social representations – discourses, images, metaphors – are only constructions, narratives about the way a group represents itself and the way they want to show themselves.... Within these representations we can find the most significant features of a self-established identity.” (Brown 1998: 161) At the same time “having a national identity also involves being situated physically, legally, socially, as well as emotionally.... within a homeland.” (Billig 1995: 8) As a result, to compare national identity in Hong Kong and Mainland through football is to compare Hong Kong people and Mainlanders’ ways of talking about their preferences in football. As Christian Bromberger suggested football teams “represented a remarkable crucible for identification.” (Giulianotti and Williams 1994: 32) Eric Hobsbawm also argues the identity of a nation of millions “seems more real as a team of eleven named people” (Brown 1998: 102)

The construction of identity, like the set-up of boundaries, leads to inclusions and exclusion. It involves the creation of “us” and “others”. Raymond Boyle suggested that groups establish and sustain their collective sense of themselves as a distinct group by reference to other “outsider” groups from whom they wish to be distinguished.” (Giulianotti and Williams 1994: 92) For one to claim to have a national identity, the nationalist thinking involves the conception of “us, the nation”, which is said to have its unique destiny (or identity); it also involves conceiving of “them, the foreigners”, from whom “we” identify “ourselves” as different.” (Billig 1995: 61) The demarcation of identity can be recognized in football rivalries. Hognestad states, “symbolic pride is tied to support and football is therefore frequently made into “a matter of honour”.... the quest for honour must first and foremost be related to identity. The vitality embedded in the identification with a team has been carved out and continuously maintained through various constructions of enemies and rivals.” (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997: 194-195) Fans often show their identification to a team by talking about the team in terms of “I” and “us”, as opposed to them, the rivals. In Hognestad’s study of “The Jambos” (fans of Scottish football club “Heart of Midlothian FC”), a Jambo said to him, “I might be happy to see us winning the cup.” (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997: 202)

Football styles and tactics are another manifestation of defining “us” and “other”. Coelho states, “football supporters identify themselves so intensely with their national football team and their club teams because that team is perceived, namely

through its playing style, as a symbol of a specific mode collective existence. The skills and tactics of football can be understood as lasting cultural traditions: they are not only sporting definitions, but also cultural ones (Archetti 1994).... football playing styles in national terms are often seem as being connected to the so-called “national character” rather than other characteristics.... We can say that a style is imagined in the same way as national identity is imagined, by the cultural and journalist elite, through forms of banal nationalism. The style is the way we like to represent ourselves and to be seen by the relevant others.” Lui agreed, “...every team and every football style (including deployment and tactics) represents a set of values and cultures.” (Lui 1998: 182) Jorgen Juve, the captain of Norway 1936 team, wrote when he worked as sports editor for the newspaper *Tidens Tegn*, “Norwegian football is built upon the best national qualities of our youth; the speed, the force, the simple and tough technique, the tactical brain.” Goksoyr and Hognestad claimed, “these qualities were compared to other nations: “football among the Germans develops forwardness and systematics, among the Latin Americans it keeps the warm-blood temper under control, while their love of excitement can thrive freely, among the Englishmen it strengthens their stoicism, their tactical abilities and their fairness, among the Danes their speed, joy and humour, and among the Norwegians their velocity, their force, their skill and their ability to fight is growing. (Juve 1934: 19-20)” (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999: 204) Differentiation of styles is not restricted for teams, fans tend to identify themselves with support styles too. For instance Scottish fan group “Tartan Army” established their national identity through emphasizing their friendliness to differentiate from English fan’s hooliganism. (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999: 36)

Stereotypes are often employed in distinguishing “us” and “others”. Billig pointed out, “Stereotypes are often means of distinguishing them“ from “us”, thereby contributing to “our” claims of a unique identity.” (Billig 1995: 81) The stereotypes used could be negative and degrading. Bairner and Shirlow suggested, “Defining the “other” leads to the imposition of negative and putative characteristics upon a “collective other” whose lifestyle, culture and politics must be both resisted and repelled.” (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999: 155) Football fans very often use stereotypes to insult oppositional fans. For example in German fans often shout chants that compare other fans to “those with a stigma, such as gypsies and homosexuals, who do not conform with working-class norms and values.” (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999: 60)

“Nationalism must be conceived as a cognitive and social arena marked by



obligations and not by selfish consideration” (Giulianotti and Williams 1994: 227) But Social Identity Theory suggested identity could be subject to change due to individuals having “a need for a positive social identity, or self-conception: “It can be assumed that an individual will tend to remain a member of a group and seek membership of new groups if these groups have some contribution to make to the positive aspects of his (sic) social identity” (Tajfel, 1981, p.256) To achieve this positive identity, groups will tend to compare themselves positively with contrasting outgroups, and they will seek dimensions on which they will fare well.” (Billig 1995: 66) The need to seek for positive identity can explain why success is so important for a team to stabilize a fan-base. In the 1940’s the French national team was not popular in the country compared to today, Hare and Dauncey explain, “the growing number of international matches, and the hosting of the 1938 World Cup helped create a shared sense of national identity in supporting the country..... the problem was that France was not notably successful in internationals.” (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999: 44)

Globalization and postmodernism are closely linked to identity becoming a choice. Billig wrote, “theorists of the postmodern emphasize the importance of consumption in the postmodern experience..... Patterns of consumption are not strictly national. Consumers can no longer imagine themselves as part of a national community, all purchasing the same style of article, which is marketed within the nation’s borders and which represents a distinctive national culture... Consumers can create their own identities through their changing patterns of consumption.” Eventually the nationally imagined identity would diminish in importance, “the result is that the process of globalization, which are diminishing differences and spaces between nations, are also fragmenting the imagined unity within those nations.” “National identity no longer enjoys its pre-eminence as the psychological identity that claims the ultimate loyalty of the individual. Instead it must compete with other identities on a free market of identities.” (Billig 1995: 132-133) This “market of identities” is very similar to Gordon Mathews’ “cultural supermarket” that it brings “a flood of information and potential identities into every corner of the world.” (Mathews 2000: 9) So that we can “fashion ourselves from the cultural supermarket in a number of areas, among them our choices in..... national identity...” (Mathews 2000: 21)

However there are scholars suggesting the opposite. Anthony Giddens suggests that “people often react against ontological insecurity with “regressive forms of object-identification”. They identify with, and invest great emotional energy in, the symbols of nationhood and the promise of strong leadership.” Fromm also claims the

freedom to create own identities scares some people, “turning away from the uncertainties of the present, they are regressively yearn for the security of a solid identity. So, they are drawn towards the simplicities of nationalist and fascist propaganda.” (Billig 1995: 137)

Billig himself is not convinced by both positions. He pointed out that, “not all identities should be considered as equivalent and interchangeable... national identity cannot be exchanged like last year’s clothes.” (ibid)

But in football there are evidence that globalization does to an extent cause switch of identity. Globalization enables television broadcast of world football in a single destination. Therefore some teams such as Manchester United, Real Madrid, Juventus and Liverpool generate global appeal. Most of attention is from non-attends, the so-called “armchair fans”. For these armchair fans, ““sport as a spectacle would appear more clearly as a mass commodity.” (Bourdieu, 1993).... There being no longer any loyal identification with a local team.” (Giulianotti and Williams 1994: 13)

In Norway “substantial newspaper coverage of English football, the distribution of English football magazines, and radio commentary.... contributed to the creation of a semiotic process in which support for English teams played a key role in school yards, playing fields and work places.” (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999: 206)

The switch of identity shows the unconstant nature of identity. Identity is not fixed, it is continually being constructed and reconstructed. Stuart Hall pointed out, “we should think... of identity as a “production”, which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation.” (Brown 1998: 136-137) Coelho agrees, “we must be aware that identities are not rigid or permanent, they do change a lot, they are not something we possess and carry with us all the time.” (Brown 1998: 170) In Brazil people were reluctant to identify with their nation team in the 50’s because the players were mostly black players. But the victory in World Cup 58 people started to turn. Leite Lopes described that they, “provide an important domain for Brazilian national identity, wherein they have contributed to a reversal of elite’s racist stereotypes and ethnocentrism internalized by society as a whole.” (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997: 79)

Another characteristic of the concept of identity is that it can be dual or even multiple. Kellas suggested that identities are either self-contained or immutable, “indeed, identities are likely then not to be dual or even multiple. Thus one’s identity

as a player of a certain sport or a supporter of a particular team may or may not overlap with other aspects of one's identity." (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999: 152) In Raymond Boyle's study of Celtic supporters, it's found out that fans often have different national identities. Younger fans tend to identify themselves with Irishness more when older fans are more Scottish. (Giulianotti and Williams 1994: 86) Billig is also aware of this multi-faceted nature of identity, he pointed out that, "grammatically similar statements of identity can have very different meanings." After the unification of Germany, questions were raised about what the German identity means. The German state define itself through democratic values but former eastern German acknowledge the division that they chanted "we don't want any Western swine" in football matches against former West German teams. Apparently at that time "I am German" could have very different meanings.

## **Findings**

-- Participant Observation

Match: The 28th Hongkong-Guangdong Cup Competition (1st Leg)

Teams: Hong Kong Representative Team Vs Guangdong Team

Date: 31st December, 2006 (Saturday)

Time: 3pm

Venue: Mongkok Stadium

The match attracted a crowd of more than 2000, a huge number compared to a weekly local league games. The crowd was consisted of mainly middle-aged and old males, small groups of teenagers and young adults were also present. Hong Kong had control of possession most of the time while Guangdong was playing defence. The crowd was fully behind the Hong Kong team but only a small portion of fans was formed into an organized support group. The group had about 50 fans that wore the red Hong Kong football kit and hanged a Hong Kong SAR flag on the edge of the stand. They brought drums and played them constantly. I started the first half on the stand opposite to theirs and all I could hear from them was drums.

Throughout the match the crowd cheered Hong Kong on as the players attacked and appeared really quiet when Guangdong gained rare possession. Occasional shots were greeted by two main reactions. When the shot was on target and looked very likely to go into the net a collective "aai ya!" (哎咗, an interjection widely used in Hong Kong to express sudden pain, disappointment and frustration. In this case it indicated disappointment and frustration) By contrast when the shot was poorly

executed, the crowd perceived it as a waste of chance. They shouted abuse at the shooter with foul language and attempted to direct where the ball should have been played. One of the shouts I overheard from the crowd was, “why the fuck you shoot? you should have passed to the right winger!” (射乜野呀! 比右邊果個呀嘛! se mat nun je aa! bei jau bin gwo go aa maa!)

Hoping to hold on to a draw, the Guangdong goalkeeper was constantly keeping hold of the ball to waste time. The crowd was not pleased and they blasted the goalkeeper, one said, “Mainland fucker! What the fuck are you waiting for? Hurry up!” (大陸哩! 等乜野! 快D! daai luk lei! dang mat gau je! Faai nun d!)

At halftime I observe the activities near the snack bar and a counter selling Hong Kong football souvenirs like kits and t-shirts. People were not interested in the souvenirs as only 3 fans enquired about the official kit that I eventually bought. Most people were only passers-by to the snack bar to get food. A Guangdong correspondent was reporting the match with a cameraman on the edge of the pitch. The fans on the stand weren't particularly rude to him but a few teenagers were joking about his hairstyle and his clothes which they thought were “unfashionable.” (娘 neong)

I started the second half in the opposite stand where the organized support group was seated. Their style of showing support was more or less the same with other match-goers. But they tend to criticize the players less and shouted their nicknames as they cheered. An incident happened which they reacted fiercely to. A Hong Kong player was pulled down by a Guangdong player in the penalty area. The referee gave a penalty to Hong Kong which eventually won Hong Kong the match. The crowd applauded the referee and urged him to send the offender off, “send him off! Fuck him! He fouls the whole match!” (趕佢出場啦! 你! 成場嘅度犯規! Gon keoi ceot coeng laa! Diu nei! Seng coeng hai dou faan kwai) As the abuse went on, another Guangdong player was not happy with the referee's decision and pushed the referee. He was sent off but appeared to be reluctant to leave the pitch. The fans swore at him, “go away! Fuck your mother! Damn Mainland Fucker!” (走啦! 你老味! 死大陸哩! Zau laa! Diu nei lou mei! daai luk lei! )

After Hong Kong scored, the Guangdong players frequently committed fouls. Late tackles were flying in at later stage of the match. The fans were increasingly hostile to the Guangdong players. One shouted, “What the fuck are you tackling? You almost broke his leg!” (鐘乜野! 腳都比你鐘斷! caan mat nun je! goek dou bei nei can dyun!) Another fan joined the swearing, “you damn Mainland fuckers! You

always do that!” (你 D 死大陸鐘! 次次都係咁! nei D sei dai luk caan! ci ci dou hai gam!) Another fan was also unhappy with the way Guangdong players played, he said, “you are rude cheats, are you fighting or are you playing football?” (正一死人茅躉, 開片定踢波! zeng jat ci jan maau dan, hoi pin deng tek bo!) The match ended with applause of the fans. I stayed behind and asked that fan who shouted what he meant by “always”. He explained, “it’s the rudeness! They play very rudely every year.”

Match: Hong Kong Football Association Lanwa International FA Cup

Teams: South China Vs Happy Valley

Date: 8th April, 2006 (Saturday)

Time: 2pm

Venue: Mongkok Stadium

South China and Happy Valley have been playing in Hong Kong’s local league since 1908 and 1957 respectively. Their fan bases were two of the strongest in Hong Kong. Situation had changed before the game. Happy Valley were crowned league champions already before the end of the league. South China, on the other hand were fighting for survival in the top league. They looked very likely to fail (which they eventually did) as they were deep in the relegation zone. General opinion expected Happy Valley to win.

Abuses were shouted frequently, as normal. Players were criticized and shouted at with foul language for underperforming such as missing the target, losing the ball... South China fans and Happy Valley fans were not particularly hostile to each other. They mainly focused on their own teams. Referee was sworn at when fans disagreed with his decisions. Happy Valley won the match by 2-0. I talked to a fan who yelled at South China players the whole game claiming that they didn’t try hard enough. He said, “I blasted them because I support them. They are surely going down this year, it looks like I will have to go to Second Division grounds to support them.”

Match: Hong Kong Football Association Lanwa International FA Cup

Teams: Citizen Vs Xiangxue Sun Hei

Date: 8th April, 2006 (Saturday)

Time: 4pm

Venue: Mongkok Stadium

Citizen and Xiangxue Sun Hei were relatively less popular teams compared to South China and Happy Valley. Citizen were founded in 1968 but have been

struggling in between Second and Third Division until finally being promoted to the top league. Sun Hei was founded in 1986 and joined the top league in 1999. They were a local team despite the name “XiangXue”. “XiangXue” was added in front of the team name “Sun Hei” in 2004 after the team clinched a sponsorship deal with XiangXue Pharmaceutical from Mainland. There was no organized support group for Citizen and about 20 Sun Hei fans who intentionally dressed themselves in yellow, the team colour. Some families of the foreign players of Sun Hei turned up and the supporters seemed to be really friendly with them. The size of the entire crowd was only half the one watching Hongkong-Guangdong Cup Competition.

This match is a repeat of South China Vs Happy Valley in terms of fans behaviour. Underperforming players were greeted by foul language; referees were blasted after unfavorable decisions. Sun Hei’s Brazilian player Lico was mentioned in the crowd with appreciation as he scored 5 goals in the 7-goal-thrashing of Citizen. When he scored his fourth and fifth, many fans said with amazement, “it’s him again!” (又係佢! jau hai ceot!) I stayed behind and had a few words with Sun Hei supporters. They claimed to have had a good relationship with the players’ families, local or foreign. They sometimes organized parties and players would join. It’s not rare for some fans to celebrate players’ birthdays with the players.

Match: 2005/06 Hong Kong Football Association Coolpoint Ventilation First Division Football League

Teams: Xiangxue Sun Hei Vs Lanwa

Date: 29th April, 2006 (Saturday)

Time: 2pm

Venue: Hong Kong Stadium

This was the last league date in this season, yet the game attracted no more than 50 fans in the first half. About 10 Sun Hei fans sat together as a group. Lanwa, a Guangdong-based team invited to join Hong Kong local league this season, had weak fan base and no obvious fan of theirs could be spotted on the stands. The first half passed without much noise, even when Lanwa scored their first goal.

Fans flooded in during half time. The supporter group has grown into about 30 members. Other fans filled two stands with a total of about 200. I started the second half seated with the Sun Hei Supporters. The game restarted and soon jeers and abused directed at the Lanwa players could be heard from the Sun Hei fans. A Lanwa player was down after a late tackle by a Sun Hei player. He stayed down with his face

on the ground for a while. A Sun Hei fan shouted, “act again! your mother!” (又詐帝! 你老味呀! jau zaa dai! nei lo mei aa!) Another Sun Hei fan joined him, saying, “eat shit! Dive again!” (食屎啦! 又插水! sek si laa! jau caap seoi!) A fan seated next to the fan group agreed, much to the delight of the Sun Hei fans, he yelled, “ignore him! Turn off the lights!” (唔好理佢! 熄燈! ng hou lei ceot! sik dang!) (the lights were not on actually, by turning off the lights he meant the player was faking injury and the game was stopped like it’s over.) Sun Hei fans laughed following this comment. Later a Lanwa player caught his opponent on the face. Sun Hei fan reacted, “fuck you! You could have got him blind!” (𦞙你! 眼都比你抓盲! diu nei! ngaan dou bei neizaau maang!) The referee blew his whistle and that Lanwa player appeared to be arguing with the referee. The fan went on, “Fuck you mother! Don’t listen to him, sent him off!” (𦞙你老母! 唔好聽佢講, 趕佢出場! Diu nei lo mou! Ng hou teng keoi gong! Gon keoi ceot coeng!)

Lanwa scored another goal later on, Sun Hei fans were disappointed as a collective “aa” (呀) was released. But I suspect the noise could not be heard in the opposite stand because the clapping and cheering of the rest of the crowd was so loud. Lanwa won the game 2-0. I asked some fans why they cheered, most of them said they were not fans of any particular team and they liked seeing goals. One said, “I don’t follow any team. I came for the goals. The more the merrier.” Another fan said, “Hong Kong football is increasingly poor these days, if we shout after goals and the match atmosphere is better.”

Match: 2005/06 Hong Kong Football Association Coolpoint Ventilation First Division Football League

Teams: Kitchee Vs Happy Valley

Date: 29th April, 2006 (Saturday)

Time: 4pm

Venue: Hong Kong Stadium

This match was played soon after Xiangxue Sun Hei Vs Lanwa. I left the Sun Hei stand to sit with those fans who said they wanted a goal show. Kitchee is another most supported team in Hong Kong. They were founded in 1931 and promoted to the top league in 1947. Organized supporter groups of both teams could be spotted on two separate stands. Both were dressed in their team colours. Blue for Kitchee; green for Happy Valley. The fans who watched the first match stayed for this game.

Kitchee scored two goals in the first half, the crowd cheered as loud as they

did to the Lanwa goal. Not much abuse was shouted in the match unless at times when players underperformed.

Kitchee coach Antonic Dejan (狄恩 dik jan) who is from Serbia and Montenegro, was so nervous, he kept stepping outside the manager area, the fourth referee had to remind him of his place time and time again. The incident was taken in good manner by the crowd. Fans were amused as they saw Dejan being asked to step back repeatedly. At half time while Dejan was walking to the tunnel passing the stand, a fan yelled at him jokingly, “狄恩! 狄恩! dik jan! dik jan! (in Cantonese, Hong Kong fans always refer to foreign coaches and players by their translated Chinese names), you go out and play too!” (狄恩! 狄恩! 你出埋去踢呀! dik jan! dik jan! nei ceot maai heoi tek aa! ) Dejan heard him, he looked at the fan with a smile putting his right hand behind his right ear and said, “咩呀? 咩呀? me aa? me aa?(meaning what? What? He spoke in Cantonese even though he’s not a capable Cantonese speaker)” The crowd on that stand was amused, laughters could be heard.

Happy Valley scored 3 goals to complete a turn-over in the second half. I can’t differentiate the volume of cheers following the last 6 goals scored. The Lanwa second goal, Kitchee’s 2 and Happy Valley’s 3. The crowd enjoyed all the goals just the same. After the match, Happy Valley was presented the league championship trophy. The players celebrated in front of the stand where their fans were seated, while the rest of the crowd left the stadium.

### **In-Depth Interviews**

According to He Runfeng’s study “Football Globalization and Fans’ Local Identity: Case Study in Hong Kong” in 2004 (He, Renfeng. 2004. Football Globalization and Fans’ Local Identity: Case Study in Hong Kong. M.Phil. thesis, Division of Communication. The Chinese University of Hong Kong. Graduate School.), he generalizes Hong Kong football fans into three categories in terms of their identity – local identity (fans who show the most eminent support and loyalty to the Hong Kong team and Hong Kong football league clubs and to a large extent overlook global football), bi-directional identity (fans who show recognition to both Hong Kong based teams and global teams) and disembedding identity (fans whose attention and loyalty are overwhelmingly dedicated to global football). From the data that I gathered from Mainland informants, I think his categories are fairly justified and are good tools for explaining my data. To fit my Mainland data in, I suggest to rename and redefine the categories - national identity (fans who show the most eminent support support and loyalty to the Chinese national team and Chinese leagues (Super League clubs and



“Jia A” clubs) and to a large extent overlook global football), global-national identity (fans who show recognition to both Chinese teams and global teams) and global identity (fans who give overwhelming attention to global football). For the Hong Kong informants, I suggest it is appropriate to add the “local” category to describe fans that show loyalty to Hong Kong football.

One thing to be borne in mind is the multiple nature of identity suggested by Kellas. The difference in football preferences does not mean “the resultant identities are either self-contained or immutable” (Armstrong and Giulianotti quoting Kellas 1999: 152) Thus; these categories do not indicate absolute demarcation. Informants are sorted into the categories in relative fashion.

#### 1. Mainland China

- Mainland China -- National Identity

Of the 6 informants I interviewed, 2 of them demonstrate major concern with the Chinese national football team and Chinese league clubs. When asked the reason why they support the national team, their identification to being a Chinese arose. Zheng responded, “why do you have to ask? I don’t need to explain, I don’t need no reason, I’m Chinese, born and breed in China. I grew up watching the Chinese team play. I dreamt of being a star player of the national team. Of course I love the Chinese team.” Nian made similar response, “of course Chinese must support the China team.”

It must be noted that these strong supporters of the national team are not ignorant of the fact that quality-wise, the Chinese team is inferior to other national teams such as Brazil, Holland, England or even Asian teams like South Korea and Japan, the fans recognize the vulnerability and criticize the team rather fiercely every time they fail to perform. These comments about the national team are actually of significant value to my study because they show the fans’ emotional linkage that connects football and national pride. For example after China lost 0-2 to Serbia Montenegro on 13th November, hundreds of fans logged on to the forum to trash the coach and the players, calling them “stupid rubbish”, that they “shame all countrymen (國人 Guo Ren)”, “make China live under the shadows of Europeans once again”. When I asked them about the heavy criticism, they denied being disloyal and unpatriotic. To quote some forum members, they posted, “it’s just like what that Chinese notion says – blast it because I love it too much.” “Their loss hurts me so much, I can’t help myself, I must criticize them to make them improve. It feels so much like Joan Jett’s song “I hate myself for loving you”, do you understand?” It shows that these fans support the national team still despite the quality.

Zheng and Nian also agree with the forum members. Zheng said, “this (making criticism) is a way of showing support. I care, so I blast. I sacrifice so much following them, why can’t they do the same for the country? Against Japan (打日本 da ri ben, “da” means “hitting” in Chinese and in football it is a metaphor for “playing against”) it is an absolute must-not to lose (絕對不能輸 jue dui bu neng shu) but they often disappoint.” Nian acknowledged even more problems of Chinese football, he said, “have you heard of jia du hei? (假賭黑, football match fixing, gambling, corruption)” Jia du hei means jia qiu (假球 football match fixing); du qiu (賭球 football gambling) and hei shao. (黑哨 corrupt referees) “They are big problems in the league. Footballers and referees accept bribes (好處 hao chu, a profit) from gambling bankers and work together to fix matches. I pay so much to support a team, but the team doesn’t play seriously. Don’t they deserve the blasting?” When asked why he still supports Chinese football, he said, “of course Chinese support Chinese football, no matter how poor (臭 chou, chou means stink in Chinese) they are. A man can’t make love to another woman because his wife is poor!” Nian also expressed similar hatred to other states. He claimed, “To fight Taiwan, I donate a month’s salary; to fight United States of America, I donate a year’s salary; to fight Japan; I donate two lives. Let alone football, I always support China.”

The number of fans like Zheng and Nian is decreasing in China, at least in the Chinese club competition. The average number of audience attending Jia A league matches in 1995 and 1996 reached 25,000. Chinese Football Association Vice President Yang Yimin pointed out in the Super League report that the number went down to an average of 15,000 audience in 2002. In 2004 the average slid further to 5,000 with the lowest attendance record being smashed following only 8 tickets sold in a match. Television audience also dropped to 13,000, a record decrease of 42% compared to 2003. (<http://www.xawb.com/gb/news/2005-02/26/content486390.htm>) Recent reports reveal a rise in attendance to 13,000 but the number is still a little more than half the 95 and 96 statistics.

- Global-National Identity

The kind of strong identification towards the national team was also shared by fans who obtain global-national identity. The difference is they don’t feel the need to focus their attention on the national team or local Chinese football. Quality issues are often raised when their multiple interests were discussed. Xian pointed out, “the national team is too weak. Being an Inter Milan and AC Milan fan is good because the national team can’t hurt you too much as your attention is split into other good clubs.” His

support for the national team still remains but it is not positioned as his sole interest because if his attention is split, the national team's poor results can't hurt them. "Inside the country (國內 guo nei) I like Liaoning and Shandong because I like "Big Yu". (Hypocorism of Shandong player Li Jinyu)" Xian also insisted to me that he won't surrender his support for the national team. Xian's favorite global team, Manchester United, is an English team for which many English players play. I asked him whether he would support England against China, he said, "Although there's a wide gap in quality, I still want China to teach "white stripe rubbish" (白條垃圾 bai tiao la ji) England a lesson, because England don't know how high the sky is and how thick the ground is. (不知天多高地多厚 tian duo gao di duo hou, a phrase in Chinese that indicates naivety and immaturity) Whenever the 4-1 defeat of England by Denmark comes to mind, I want to laugh." His support of China involves supporting Chinese players too. I asked why he wasn't a fan of Manchester City (Manchester United's arch rival) as Chinese player Sun Jihai is currently playing for, Xian appeared to be torn. He said, "ai (唉, an interjection that shows the speaker's frustration of being given no option), if he plays for Manchester United, everything is okay." Xian also shares Zheng and Nian's hatred of Japan. When asked whether he agrees to Manchester United bringing in Japanese players. He said, "little Japan, all they do is making pornography. I strongly object!"

- Global Identity

Fans who give overwhelming support to global teams appear to be more passionate about their favorite teams. Siming said, "Manchester United means passion. There is no passion watching football without it." "The club has everything I want. It has a history of more than a hundred years, it is classical and traditional. At the same time it has the current best players in the world, it is fashionable and up-to-date. I believe in science, Manchester United has a complex and yet orderly database of statistics. I like urban legends and fascinating rumors, the latest stories about Manchester United always satisfy my imagination and my desire for novelty." Ji claimed, "I can't live without Manchester United." Feng is also loyal to his favorite global team, he said, "Manchester United is too fascinating. They are now the centre of my life. I'm no different with those fans sitting in Old Trafford (Manchester United's home stadium.) I might be less fortunate but my heart is the same with theirs." These fans tend to give little or no support to the national team and Chinese clubs. Feng claimed, "I used to like the national team and the Liaoning team but I gave up because they are rubbish" Siming and Ji also sided with England when asked their preference between China and England. Siming said, "I support England, my love for Chinese rotten feet (中國爛腳 zhong guo lan jiao, meaning Chinese footballers) is dead completely." They

also made no identification to Chinese players as they all objected to supporting Sun Jihai's Manchester City. I asked whether they thought they were Chinese. Siming explained, "yes of course I am Chinese but my football preference has no damn relation to nationalism" Ji also pointed out, "every individual has preference that is not to be forced. You are talking about nationalism." Feng and Ji do not possess the same hatred towards Japan and Japanese players as previous informants have shown. Feng said, "why not (bring in Japanese players to Manchester United)? Manchester United is not our national team." Ji agreed, "I will recognize Japanese players if they make significant contribution to Manchester United." When confronted whether they would fight wars for China, Siming reacted, "definitely! It is every Chinese's obligation to protect his country." Ji explained, "of course! If Japan dares to attack China, we would exterminate their whole race. (滅他全族 mie ta quan zu)"

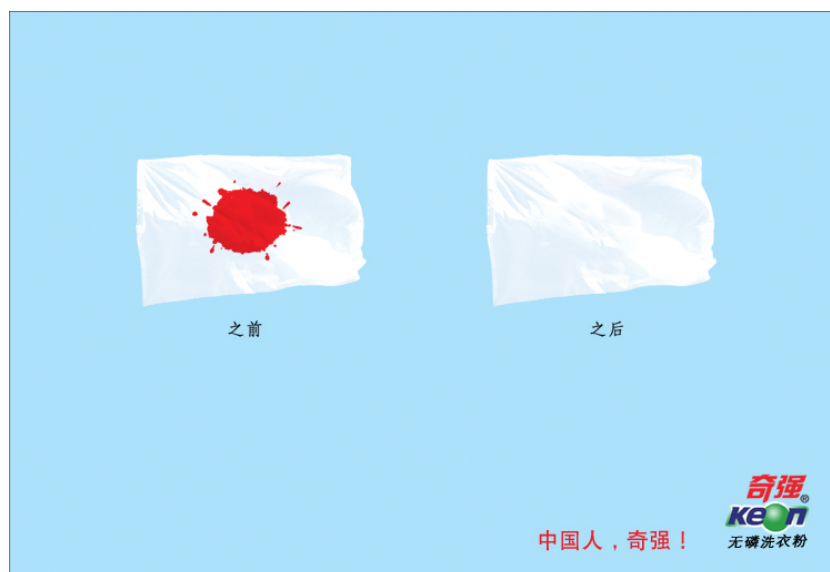
Fans identifying themselves with global teams are increasing vastly in Mainland China. According to Reuter news report, a gloom future could be predicted for Chinese football as fans are turning their attention to the West. Images of David Beckham and his Real Madrid teammates are frequently being put on billboards in big cities. (<http://hk.sports.yahoo.com/041201/61/177si.html>) Also matches featuring global teams are more attractive to Chinese fans than Chinese clubs. When English club Charlton visited Shenzhen in the summer of 2004, the match attracted a full-house crowd at the 35,000 seated Shenzhen Stadium. According to China's People Net, the match was very crowded in comparison to Shenzhen local league games. (<http://sports.people.com.cn/GB/2/57/217/218/2661197.html>)

- The Media
  - The Internet

I posted the question "do you want Manchester United to bring in Japanese players" on Mainland-based fan forum dedicated to the team. Forum members were split in preference. Some member gave straight "nos"; the rest disagree, member "giggs" (nicknamed after Welsh footballer Ryan Giggs) said, "if they (Japanese) help us win championships, I support."

As I searched through the forum posts, it is found out that there were 156 posts that jeer or belittle Japan from June 2005 to May 2006. To give some examples, there is a post with the heading "Listen up Japan", the member posted, "Japanese said they love peace, the Asian people laughed, "is this something a human would say? Japanese said they protect world peace, Americans laughed, "you should have talked to me before you said that." Japanese said they are human, all dogs in the world

barked, “brothers, a dog has to know its roots.”” The heading of another post is “The Advertisement that Shocks Little Japan!!!! Super Strong!” the post contains a picture:



**Figure 1.** Before and After (bottom right corner: “Chinese, Super Strong!”)  
(This is an advert for laundry detergent)

Sina.com.cn is the one of most browsed website that is based in Mainland China. According to a 2005 report Sina.com.cn was the first choice of 30.9% of Chinese internet users in 5 Chinese cities. An average of 2.8 hundred million people visited Sina.com.cn each day. (<http://ads.sina.com.cn/>) Sina’s football section covers news and pictures of the Chinese national team, the Chinese Super League, the World Cup, the English Premier League, the Spanish Laliga and the Italian Serie A. The Chinese Super League is highlighted in yellow on the bar where viewers choose their destinations. The Chinese Super League section is the most informative compared to the other 5 sections. It contains news, pictures, match stats of each club and a database of 12 years of league statistics. Also Chinese league actions and highlights are broadcast on the net. The Chinese Super League forum is the only football forum that makes it to the chart of most-visited posts. (<http://bbs.sina.com.cn/focus100.html>)

In the sports photos section, Chinese players who play in global teams are always the focus when photos of their teams are featured. Their names are often in the headings while the other match photo galleries are named by team names and scores. For example the gallery of a 1860 Munich match was titled, “Shao jiayi help 1860 stay in top league”. Manchester City’s game gallery is titled, “Sun Jihai fought against Arsenal stars”. Sun was featured in all 6 photos in the gallery. The gallery featuring Manchester United versus Charlton was titled, “Manchester United 3-0 Charlton”.

▪ Newspaper



Figure 2. Nanjing's local paper *Nanjing Xian Dai Express* (2005)

Nanjing's local paper *Nanjing Xian Dai Express* reported on 11th November, 2005 about China team taking a trip to Nanjing Massacre Memorial Museum. It was arranged before the match played against Serbia Montenegro in Nanjing – the city where Japanese army massacred Chinese people in the Second World War. Due to the team's tight schedule, no formal ceremony was organized for the players to pay respect to the dead. The team was criticized heavily for this. “Xian Dai Express” described the trip as nationalistic education for the players. Photos were printed and captured some younger players sharing jokes and laughter in the museum. They were blasted as disrespectful. Other visitors to the museum were reported saying, “no wonder the team can't perform. Every Chinese comes here to learn history.” These reflections on the incident show national football is more than just a sport. It's enormously related to the “Chinese” identity and its meanings.

▪ Television

Chinese football fans located in more developed cities are exposed to both national and global football. Competitive games and friendlies of the national team are often broadcasted. Global football broadcast is widely covered too. Programmes include the World Cup, the European Cup, the American Cup, the African Cup, the English Premier League, the Spanish Laliga, the German Bunesliga, the Italian Serie A and various countries' domestic cup competitions.

- China Football Encyclopedia

China Football Encyclopedia recorded the football history of “China”. “China” is the People’s Republic of China. The football history of Republic of China before the Communist Party gained sovereignty in 1949 did not get a mention in China’s football history. The football history of Republic of China was sorted into the Taiwan history chapter. The beginning of the chapter reads, “After the 2nd World War, Taiwan returned to Motherland’s arms on 25th October, 1945 in accordance to “Cairo Declaration” and “Potsdam Proclamation””. (Yuan 2002: 445) The team name is referred to as “China Taiwan” to describe Taiwan’s football history from 40’s through 60’s but Taiwan was operating under the name “National China” or was known by Hong Kong people in the 50’s as the “Free China Team”. Even now the team is a member of FIFA under the name of Chinese Taipei. It just shows how history is always political but never objective when put into consideration that China and Taiwan are still two sovereignties at the moment.

It is also recorded that China pulled herself out of FIFA in 1958 because “a small bunch of people insisted on taking the “two Chinas” stand.” (Yuan 2002: 11) China was re-admitted to FIFA following FIFA’s decision to ban Taiwan from operating under the name “National China” or “Republic of China” or any emblem related to the names.

The book also contains numerous of phrases that link football to national pride and identity. For example “South China was crowned Far East Football Competition champions 5 years in a row. They were the first Chinese team to visit Australia. It changed foreigners’ perception of Chinese being “East Asian ill Man” (東亞病夫 *dong ya bing fu*), Chinese everywhere were deeply encouraged.” “Competitive work, is not just leisure, apart from physical training, it is to let the world know our countrymen’s glory and abilities.”

- Football Advertisement

These are three of seven billboards hung on the outside of a busy shopping mall in Dongmen, Shenzhen. The mall is located on a long and busy street in the shopping district. The two players in Nike’s “Just Do It” campaign are unidentified but it’s extremely tempting to think they are Chinese as the billboards beside them feature two national basketball team players. Next to it is a Chinese sports brand advert that features Jay Zhou (a Taiwan-based singer). The view from across the street is quite unified, 5 “Chinese-looking” people being featured in 3 different advertisement campaigns. Turning the corner one can see the billboard of adidas’s “+10” campaign

that features Michael Ballack. This is the only billboard on the street that features a non-Chinese.

## 2. Hong Kong

- Local-National Identity

It's extremely rare that a Hong Kong fan gives unconditional support to the national team and Chinese clubs. Of the 9 fans I interview, only 2 claimed to have had emotional attribution towards the Chinese national team. They both claim to be Chinese but being Chinese does not require them to give priority to China. Ordy said, "I am Chinese. But to me the Chinese identity is obtained based on foreign assault. So I would be nervous when China play against Japan." "I'd like China to win, to release the rage, the rage of so many decades, the rage caused by their bullying."

The support for China is subject to abandonment under a few conditions. Most importantly Hong Kong always comes first in his preference list. When asked which team he'd support in a match between Hong Kong and China, he said, "Hong Kong! Definitely!" He also stressed, "I'm a Hong Kong person, a Chinese and also a Guangzhou person." I asked which of these 3 identities is the most important to him, he responded, "it depends. Like I said, I always support Hong Kong against China, but when China plays Japan I won't watch the game as a Hong Kong person. When I watch Guangzhou playing in Jia A I am a Guangzhou person." Shing also put Hong Kong ahead of China. He said, "I'm Hong Kong Chinese. Of course I would always put Hong Kong ahead of China. In the East Asian Games I feel so disappointed when Hong Kong lost to China. But if China is playing teams other than Hong Kong, I'd like them to win. For example if China plays Japan, I'd like China to win because it can shut the Japanese up. At the end of the day I'm still Chinese. But them losing matches does not cause me heartache, I understand that they are poor compared to the likes of Germany, Brazil..." Shing explained further his preference of Hong Kong, "I like Hong Kong playing style more. Hong Kong is full of stony cement football grounds. So Hong Kong footballers' playing style is very unique. We are not very technical but we always give our all and play with a lot of courage. Also a lot of Hong Kong footballers grew up in public housing estates. There they played in the corridor and learned to play as a team with other teammates." "Chinese players are very different. They are no gentlemen; they always play dirty tricks and try to injure their oppositions." Ordy also spotted Chinese players' rudeness, he pointed out, "we are different in football cultures. In Mainland if a player punches a referee continually, he is very likely to only be banned for a few matches. It's very different from the practice here."



Another condition supporting China is subject to is political concern. Ordy claimed, "It's also due to political reason. If Chinese Taipei play against China, I would support Chinese Taipei. I hate the Communist sovereignty." The third condition is his insistence of being a "real fan". When asked what a real fan is, he said, "a real fan would show sense of belonging to a team; they'd support them regardless of the results; their comments of the team would be reasonable and critical which are not blind compliments. Those who only support a winning team are fake fans." This real/fake fan notion affects his support for China. I asked whether he supported China in the 2002 World Cup, Ordy said, "no. When China played Brazil I supported Brazil. It's not only because I like Brazil, it's also because at that time many people who normally wouldn't take a look at China supported China." I asked if he was looking to differentiate himself from them, he agreed and further explained, "I used to be upset when China lost games. For example in the qualifying stages of World Cup 98, I felt really frustrated when China lost to Iran 2-4 at home. But when they finally got to the World Cup finals in 2002, I saw so many people who normally didn't care about Chinese football to say they support China. I can't stand these glory hunters. When China used to be dropped out, where were they?" When asked if he is a real fan for Hong Kong and China, he admitted, "I'm a real fan of Hong Kong, but not at all for China."

- Local Identity

Some other informants, like Ordy and Shing, also claimed that they are Chinese but they don't feel the urge to support China. Instead they tend to hate China to a certain extent. Yin said, "of course I'm Chinese. I was born on a Chinese land. If I was born in Japan, I would be Japanese. Hong Kong is part of China, it's only a colony and Britain was to blame for it." "I'm proud of my Chinese identity. China has a long history of 5,000 years and our ethical theories are the best in the world." But her admiration of China does not involve Mainland people and the Communist sovereignty. "I think they (Mainlanders and the Communist Party) betray what being a Chinese means. A Chinese should live a life of honesty and renunciation (克己 hak gei). They love money too much." She reflected on the match between Hong Kong and Guangdong, "I think Hong Kong had a point to prove against Guangdong or any team from China. Since Hong Kong's economy flopped, the Mainlanders look down on us. Things got even worse after the Individual Visit Scheme was introduced. Have you ever seen Mainlanders yelling in Louis Vuitton? They were very impolite to the salespeople as well. They are rich but so arrogant and thick. Likewise Guangdong can afford to invest more money in football. That's why they can fill younger, better

players in their team. Our government is not able to invest in football as heavily as they did. I watched the match, their footballers have no respect for Hong Kong players. We have to beat them to show we are still better.” She is reluctant for Hong Kong to return to the Communist government. She said, “To be honest with you, I think some Hong Kong people actually wanted Hong Kong to remain colonized. They just wouldn’t say it because they are afraid of being accused of worshipping the West. (崇洋 seoi jeong) “I don’t think Hong Kong people can ever enjoy our qualities of life without the help of the British Empire.”

The support for Hong Kong and rejection of China are very apparent in the discourses of these informants. Hinz said, “Hong Kong is a place where I was raised and educated. Of course I support my own representative team.” He also made a point to me that beating China feels extra-sweet. He said, “how magnificent we are if we city boys beat the state?” When asked whether beating Thailand or Singapore feels just as good, he denied, “Beating China is more important. I won’t be as interested in a game against Thailand or Singapore.” In He Run Feng’s thesis, it was recorded that days after the full-house crowd watching Hong Kong versus China, a crucial game was played between Happy Valley and a Singapore football team. Less than 200 fans turned up for the game.

McLuck also sees himself as Chinese but the identity does not include being a China fan. He said, “Kuomintang was the reigning party in China when my father came to Hong Kong. I’ve always admitted I am Chinese but why everything has to be related to ethnicity and politics? Football is football, it has nothing to do with things like these.” When asked why he does not support China, he said, “it’s impossible. I’ve always thought China and Hong Kong are arch rivals. We are not brothers. Do you know what happened in 1985? Ever heard of the 519 incident? We beat China in a World Cup qualifying game and they got dropped out of the competition. Their fans couldn’t take the loss (輸唔起 syu ng hei). They assaulted our players and fans after the match. I will never forget how little they were. (小人 siu jan)” He explained further about Chinese players, “Chinese players are rude cheaters (死茅薑 sei maau dang). Those Mainland teams that played in Hong Kong are interested in fighting more than playing football (開片多過踢波 hoi pin do gwo tek bo). So I always object to Hong Kong Football Association letting Mainlanders play for Hong Kong. Like the match against Real Madrid. It’s not fair to Hong Kong players, they work so hard day in, day out.”

Vegie shows similar resentment of Chinese players. He said, “I’m a Hong

Kong person, why would anyone support other people's national team? It's just like Welsh people won't support England." "Hong Kong and China are two independent entities in the international sports scene, we are not subordinated to them." I asked whether he thought China is his nation, he responded, "It's not about whether I recognize China. I am Chinese. But we are different with Mainland Chinese. Our culture is different, our language is different, our flag is different. Basically the attitude of Chinese players, the chaos in Chinese football have already let us down." He also pointed out that the Chinese football people like to cheat, "their players like to cheat, their clubs like to cheat too. Lanwa initially promised there would be two Portugal national team players in their squad. They also said they could not reveal their names due to commercial reason. Finally we didn't even get to see the shadows of those Portugal players. (無晒影 mo saai jeng)" Vegie admitted, "but what can we do? We can't have a league with only 6 teams competing. We don't have the resources so we need help from these Mainlanders."

- Global Identity

The alienation towards the China team and Chinese players is also shared by informants who don't identify themselves with the Hong Kong team. These informants tend to mistake "national team" for Hong Kong when they first heard the term. The mentality is that they don't care about the Chinese national team, if there's something they should care about it is the Hong Kong team (which most of them don't at the time being). Jay said, "I don't even care about the Hong Kong team, why should I care about the Chinese team?" "I'm from Hong Kong. Sometimes I struggle with myself for not showing "national passion" (his exact wording is 民族情緒 man zuk cing seoi) to like the Hong Kong team. But China? I never feel a sense of guilt for not thinking about them." Little attention is given to China, all of these informants had no idea that China has won the football championship in the East Asian Games last year (2005). They can't name the current coach. The few players that they recognized are playing for English clubs (e.g. Sun Jihai of Manchester City Football Club; Li Tie of Everton) and Hong Kong fans learned about them through their interest and consumption of global football.

This category of informants tends to deny being Chinese. Jay insisted, "I'm from Hong Kong. Maybe politically Hong Kong is part of China but for me, I never feel I am Chinese. And I don't want to be." Similar comments were made by Beck and Joyce. Beck claimed, "Maybe I can be counted as a Chinese, but I am definitely a Hong Kong person. But actually if I could choose my birthplace again, England would be my choice, so that I could go to Old Trafford to see Manchester United

play.” Joyce appeared to be ambiguous, “I would say I am a Hong Kong person. I know I should admit I am Chinese but I don’t want to. One time my mother was talking loud on the phone in an MTR train. I was sitting beside her feeling so embarrassed.”

Informants’ preference of Hong Kong local identity to Chinese identity does not indicate support for the Hong Kong team. Joyce explained, “If Hong Kong plays China. I would want Hong Kong to beat them. But if Japan or England come visit Hong Kong, I will go to the stadium to support Japan or England. They are stronger. I will not forget the way I screamed on the phone during half time of England versus Argentina in World Cup 2002. Beckham scored a penalty.” Beck, a Manchester United fans, also claimed, “usually I support the foreign teams against Hong Kong, unless those that I hate like Arsenal, Chelsea and Liverpool. They are Manchester United’s arch rivals.” Jay agreed, “of course I support the foreign teams. They are stronger teams than Hong Kong” The mentality of these fans is that they don’t care about neither Hong Kong nor China, but if there’s something they should care about. It is the Hong Kong team.

Fans who identified themselves with the least Chineseness also shared the resentment towards the China team with previous informants. Joyce, a football fan whose interest is based on the appearance of some footballers, said, “I don’t like the Chinese team. They are ugly and unfashionable. China is a communist society. Their team must be managed in a backward way. I heard they are not allowed to grow their hair long. It’s just too traditional. Beckham looks so good with long hair. Chinese just don’t understand fashion. Some of them are very rude too, always yelling at the oppositional players to provoke them. Beckham is much more polite. Chinese should learn from him.” Chinese fans are also criticized. Beck said, “Chinese fans are bumpkins. I once saw a news report about the Chinese team on television. The fans brought China’s national flag with them and kept waving them throughout the match; banners written “China sure win” were hung everywhere; fans were shouting “China, China, China.... They look so hilarious.”

The number of fans obtaining global identity is significant in Hong Kong. Football souvenir shops in Hong Kong rarely sell items other than European national teams and football clubs souvenirs. Also attendance of local matches is drastically decreasing. A record low of 23 in a game was observed at the turn of the century. Yet global team visits can attract a full-house 40,000 crowd in Hong Kong Stadium. The trend of fans identifying with global teams can be justified in Hong Kong people’s

consumption of football programmes and products through the media, which will be discussed later.

- ‘Asian Identity’

It is apparent that Hong Kong identity is the centre of many of my informants’ self-identification. To find out if the Chinese identity gives them any special pride, I asked my informants whether they would feel empowered or proud if a Chinese player becomes a star in their favorite global teams. Shing replied, “of course it would make me feel proud. It’s strong evidence that Chinese people can play just as well as the Westerners.” Yin agreed, “I would be proud but I would be even more proud if a Hong Kong player achieves that.”

Responses from the other informants are very different. Ordy said, “I think I’d be a little proud but the success of other Asian players has proved this is not special.” Jay said, “Maybe I would be proud. I don’t know. I got the experience of feeling a little moved while Chinese athletes received gold medals in the Olympic Games. But I’m very sure this (Chinese players being featured in the best global teams) won’t be happening, at least for the next ten years. If Manchester United buys a Chinese player and he gets into the first team, I will pray that he doesn’t embarrass us.” Beck, on the other hand told me, “I don’t think I would have any special feelings over a Chinese playing for Manchester United. But I do feel rather proud when Asians are featured in Manchester United. Recently Park Ji-Sing (a South Korean) is playing really well and I admire him. I hope he can establish himself as a regular in the first team.” I asked him further whether he would feel proud if Japanese players got into the first team. He said yes. I reminded him of the hostile relations between China and Japan. He replied, “what does it have to do with me? I judge Japanese players and Chinese players all the same – their performance. Football has nothing to do with politics.” Beck’s comments revealed that ‘Asian’ is a category that matters to him, as opposed to the ‘Westerners’.

Interviews with other informants show similar tendency to recognize Asians. Joyce said, “I was so excited to see South Korea playing against Spain in the quarter-finals of World Cup 2002. I was so anxious for them to win, I dared not watch them in the penalty shootout. At last they won, it made me feel a little emotional. They lost to Germany eventually but it proves we Asians can play as well as blacks and whites.” Vegie too said, “the success of Japan and South Korea proves Asians can do just as well as Westerners. What’s so special about China’s achievements? Their participation in World Cup 2002 was mostly due to Japan and South Korea passing

the qualifying stage as hosts of the World Cup. Also Japan and South Korea went further than China. Do you remember how they eliminated Italy? You watched that too didn't you? They were so lucky with the referee helping them. If they had that kind of luck against Germany, they could have become the first Asian team to win the World Cup."

- The Media
  - The Internet

I started a poll with two questions on a forum dedicated to the Hong Kong team and Hong Kong football clubs. The first question is, "Which team do you prefer, Hong Kong or China". The result was very one-sided. 96% of people chose Hong Kong, China was left with only 4%. The second question is do you want Mainland teams in Hong Kong? Members were given three choices (1) yes (2) no (3) It'd be great if there's none but we need them. 71% picked the third choice; 17% pick the second; 11% picked yes. The data shows the majority of the voters identify themselves with local identity and to a large extent object to Mainland influence.

- Television

Hong Kong television viewers are exposed to several European competitions. Among the free channels, TVB pearl captures the live broadcast of Holland top league and the highlight show of the English FA Cup; ATV World broadcast live the European Champions' League and the highlight show of Spanish Laliga. The rights to broadcast live the English, German, Italind Spanish top leagues go to Cable TV. An extra individual payment will gain viewers access to a channel that broadcast Chinese Super League live. Now Broadband TV captures the domestic cup competitions in England, France, Spain and Germany. The Hong Kong-Guangdong Cup Competition is broadcast live by TVB every year but local league broadcast is rare. Short clips of local league highlights are shown in a weekly sports programme on TVB.

- Football Commentaries on Television

Games of the Chinese national team are rarely broadcasted but commentators appear to be very supportive of China whenever they comment on a China game. In World Cup 2002 they were criticized by fans for siding with China against Brazil. Ordy remembered the match, "I think they crossed the line a little bit." Hinz tried to explain why, "they are afraid of the consequences of bad-mouthing China. I think it is a tradition in Hong Kong. People who criticize China will be accused of being unpatriotic. Especially for them (commentators) who work in a public broadcasting company, they might be fired if they make unpatriotic comments." Hinz gave an

example, “have you ever seen the *biu ze* (表姐 “cousin”) movie series? (The series tell a story of how “the cousin” coped with life in Hong Kong after leaving her Mainland home. The series present jokes that emphasize Mainlanders’ “backwardness” and “characteristics”) Cheung Chi Tak, a former Hong Kong footballer you know him? He is now a commentator of Cable TV. He acted as a Hong Kong officer who needs to help a Chinese politician settle in Hong Kong. He apologized to the politician when he first met him, “I’m sorry Sir. I scored a goal against China before, please forgive me. Nothing will happen to me right?” I think it’s very hilarious but also very sad. We are not free to speak our minds.”

Informants think commentators pay special attention to Japan and South Korea in the World Cup 2002 too. Joyce said, “I think so, I think they went with public opinion. Japan and South Korea are Asian nations and we feel more related to them than Brazil and others.” McLuck agreed, “of course! That match against Italy, South Korea were so lucky. If the referees didn’t make so many mistakes they wouldn’t have gone through. The commentators did mention the mistakes, yet the commentators described the South Korea players as fighting hard to get through. I remember they even said South Korea winning made them proud (予有榮焉 *jyu jau wing jin* is a Chinese idiom which describes the pride brought by objects that the subjects feel related to) too.”

On 17th April, 2006 commentators Lee Tak Nan and Ma Kai Yan talked about a South Korean derby (Lee Young-Pyo versus Park Ji-Sing) during the match between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester United. On the same day Cheung Chi Tak and Lau Kin Kei mentioned a Japanese derby (Junichi Inamoto versus Hidetoski Nakata) during a match between West Bromwich Albion and Bolton Wanderers. Japanese and South Korean players are often referred to by nicknames created by the commentators. For example Park Ji-Sing is often called Sing Zai (星仔, *zai* is a Cantonese hypocorism for young males that indicates closeness); Hidetoski Nakata is often called Sau Zai (壽仔, *sau* is the last word of the Chinese characters of Hidetoski Nakata).

- Newspaper

The sports section of *Appledaily* (the second popular newspaper of Hong Kong) usually contains 14 pages. There were 11 pages dedicated European football news and football betting odds on 9th April, 2006 and 30th April, 2006. 9th April, on the eve of the Hong Kong FA Cup semi-finals, news about local clubs was given a box of 19cm x 22cm. 30th April, the day after the last date of the local league, local football news

took up space of 25.5cm x 19.9 cm. Images of European footballers were all over the pages. News about the Chinese national team and Chinese Super League was not available.

- Football Books and Magazines

- The 90th Anniversary of Hong Kong Football Association

The book is about Hong Kong football history that involves the management, the coaches, the players, the matches in the past 90 years. Numerous pages were dedicated to describe the era in which Hong Kong was called “the Asian Football Kingdom.” Also the 519 incident is frequently featured in the book. The incident was described in detail in the 80’s history section and the glorious matches section; coaches and players were remembered for the victory over China, including the two goal scorers, Ko Kam Fai and Cheung Chi Tak.

Towards the 20th Anniversary of Hong Kong-Guangdong Cup Competition 1978-1996” & “Towards the 25th Anniversary of Hong Kong-Guangdong Cup Competition 1978-2002”

The two books talk about the history of Hong Kong-Guangdong Cup Competition and are released jointly by Hong Kong Football Association and Guangdong Football Association. The competition was described by one of the founders Fok Ying Dong as, “the achievement of Motherland’s reform and open-door policies.” And that the competition completes the goal of “province and Hong Kong being in one family”. 519 incident was briefly mentioned in the book.

- Magazines

There are several football magazine that feature football news and reports. “Attack Soccer” is the current best-selling magazine in Hong Kong. 183 issues and 19 special issues had been published since the “Attack Soccer” was founded in 1998. There had been no Chinese or Hong Kong player being featured on the cover of the 202 issues. European football stars like David Beckham, Michael Owen, Steven Gerrard, Cristiano Ronaldo, and many more dominate the cover and the content. There had been occasional reports about Sun Jihai and Li Tie but they are rare compared to reports about global stars. “Soccer Wave” is very similar to “Attack Soccer” as European football stars are the main feature every issue. Chinese Super League news is never featured in both magazines. “Soccer Weekly” is published in Hong Kong and also 4 Mainland cities including Beijing, Shenzhen, Shanghai and Chongqing. The Hong Kong edition is a duplicate version of Mainland’s. The editor claimed Hong Kong and



Mainland version were different in terms of content, Chinese characters and translation of footballers' names. Hong Kong version is less informative than Mainland's; it is written in traditional Chinese while Mainland version is in simplified Chinese. The translation of footballers' names were based on Cantonese and Mandarin in Hong Kong and Mainland respectively. 4 pages of the magazine is dedicated to an interview with Sun Ji-hai and there is a page of Chinese Super League news.

▪ Football Advertisement

These billboards were displayed on Fa Yuen Street, Mongkok, one of the most crowded areas in Hong Kong. The street is famous for the sales of sports goods as it's nicknamed "sneaker street". As seen on the next page, Ronaldinho and Ruud Van Nistelrooy are featured in Nike's Joga Bonita campaign.

### **The Rise and Fall of Local Identity in Hong Kong**

The data gathered about football support in Hong Kong was mainly from books about Hong Kong football history and interviews with older informants Wai, Ping and Shing who are in their seventies, sixties and fifties respectively.

#### 1. Pre 1960

Football was brought to Hong Kong by Britain more than a century ago. But Hong Kong Chinese were not welcomed to organized football activities until South China Football Club was founded in 1908. The objective of the club was to "eliminate the name East Asia ill Man through physical training." South China Football Club first represented China in the 1913 Far Eastern Games. There wasn't a Hong Kong team until 1923 but at that time Hong Kong Chinese always took China as first choice and Hong Kong second. The situation remained the same in 1960's. Wai said, "at that time Hong Kong is a colony, so Chinese (players) wanted to play for "Free China Team" (another team name of Republic of China). The fans fancied "Free China Team" more than the Hong Kong team too. Also overseas Chinese rooted for "Free China Team" China was then a very capable team that they were crowned champions in Asian Games 54 and 58. Wai recalled, "we were so overwhelmed after the 58 final. It brought tears to everyone's eyes, the fans, the players." China games were broadcasted live on radio in Hong Kong in the fifties. Many Hong Kong people listened to the final against South Korea. Wai said, "at that time Hong Kong people felt Republic of China was their national team because many of them were refugees from China."

Wai also recalled a match between Hong Kong club Singtao and the British Navy. Wai said, “in 46 British Navy played Singtao, it resulted in a big fight. A Singtao player kicked a westerner, then players fought and fans got into the fight. At last the Navy called a car to pick them up, Hong Kong fans threw stones at the car.” When asked whether fans watch local football games, Wai said, “yes they did. In that era a club needed an average investment of 20,000, but a game could earn them 20,000.”

Wai added, “at the time there were two united teams. They are Hong Kong United and Chinese United. There were westerners in Hong Kong United and Chinese United were all Chinese. Fans supported Chinese United more. Whenever Chinese United had a game, they always attracted full-house crowds. This is not the case for Hong Kong United.”

The official Hong Kong Representative Team was formed in 1956. (Lam 1990: 10) It was recorded that Hong Kong team would visit Republic of China’s local embassy while playing overseas. (Au 1993: 80) The players would support Free China Team that played in the same tournament. (Au 1993: 148)

## 2. 1960’s

Hong Kong players continued playing for Free China Team in the 60’s even though the Communist Party has gained sovereignty in Mainland already. Ping explained, “at that time Kuomintang and Communist Party were very hostile towards each other. Although Kuomintang retreated to Taiwan, they vowed to fight Mainland again. People wrote the revenge message on banners and hang them all over the street. They still support Free China Team.”

Local football also generated a lot of attention. Radio broadcasted matches live and highlights were shown on television. Sports pages in newspapers were dominated by local football news. Before a local match, squads will be reported in the papers. (Lui 98: 30) Hatred against British footballers was common. English footballers were considered rude and backward in technique. “An English top league visited Hong Kong, they played very rudely. Cheung Yiu Kwok’s shirt was left with a clear footprint.” (Lui 1998: 34)

In the 60’s Hong Kong’s Rediffusion TV started producing British football programmes.

## 3. 1970’s to late 80’s

Hong Kong players were not included in Republic of China squad anymore in early 70's because "Taiwan was on the decline. Other nations started to recognize People's Republic of China. Taiwan was not invited to many international competitions." said Ping. Many Hong Kong youths who were born in Hong Kong paid attention solely to Hong Kong team and local clubs. Radio started to broadcast local football live. RTHK and Hong Kong commercial broadcasting broadcasted 2 to 3 local matches in a week.

Magazines concentrating on local football news, history were published in Hong Kong. There was a Singtao sports page sold seperatedly from Singtao newspaper weekly. Tong Tse's article in the page took up at least half a page. (Lui 1998: 45)

Rediffusion TV delay-live broadcasted World Cup 1970 for the first time. Shing recalled, "not too many people had televisions at home in the early 70's. But we could pay 1 cent to watch television at local stores." In 1970 some Hong Kong people resented England because of British colonization of Hong Kong. When England played against Brazil, people tended to side with Brazil. (Lui 1998: 34) Later Brazil's club Santos, which featured Pele, visited Hong Kong, free television channel TVB captured the match live.

A year later Rediffusion TV broadcasted the English FA Cup delay-live too. Magazines concentrated on English football information went into the market in Hong Kong, for example "Soccer World" and "British Soccer." Many people started to pay attention to English football teams like Manchester United and Liverpool. Lu Dai Lok described, "I started to support Liverpool in mid 70's" (Lui 1998: 20) Fans gave hypocorisms to their favorite foreign stars like they did to Hong Kong footballers. For example Liverpool's Ian Rush was called "lightning feet." (Lui 1998: 68)

Buying foreign footballers became a favorable option for Hong Kong local clubs. Teams like Seiko and Bulova were formed in the 70's. They featured lots of foreign players. Seiko spent a record transfer fee of 35,000 for Derek Currie, a German player who later became a fans' favorite. Shing recalled, "I remember a player called Currie, we used to call him "Jesus" because he had a lot of bread."

Seiko and Bulova generated huge support from Hong Kong fans. More than 10,000 would come and watch them play in Hong Kong Stadium. Some foreign players played for Hong Kong against Guangdong in the Cup Competition. In 1982 it was recorded 8 foreigners were in the squad.

Liverpool visited Hong Kong to play Bulova in July 1983. It was reported that Hong Kong fans were fully behind local team Bulova. Manchester United played Bulova too in May, 1984. Fans were also behind Bulova. *Champion Sports* magazine reported, “a group of foreign fans hollered whenever Manchester United attacked; some threw plastic bottles at them. The foreigners confronted Hong Kong fans. Police’s interference was needed.” (He 2004: 102)

In 1985, Hong Kong beat China in a World Cup qualifying match and China was dumped out of the competition. According to magazine reports, Hong Kong squad was welcomed back and greeted by a thousand of fans at the airport. “The players were surrounded by fans asking for autographs.... Fans tried to get a hand-shake from the players, some of them kept touching the players’ hair, shouting Hong Kong!” “Cheung Chi Tak, Kwok Ka Ming were lifted by the fans....” (He 2004: 94)

TVB, ATV captured all the World Cup matches played throughout the 80’s and 90’s.

#### 4. 1990’s to Present

Global football has been dominating television broadcast. The World Cup, European Championships, Champions’ League, English, German, Italian and Spanish top leagues are shared by TVB, ATV, Cable TV and Now Broadband TV. Short Clips of local football are featured occasionally in daily news programmes and weekly sports programme.

Support for global football increased enormously. More than 20,000 fans pay 300 dollars to attend the match between England and Hong Kong. A fan recalled, “when Robbie Fowler was called from the bench, the audience loudly applauded him.... The fans seated at the top, still they recognized all the English players like they were their relatives..... hundreds of fans welcomed England at the airport... My brother, who is a father, slept in his Newcastle kit for a month, hoping to bring luck to Newcastle’s title bid.” (Lui 1998: 134)

In 2000 local football attendance dropped to a record low. The smallest crowd in a match was 23 fans. Much attention was still paid to Hong Kong against China. He noted in his thesis, “from the start fans were shouting “Hong Kong!” ”Hong Kong!” They cheered when Hong Kong attacked and booed when China did. Two stands were filled with China fans. After China scored, China fans lighted up a fire. When police

was interfering, Hong Kong fans shouted, “arrest them!” “arrest them!” A forty-something fan blasted in English, “fuck off China!”” (He 2004: 123) These descriptions show fans’ hatred against China.

Real Madrid visited Hong Kong in 2004, tickets were charged up to 1,500 but eventually a full-house 40,000 Hong Kong fans turned up for the game.

### **Analysis**

#### 1. National Identity

- Mainland China

3 of the Mainland informants show strong sense of national identity. Zheng and Nian both linked their Chinese identity to the support of the China team. Zheng’s remarks of “I don’t need to explain, I don’t need no reason, I’m Chinese” shows he feels obligated to support China as a Chinese. Nian’s answer, “of course Chinese must support the China team” also indicates Nian thinks it’s an obligation for a Chinese to support China. Even though they recognized the poor quality and jia du hei problems in Chinese football, and they heavily criticized the China team and clubs for them, they do it as a way to show support. Zheng makes sense of his criticism, “this (making criticism) is a way of showing support. I care, so I blast.” Nian makes it clear the problems are not reasons for Chinese to turn away from Chinese football, “of course Chinese support Chinese football, no matter how poor they are. A man can’t make love to another woman because his wife is poor!” The remark further proves the sense of obligation that Zheng and Nian possess. Their sense of national identity is so strong that in crises they could sacrifice their property and their lives as Nian claimed, “To fight Taiwan, I donate a month’s salary; to fight United States of America, I donate a year’s salary; to fight Japan; I donate two lives.”

Xian, though being a fan of English club Manchester United, still feels tied to giving obligatory support to China (wanting China to beat England), the Chinese league (Liaoning and Shandong) and Chinese players (urging Sun Jihai to play for Manchester United). The point is they don’t feel obligated to focus attention on Chinese football. Xian explained, “the national team is too weak. Being an Inter Milan and AC Milan fan is good because the national team can’t hurt you too much as your attention is split into other good clubs.” Supporting global teams split their attention and satisfies their quest for success but their priority remains to be China. Xian denied the support for English club Manchester United leads to support for England. Instead resentment at English football is in place. Xian said, “Although there’s a wide gap in quality, I still want China to teach “white stripe rubbish”

England a lesson, because England don't know how high the sky is and how thick the ground is." National identity is still very strong.

Zheng, Nian and Xian disagree on the restriction of being a Chinese but all of them feel the obligation of the identity to support Chinese football. These types of football fans are decreasing in Mainland as shown in the decrease of attendance of Chinese football matches. But the remaining number is still significant; they are still the majority groups in China as forums about Chinese football remain the most-circulated. The button of Chinese Super League is highlighted in yellow; Chinese playing overseas are the focus of global football reports; "Xian Dai Express" blasted the players for not being nationalistic; Chinese-looking figures featured by global sportswear companies... With media theories suggesting the intense negotiation between media and receivers; Anderson giving significance to newspaper in forming imagined communities (Anderson 1991); Billig suggesting "sporting pages repeat the commonplace stereotypes of nation" (Billig 1995: 120), "we feel at home in a paper" (Billig 1995: 126), it can be concluded that the majority of football fans in China still possess national identity and do feel obligated to support Chinese football.

- Hong Kong

If nationalism is indeed an obligation as suggested by Archetti (Giulianotti and Williams 1994: 227), then no Hong Kong informant can be deemed nationalistic but the Chinese identity is still a major part in the lives of some of the informant, but the identity does not require them to give obligatory support to China. They do give support to China but it is not an obligation to be fulfilled in any situation but a choice which they feel can overlook under some conditions. For example when Hong Kong's interest is in conflict with China's, Hong Kong always comes first. Ordy said, "I always support Hong Kong against China." Shing also claimed, "I'm Hong Kong Chinese. Of course I would always put Hong Kong ahead of China."

For Ordy there are more conditions to overlook China. Standing by his political commitment is his other concern while making the choice whether to support China. He would support Chinese Taipei against China because "I hate the Communist sovereignty." Staying a real fan is his third consideration. He chose to support Brazil against China in World Cup 2002 because "I saw so many people who normally didn't care about Chinese football to say they support China. I can't stand these glory hunters."

In the match between Xiangxue Sun Hei Vs Lanwa, the audience applauded

Lanwa because they scored goals and provided entertainment. A fan claimed, “I don’t follow any team. I came for the goals. The more the merrier.” Support for Lanwa is not obligatory, but only when they entertain the fans.

The lack of national identity is also evident in Hong Kong’s media. News about the China team and Chinese football is rare in newspaper and football magazines except for a Mainland-based magazine; Chinese games are rarely broadcasted; although the two books about Hong Kong-Guangdong Cup Competition emphasize Hong Kong-Guangdong relationship and glorify the reform and open door policy of Mainland China, they do not reflect Hong Kong’s public opinion. It could be due to what David Russell suggests a means to cement “social stability”. (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999: 19)

It can be seen from the fans’ account, the observation and the media that China is being placed in the “identity supermarket” (after Gordon Mathews’ cultural supermarket where we can “fashion ourselves....in a number of areas, among them our choices in..... national identity...” (Mathews 2000: 21)). Supporting China is not an obligation, it’s a consumer choice. National identity, along with other identities is being placed in the supermarket in which everything is freely bought and sold. In the supermarket people choose the identity they want to present in the immediate situations – occasions where I want to show my local identity; my real fan identity, my political identity; my entertainment seeker identity...etc. Contrary to Billig’s view that national identity can’t be exchanged like “last year’s clothes”, Hong Kong do have the tendency to pick up and put down national identity under different conditions in football terms.

## 2. Global Identity

- China

Among the Mainland informants, Siming, Ji and Feng show the least national identity but possess strong global identity through their preference in football. They present eminent passion over their favourite global teams. Siming said, “The club (Manchester United) has everything I want.” Ji claimed, “I can’t live without Manchester United.” Feng even show some sense of communion with English fans, “They (Manchester United) are now the centre of my life. I’m no different with those fans sitting in Old Trafford (Manchester United’s home stadium.) I might be less fortunate but my heart is the same with theirs.” Though they all claimed they are Chinese but the Chinese identity does not bear them any obligation to support Chinese football and footballers. National identity has apparently become a consumer choice

which they no longer pick up in terms of football support. Siming admitted he did previously support Chinese clubs but “I gave up because they are rubbish.” The sense of choice is obvious here as the support for Chinese clubs can be given up. These fans show serious alienation towards the China team and Chinese player as they identify themselves with global teams and players. Siming sided with England against China, “I support England, my love for Chinese rotten feet is dead completely.” Being a Chinese also does not require them to reject Japanese players. Feng pointed out, “why not (bring in Japanese players to Manchester United)? Manchester United is not our national team.” Ji shared his view, “I will recognize Japanese players if they make significant contribution to Manchester United.”

It must be noted that these fans who have little national identity does not indicate they are not nationalistic in other ways. They are aware of the difference between football and other aspects of life. Siming and Ji’s remarks of “my football preference has no damn relation to nationalism” and “every individual has preference that is not to be forced. You are talking about nationalism” convey that they think football and nationalism is not to be reviewed together. Therefore nationalism is shown in other aspects of life. Siming and Ji show their nationalistic sentiments by claiming their will to fight wars for China.

Global identity is rising in China in terms of football. As discussed global football news is circulated promptly and extensively in China; global football stars are featured in advertisements; global teams’ visits attracts full-house crowd. Global influence is a force that is threatening the already established national identity in Chinese football.

- Hong Kong

Jay, Beck and Joyce are the 3 Hong Kong informants that show the least national and local identity. Among them Jay denied being Chinese, “I never feel I am Chinese. And I don’t want to be.” But at the same he admitted that, “I got the experience of feeling a little moved while Chinese athletes received gold medals in the Olympic Games.” Beck and Joyce identify with the Chinese identity rather ambiguously. Beck said, “Maybe I can be counted as a Chinese, but I am definitely a Hong Kong person.” Joyce claimed, “I would say I am a Hong Kong person. I know I should admit I am Chinese but I don’t want to.” Their rejection of Chinese identity is parallel with their resentment at the China team and players. Jay said, “I never feel a sense of guilt for not thinking about them.” Joyce criticized the China team, “They are ugly and unfashionable.” Becks said, “Chinese fans are bumpkins.” From their accounts, it can



be seen that national identity is not chosen because of their poor fashion sense. On the other hand, their preference of Hong Kong identity does not indicate support for the Hong Kong or local league. Joyce claimed, "if Japan or England come visit Hong Kong, I will go to the stadium to support Japan or England. They are stronger." Jay agreed, "of course I support the foreign teams. They are stronger teams than Hong Kong" Beck revealed his choice, "usually I support the foreign teams against Hong Kong, unless those that I hate like Arsenal, Chelsea and Liverpool. They are Manchester United's arch rivals." The quotes show Hong Kong identity does not require them to give obligatory support to Hong Kong. Hong Kong identity, along with national identity, global identity and many others, is placed in the identity supermarket where football fans pick and choose their "appropriate" identities. Jay, Beck and Joyce picked Hong Kong identity as opposed to national identity. Beck's comment about Arsenal and Liverpool shows he too picks up Hong Kong identity when his global identity is threatened.

Beck and Joyce taking notice of Asian players' achievement shows "Asian identity" is also in the identity supermarket. It is often picked up as opposed to blacks and whites or "Westerners". Some sense of pride is generated through Asian beating Westerners in football and some informants identify with this sense of pride.

The number of fans possessing global identity is sky-high in Hong Kong. While a local league game only attracts up to a few hundreds fans, a game that involves global teams can attract a full-house 40,000 crowd. Global identity is also very evident in Hong Kong's media. Television channels are fighting each other off to gain the rights to broadcast global football. Cable TV is contributing heavily to publicizing its exclusive coverage of World Cup 2006. It's never heard of in Hong Kong that TV stations fight for the rights to broadcast local or national football. Global football news dominates the coverage of sports pages and football magazines. Billboards of global football stars are hung on very busy streets, for example the "sneaker street" and just next to Sogo in Causeway Bay. All of this combined shows the market-based identity is of dominant influence in Hong Kong.

### 3. Local Identity

- China

Some Mainland fans possess local identity too. Like Xian takes interest of Liaoning and Shangdong. The establishment of Chinese Super League that contains local teams is evidence of local identity. But local identity is never as strong as national identity in football. The China team is always the focus. It can be seen from this criticism that a

fan made to CCTV, “I can forgive you for not broadcasting Chinese Super League, but not for China!”

- Hong Kong

Yin, McLuck, Hinz and Vegie show strong identification towards the Hong Kong identity and Hong Kong football teams. They tend to think that being a Hong Kong person obligates one to support the Hong Kong team. Hinz said, “Hong Kong is a place where I was raised and educated. Of course I support my own representative team.” Vegie said, “I’m a Hong Kong person, why would anyone support other people’s national team? Hinz and Vegie presented the obligatory relation between being a Hong Kong person and the support for the Hong Kong team.

Contrary to Ordy and Shing’s accounts, even though all of them acknowledged themselves as Chinese, they give no support to the China team and Chinese players, instead they resent them to a certain degree. Yin talked about the Guangdong team, “their footballers have no respect for Hong Kong players. We have to beat them to show we are still better.” Hinz compared victories against China to Thailand and Singapore, “Beating China is more important. I won’t be as interested in a game against Thailand or Singapore.” McLuck criticized, “Chinese players are rude cheaters. Those Mainland teams that played in Hong Kong are interested in fighting more than playing football.” Vegie shared McLuck’s view, “their players like to cheat, their clubs like to cheat too.” This is very different to how Hong Kong fans perceive “foreigners” in the local league. If we compare the match between Kitchee and Happy Valley to Xiangxue Sun Hei Vs Lanwa, it shows local football fans are more friendly towards “foreigners”. Lanwa players were abused for faking injuries and arguing to the referee. Kitchee’s Serbia and Montenegro coach Dejan was not criticized for crossing the manager area. Instead a fan made a joke to Dejan out of the incident and the crowd was entertained. It might be due to fans taking Dejan as “local” in that context because he was local team Kitchee’s coach; he understood the fan’s shouting his name in Cantonese and also he responded him in Cantonese. All these combined shows the fans’ identification towards Chinese identity does not obligate them to support China, or even have a positive valuation of Chinese teams and players.

These discourses also show they have very different ways of interpreting what being a Chinese means. Yin said, “I’m proud of my Chinese identity.” But at the same time she claimed, “I think they (Mainlanders and the Communist Party) betray what being a Chinese means. A Chinese should live a life of honesty and renunciation. They love money too much.” There is no “they” without “we”. A strict division

between themselves and Mainland Chinese is frequently conveyed. Vegie said, "I am Chinese. But we are different with Mainland Chinese. Our culture is different, our language is different, our flag is different." "Hong Kong and China are two independent entities in the international sports scene, we are not subordinated to them." Local identity therefore is emphasized by dividing "us" and "others".

### **The Construction of "us" and "Others"**

#### 1. China

The fan riot after 519 incident in shows Hong Kong people was not considered "us" by Mainlanders in 1985. The fans' rage following China's loss show rivalry between Hong Kong and China was heated. Pitt-Rivers argues, "the ultimate vindication of honour lies in the use of physical violence. Honour is lost, and shame follows, if a man is found incapable of replying to a challenge." (Giulianotti quoting Bourdieu 1994: 301) The fans rioted because they felt deeply humiliated as honour was lost. It was reported that China fans went on the streets throwing missiles at Yugoslavian, Canadian and Luxemburg embassies. Hong Kong players and fans were attacked too. (<http://www.tycool.com/2005/05/19/00053.html>) The attack of Hong Kong people indicates they were considered by Mainlanders an "others" at that time.

Twenty years later in 2005, a sense of communion is found present in Mainland fans' and media discourses. The sense of division is not as hostile in Mainland China as in Hong Kong. In the encounter of China Vs Hong Kong, Chinese fans don't show as much hatred towards the Hong Kong team like Hong Kong fans did. The Chinese media even call the Hong Kong team "China's little brother". (<http://sports.sina.com.cn/n/2005-11-01/12241855272.shtml>) After China beat Hong Kong 2-0 in the East Asian Games, the talk of "helping our brothers" was raised in China as Hong Kong could have a slight chance to qualify if China went on a rampage against North Korea and at the same time Hong Kong beat Macau. One of the forum members said, "Let us three blood brothers work together, kill our cousin North Korea." (咱們三親兄弟聯手，把朝鮮這個表兄弟給做了吧zan men san xiong di lian shou , ba chao xian zhe ge biao xiong di zuo liao ba, <http://comment4.news.sina.com.cn/comment/comment4.html?channel=ty&newsid=6-12-1855272&style=0&nice=0&rid=12724668&filter=0&page=0&face=&hot=>) Hognestad suggested that fans often show their identification by the use of "I" and "us", as opposed to them, the rivals. (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997: 202) Hong Kong, being described as "our blood brother" is considered a member of the community by Mainland fans.

The sense of unity is not shared by Hong Kong fans. The Hong Kong fans recognize the difference between Hong Kong and China, and they feel strongly that demarcation is needed. Vegie claimed, “our culture is different, our language is different, our flag is different.” All of these elements assert particularity. (Billig 1995: 71) Therefore a strong sense of “us” and “others” is reflected in the interviews time and time again. It shows the boundary between Hong Kong and China is still being imagined by Hong Kong fans.

It is clear that Hong Kong fans differentiate Hong Kong footballers to theirs. As Coelho, Archetti and Lui suggest football style is a means of defining “us” and “others”, the difference of football styles is emphasized in informants’ accounts. Shing said, “I like Hong Kong playing style more. Hong Kong is full of stony cement football grounds. So Hong Kong footballers’ playing style is very unique. We are not very technical but we always give our all and play with a lot of courage...Chinese players are very different. They are no gentlemen; they always play dirty tricks and try to injure their oppositions.” Apart from the stereotype of being violent, Mainland players are also being thought of as:

-tend to love money

(Yin, “they love money too much”)

-tend to cheat

(Vegie, “Lanwa initially promised there would be two Portugal national team players in their squad.... Finally we didn’t even get to see the shadows of those Portugal players.”)

-tend to exaggerate or fake injury

(Sun Hei fan shouted to an injured Mainland player, “act again! your mother!”)

-tend to argue with referees

(fan yelled at a Mainland player who argued with referee, “Fuck you mother! Don’t listen to him, sent him off!”)

-tend to look unfashionable

(Joyce, “I don’t like the Chinese team. They are ugly and unfashionable.”)

Mainland footballers were also referred to as Mainland fuckers (大陸哩) by Hong Kong audience. This is a very stigmatized stereotype in Hong Kong. That’s why Joyce would feel embarrassed when sitting next to her mother who was talking on the phone in Mandarin.

Informants also think Hong Kong fans and Mainland fans are different too. McLuck said regarding the 519 incident, “Their fans couldn’t take the loss. They assaulted our players and fans after the match. I will never forget how little they were.” Beck said, “Chinese fans are bumpkins. I once saw a news report about the Chinese team on television. The fans brought China’s national flag with them and kept waving them throughout the match; banners written “China sure win” were hung everywhere; fans were shouting “China, China, China.... They look so hilarious.”

Hong Kong fans, whether they support the Hong Kong team, are inclined to talk about the Hong Kong team in terms of “we” and “us”; whereas the China team is always “they” and them. Hong Kong fans’ demarcation of Hong Kong and China is very unequivocal while China fans tend to convey a sense of communion which is not shared by Hong Kong.

The football history books released in Hong Kong show strong sense of maintaining own history, which is separated and distinct from China’s. Billig suggested that maintaining own history is way to show particularity. The temporal dimension ensures that all nations maintain a sense of their own history, which is no one else’s. It is no coincidence that the emergence of nation-states has typically been accompanied by the creation of national histories (Colley, 1992; Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983).” (Billig 1995: 70) “National histories tell of a people passing through time – “our” people, with “our” ways of life, and “our” culture.” (Billig 1995: 71) The writers’ and informants’ tendency to take account of the “Asia’s Football Kingdom” and 519 incident further explains the wish to claim particularity.

### **Multi-faceted Identity**

Kellas suggested that identities are either self-contained or immutable, “indeed, identities are likely then not to be dual or even multiple. Thus one’s identity as a player of a certain sport or a supporter of a particular team may or may not overlap with other aspects of one’s identity.” This is very evident in China. While fans’ consumption of global football is absolute, they are still nationalistic in other aspects in their lives (will to fight wars for China). Ordy’s view that he is “a Hong Kong person, a Chinese and also a Guangzhou person” is also a strong example of multiple identity.

Identity is also multi-faceted. The same statement of “I’m Chinese” means very different to Mainland and Hong Kong fans. China fans all claimed to be Chinese, but not all of them interpret the identity as an obligation to support and it does not

necessarily mean to exclude Japanese players. Hong Kong fans tend to have individual interpretation of what Chinese means. They have in common that the Chinese identity doesn't mean at all to give obligatory support to China; it is expendable for the Hong Kong identity too. For Ordy, It is an identity to face the outside world, for yin it is an ethical persistence ("A Chinese should live a life of honesty and renunciation. They love money too much."). Hatred towards China can also be an element in the Chinese identity (Yin, Vegie, McLuck and Hinz).

### **Identity Continually Being Constructed**

The review of Hong Kong's people's football preference in the past decade proves identity is not a mixed article, it's immutable and always being constructed and reconstructed. In the past decade Hong Kong people's sense of national identity and local identity changed from meaning obligatory support to China and Hong Kong to performing consumer choice. Globalization (TV broadcast of global football, circulation of global football news) gave and is still giving Hong Kong people the choices.

In early days when Kuomintang was still reigning in China, identity was not an issue. People felt they were Chinese and they were bound to support the China team. Hong Kong team didn't generate the same amount of support. The preference persisted through to the early 60's. After the Communist Party gained sovereignty of China, Hong Kong people, many of whom refugees of China during the civil war and Cultural Revolution, still maintained the "national" identity but it was very different from the one before. It was no longer identification to state. The mass attention paid to Republic of China's final against South Korea proved people still felt that was their national team. As Wai recalled, "at that time Hong Kong is a colony, so Chinese (players) wanted to play for "Free China Team" (another team name of Republic of China). The fans fancied "Free China Team" more than the Hong Kong team too." At the same time global identity was still inexistent, support was given to Chinese United against British teams. But the "choice" of British football was for the first time provided by Rediffusion TV.

The reports about local football on the radio, on television and in the papers indicated the attention to local football started to rise. The Hong Kong identity was starting to form.

In the 70's Hong Kong people can be deemed having no or little national identity. As People's Republic of China was recognized by other states and international

football organizations, Republic of China lost its national label in sports and was not welcomed to attend international matches. Under these circumstances, Hong Kong people turned their attention to local and global football.

On the other hand, local identity reached its high point and global identity was starting to form. The Hong Kong identity has already been fully formed. Youths offered support to the Hong Kong team, the media was dominated by local football news. Global identity became a realistic option too. The rise in wealth was accompanied by the choice of global football provided by television stations and football magazines about English football. The screening of the English FA cup and World Cup saw the rise of support given to English teams and other global teams.

In the 80's the dual development of local and global identity persisted. The hostility against China in the 519 incident shows Hong Kong people's strong identification towards Hong Kong in opposition to China. Global identity was not yet fully established as local identity still dominated. Hong Kong people tended to support local teams against the likes of Manchester United and Liverpool.

It was suggested that the Joint Declaration agreed in 1984 threatened the separate "Hong Kong identity". The effect on football was not eminent until the mid 90's when global identity raced ahead of local identity. Attendance at local matches fell drastically, media coverage was mainly of global football news. The sense of obligation to support Hong Kong football was receding to a large extent. At the current moment global football is still Hong Kong people's main consumption.

### **Conclusion**

As mentioned in the analysis, identity is continually being constructed and reconstructed. The influence of globalization on football has been freeing more and more Hong Kong and Mainland football fans from the obligation to support local/national teams to support local/nation/global football as consumer products. China is placed in the cultural supermarket with other local/global teams. National identity is no longer linked to obligation, it's instead a consumer choice, brought and sold in the cultural supermarket. The criteria to pick up a choice can be success, being a real fan, political stand, taste and fashion or anything the consumer identified himself/herself to. China is picked to support when it attains the criteria.

Increasing number of mainlanders and significant number of Hong Kong people connoted the cultural supermarket. It can be deemed that they possess the

market-based identity, “market identity... is based on belonging to no particular place, but rather to the mark in both its material and cultural forms – in market based identity, one’s home is all the world.” (Mathews 2000: 9) The sense of belonging to Old Trafford shown by Feng and Beck proves they are no longer constrained to China and Hong Kong.

Under such circumstances, the number of fans in China possessing national identity is still high in number but is vastly decreasing. Global identity (market-based identity) is increasingly being adopted in terms of football. It must be borne in mind that Chinese football being taken as a consumer choice does not represent other aspects of life. People who adopted global identity in football support are still nationalistic in other ways. In other words, the discourse of state still dominates in China, while discourse of market is coming in fast.

In Hong Kong people have some sense of national identity as most people do claim to be Chinese though that identification has various interpretations. As Billig suggested in his 1995 work, “as far as national identity is concerned, not only do the members have to imagine themselves as nationals; not only do they have to imagine their nation as a community; but they must also imagine that they know what a nation is; and they have to identify the identity of their own nation.” Hong Kong do not imagine their nation as one community as they tend to differentiate themselves from Mainland Chinese, but the identification towards a “Chinese” identity shows they recognize the existence of China as a nation in a world of nations. Mainland Chinese is considered a different category but none of the informants described them as “foreigners” in the interviews. Julia Kristeva pointed out, “the foreigner is the one who does not belong to the state in which we are, the one who does not have the same nationality.” (Billig 1995: 79) Hong Kong people do convey the imagination of a nation including both Mainland Chinese and Hong Kong Chinese. As a result they can still be deemed to have national identity.

But the national identity that Hong Kong possess is a consumer choice which they always pick after Hong Kong local identity or/and global identity. The trend is clear: discourse of market is still in the dominant position but state is gradually making its presence known in Hong Kong, Chinese investments (Xiangxue Sun Hei) and the participation of Chinese clubs (Lanwa) in Hong Kong local league; Mainland-based magazines sold in Hong Kong... It has just been announced that a free channel of Chinese Super League would be introduced later in the year (2006) by Cable TV. The discourse of state will be a force in the years to come.



It's hard to predict the future though. As the local football crisis intensifies, Hong Kong is no longer the "Asia Football Kingdom" that people were proud of. To join Cable TV's World Cup advertisement campaign, promising Happy Valley player Fung Ka Kei terminated his contract with the club. Global football is turning everyone's attention away from local football. The participation of Chinese quality players at this crucial time might be significant as they satisfy the quest for entertainment of some Hong Kong fans. They might be able to reverse the stereotype like the Brazilian blacks did in the 1960's. (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1997: 79) It will be interesting to see if the choice of Chinese football will be picked in the future. By the same token, Hong Kong people are open to various choices of identity as identity becomes a consumer product in the cultural supermarket. In a world of possibilities, identity could be even more multiple. I asked a 7-year-old in a Real Madrid football kit where he's from, he answered right away, "I'm Chinese."

### **Limitation**

To quote Kellas again, "indeed, identities are likely then not to be dual or even multiple. Thus one's identity as a player of a certain sport or a supporter of a particular team may or may not overlap with other aspects of one's identity." (Armstrong and Giulianotti 1999: 152) I think the major limitation this project has is how much the national identity shown in football represents other aspects of lives of other Hong Kong and Mainland people who are not interested in football? Moreover Coelho wrote in his study of national identity in Portugal, "in a country like Portugal where it's impossible to turn on the television or go out without hearing something about football, it is perfectly reasonable to think that the way we watch and feel this game must say a lot about ourselves, about our society, and in this case about our national and cultural identity." Hong Kong is close, but not exactly the same case. Especially career-wise, it is increasingly rare today that one says he/she wants to play football professionally in Hong Kong.

The second concern I have over this project is that I didn't get to attend matches in Mainland China. I didn't get to observe how Mainland football audience react to incidents in a match. From my Hong Kong informants I heard Mainland supporters have a different style of support but I didn't observe it myself.

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足球及國民身份在香港及中國

陳君行

文章摘要

1985年5月19日，中國足球隊在世界盃亞洲區外圍賽被香港隊以2比1的比數擊敗，宣佈出局。賽後發生球迷騷亂，數以百計的中國球迷走到街上，投擲物品攻擊香港球員、外國人及大使館。由此而言，足球絕不是只是單單涉及22位球員及一個球的比賽，而同時是關乎球迷如何建立他們的身份認同。本文著手比較中國及香港球迷如何從足球運動中建構他們的國民身份。